



A PARADOX OF KNOWING

Teachers' Knowing about Students

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Submitted
in fulfilment of the
requirements of the degree
by full dissertation:

Doctorate of Education
Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal

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2008



DEDICATION

For
Jayesh
(*Mere jivan saathi*),

Vidya
(*Our beloved daughter*)

and Chopstix
(*For enriching our family life*)



DECLARATION

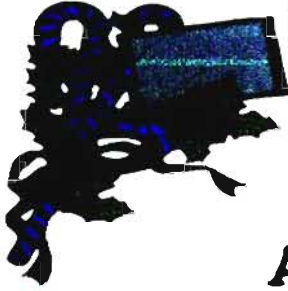
I declare that this dissertation is my own production, original in conception and execution, and has not been submitted heretofore to any other institution for examination.

Further, all sources used are acknowledged, and cited in the bibliography.

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Promoter

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Co-promoter



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research projects are like viruses. They lodge themselves in the body and simultaneously, stealthily, penetrate and inhabit personal, private, public, social, and work spaces, interrupting and destabilising life for years. These debilitating effects, however, have not had the toxic effects I feared because I have been privileged with the care and concern of many individuals who provided intellectual, emotional, physical, and social safety-nets and support, sustaining my vigour and zest for research, preserving my family life, my health, and well-being. It is to these remarkable persons that I acknowledge my profound thanks:

The teachers and students of Amethyst Secondary School, participants of this research endeavour.

Renuka Vithal and Michael Samuel, for their guidance, friendship, academic support and training, intellectual integrity, and exemplarity. It has been an inspiring experience and I am so proud of my association with such great minds.

Betty Govinden, for lovingly challenging my “paradigmatic incoherencies”, for reading many drafts of this thesis and providing feedback and critique, and food for body and soul.

My Michigan State “family” and friends for stretching my thinking, introducing me to a different body of literature, and for companionship: Lynn Fendler, Irfan & Shamillah Muzzafar, Manashi Ray, Punya & Smita Mishra, Denise Theiss, Luciana Gil, Cleo Cherryholmes, Anne Schneller, Richard Peterson, Rajesh Lal, Hemant Kini, Ajay & Venu Sharma, and Rick & Gretchen Forster.

The doctoral cohort of students, for three years of intense sharing, debate, and growth: Rita Bansilal, Penny Flack, Cecelia Jacobs, Robin Joubert, Fathima Khan, Benedict Khoboli Sadhana Manik, Peggy Msimang, Ben Nel, Shabier Omar, Sbu Radebe, Serela Ramklass, Lorraine Singh and Michelle Stears.

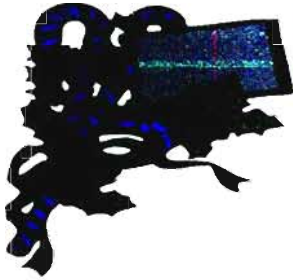
The doctoral cohort of “super” supervisors for challenging and pushing research boundaries beyond the back of beyond: Renuka Vithal, Michael Samuel, Betty Govinden, Busi Alant, Reshma Sookrajh, Labby Ramrathan, Daisy Pillay and Cliff Malcolm.

For invaluable critique and comment: Rubby Dhanpath, Reshma Sookrajh, Robert Balfour and Alan Pillay, and crucial feedback on drafts of chapter one: Daisy Pillay, Farida Patel, Lorraine Singh, Derek Buchler, Labby Ramrathan and Sadhana Manik.

For listening to gripes and groans, for their technical expertise, and administrative support: Tracy Andrew, Anisha Aungadh, Juliet Perumal and Rishan Govender.

For their love, faith, patience, and grace: my husband Jay and daughter Vidya. For their special care when I was ill and supporting my family during my many absences: Premilla & Girish Amin, Shireen & Reggie Naidoo, Vimmie & Manu Bowan and Hansamasi. My sisters: Kala, Damoo, Viju, Chandu and Neemoo and brother: Joey for their love. For twelve years of dedication, devotion, and labour: the late Natalia (Annie) Maselane. And to Chopstix, for unconditional love and comic entertainment.

I also place on record my sincere thanks to the Fulbright Commission for sponsoring my stay at Michigan State University, to the former University of Durban-Westville for research grants, and to the University of KwaZulu-Natal Leap programme for providing opportunities and resources for my research and academic development.



ABSTRACT

This study is a critical exploration and post-structural explanation of how and what *teachers' know* about students. The intention has been to explore *teachers' knowing* beyond taken-for-granted iterations, beliefs and conceptions of those they teach and to theorise the nature of *teachers' knowing*. The route to insight involved deploying critical ethnography to produce data over a six-month period.

The study site, a secondary school I named Amethyst, is an apartheid-era creation. Since 1990, political change has introduced uncertainties of various sorts and has destabilised the ethos and culture of the school: conflicts between teachers and students, conflicts amongst students' peers, students' participation in activities that are unacceptable and harmful, severe lack of funds to meet the financial needs of the school and lack of human and teaching resources. It is within such an uncertain space that I produced data to interrogate *teachers' knowing* about students.

At the site, data production was impeded by various confounding factors that eroded trust between the participants and me (the researcher). Traditionally, an ethnographic approach entails three kinds of observation: descriptive observations at the beginning, followed by focused observations narrowed to the concerns of the study and finally, selective observations to consolidate focused observations. For the data production process to continue, the researcher-researched relationship had to be assessed and reconfigured from a critical perspective. In this study the above-mentioned observations have been renamed and reconceptualised from participants' perspectives as: an innocuous phase, an invasive phase and a reciprocity phase. Furthermore, an explication is provided of how research reflexivity shaped the reconceptualisation and the data production processes. Usual forms of data production were abandoned and replaced by a conscious effort to reveal my story to participants eventuating in the form of an exchange of data – my story for their stories. Reciprocal participation enabled data production to be completed and two sets of data were generated: teachers' stories and students' stories. Eight teachers' stories derived from

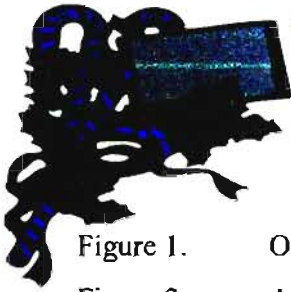
interviews were woven into texts whilst fourteen students' autobiographical accounts comprising lived experiences were re-presented as they narrated them.

Juxtaposing students' accounts with *teachers' knowing* has yielded three revelations. Firstly, unveiling how teachers constitute students through *knowing* them in particular ways. Secondly, it reveals how students' constitution as subjects at home and at school allow them to be *known* in particular ways and thirdly, revealing the ways students consciously prevent teachers from knowing about their lived experiences. The analyses of both sets of stories have deepened understanding of *teachers' knowing*, taking it beyond teachers' personal belief systems. Placing both sets of data under a critical gaze has yielded three ways of *teacher knowing* (solicited, unsolicited and common) and five kinds of *teacher knowing* (racialised, gendered, cultural, classed, and professional). From the analyses, I have inferred that *teachers' knowing* about students, when juxtaposed with and mediated by students' lived experiences, is flawed, incomplete, partial, complex, contradictory, and uni-dimensional.

I put forward a thesis predicated on two abstractions from the analyses: one, that *teachers' knowing* is dangerous because it propels teachers towards actions that can result in disastrous consequences for students; and two, that *not knowing* is useful because it is a more critically and socially just approach to teaching as it allows teachers to function without succumbing to marginalising the non-traumatised and those without challenges at the personal level. In effect it translates into practices that treat all students equally in an academic setting, so that in one instantiation, students are driven to strive for academic achievement instead of focusing on emotionally debilitating distractions that cannot be resolved by *teachers' knowing*, understanding, and empathy. *Not knowing*, I argue, offers viable possibilities for working with students whose lives are compromised by low socio-economic conditions and problematic family relations.

This inversion of common-sense instincts about *teachers' knowing* and *not knowing* is theorised by deploying a topological metaphor, the Möbius strip, to demonstrate that *teachers' knowing* and *not knowing* about students are not polar opposites on a continuum, but are paradoxically, cohabitants of a common space, reflections of each other, residing in each other. Additionally, I charge that teaching and caring, mediated by *knowing*, form the foundation of teachers' work, and argue that at Amethyst, teaching and caring cannot be activated simultaneously within an individual teacher.

Key words: critical ethnography, teachers' knowing, paradox of knowing.



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A PARADOX OF KNOWING TEACHERS' KNOWING ABOUT STUDENTS

A STUDY IN FOUR PARTS

PART ONE: KNOWING THE STUDY

Part one, comprising the first chapter, provides a global view of the study. It situates the study historically, politically, contextually, and locally. Teachers' knowing about students, the focus of the inquiry, is problematised by a discussion of experiences in two settings: an institution of higher education (where knowing theory was received), and at a school (where knowing theory was practised). A rethinking of these experiences is then offered from post-structural perspectives. Various constitutive aspects of the study (e.g. research site, participants, theoretical framing, and the contributions this study make) are made explicit for the reader. Part one can thus be viewed as the setting up of the study in its entirety, and which is then reviewed in part four of the study in relation to the thesis presented.

CHAPTER 1

Researching Teachers' Knowing About Students

NOTICE

PERSONS attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.

BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR

Mark Twain — *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Introduction

27 April 1994 was a momentous day in South Africa's history, officially ending the long winter of apartheid rule with the investiture of a government of, and for, the people. For most nationals, the new political formation heralded freedom of association, movement, and thought, and the restoration of dignity and respect to subaltern¹ groups and oppressed communities². Political change from oppressive to democratic governance, however, is unlike a landslide that gathers momentum, forcing its way into every crack and fissure, imposing its will on monoliths and miniatures with equal vigour³. Democratic change comes about through policies and frameworks that have to be debated, negotiated, and disseminated, a course that cannot be rushed, more so if resistance to change prevails. In the field of education, political upheaval has produced new educational policies, new teaching programmes, and new curricula⁴ for more than a decade now, an arduous process to re-educate teachers and the taught geared towards undoing the stranglehold of apartheid ideology on our collective psyche. There is an expectation that teachers will "help rebuild national culture and identities" (Hargreaves

¹ Spivak's (1985) term is appropriated here "not as a classy word for oppression" (Spivak, cited in Kilburn 1996:2) but as a description of voices denied a place in apartheid structures and who continue to remain on the margins of democratic processes because democratic agents purport to act on their behalf.

² The preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) includes these aims:

"Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law".

These aims are supported by ten fundamental values identified in the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (DoE 2001a): democracy, social justice and equity, non-racism, non-sexism, ubuntu, an open society, accountability, respect, rule of law and reconciliation.

³ This thesis is written according to British spelling conventions. American forms are used in direct quotations from texts and as they appear in book and journal titles in the reference section.

⁴ Some of the most important new policies, teaching programmes and curricula include the National Qualifications Framework (IEB 1996), the South African Qualifications Act (DoE 1995), South African Schools Act (DoE 1996) Outcomes-based Education (DoE 1997) and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (DoE 2002).

1998:5). If so, then the current reorganisation of education must be connected to transforming the rhetoric of participatory governance into reality because schools are, in a sense, microcosms of political possibilities, of social restructuring, and reformations. Additionally, Paechter reminds us that “schools are meant to educate the next generation” (2000:3). The insertion of social justice at the centre of political and social life means that teachers and students of various ages and backgrounds finally have license to interact in ways that transgress apartheid ideology, with viable alternatives to educate a new generation of students in schools. As representatives of society, schools continue to be fertile sites for testing out a new social order, a theatre for viewing democracy in operation.

More than just representing national and societal values and ideals, schools can also be nodal points for re-examining taken-for-granted opinions of *teachers' knowing*⁵ about how to teach, what to teach, and whom to teach, especially in the light of the state's Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE⁶ 2000b) which has significantly expanded teachers' role functions. Seven roles for teachers are stipulated in the norms and standards, namely: mediators of learning; interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials; leaders, administrators and managers; scholars, researchers and lifelong learners; community members, citizens and pastors; assessors; and learning area specialists. One could surmise that there is an assumption embedded in the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE 2000b) for teachers to know students. For instance, the effective performance of a pastoral role, or of learning mediator, must surely depend on teachers *knowing* their students. Consequently, in this thesis, an unstated, but a key assumption underpinning teaching, that teachers should know their students, is analysed. In particular, *teachers' knowing* about students in a secondary school is explored.

The research site, Amethyst⁷ Secondary School, has its origins in South Africa's past. How it came to be, where it is located, and which group's interests it serves, are aspects that are locked into its apartheid ancestry and legacy. Amethyst opened its doors

⁵ Throughout this thesis *knowing* and *not knowing* refer to *teachers' knowing* and *teachers not knowing*. For the sake of convenience these terms are sometimes used without the qualifier “teacher”. To avoid confusion, all references to *teachers' knowing* and *teachers' not knowing* are italicised.

⁶ DoE is an abbreviation for the Department of Education, a national level structure and the official educational authority in the country.

⁷ The names of schools, participants, and the suburb in which this study is located, are pseudonyms.

of teaching and learning in 1980 to *Indian*⁸ students and *Indian* teachers in a suburb created for *Indians* persons⁹. Within this space of so-called racial homogeneity¹⁰, notions of being separate and different from and to other races were endorsed and entrenched by law.

Almost two decades after its establishment, Amethyst began admitting small numbers of students previously precluded by apartheid legislation, namely *Black* and *Coloured*¹¹ persons. Racial integration and desegregation has been fraught with tensions and conflicts, especially since *Black* students comprised the majority of students at Amethyst. After decades of political and social segregation, and knowing individuals based on theories of eugenics, biological superiority and inferiority, and master race discourses, can we in South Africa know individuals beyond race?¹² Is democracy a veneer applied to policy surfaces, or can it penetrate and dislodge ideologies and *a priori* knowing embedded in our minds, and refashion political, social, and educational practices by levelling the unjust foundations on which knowing is constituted? These are the concerns that frame this study and will be interrogated in subsequent sections of this chapter.

This chapter is organised according to the theoretical and experiential complexities of *knowing* students by referring to both literature and my exposure to theory at a teacher's college and induction in the field as a practising professional. The confusion that emanated from these kinds of discursive interpretations about *knowing* students positions me to share a rethinking of theoretical and experiential ways of *knowing* students from post-structural perspectives that draw on Lacanian (1981) theory. This is followed by a clarification of the rationale for privileging the concept "knowing" as opposed to the concept "knowledge". Finally, the key structural elements of this study are unveiled through a succinct discussion of the theoretical framings, paradigmatic

⁸ An apartheid created category discussed in greater detail in chapter two. Here I would like to mention that these repulsive categories, linking persons to race, continue to have currency in the post-apartheid period, and as a reminder of its vile heritage, I have chosen to italicise all racial descriptors in this thesis.

⁹ The Group areas Act (no 41 of 1950) demarcated cities and towns of South Africa into zones for residential and business purposes. The zones were allocated according to apartheid categories of *White*, *Coloured*, and *Indian*. *Black* persons were excluded from residing, or conducting business in cities and towns.

¹⁰ Critical anti-race theorists would challenge notions of "racial homogeneity" (see Carrim & Soudien 1999). The idea is used here as it was practiced during apartheid.

¹¹ *White* students have not sought admission to *Indian*, *Black* or *Coloured* schools (see Chisholm & Sujee 2006; Carrim & Soudien 1999).

¹² Race as a construct and its application in South Africa, is discussed in chapter two.

orientations, research methodology, research questions, the study's participants, the research site, representation of data, and approaches to analysis and synthesis. These structural elements are offered to provide an overview of the study and to signal what I engaged with in this thesis.

Knowing students: theoretical and experiential contradictions

The notion of *knowing* students can be traced to the nature of schools as places where human interaction is both foundational to education and the sovereign mode of teaching and learning. Human interactions in schools are predicated on *knowing* about each other, on common-sense inclinations that a “good”¹³ teacher is someone who knows her/his students. Accordingly, the question that emerges is: what should teachers know about students? This question posed a dilemma as I, personally, was never sure what this *knowing* entailed. To illustrate my dilemma I share examples of how *knowing* students is understood in diverse contexts by a diversity of individuals.

First, at the institution where I trained as a teacher, the theoretical landscape that shaped what and how we came to know our students emanated from the field of psychology. Dominant in the curriculum were theories of development (Piaget 1978), identity (Erikson 1980), moral reasoning (Kohlberg 1984), self-actualisation (Maslow 1976), motivation (Bandura 1977), instincts (Freud 1949), behaviour (Skinner 1974), incongruence (Rogers 1980), and conditioning (Pavlov 1941). Armed with humanist, behaviourist, psychodynamic, cognitive, and structuralist images of learners, I entered school, imbued with confidence as a professional, *knowing* students as **learning organisms**¹⁴, only to be destabilised by another conception of students strongly advocated by voices of experienced teachers, which takes me to the second example.

At school, anti-institutional and anti-theoretical rhetoric were dominant motifs, and, as such, practical experience was valued at the expense of theory. I was advised to “Forget what they taught you at college. We know the real world”. These bits of “advice” were often followed by a list of negative behaviours that one could expect from students at school and in the classroom, as well as with the names of “good” students. The theories

¹³ Words in quotation marks without reference to an author indicate an acknowledgement of the inherently judgmental quality of the words and consequently, are used guardedly. The quotation marks are a reminder about the silenced interpretations that accompany their use in this thesis.

¹⁴ Words in bold are intended to draw the readers' attention to salient peculiarities/insights that I moot.

of psychology were not deferred to, and in many instances, psychological perspectives were derided for being alien to the realities that teachers had to confront. It was not unusual to hear a number of different perspectives being shared authoritatively. The rank and experience of teachers gave credence to some stances and discredited others. Students, I learnt, were primarily **social organisms**. It was, to say the least, very confusing for knowledge garnered in one setting to be negated in another. More unsettling was a realisation that multiple realities, often contradictory, were at play, and that in a school setting, **practical reality** superseded **theoretical reality** and, paradoxically, that formal theoretical knowledge was valued not for the practice of teaching, but as evidence of professional training. **Real learning** about teaching, the paradox suggests, is located in schools and **real credentialing**, in institutions of higher learning.

Third, my own experiences as a novice teacher with Timothy, an eight-year-old who appeared incapable of learning to read or write, added to my confusion. Timothy often had minor bruises and scratches and, believing information supplied by his peers in the classroom, I assumed these injuries to be the result of clashes on the playground. One day I found Timothy outside the school gates with a broken arm and bleeding from a serious head injury. After tending to his injuries, the school Head accompanied me to Timothy's home. Timothy lived in a low-income housing area. The entrance to the home was dimly lit, a torn curtain shutting out much of the daylight. At a dilapidated table, Timothy's parents were sipping tea. In another corner of the room, partially obscured by a curtain, Timothy's fourteen-year-old sister and an adult male, both in a state of undress, were together in bed. Before we could even introduce ourselves, Timothy's mother sternly informed us that her daughter was "busy with a customer", and we had to wait outside the house for our turn.

It dawned on me then that I had no idea of the lives led by children in my classroom. If I had known the details of Timothy's life at home, what could I have done? Could I have, perhaps, justified his poor scholastic performance, excused his rudeness, destructive tendencies and violent anger? Have him placed in a house of safety or dismantle the family? With hindsight, the possibilities are many, suggesting that I could have made a difference to Timothy's life, but at that time, however, I felt impotent,

vulnerable, and confused. I knew that I did **not** know, but that did not clarify **what** I needed to know then (or now).

Finally, literature has also not provided a stable meaning for the construct *knowing* students. For example, Delpit's (1995) incisive account of marginalised children's treatment by teachers in schools is illustrative of teachers' ignorance:

We educators set out to teach, but how can we reach the world of others when we don't even know they exist? Indeed many of us don't realize that our own worlds exist only in our heads and in the cultural institutions we have built to support them. It is as if we are in the middle of a great computer-generated virtual reality game, but the "realities" displayed in various participants' minds are entirely different terrains. When one player moves right and up a hill, the other player perceives him as moving left and into a river. (1995:xiv)

Delpit's thesis is that *knowing* students exists abstractly; that students are known independently of the living realities of their lived experiences. Echoing similar sentiments, Tshabalala-Mogadime's (1990) work portrays a student beseeching a teacher to understand her. This work provides insight from a child's perspective about a teacher oblivious of the pain experienced by a student labelled as ADHD (attention deficit hyperactive disorder). Both writers' accounts are troubling should one conclude that what teachers' know about students is sometimes questionable and unjust. It appears there are neither definitive explanations of, nor consensus, about what teachers should know.

Rethinking knowing your students

The preceding argument suggests that teachers understand or interpret *knowing* your students differently. These discursive meanings about *knowing* students, I want to argue, require some kind of an explanation that not only draws differing accounts together, but also provides a sensible explanation for these dissimilarities. I am not suggesting that a diversity of experiences is disagreeable, only that from a post-structural stance, the notion of "empty signifiers" (Laclau 2000) can permit one to know a multiplicity of experiences as a unitary idea. Let me explain.

The lack of definition and/or consensus is, according to Laclau (2000:185), “the production of tangentially *empty signifiers* ... signifiers with no *necessary* attachment to any precise content” (italicised in original). The descriptor **empty** does not refer to **nothingness**, but rather that a concept or idea acts as an empty receptacle that can be filled with all kinds of understandings without an anchoring attribute. In terms of *knowing* students, diverse practices, beliefs and opinions simultaneously occupy the space created by a lack of specificity. Anybody, it appears, can fill the receptacle with meaning, or interpretations of *knowing*, creating a chain of equivalences in Lacanian (1981) terms. The proliferation of vested and loaded meanings does not necessarily translate into choices of equal value. In practice, it sets up the terrain for hegemonic¹⁵ articulations to take hold and to claim this “absent fullness” (Laclau 2000:192) to achieve preferred and selective understandings. At the teachers’ college I attended, psychological theories operated hegemonically, whilst at the schools where I taught, personal theories and intuition dominated. Based on my personal experiences, it means then that both these views, and others I have not even explored, are co-habitants of the signifier *knowing*. *Knowing*, in other words, is an empty signifier. It does not have an essentialised or dominating meaning, or interpretation, and supremacy of one belief/opinion/practice can be displaced by competing and more compelling beliefs/opinions/practices as exemplified by my experiences at the teachers college and in the school I taught.

Empty signifiers arise from the recognition of the Lacanian “Real”, the impossibility of defining reality, meaning or intention precisely as it exists before its mediation through language, an order of symbols (Lacan, 1981). There is, on the one hand, a limitation inherent in language to express the real (Butler, Laclau & Žižek 2000; Žižek 2005), and on the other hand, the impossibility of preserving meaning through

¹⁵ Hegemony, in this study, relies on Gramsci’s (1977) notion of a mentality unconsciously colonised and governed by powerful interests masquerading as natural order. In the examples referred to here, psychological theories in the teacher education institution were presented as authoritative accounts such that teachers-to-be desired them in the belief that these theories were sacred professional knowledge. By contrast, at schools, in-service teachers overtly “desecrated” formal professional knowledge and openly propagated the “naturalness” of practical experience. The point being made is that hegemony, or dominion over how and what to think, is inextricably linked to who are perceived as “natural” leaders within bounded spatial contexts. I am mindful, though, that Gramsci’s notion that the adoption of dominating ideas occurs in the absence of coercion is challenged by Žižek’s recognition that a forgetting accompanies hegemony: “we are dealing with the effect of hegemony – that is, an element exerts hegemony – only when it is no longer perceived as a usurper that has violently subordinated all other elements, and thus commands the entire field, but as a neutral framework whose presence is ‘a matter of course’ – ‘hegemony’ designates usurping violence whose violent character is sublimated.” (Žižek 2005:204). Butler (2000:14), by contrast, views hegemony as productive as it enables the emergence of “new social possibilities”.

communication. The Lacanian “Real”, which defies existence in a material form, highlights a gap between reality and representational reality, between action and description, between thought and articulation, and thereby reveals the uncertain, imprecise, and arbitrary nature of discourse. Meaning is, in other words, “a fleeting phenomenon, that evaporates almost as soon as it occurs in spoken or written language ... rather than something fixed that holds over time for a series of different audiences” (Sim 2001:6). It is precisely the nature of discourse that sets the stage for colonisation of meaning within an undecidable terrain, exemplified in this instance, in the deterritorialised¹⁶ space of education. The field of education is not confined to schools or school authorities. It is theorised and taught in higher education institutions, controlled by state organs and policies, discussed in homes by parents and students, and commented on by the media, resulting in a multitude of audiences with multiple impressions of the field presenting multiple opportunities to populate the “empty signifier” (Laclau 2000:185). Resulting from these various vested interests, the task of this study has been to delimit the audiences to teachers and students, and to delimit the space to one school context to fathom critically how *knowing* students is signified by teachers.

Knowing: choosing fluidity over fossilisation

Up to this point there is deliberate use of *knowing* as opposed to *knowledge*. This stance may seem odd because the word *knowledge* is inextricably bound to the word education. Education, supposedly, deploys *knowledge* to advance *knowledge*. Schools as organisational units depend on structured systems of thought to educate. Though *knowledge* and *knowing* are both derivatives of the same root, “know”, *knowledge* is the culmination of *knowing*, organised, structured, and essentialised whilst *knowing* is tentative and fluid and, as theorised by Skovsmose (1994), dynamic. Furthermore, *knowledge* is a body of information that is often impersonal, abstract, and imposed (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule 1986), whilst *knowing* is internalised belief informed and influenced by relationships existing between knowers and the known. The decision to use *knowing* is guided by exploring teachers’ personal, practical and political

¹⁶ The use of “deterritorialised” refers to the difficulties of identifying the “authoritative voice” about educational matters. Is it the public? The department? School personnel? Parents? Students? Anyone, it seems, can and do make pronouncements about schooling.

understandings of students rather than scientific objectivity as implied by the term *knowledge*. The idea is not to identify a shared construct of truth, but to explore the multiple realities and interpretations of research participants in their historicised, localised, and cultural lives within an educational space.

Researching teachers' knowing about students

As mentioned in the previous sections, this study interrogates teachers' *knowing* about students. The intention is to fathom what teachers know beyond images of students as learning subjects, in other words, as living, knowing beings. The paradigmatic orientation of this study may best be described as a critical stance with a post-structural attitude. Critical theory is deployed to analyse *how* and *what* teachers know about students and post-structural frames applied to theorise findings. I am not insinuating clear lines of demarcations between critical and post-structural orientations, as paradigms are social constructions and conventionally used to understand research, and consequently, there is much blurring between these two positions in this study. However, there is, undeniably, a predominance of critical theory in the analysis sections (chapters six and eight) and post-structural thought in the thesis section (chapter nine). In this section clarification is provided about the theoretical framing that underpins this study, beginning with critical theory.

A Critical Stance. Critical theory, which arose from disenchantment with the moderns, particularly their failure to improve conditions for all humans (Bell 1990; Giddens 1990; Nietzsche 1968), has resulted in overtly political research that interrogates social, cultural, political, and economic ideologies and assumptions that constitute the world within a normalising framework. From a critical perspective, the world is not as it appears to be, or as presented as a natural order (Anderson 1990; Arendt 1958; Berger & Luckmann 1967). It is a creation by the powerful and the privileged and its operationalisation is manipulated to sustain power and privilege (e.g. Freire 1985; Giroux 1981; Chavez 2006). It is also the product of language (e.g. Bourdieu 2001; Butler 1990; Foucault 1972). Within this paradigm, schools are but one of many products of powerful interests and forces, and practices and performances of schooling are causeways for the flow of power as regulated by authorities (Apple 1982). There is an expectation, when

working within a critical frame, to question, interrogate, reveal, and challenge the power dimensions of schooling that privilege some and marginalise others.

Critical researchers are also expected to be activists, bringing about change through the processes of research. Within the context of education, in particular, “critical pedagogy emerged from a long history of historical legacy of radical social thought and progressive educational movements that aspired to link the practice of schooling to democratic principles and to transformative social action in the interest of oppressed communities” (Darder, Baltonado & Torres 2003:3). “Transformative social action”, or emancipatory research, inspires a different way of validating research through “catalytic validity” (Lather 1991). To liberate, as an outcome of such research, catalytic validity tracks “the degree to which the research process re-orientates, focuses and energises participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it” (Lather 1991:68). The particular interpretation taken in this study is twofold: to make visible the ideological underpinnings and hegemonic worldviews that source *teachers' knowing* about students, and reluctance to invoke catalytic validity.

To be a catalyst for change assumes that one must work with certainty – that change will be beneficial, and more importantly, that the long-term consequences of propagated change will be advantageous, and that in the process of “doing good” another set of marginals, disadvantaged, and dispossessed will not emerge. Feinberg (2005) drives this point home in his reflections about his study of Anutans on Guadalcanal, “My opportunities to serve as advocate for Anutan interests have been more limited than I imagined, and I continue to question how much I can do that will be of value to either Anuta or the Solomon Islands” (2005:299). It is an uncertainty that I too have courted in this study.

A Post-structural Attitude. Post-structuralists’ concerns are strongly tied to language as a mechanism to produce reality, and more importantly, “on the complexity of social relations in a given context” (Duesterberg 1999:752). The work of post-structural researchers is inherently connected to views of human as different to other life forms due to its use of language to represent reality as eloquently expressed by Agamben (1998:2-3):

... human politics is distinguished from that of all other living beings in that it is founded, through a supplement of politicity [*policità*] tied to a language, on a community not simply of the pleasant and the painful but of the good and the evil and of the just and the unjust.

Whilst critical theories peer beneath the presented order of the world to expose oppressions, exclusions, and marginalisations of persons, ideas, and knowledges, post-structuralism “tends to operate against totalising theories or meanings” (Peim 1993:4) that are expressed in **language** formats and communications. To put it differently, a post-structural frame is activated to ensure working against generalisation, against generating a grand theory of *teachers' knowing*. Furthermore, a deeper look into language can reveal paradoxes about the realities it purports to present.

In this study, I looked particularly at what was said to reveal the assumptions of hegemonic notions that pervaded *teachers' knowing*, as well as how that *knowing* was presented in language to reveal paradoxes. Working with undecidables, of both terrain and meaning-making, with multiple realities that are elusive and defy pristine re-representations, required *teachers' knowing* (data and interpretation) to be temporarily fixed in this study. This induced paralysis over text, interpretation, and analysis was necessary for the purposes of analysis and theorisation in this study.

Truth. On the basis of the discussion thus far, it appears that critical theory presupposes an examination of power relations, referred to by Foucault as “regimes of truth” (Foucault 1984a:74). Influenced by Foucault’s notions of truth¹⁷ (Prado 2000), two “regimes of truth”, teachers’ truths and students’ truths, were considered to interrogate *teachers' knowing*. Consequently, two sets of data were produced, namely, teachers’ stories and students’ stories. I did not question the truth value of these stories. Each story was accepted as constituting experiential or narrative truths. No attempt was made to triangulate “the truth” of any story during the data production phase. Instead, I have accepted as data (narratives from both sets of participants) as their truth claims to theorise the **nature** of *teachers' knowing*.

¹⁷ Prado (2000) identifies five notions of truth in Foucault’s writings, namely, criterial, constructivist, perspectivist, experiential and tacit-realist truth (explained in chapter two). Prado argues that the contradictions and relativist claims levelled against Foucault emerge from conflating these five notions and from attempting to unify the notions into a single theory of truth (similar to attempts to unify Foucault’s discursive strands of power).

Study Site. This study has been conducted at a site that reflects the realities of changing population demographics in schools. In addition to significant changes in terms of student profiles, the school has sustained curriculum restructuring within a geographical space in transition, of middle-class inhabitants moving out, and poorer, homeless, and unemployed families moving in, of fiscal constraints, lack of resources, and crowded classrooms. By choosing this school the understanding of *teachers' knowing* about students in fluid contexts assailed by changes on many fronts was enhanced, making this a vital study to understand *how* and *what* teachers' know about students. Furthermore, the legal umbilical cord that connected particular groups to particular schools, namely race, has been severed by democratic reforms, allowing the complexities around *knowing* to surface and to be explored in and beyond race vantage points.

While the context of this study is important inasmuch as representing contexts in a state of flux, the study, though in a South African context, is not necessarily **about** a South African context. The context has been deployed for a particular purpose, to generate data in order to interrogate how and what teachers know about students. What is important about this context is how the exaggerated complexities related to sociopolitical change at this site foreground the ways in which gender, race, class, culture, and professional identities act as primary organisers of *teachers' knowing*.

Though the site of this study exemplifies contexts where transformation is dramatic, the findings could be equally important for schools where changes are far more subtle, perhaps even imperceptible. An importance contribution of this study is the way it proposes a theorising of *teachers' knowing* about students that, perhaps, can be exported to “stable”¹⁸ contexts with different kinds of challenges than those encountered by students and teachers at Amethyst. The intention is not to prioritise generalisation of findings, but rather that the **nature** of *knowing* your students, as proposed in this thesis, inspires a rethinking of the claims teachers make about *knowing* their students within any context. The notion of rethinking, that is, how do the findings in a context/case generate thinking about its application in other contexts/cases, has particular reference to the

¹⁸ The notion of “stable” contexts has been contested. Skovsmose (1994) provides an “irrevocable test” to prove that conflict occurs all over the world. Building on Skovsmose’s work, Vithal & Valero (2001:2) contend that “the First World is not as calm and stable as it seems”. They broaden our understanding of conflict by recognising different spheres where conflict occurs, viz. cognitive conflict, conflicts in interactions, cultural conflict and, social and political conflict (Vithal & Valero 2001:15).

validity construct of “generativity”¹⁹ as theorised by Vithal (2003:100). Furthermore, the study tweaks the categories of race, class, gender, culture, and professionalism beyond their regular analytical deployments.

Research methodology. *Teachers' knowing* was researched from an anthropological perspective²⁰. The approach, critical ethnography, entailed being embedded in the context for approximately seven months. Prolonged engagement with the study site challenged assumptions that the repetitive and monotonous nature of school rites and rituals are simple to understand. Schools represent a complex society, *albeit* an arranged situation, which may be best understood through synectics²¹, that is, to make strange that terrain so banal, to look at school anew, problematising past familiarity. Consequently, I was able to penetrate the familiar ground of Amethyst to disentangle its labyrinthine structures and communication networks, and its multiple realities and challenges, to derive a critical understanding in order to answer the research questions of this inquiry.

Research questions:

1. How do teachers come to know the students they teach? This question attempts to fathom the ways in which teachers derive information about students.
2. What do teachers know about the students they teach? This question hones in on the contents that constitute teachers' knowing about students. The

¹⁹ Generativity, as the overriding validity construct of this study, derives its theoretical grounding primarily from the work of Vithal (2003) in the field of mathematics education. Arguing for a critical mathematics pedagogy, Vithal (2003:100) makes a case for democratic participatory validity, which is not characteristic of my study, and for a criterion, which I moot, that is, prioritising generativity over generalisability, with a recognition that the latter is never totally absent, “researchers and their research never completely escape generalisation. Readers of research and researchers themselves, constantly make judgements about the applicability of findings of other research to their own situations”. Generativity is, in other words, about creative thinking, finding applications “to explore the possibilities and potential for a critical perspective” (Vithal 2003:102). In her study, Vithal co-produces ideas and thoughts for rethinking mathematics education with the study participants. In this study the possibilities for rethinking teachers' knowing come about through theoretical analysis and synthesis that are deconstructive in nature and rely on readers to make the creative leap. The reasons for excluding participatory validity will become clearer as the dissertation unfolds.

²⁰ Anthropological studies are predicated on the notion of “naturalistic inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln 2003b), meaning that communities are researched by observing them in their natural settings (see also chapter two).

²¹ Synectics is a creative thinking process pioneered by W. J. J. Gordon (1961). The technique involves a problematisation of the familiar through recasting it as alien, whilst that which is alien, is made familiar. Familiarity and alienation are achieved through analogies or metaphors. For example, in this study, the analogy *researching Amethyst is like being lost in a maze* was used. The solution for finding one's way out of a maze requires a looking to its insides rather than outside. Similarly I looked to data, to prevent *a priori* knowledge and my experiences in education to intrude and shape writing the story of the school context, and in the analysis of teachers' and students' stories.

contents include teachers' knowing about students in and outside of school.

3. How do students describe their own lives? This question hones in on the contents that constitute students' knowing of themselves and how that knowing disrupts teachers' knowing about students.
4. What is the nature of teachers' knowing? This question theorises the nature of knowing by mediating the analysis of teachers' stories with the analysis of students' stories to draw out the nuanced complexities of teachers' knowing.

The participants. The participants in this study comprise a class of Grade Eight students attending a secondary school and the teachers with whom they come into contact. Grade Eight students were targeted, as they are "new" arrivals (from primary schools) at the research site. It is assumed that teachers do not know the students and thus teachers do not have pre-determined opinions/images/ideas. Additionally, Grade Eight students are exposed to most learning areas, have fewer options and split classes (according to subject specialisation) and hence have more teachers than students in Grades Nine to Twelve. Student participants come from a geographical spread of about twenty kilometres. Most of them live within the vicinity of Nirvana, a suburb of Durban in which the school is located. Some are refugees fleeing from township violence and political strife; some from families waiting for city council homes; others are orphans living on their own or with foster families, and some are descendants of inhabitants for whom this suburb was created.

Eight teacher participants of a group of twenty-four teachers employed at Amethyst shared their *knowing* about students. Like the students they teach, they come from diverse backgrounds. Of *Indian* extraction, educated in institutions for *Indians*, and garnering teaching experiences in *Indian* schools, this mono-racial group of teachers travel daily to Amethyst in their own vehicles from various areas in and around Durban. Three teachers, however, reside in Nirvana. Some teachers were appointed to the school twenty-four years ago when it first opened its doors. Some are newly appointed and a few are short-term contract employees, appointed and paid by the school governing body.

These two sets of participants are counterpoints in terms of race, class, age, and culture and are distanced by worldviews, experiences and conceptual understandings of schooling and education. The teachers are a mono-racial group who received their education in mono-racial institutions and were prepared as teachers for particular mono-racial contexts. In contrast to the adult participants, the children are post-apartheid, street-wise individuals who are influenced and immersed in youth cultures and differently organised family configurations that are perhaps foreign to and derided by school authorities. The students understanding of race is far more complex and nuanced, moving beyond apartheid classification. Together these divisions between the two sets of participants signal conceptual differences between teachers and students that are profound: complicating the relationships between teachers and students, complicating how they know each other and complicating the pedagogical arrangement at Amethyst.

Narrative data. The data yielded from observations, teacher interviews and student biographies are presented as stories, making this a substantially storied thesis. Five stories are constituent parts of this thesis:

My story, an uninterrupted narrative, is a data generating tool. Conceptualised as a research instrument, my biographical account has been placed in the appendices section (Appendix A) for two reasons: first, an ethical concern to present research participants' *knowing* before privileging my knowing and, second, so that the long, subjective account of my past does not distract readers from the heart of this research project about contemporary complexities of pedagogical work in post-apartheid South Africa.

The data production story outlines how teachers and students orchestrated their participation in this study. It chronicles the challenges of critical ethnographic work in a complex post-apartheid space, detailing an innovative reflexive response to generate data.

The story of the school is a critical narrative that disturbs sedimented histories, releasing past traumas and joys that haunt the social, pedagogical, and psychic ecology of a purposefully arranged space.

Teachers' stories are patchwork quilts, with selected pieces of conversations sewn together to create narratives. These narratives are derivatives of a single interview with each teacher participant.

Students' stories are biographical accounts, which they have written, and which are re-presented as narratives with minor editing of grammar and spelling.

Of note are the considerations taken into account for including students' stories in the analysis. In this research endeavour, teachers and students can be regarded as two sides of a *knowing* coin. Teachers' stories can be regarded as inhabiting/exhibiting one kind of reality, and students' stories as inhabiting/exhibiting another kind. To explore the nature of *teachers' knowing* about students, both sets of teachers' and students' realities needed to be mediated and modulated in the analysis. Students' stories are not just counterpoints in opposition to teachers' accounts, or as a means to pathologise teachers, and in so doing to cast them in a negative light. On the contrary, both sets of stories, of the *knowers* (teachers) and the *known* (students) are necessary to interrogate *teachers' knowing*. Teachers are important and their work more so, and just as Dooley & Kavanagh argue that "Derrida is only ever interested in criticizing what he wants to keep and preserve" (2007:146), I too believe that we preserve that which is vital and crucial in education by theorising and critiquing *teachers' knowing*. Teachers' stories should, therefore, not be read as a pejorative gaze at students' lives, but as important texts providing insights into the complexities of teaching, emerging from particularised *knowings* about students. In juxtaposing these stories, assumptions were examined, explanations were found for the proliferation of interpretations that emerged in the stories, and most importantly, the duality allowed for theorising the nature of *teachers' knowing*. Students' stories should thus be seen as necessary disruptions to deepen our understanding of *teachers' knowing* about students.

Analysis and synthesis. The analysis of data in this study is influenced by the idea that "much more than pedagogy, instruction or teaching method is at stake" (Hargreaves 1998:ix). It is thus not an analysis *per se* of classroom practice, reflective practice, professional competence, professional development, assessment, leadership, management, pedagogy, teacher education, curriculum, pedagogical content knowledge, or policy. When research participants raised issues rooted in these various branches, then arguments were structured to respond and the opportunities were exploited to comment on, and to make interpretations, but the study is essentially about a critical gaze cast at teachers' claims to *knowing* their students.

The dislocation of this study from pedagogical and curriculum moorings, is a deliberate “Othering”²² of traditional realms of research in education. Relocating traditional foci to the margins, in this instance, provided an uncluttered means to analyse *teachers’ knowing* about their students. Debates about teacher professionalism and teachers’ roles and functions were re-entered through the lenses of *teachers’ knowing*. Furthermore, it served to desacralise and demythologise normative literature on classroom behaviours and practices by suggesting an alternative route to understanding teachers’ work. For example, *knowing* about students implies a rethinking of one, *teachers’ knowing* about students; two, the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE 2000) expected of teachers at Amethyst Secondary School; three, the impact of sociopolitical conditions on pedagogy; four, the consequences of *knowing* students on teachers’ professional identities; five, the complexities of teaching and caring for students; and six, a nuanced understanding of teachers’ work in traumatic contexts.

Primarily, the analyses undertaken of both teachers’ and students’ stories has resulted in a more critical, nuanced, and complex understanding of *teachers’ knowing* about students. It points to schools as meeting points of antagonistic worldviews and of parallel universes (teachers and students) inhabiting a common space. The analyses demonstrate how dominant meaning making is hegemonic and the outcomes thereof. Furthermore, the analyses identify some of the contents of the empty signifier, *knowing your students*: three ways of *how* teachers come to know and five categories of *what* they come to know, thereby exposing internalised, invisible thought processes and external influences. The synthesis, that *teachers’ knowing* is dangerous and that *not knowing* is useful, is reconnected to the body of literature, and pushes the boundaries of the nature of knowing in addition to theorising *teachers’ knowing* as being the same as *not knowing*. Moreover, the synthesis speaks back to educational, political, and social possibilities in a reconfigured national space.

Researcher’s knowing. I have already signalled strong leanings towards critical and post-structural ways of *knowing*. The how of *knowing* will be dealt with substantially in chapter three and the nature of researcher knowing and researcher-as-

²² The ways of defining, stigmatising, and marginalising of one group by another group (Ang 2001; De Beauvoir 1972).

knower will be discussed and theorised in the final chapter. The reasons for delaying this discussion will become self-evident then.

Organisation of thesis

This thesis consists of four moves that unveil four kinds of meta-knowing:

(i) knowing the study (ii) knowing the foundations (iii) exploring *teachers' knowing* and (iv) knowing *teachers' knowing*. The four parts comprise an unequal distribution of chapters and length (see Fig.1).

PART ONE Knowing the Study	1 Knowing about researching knowing			
PART TWO Knowing Foundations	2 Knowing literature	3 Knowing methodology	4 Knowing study context	
PART THREE Exploring Knowing	5 Knowing teachers	6 Exploring teachers' knowing	7 Knowing students	8 Disrupting teachers' knowing
PART FOUR Knowing about Knowing	9 Knowing teachers' knowing			

Fig. 1 Organisation of Thesis

Part One: Knowing the study

This part provides an elaboration of the study as whole, orientating the reader to the structural components of the thesis. The overview invites the reader to know the rationale, aims, research questions and theoretical framework. Chapter one constitutes part one.

Part Two: Knowing the foundations

The fundamental building blocks of this study are presented in this part. It includes three chapters that invite the reader to know the literature, to know the methodology, and to know the school context. Each of these is elaborated hereunder:

Chapter two is an analysis of the literature reviewed for this study. The review is a conceptual exegesis of knowing as different to knowledge. Since there is a dearth of literature on *teacher knowing*, as opposed to literature on teacher thinking, teachers' work

and teacher identity, I draw on texts outside teacher knowledge/thinking from fields like ancient Roman mythology, philosophy, psychology, and sociology to build a concept of knowing and when possible, connecting these to how such *knowing* occurs in schools, particularly in how and what can be known about students. This chapter concludes with a synthesis derived from the literature reviewed in the form of a conceptual map.

Chapter three is the story of the data generation process and details the methods deployed, challenges faced, and the data generated. It provides substantial details about how the school context blurred the boundaries between the researcher and the researched and forced anthropological traditions to be discarded and replaced by my personal narrative as a strategy to produce data.

Chapter four situates the study context politically, historically, socially, economically, and culturally. Written as a thick description, it is the story of the school, drawing the reader into the complicated, inner workings of the institution, and lays bare the contextual worlds of the students and teachers of Amethyst from critical/post-structural vantage points.

Part Three: Exploring knowing

This part takes the reader through the exploration of *teachers' knowing* about students by first presenting teachers' stories and an analysis thereof, followed by a representation of students' stories and a disruption of *teachers' knowing* in the analysis. Part three comprises the following four chapters:

Chapter five introduces teacher participants of the study. The discussion of the sample is followed by their stories, derived from interviews. Eight teachers share how they come to know about students as well as what they know about students inside and outside school. Teachers' stories also highlight how professional identities shape, and are shaped, by the choices teachers make about *knowing* or *not knowing* their students.

Chapter six presents an analysis of *teachers' knowing* about students. Two themes: how teachers know and what teachers know, frame the analysis. Three *ways*: solicited, unsolicited, and common *knowing*; and five *kinds*: racial, gendered, classed, cultural, and professional *knowing* are identified and discussed. Each discussion is

followed by a critical commentary and then by a critical analysis. Each theme concludes with critical connections to the literature on knowing.

Chapter seven is a re-presentation of students' narratives. Fourteen students describe their lives in their own words. They reveal their feelings of school, home life, peer relationships, the influence of religion, culture, and family. Their lives are not alike and the joys and hardships they experience differ as well.

Chapter eight is the extension of the analysis of *teachers' knowing* by interrogating students' narratives. Using a similar structure of two overarching themes to frame the analysis, the themes analysed in this chapter are how students communicate information about themselves to teachers, and the lives they lead as racial, gendered, cultural, classed, and professional learning subjects that serve to disrupt *teachers' knowing*. The critical commentary in this chapter hones in on how *teachers' knowing* is challenged, confirmed, subverted, denied, and influenced, followed again, as in chapter six, by critical connections that forge links with literature on knowing. The chapter concludes with insights provided by students about their lives to which teachers are not privy (*teachers' not knowing*).

Part Four: Knowing about knowing

Readers are invited to know about *teachers' knowing* from post-structural perspectives. This part provides theoretical explanations about *teachers' knowing* and comprises of one chapter that is explained hereunder.

Chapter nine is the final chapter of this thesis. I shift paradigmatic gears from critical theory to post-structuralism to present and theorise *teachers' knowing*. I theorise *teachers' knowing* by mobilising a topological concept as a metaphor to understand the two antithetical conceptions of *teachers' knowing* emerging from the study: one, that *teachers' knowing* can be dangerous and two, that *teachers' not knowing* can be useful. I re-enter the teaching space by arguing that teaching and caring, mediated by *knowing*, are foundational to teachers' work, and in conditions of adversity, teachers have to choose between teaching (intellectual care) and caring (emotional/psychological care), as these core functions cannot be activated simultaneously at Amethyst. This discussion is followed by retrospective and prospective reflections of the study.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview and orientation to the study of *teachers' knowing* about students. This inquiry is set against a troubled political past that continues to intrude in the present, but whose intrusions are slowly being challenged and contested by democratic reforms that have filtered to schools. I have purposefully chosen a school in a very challenging sociological urban context that is coming to terms with educational and political changes to interrogate eight *teachers' knowing* about Grade Eight students in one school in KwaZulu-Natal. The low number of participants in a single site has allowed me to do an in-depth analysis from critical and post-structural perspectives to question both the logic and ethics of *knowing*, and the “innocence” of caring as taken-for-granted wisdoms. In other words, to challenge the merits of connecting with those we teach and to engage in pedagogical work based on a notion that it is important to know our students. Finally, a theoretical explanation is offered for findings that disrupt common-sense approaches to *teachers' knowing*. I begin this process in part two of the thesis, with a review of selected readings presented in the next chapter.



PART TWO: KNOWING FOUNDATIONS

Part two introduces the foundational knowings (literature, methodology, and context) of this study in three chapters (refer to the shaded section of Fig. 1).

PART ONE Knowing the Study	1 Knowing about researching knowing			
PART TWO Knowing Foundations	2 Knowing literature	3 Knowing methodology	4 Knowing study context	
PART THREE Exploring Knowing	5 Knowing teachers	6 Exploring teachers' knowing	7 Knowing students	8 Disrupting teachers' knowing
PART FOUR Knowing about Knowing	9 Knowing teachers' knowing			

Fig. 1 Organisation of *Theix*

The first of these chapters is an exploration of knowing as a concept distinct from knowledge. The concept is grown from diverse fields such as psychology, philosophy, and Roman mythology. It is made up of the exterior influences against which the findings of this inquiry are eventually theorised in part four.

The second of the trinity of chapters is an integral component of the study: the methodology for data production. It is an explication of the roots of critical ethnography, research experiences in the field, and critical methods deployed to produce data. This chapter draws the reader into the complexities of innovating an agency-based methodology borne out of resistance by participants and desperate moves to rescue the study.

The final chapter of this part is the initial knowing emerging from the study which invites readers into the environment of Amethyst Secondary School, the site of the study. Amethyst is the space that teachers and students cohabit as unequals: teachers are positioned there as professionals by choice, whilst students come there to be subjected,

perhaps even coerced, into assuming learning identities. Knowing the context of the study is important because it is the space in which teachers and students converge, and in which the psychological, conceptual, and cultural distances between the two groups are physically brought together. The convergence of teachers and students at Amethyst produces particular kinds of teachers' knowing which will be explored in part three and, to that end, knowing the context is crucial towards that understanding.

The foundations can, in a sense, be viewed as the backdrop of the study in relation to the analysis, synthesis and thesis. More importantly, part two retains an invisible presence in parts three and four through critical validity checks to maintain localised, historicised, and contextualised readings of the data, and theorisation emerging out of the data.

CHAPTER 2

Knowing: Conceptual Exegesis

Introduction

Centore (2005:1) asserts that human beings are “built to be knowers. It is our nature to know”. Indeed, from the perspective of everyday living, every individual knows something or someone and has the desire to know. These taken-for-granted *knowings* about things and persons, consciously or unconsciously, shape and influence individuals’ thoughts and actions. Part one of this thesis has already explored different understandings of *knowing* within two supposedly symbiotic contexts: a school and an institution of higher education. This exploration suggests that there is a proliferation of ways to conceptualise, determine, explain, and interpret *knowing*. This is the reason this thesis focuses on crystallising a notion of *knowing* and broadening understandings of *knowing* and its connections to the field of education.

The literature survey, which, in a sense, marginalises teacher knowledge/thinking readings, presented two challenges. The first was justifying the selection of readings to inform the study. As you will discover, the readings discussed in this chapter deliberately do not engage with the literature on teacher knowledge as these are not, *per se*, the focus of this study. This point is argued with a discussion of two examples, the first by Fenstermacher (1994) and the second by Sinfield (1992).

Another challenge in the survey of literature undertaken was to distinguish and separate the term **knowing** from the term **knowledge**. Dictionaries and other texts separate their meanings as elaborated below, but in practice the two are used synonymously, even by theorists (see e.g. Belenky *et al* 1986; Cunliffe 2005; Fenstermacher 1993; Küpers 2005; Tirri, Husu & Kansanen 1999), with their meanings blurred and *knowing*, in particular, often interpellating *knowledge*. The bringing together of these two terms to explore how they differ, and are similar, is necessitated by the everyday interchangeable use of these terms and, more importantly, during data analysis, it informs when these two terms are conflated, used synonymously, regarded as insignificantly different, or when they signify different things.

At times the interpretations in this chapter may be construed as subversively reconstituting knowledge as knowing. When that does occur, it signals an agenda to derive from knowledge, the processes and or the thinking (knowing) underpinning knowledge. To that end, I perused when necessary, theories of knowledge to infer its knowing blocks.

This chapter thus interrogates various readings that have shaped and influenced this study by supporting arguments with a theoretical basis and by exposing fissures that need to be filled. It begins with a rationale for relying on “dissident” literature. Then exploration of knowing follows, with various definitions and interpretations of knowing and knowledge. The nuanced differences between these two terms are highlighted and power, truth claims, values, and practical deployment are shown as markers of their distinctive characteristics. Having pinpointed knowing as a category dissimilar to knowledge, the alignment of interpretations of knowing to a selection of paradigmatic orientations is expounded. This leads to an elaborate exposition of different kinds of knowing and how these kinds of knowing inform the study. Finally a few technologies deployed in education are debated to argue their limitations in the context of this study. Though not exhaustive accounts of knowing, the review provided a working notion of knowing to explore *teachers’ knowing*, and has yielded a conceptual map to inform the analysis of teachers’ stories and students’ stories.

Knowing literature: “dissident” readings

The choice of readings informing this study do not emanate from the field of teacher knowledge. Two examples are used, one from outside the field of teacher knowledge, and the second from within, to justify this unusual stance that silences the voices of teacher knowledge theorists in a study grounded in the field of teachers’ work.

I draw on Sinfield’s (1992) notion of reading outside the canon of classical literature which he terms “dissident literature” to justify the selection of readings. In his “Faultlines: cultural materialism and the politics of dissident literature”, Sinfield (1992) critiques the hegemonic influence the canon of classical literature has on the field. He contends that as long as the reading of classical literature is upheld as the mark and standard of cultural heritage, there can be no re-inscription and re-articulation of literary

values. The continued reliance, he argues, on the authority of the classics makes us all complicit in allowing classical culture to thrive at the expense of emergent forms of literature. He advocates reading outside the classical canon of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Donne, for example. For him, this shift facilitates the production of a different politics of nationality, gender, power, and sexuality. In a similar vein, the challenges of teaching and learning are profound (see e.g. Abedi & Dietel 2004; Ames 1992; De Figueiredo 1995; Epstein 2001; Hartley 1997; Malhotra 2000; Samuel 1991), and continue to be dominated by theoretical framings from the field of teacher knowledge. Perhaps risks need to be taken from outside the field to provide explanations that inspire a rethinking of the challenges faced by schools. Indeed, maintaining and sustaining reliance on teacher knowledge/thinking theory will not allow the very foundations of already taken-for-granted *teachers' knowings* to be challenged. Drawing on such sentiments, the project of producing a different politics of teachers' work requires reading outside the "canon", so that new ideas may be infused, not as a means to erase the foundational knowings in the field of teacher knowledge, but to enrich our understanding of *teachers' knowing* as it is shaped in the context of this study.

Having argued from outside the field of education, I now turn inwards to Fenstermacher's (1994) work to strengthen the argument for a need for "dissident" literature.

Fenstermacher's (1994) review of literature in the field of teacher knowledge provides a means to **argue what** this chapter may have looked like had the review been narrowed to teacher thinking, teachers' work, and pedagogy and to **argue against** such a format. The example by Fenstermacher (1994:4) marks out four themes as constitutive of the field of teacher knowledge:

- (i) What is known about effective teaching?
- (ii) What do teachers know?
- (iii) What knowledge is essential for teaching?
- (iv) Who produces knowledge about teaching?

Theme one focuses on the characteristics of effective teachers and how these effects can be engineered through training, reflexivity, and teaching. It concerns **formal** knowledge about the things teachers do as professionals to teach, and how teachers know

students as learners and recipients of knowledge, as opposed to epistemic beings and meaning makers of schooling. Students are seen as being outside the production of knowledge about teachers' work, but in this study, there is a deliberate intent to include them in the analysis of *teachers' knowing*.

The second theme is about researching **teachers' experiences** and the knowledge derived from such experiences. Often cast in generalisable formats, these experiences do not provide peculiarised or particularised insights about who students are, and how their individualised biographies challenge and/or confirm these generic formats. The intention is not to confirm or deny *teachers' knowing* about pedagogy and content, but about an observation made that these studies do not contemplate students as knowing beings who can disrupt *teachers' knowing*. Thus reading literature about what teachers' know will not be helpful in this inquiry.

The third theme regards **teachers' perspectives** of which knowledge is essential for teaching. The perspectives of students, as mediating and destabilising factors of teachers' perspectives, is not, the literature suggests, an integral means to debate what knowledge is essential. The fourth theme interrogates the **production of knowledge**. The concerns Fenstermacher (1993) raises are about the power differentials between university-based teachers and school-based teachers which effectively factors students out of the field. Fenstermacher's (1993) review can thus be seen as pointing to the limitations of readings on teacher knowledge/thinking to inform this study.

When considering the limitations identified from Fenstermacher's (1993) review, it seems that if a similar organisation of teacher knowledge were used in this chapter, then this literature review would read like a list of what teachers' know, that is, the contents of knowing, and sideline issues like: what is *knowing*, why do teachers know what they know beyond hegemonic articulations of contestation between institutions, and, what are the consequences of *knowing*, because these are the issues that underpin this study. The concern that arises out of the questions posed here is the silence in the literature about **students as producers** of *teachers' knowing*. This explains my decision to go beyond the field of teacher knowledge in this study, beginning with clarifying the differences between knowing and knowledge.

Knowing and knowledge

Cunliffe (2005) defines knowledge in terms of knowing. Knowledge, he surmises, constitutes two types: “procedural knowledge or ‘knowing how’ and declarative knowledge or ‘knowing that’” (2005:547). His analysis indicates that these two forms of knowledge are often conflated and confused in the assessment of art education. Cunliffe’s (2005) interpretation that connects knowledge and knowing, and blurs their differences, makes my task of separating these concepts more challenging. Dooyeweerd (1997), in contrast to Cunliffe (2005), makes a succinct distinction between these two terms: knowing, he surmises is an activity, and knowledge, a commodity, whilst Tekippe (1998) sees knowledge as conceptual knowing, and knowing as primordial knowing. Conceptual knowing is a clarifying process, distilling thoughts and ideas and primordial knowing is a predecessor of conceptual thinking. In his elaboration, Tekippe (1998) points out that:

Primordial and conceptual knowing each have their own excellences. Primordial knowing is the mother-wit of all knowing; it clings to particulars and individuals and plumbs their mysteries Conceptual knowing is knife-sharp, precise; it excels by its own volubility and articulateness. It lends itself to second-order controls of definition and logic (Tekippe 1998:479).

A turn to the New Elizabethan Reference Dictionary (third edition, n.d.) delivers broader definitions. It describes knowing in the following terms: “to be acquainted with, to have personal experience of, to be on intimate terms with, to be aware of, to understand from learning or study”, whilst knowledge is defined as, “the result of knowing, that which is known, certain or clear apprehension of fact or truth, learning, erudition, science, sum of what is known (n.d.:820). In the light of these dictionary definitions, knowledge can be interpreted as precise, and knowing as tentative. In other words, knowing is *pre-knowledge*, or that knowledge is *post-knowing*, if one participates in the power game of privilege and marginalisation signified by terms and concepts. The power dimension is already imbedded in these concepts, as knowing constitutes notions that are not definite and not certain and, by implication, knowledge has truth value referred to as “justified true belief” (Goldman 1967, 1986; Pappas & Swain 1978; Phillips-Griffiths 1967; Steup 2005), which is the idea that knowledge can be justified, is

reliable, and true. Belief that is not justified and not true is not knowledge as there is insufficient proof (Flynn, 2005). But this general notion that knowledge is a collection of truths is contested by Russell (2005:5) who argues that:

All knowledge is more or less uncertain and more or less vague. These are, in a sense, opposing characters: vague knowledge has more likelihood of truth than precise knowledge, but is less useful. One of the aims of science is to increase precision without diminishing certainty. But we cannot confine the word “knowledge” to what has the highest degree of both these qualities; we must include some propositions that are rather vague and some that are rather probable.

Justified true belief is also challenged by what has now been termed the “Gettier Problem” (Steup 2002). The problem arises from taking a closer look at true justified belief. True justified belief rests on three conditions: (i) a proposition is true (ii) a knowing subject believes the proposition and (iii) the knowing subject is justified in believing that proposition. Let me explain the “Gettier Problem” by way of Pryor’s (2004:1) appropriate example and explanation:

You’re in the meadow, and you see a rock which looks to you like a sheep. So you say to yourself, “There’s a sheep in the meadow.” In fact there is a sheep in the meadow (behind the rock, where you can’t see it). This seems to be a case where you have a justified true belief that there’s a sheep in the meadow, that fails to be knowledge. Now one salient feature of this case is that you can’t really *see* the sheep. You just think you do. The fact that there *really is a* sheep in the meadow, which you don’t see, seems to be a gratuitous accident. It doesn’t have anything to do with your belief or evidence for your belief (*italics in original*).

The “Gettier Problem” highlights the illusion of truth, certainty, and reason, and undermines the very foundations of knowledge by introducing confounding ideas like coincidence and luck, what I would call in this thesis a form of unwitting knowing or unknowingly knowing. Knowing, by contrast, implies the process of learning and, as Centore (2005:1) explains, a process of building knowledge:

What happens in the process of knowledge? The macrocosm enters into the microcosm. The known becomes present in the knower. To say that a thing is known means that it exists in the mind of the knower. The knower is in the world, yet the world is in the knower.

There is, in other words, a strong connection between the external and the internal through the mind. Building on the mind-world connection, Slife and Williams' (2000:65) ideation of knowing falls in the realm of learning and memory "because learning memory and knowing all entail relations between our world and our being" In various disciplines, social, cognitive, and development scientists engage with notions of knowing and learning. Despite the expectation of knowing and learning being expected as an outcome in every field, Slife and Williams (2000:66) contend that:

... one might assume there are many different theories of knowing in the behavioral sciences. Surprisingly, this is not so. ... the assumptions that underlie the majority of these models and approaches are basically the same – that is, the epistemologies of these modes and approaches - the ideas underlying theories of learning - are essentially alike. In philosophy, epistemology concerns the nature, origins, and limits of knowledge.

Embedded in Slife and Williams contention is an understanding of "epistemology" as a convenient descriptor of theories of knowing in general. Whilst their work explores knowing in its generic form, Kincheloe (1991:67) differs in his debate on the realm of knowledge, which he finds to be problematic, diverse and contested. He insists that:

One task of epistemology is to provide theories of the nature of knowledge, of its general genesis and justification. Traditionally scholars have assumed that once we were conversant with theories of knowledge we would be better prepared to proceed with our research. These diverse theories of knowledge, of course, conflict with one another over the definition of true knowledge; indeed some epistemologies deny even the possibility of true knowledge. Nevertheless, different epistemologies promote different forms of knowledge along with different methodologies and ways of knowing.

Kincheloe's (1991) position becomes clear when considering the nature of knowledge in empirical studies, especially the relationship between the knower and what can be known from various paradigmatic vantage points, as will be elucidated in the next section.

Paradigmatic knowing

Knowledge produced is linked, limited, expanded, and moulded by a framework or paradigm. Paradigms, according to Lincoln and Guba (2000), are a set of beliefs or meta-organisers that shape our view of the world. They do not exist, but are social constructions to make sense of claims to knowing, knowledge, and interpretations. Four concepts characterise paradigmatic orientations, namely: ethics (moral imperatives shaping how one comes to know), epistemology (how knowledge emerges, particularly through the relationship between the knower and the known), ontology (how one explains reality) and methodology (the ways and means of producing evidence). These concepts are not monolithic within a single paradigm and are often expressed in discursive ways with a number of transpositions from one paradigm to another (Lincoln & Guba 2000). The initial divide between quantitative and qualitative worldviews has been expanded by a profusion of paradigms emerging in the qualitative quarter, for example, constructivism, critical theory, feminist theories, and queer theories (see Denzin & Lincoln 2003a). In this section, I will not explore all the paradigms, instead I draw on positivism, critical theory, social constructivism and post-structuralism, to argue for a perspectival conception of the nature of knowing.

Positivism. Positivists view the relationship between the investigator and the investigated as an objective one with the aim of discovering how things *actually* are. Both the investigator and the investigated are assumed to be independent of each other and that rationality and order organise the world. Framed by conditions of neutral and unambiguous objectivity, there is an assumption within this paradigm that the discovery of a universal truth is possible. Two possibilities exist for discovering the truth, that is, rationalism and empiricism (Thompson 2006). Reality as experienced through the senses, are deemed to the ultimate sources of knowledge for empiricists, as emphasised by Locke (2003:130):

First, our Senses, conversant about particular sensible objects, do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects do affect them. And thus we come by those *ideas* we have of *yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet*, and all those which we call sensible qualities; which when I say the senses convey into the mind, I mean, they from external objects convey into the mind what produces there those perceptions. This great source of most of the ideas we have, depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by them to the understanding, I call SENSATION. (italics and upper case in text).

Locke's (2003) position is based on the assumption that all human minds experience the senses identically, that there are no shades, blurrings, confusions, or disagreements about how external objects get processed for understanding. This refusal to admit to the confounding effect of interpretation is the grounding of positivistic stances. Thus, these objects of reality are the focus and source of knowledge in the research domain, and such has been their impact that the term "empirical" is regarded in the same vein as "scientific", despite essential differences. Rationalists, on the other hand, look to reasoning in the absence of sensory experience as the source of knowledge. An example of knowledge derived from such rationalisation is the discipline of mathematics, whilst the ability to theorise is another example. In other words, for positivists, truth exists and thorough investigations, observations, experimentations, or reasoning, make discovering truth a possibility. But Centore's (2005) reminder that: "A scientific truth is not a thing. It is a relationship between the way things are outside of the knower and the judgement made about those things within the knower" (2005:3), has a debilitating effect on truth which is based on factual knowing. Nevertheless, relativist notions of truth have not dented positivists' beliefs in objective truth.

Critical theory. For critical theorists, reality does not exist, but is constructed, and as Phillips and Jørgensen (2002:5) explain, "is only accessible to us through categories, so our knowledge and representations of the world are not reflections of the reality 'out there'". The shortcomings inherent in language limit our constructions of reality. A critical approach to research, however, requires the knower and the known to co-construct reality, to shift experiencing reality not objectively, but with a conscious

partiality, challenging traditions, unveiling hidden crises, and searching for alternative explanations (Skovsmose 1994). Co-constructing reality and strategic partiality can be achieved if the knower takes cognisance of power differentials, particularly within institutions functioning in accordance with a hierarchical order. Thus knowledge is mediated, inseparable from its subject, radically contingent, and vulnerable.

Truth, from a critical research perspective, is both an effect of power (Foucault: 1984a) and is sustained by hegemony (Gramsci 1977). Hegemony arises from the refusal to recognise and respect different kinds of truth. Prado (2000), for example, identifies five Foucauldian (1984a) notions of truth. One, a criterial notion which regulates the procedures for receiving and accepting truth (e.g. defending a thesis); two, a constructivist notion which produces truth as an effect of power (e.g. the ideology of apartheid supposing *White* superiority and *Black* inferiority); three, a perspectivist notion that positions truth as a proliferation of interpretations (differing accounts of a criminal act by a victim, perpetrator, and witnesses); four, an experiential notion that recognises truth as an event (e.g. personal narrative accounts) and five, a tacit-realist notion of objective truth (e.g. a dozen comprises twelve objects). Above all, at a presentation on discourse and truth, Foucault (1983) situates truth in discourse:

My intention was not to deal with the problem of truth, but with the problem of truth-teller or truth-telling as an activity. By this I mean that, for me, it was not a question of analysing the internal or external criteria that would enable the Greeks and Romans, or anyone else, to recognise whether a statement or proposition is true or not. At issue was rather the attempt to consider truth-telling as a specific activity, or as a role.

For Foucault (1983) it is important that the immanent role of power is brought to the fore in analysis. A critical approach then requires not a selection of a truth stance but an analyses of the various truth claims to extract its regulatory, hegemonic, disciplinary, and normative effects on individuals. Knowing, consequently, from a critical perspective, uncovers the way power influences how and what one knows.

Social constructivism. Social constructivism relates to the idea that reality is manufactured or to state it differently: a condition that is created, not a truth waiting to

be discovered. Social constructivism stands in opposition to rational empiricism, and whilst it has its proponents, it also has its fierce orthodox opponents (Hacking 1999:vii):

Social construction has in many contexts been a truly liberating idea, but which on first hearing has liberated some has made all too many others snug, comfortable and trendy in ways that have become merely orthodox. The phrase has become a code. If you use it favourably, you deem yourself rather radical. If you trash the phrase, you declare that you are rational, reasonable and respectable.

Kincheloe (1991) provides an extensive argument for the social construction of knowledge drawing on Habermas' (1978) three forms of knowledge: technical, practical, and emancipatory. Technical constructions cohere with human needs for tools to survive. Knowing generated thus is generalisable and predictable. But the study of human interactions and social relations is unpredictable, cannot be controlled and generalised, and is, therefore, unsuitable for such research. The practical approach views humans as language-reliant for communication purposes. Language communication allows for shared interests and common understandings, traditions, rituals, and practical actions which can be studied hermeneutically. But "the hermeneutical study of language fails at times to comprehend the ways that language hides the conditions of social life" (Kincheloe 1991:69), and ignores issues of domination, subjugation, and marginalisation. Practical interests render ahistorical, acontextual and decentered knowing. Emancipatory research is similar to the critical approach, producing knowing that has a direct interest in raising consciousness, agency, and providing tools that liberate the oppressed to utilise knowledge to improve their lives. The knowing that is generated is driven by the emancipatory interests of participants. In other words, knowing is politicised, and thus, in opposition to domination.

Post-structuralism. Post-structuralism relates to conceiving the world as dynamic and unpredictable. It breaks away from the traditions of empiricism and rationality, and does not consider knowing to be the consequence of either rational principles or universal laws. Instead, the focus is on people and their world, particularly the ways in which change, challenge, and contestation have destabilised social,

economic, political, personal, and cultural conditions (Hargreaves 1998). Migrating from the mind as the centre of sensory experiences and reasoning processes, it turns its gaze on the social world of practical activity, which is now highly globalised and characterised by excessively rapid modes of communication, an explosion of information, population movement, multinational industrialisation and commercial exchanges, and exposure to multiple cultures and ways of living.

Social discourse, however, remains the most basic understanding of the world (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002) because social discourse is constructed and shared by people who live in it. Knowing is deemed to be local, context specific and historically situated, now increasingly influenced by relations of people and their world with an awareness that there are other ways of living and doing. By rupturing long-held traditions and disrupting universal claims, the aim of the knower is to critique the world (Neuman 2000). Knowing is thus contextualised and contiguous, the certainties of modernity are contradicted and displaced, and the notion of *truth* is questioned, debated, and relativised.

Conclusion. Each paradigm discussed in this section is a particularised construction of knowing²³, influencing research inquiry, research methodology, and knowing as theoretical truth in this study. For positivists there is a universal truth that is evident, objective, and rational. For critical theorists, truth is an effect of power, of subjugation, and of domination, and it is important to know how power produces truth. Social constructivists work within a frame that produces knowing without challenging existing power relations or dominant influences, whilst post-structuralists mark out the invisible connections, contradictions, and paradoxes immanent in truths. Consequently, depending on one's paradigmatic orientation, what is known could be absolute, multidimensional, mediated, contested, or relative. Paradigmatic awareness, consequently, could be useful to explain contested, multidimensional positions of teachers and students.

Kinds of knowing

In this section ten kinds of knowing are explained and discussed. The intention is

²³ These categories are not monolithic – all knowing is open to interpretation and likewise paradigms too are open to interpretation. For the purpose of clarification the discussion of paradigms is done under clearly defined categories without indicating the porous lines of separation, or the fragility of such extreme expositions.

to register the different ways understanding and meaning-making occur through various processes. Some notions like aspectual knowing relate directly to the concept knowing, whilst in other cases, arguments are made to rationalise their interpretations as knowing, such as metaphorical knowing.

Aspectual knowing. Based on Dooyeweerd's (1997) work, Basden (2005) interprets the processes of knowing as aspects with kernel meanings. There are, in other words, various processes of knowing aspects of objects and persons. These ways of knowing are reproduced here (see Fig. 2) as vital "knowing" informing this research project.

ASPECT	KERNEL MEANING	PROCESS OF KNOWING
Quantitative	Quantity, amount	-
Spatial	Continuous extension, space	-
Kinematic	Movement, flowing movement	-
Physical	Energy and mass	The fact that things stay in the state they were in until some physical force acts on them.
Biotic	Life functions	The way things have grown.
Sensitive	Sense, feeling & emotion	Receiving stimuli and holding a memory of them. The basis for instinct.
Analytical	Distinguishing	Making distinctions between things, and also making deductions from those distinctions.
Formative	History, technology culture,; shaping & creativity	Skills: knowing how to achieve things.
Lingual	Symbolic communication	Stuff set down in symbolic form, e.g. 'knowledge' stored in books, libraries, web sites.
Social	Social interaction & institution	Networks of knowledge, shared cultural knowledge and assumptions.
Economic	Frugal use of resources	Managing limits on knowledge (personal and communal memories, etc.).
Aesthetic	Harmony, surprise, fun	Harmonizing what we know with what else is known, and with what we experience in life.
Judicial	What is due; retribution, rights, responsibilities	Giving due weight to various pieces of knowledge and to the whole: proportion and a sense of 'perspective', an informed sense of the essence of things.
Ethical	Self-giving love	A complete knowing of the other person? Hebrew in Genesis 4:1 the word "he-knew" for "have intercourse with".
Pistic	Vision, inspiration, communication, creed, religion	Certainty. Committing to a belief, both the little commitments in everyday living and the large commitments for which we may lay down our lives. Also prejudice etc.

Fig. 2. *Aspectual Knowing* (Source: Reproduced from Basden 2005)

Whilst Figure 2 is useful for identifying the aspects that can be known and the basic meaning appended to that kind of knowing, I am not convinced that the processes

of knowing is lucid as portrayed by Basden (2005). The physical, I argue, is not the fact that things change when physical forces act on them, but that physical knowing takes place through the processes of seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling, and touching. Similarly, for the creative aspect of formative knowing, the processes as identified by Torrance, (1976) would involve elaboration (attention to detail), fluency (generating a number of alternatives), flexibility (manipulating information), and originality (producing an idea or an object not thought of or designed by anyone else). Each aspect has its own aspects and requires sophistication to identify all aspects, which may not be possible, or knowable. The other limitation of this interpretation is that it does not provide sufficient clarity on knowing people. How would one know people? How would one know about them? What would one know about people? Which aspects? It seems I will have to rely on other kinds of knowing to assist with answering the questions posed.

Metaphorical knowing. Knowing is often represented and explained metaphorically. Metaphors allow for indirect comparison, enabling the visualisation of an explanation. It is a means of making abstract, theoretical ideas visible. I discuss two metaphors, one from the field of psychology, and the other from Roman mythology, as exemplars of such knowing.

The first is the “Johari window”. Johari is a contraction of the first names of Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, the creators of a four-quadrant graphic model (see Fig. 3) and fifty-five adjectives (see Fig. 4)²⁴ to improve interpersonal relations (Luft & Ingham 1955). The model, in the form of a window, represents four kinds of knowing about individuals in organisations.

The window is used not so much as to know others as much as a means to know oneself. During interpersonal development sessions, the Johari window is applied by asking a participant to choose about six adjectives that describe him/herself (Luft 1969). Peers do likewise and the selected adjectives are then plotted on the quadrants. Adjectives selected by the participant only are placed in the private knowing quadrant, adjectives selected by both the participant and his/her peers are placed in the common knowing quadrant, whilst adjectives selected by peers only are placed in the blind spot

²⁴ This is an abbreviated list for the purpose of giving some insight into the choice of words deployed by Luft and Ingham in the design of the Johari Model.

quadrant. Adjectives not selected by the participant or his peers are either not applicable or represent the potential for what can be.

	KNOWN TO SELF	NOT KNOWN TO SELF
KNOWN TO OTHERS	Known to self and others (Common knowing)	Not known to self (Blind spot)
NOT KNOWN TO OTHERS	Not known to others (Private knowing)	

Fig. 3. Johari Window

Johari Adjectives			
Able	Accepting	Adaptable	Bold
Brave	Calm	Caring	Cheerful
Clever	Complex	Confident	Dependable
Dignified	Energetic	Extroverted	Friendly
Giving	Happy	Helpful	Idealistic
Independent	Ingenious	Intelligent	Introverted
Kind	Knowledgeable	Logical	Loving

Fig. 4. List of Adjectives

As a metaphor for knowing, the cottage-pane window represents four frames of knowing/not knowing that influence interpersonal relations. The model is based on the assumption that relations with co-workers and seniors are beset by problems because individuals are unaware of how they are known and unknown by others, and to themselves. The weakness of this approach to knowing is that what can be known/unknown is predetermined. The adjectives are limited to positive qualities²⁵ and thereby limit the knowing/not knowing dynamic. It is not suitable as a tool for knowing about individuals, their lives and experiences, though it does provide a matrix about kinds of knowing, such as common knowing, individual knowing, blind spots, and not knowing.

²⁵ In recent times a version comprising negative qualities has been developed and is termed Nohari window.

The second example is the “Janus face” metaphor based on Roman mythology. In Roman mythology, Janus was the deity of entrances and exits, beginnings and endings. He is often depicted as a head with two faces (Janus Geminus/Bifrons), one looking forward and the other in the opposite direction, and sometimes, with four faces (Janus Quadrifons), each facing a different direction (Grant & Hazel 1994). As a metaphor for knowing, the faces represent different pieces of information that, when brought together, would enable one to know by merely placing opposite ends together to create a linear story from start to finish. It is useful for connecting the past and present to create an uninterrupted narrative, or for combining different branches of knowing if one intends to know the whole (assuming that one can know the whole), or to be aware that there is more than one perspective. This metaphor, however, is limiting to understand complexities of knowing people, because it does not account for how these various perspectives came to be. I argue that a mere narration of a person’s life from birth to death could still result in partial truths or not knowing. Although the biographies of famous persons like Princess Diana (Clayton & Craig 2001; Morton 1997), Marilyn Monroe (Churchwell 2004) and Evita Peron (Fraser & Navarro 1996), for example, combine various strands of their lives, they do not fill the gaps and enigmas that people are curious about, and what is written about them are subjective selections, perspectives, and interpretations, and do not allow one to claim definitive knowing from beginning to end.

The application of understanding metaphorical knowing in this study is to explore its use by participants to comprehend what kind of *knowing* is being expressed, as well as the possibility of theorising *teachers’ knowing* by means of metaphors.

Intuitive knowing. Malcolm (2002) draws a distinction between scientific and intuitive ways of knowing. The question he poses is: which of these two types of knowing is more persuasive? Though uncomfortable with scientific “numbers and codes” (Malcolm 2002:1), he experienced vocational questionnaires and knowledge tests as accurate and insightful. On other occasions, intuition referred to by other writers as *instinct* (Basden 2005), or as *sensing* (Jung 1971), “is the stuff of inspiration, revelation and connectivity. It is taken for granted as ‘natural’ in African culture and refined through ritual and dance. It is part of the life of all cultures” (Malcolm 2002:1). He

contends that despite the spirited acceptance of intuition, it is sometimes wrong. As a counter to scientific knowing, intuition, he believes, does not appear to be more powerful or less useful. From this point of view, science without intuition lacks lustre and exuberance and intuition sparks ideation, but science is needed to confirm them. Thus Malcolm (2002) argues for both kinds of knowing, as knowing is persuasive when both intuition and scientific knowing are combined. Following Malcolm's (2002) argument it may be concluded that knowing that stems from both science and intuition is far more persuasive, compelling, and exciting.

Intuitive knowing is important to know as a way of knowing, for it allowed me to keep this category in mind about whether intuition plays a strong role in how teachers come to know. Should that be the case, then it raises a methodological issue: how does one analyse data for intuitive knowing?

Imagination. Much has been written about imagination which is also referred to as creative thought (Sternberg 2003), lateral thinking (De Bono 1990) or breakthrough thinking (Perkins 2000). I do not wish here to reproduce the discussions, debates, theories, and concepts of creativity (see e.g. Buzan 2006; Clark 2002; De Bono 1995; Feldhusen 2006; Guy 1998; Kaufman 2006; Michalko 2001; Stein 1986; Weisberg 1986). What I intend, is to argue for imagination to be regarded as a form of knowing.

Einstein is reputed to have stated that imagination is more important than knowledge (Einstein 2005). The argument rests on the slippage that occurs in the use of the terms knowing and knowledge. One translation or interpretation of this statement is that imagination is seen as different to and from knowledge, and is, therefore, a kind of knowing. For Malcolm (2001), imagination resonates with his notion of intuition, for Basden (2005), with instinct, and for De Bono (1990), with lateral thinking. At a deeper level, differences to knowledge suggest the kinds of thinking that each would entail.

Imaginative knowing is distanced from analytical knowing in that it appears to evolve from mental processes not usually associated with thinking and learning. The story of how Einstein came to theorise mass and energy as $E=mc^2$ is well known (Bodanis 2001). His visualisation of travelling on a beam of light and returning to the spot where he began is purported to have given him the insight he required to formulate the theory of relativity, an imaginative insight in the absence of objective rationality

(Isaacson 2007). Similarly, the accidental invention of “Lifesaver” candy with its characteristic hole in the middle (Mingo 1994), and the mixing of silicone and boric acid on a whim which led to the creation of “Silly Putty” (Mingo 1994), exemplify the creative leaps, inexplicable intuition, and unpredictable knowing that symbolise imaginative knowing. Imagination, then, represents a kind of “not knowing”, a taking of risks without knowing the consequences.

There are debates, though, about the influence of culture on creative thinking. The dominant opinion of Nisbett (2004), Niu, Zhang & Yang (2006) and Weiner (2000), is that non-western civilisations value, promote, and foster creative thought. One can deduce that while there is a tolerance for thinking differently, for thinking in non-rational ways in some cultures, there are greater restrictions in cultural spaces influenced by western thought, like schools, where order, rationality, logic, coherence, and objectivity are valued.

Gendered knowing. Gendered knowing is a highly contested and controversial field (Tazi 2004:ix). Based on biological and social differences, the physical determination and social construction of gender has been assailed by feminist biologists and theorists (Bleier 1984; Butler 1990; Fausto-Sterling 1985; Haraway 1981; Hubbard 1983) who see sex-typing as a conspiracy by biological scientists deliberately subverting biomedical research, and as a means of subjugating females. Fausto-Sterling (1993) in particular has challenged the male-female binary with biomedical evidence of five sexes, whilst Butler (1990) has argued against a universal conception of woman, and Gilligan’s (1982) research has challenged the androcentric universalisation of moral development posited by Kohlberg (1984). The rejection of evidence of more than two sexes, of gender being a continuum²⁶ rather than a binary opposition, of cultural and social influences, has resulted in constructions of male and females in ways that advantage males and disadvantage females, and completely marginalising, not only females, but those who lie between the endpoints marked by male and female gendered forms. Females are constructed as child-bearing, motherly, soft, emotional, physically weak and intellectually inferior, whilst males are viewed as rational, reasonable, strong, intellectual patriarchs, and leaders.

²⁶ Conceptualising gender as a continuum includes queers, transgender and transsexuals.

These constructions have generated practices and theories that reproduce such beliefs and ideologies²⁷ and led to the emergence of knowing persons based on dominant notions of gender, that is, as either male or female such that knowing about an individual is overshadowed by stereotyping of gender and “abnormalising” of those who stray from gendered designations and parameters. Though theorists have challenged these conceptions about how females learn (Belenky *et al* 1986), problematised democratic classroom practices (Foertsch 2000), and analysed how females are “Othered”, and the possibilities for their academic success (Paechter 1998), these “dissident” theories have not had the desired impact on gender conceptions in schools.

In education, children’s academic performances, achievements, challenges, behaviour, experiences, work, and personality are studied and analysed on gendered lines (e.g. Askew & Ross 1988; Assié-Lumumba & Sutton 2004; Burchell 1995; Davies 1989; Gurian & Stevens 2006; Herr & Anderson 2003; Hicks 2005; Paechter 1998; Walkerdine 1989; Weiler 2003).

The body of literature for children as gendered subjects in schools reveals that children’s experiences in school are similar to the experiences of adult females. Girls are marginalised and “Othered” in schools, whilst the achievements of girls are seen as exceptions to rules. Marginalised girls grow into marginalised women, and the privileges boys enjoy at school, and at home, continue and develop into adulthood. Curriculum reform has still not had the desired effects of gender equity because the discursive nature of gender discourse cannot be challenged in schools, especially since most teachers reproduce existing gender relations in their classrooms. Furthermore, in social spaces outside and inside schools, individuals continue to be constituted and known as boys and girls, and all that such gendered categories signify.

Raced knowing. This section is narrowed to the beliefs, practices, and enactments of race and race identity in South Africa. By racialised knowing, I mean that individuals are constructed and construed on the basis of race classification and socially constructed notions attached to such categorisations (Bowker & Star 2002; Brieshke 1998). The

²⁷ This study relies on Barret’s (1991:167) definition of ideology, “they cluster around processes of mystification”. Mystification, a creative way to obfuscate the discernment of how truth is manufactured and manipulated, is done by “draw(ing) rigid boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not, between self and non-self, truth and falsity, sense and nonsense, reason and madness, central and marginal, surface and depth” (Eagleton 1983:133).

notion of race emerged from colonial encounters with the “Other” (Fanon 1967; Mamdani 2004, McLaren & Torres²⁸ 1999) and was justified by theorists and eminent personages identified by Gould (1981): Abraham Lincoln (1858) Charles Darwin (1871), and Paul Broca (1861) (see also Patel 2005 for an extensive discussion).

The consequences of racial classification were dire for the “Other”. Perceived as inferior mortals, they were denied freedom to pursue life, work and associations as they desired. These consequences were particularly prevalent within the context of Africa. Africa not only had races but tribes as well: “nonnatives are tagged as races, whereas natives are said to belong to tribes” (Mamdani 2004:4). By implication, races are superior non-indigenous people, whilst tribes are indigenous inferiors.

As a country in Africa, South Africa has a long history of racialised knowing, not as described by Mamdani (2004), but one, nevertheless, based on nefarious theories of *White* supremacy (Gould 1981; Said 1996) and spurious research of white genetic advantage and intelligence (Herrnstein & Murray 1994). Race has a currency in South Africa that is unique because it is the only country that made race a legal construct, a complete politicisation²⁹ of life with the ominous support of legalisation and laws hardened on statuette book surfaces.

Race has been a feature of South African social life since colonial times. Prior to 1948, people could be seen as being loosely stratified in terms of oppositional binaries: coloniser and colonised, European and native, master and servant, pure and mixed, and, civilised and uncivilised, with each of the first term associated with *White* and the second with *Black*. From 1948 onwards, these terms were replaced with a legalised classification according to skin colour which relegated persons to four groups according to skin colour, namely, *Black/African*, *Coloured*, *Indian*, and *White*, with a deliberate intent to ignore the complexities and oppressive nature of racial profiling (Carrim and Soudien 1999). Colour, a genetic endowment, and race, a social construction, were conflated by apartheid masters: the one implied the other. Persons, though not born into a race, were matched by government officials to one of the four pre-ordained colour groups mentioned previously.

²⁸ McLaren & Torres (1999) draw attention to evidence of “racism” in classical Greek and Roman feudal societies but contend that this was a different kind of racism and not connected to *White* superiority.

²⁹ By politicisation is meant the subjugation, regulation, surveillance, and punitive mechanisms to produce a particular kind of citizen, as interpreted from the works of Foucault (2003) and Agamben (1998).

When matching could not be done in the case of, say Japanese visitors to the country, then they were given “Honorary White”³⁰ status. Thus, racial identity was politicised by technologies of identifying, matching and categorising (see Bowker & Star 2002; Dubow 1995), and legitimised by a proliferation of laws that were aggressively implemented across the weft and warp of South Africa’s social fabric and determined how one’s social, political, and economic positions were constituted within the system.

Schools were also implicated in transmitting and interpreting racial politics to each generation to ensure the entrenchment and continuation of belief in apartheid racial ideology. The success of education as a strategy to inculcate apartheid ideology is palpable thirteen years after the fall of apartheid because educational discourse is still couched in race terms, as a perusal of research projects indicate (see e.g. Badat 1997; Dolby 2001a, 2001b, 2002; Vally & Dalamba 1999).

These have direct implications within the context of schooling. Schools in South Africa continue to be associated with racial classification. There are moves towards integration with both success (Amin 2004; Samuel 2002) and failures (Jansen, 1998) reported in educational institutions. Problems of youth, however, are still associated with race (Sekete, Shilubane & Moila 2001) and perceptions of race continue to reflect apartheid ideology (Vally & Dalamba 1999).

Questioning and Knowing. Lonergan (2003) explores the logic of questioning as a means of coming to know. Like Cunliffe (2005), he believes we are driven by a will to know everything. His thesis is that there are far more questions that can be asked than there are appropriate answers. Questioning, however, does direct one towards knowing as well as to knowing what one does not know. As a methodology, questioning can methodically and rationally result in knowing.

In education, questioning forms one of the most important approaches to learning and teaching (Criticos, Gultig & Stielau 2002), and Bloom’s (1964) taxonomy is widely known and used. Bloom’s (1964) taxonomy assists in classifying the kind of question, not the answer, although it purports to infer the content of answers from questions, in a very technical way. It may be useful as providing trigger words to produce a proliferation

³⁰ The category “Honorary White” was an arbitrary race classification prior to 1994 that enabled non-European visitors to South Africa to access privileges reserved for Whites without fear of breaking apartheid laws. There were no equivalent categories of Honorary Black, Honorary Coloured, or Honorary Indian.

of questions but has limited value for knowing about persons. Thus questioning is seen both as a mode of being and a methodology. In the quest to explore teachers' knowing, how questioning is deployed to mine information about students will be one of the foci of the analysis.

Perceptual knowing. Standard psychology textbooks present perception as the body's way of processing information retrieved via the senses (seeing, hearing, feeling, touching, tasting, moving) to produce knowing. Knowing is, within this understanding, dependent on brain functioning and skills, like perceptual constancy, figure-ground perception, spatial perception, visual discrimination, and part-whole perception (Edwards 1987). Based on Edward's (1987) interpretation, perceptual constancy is the ability to process distorted, symbolic, or representational information as real objects/persons. In other words, knowing reality can be deduced from representational forms through figure-ground, spatial, visual, and part-whole perceptions. Figure-ground perception is the ability to prioritise one's focus on either figure or ground by ignoring stimuli that distract from seeing what needs to be seen, that is, knowing what is important. Spatial perception is the recognition of the relationship of one's body or objects with reference to direction, orientation and environment, that is, knowing spatial orientation. Visual discrimination is the ability to read symbols (words) as distinct to similar symbols (cat as different to bat). Part-whole perception is related to Gestaltist ways of knowing and is the ability to know about the whole from one or more of its parts.

The identification of skills or abilities that have to be learnt contradicts psychological theories that the brain is an information processor. Perception is learnt behaviour, grounded by context, history, and geography, and is shaped by those with power to influence. In schools, perceptions can be "correct" or "incorrect". Teachers, for example, displace children's visual processing of lines and squiggles as lines and squiggles with languaged concepts like the letters of the alphabet, words or as representations of objects. Individuals have to replace what they **actually** see with a **learnt** interpretation of lines and squiggles as denoting universally accepted meaning.

At school children who do not perceive as teachers have taught them to perceive, risk being seen as being in need of remediation or being labelled "slow learners" or as having "learning problems". Perception is, therefore, not a natural biological

phenomenon. It is socially constructed through its biological structures and can be interpreted, by way of a Foucauldian (2003) perspective, as a universalising, normalising, and disciplinary regulation of the brain's processing of sensory information and ways of knowing.

Dynamic Knowing. In an endeavour to develop a philosophy of critical mathematics education, Skovsmose (1994) posits three types of knowing: mathematical, technological, and reflective. Here I have chosen to discuss the latter type only as the details of mathematical and technological knowing do not have a bearing for this study. Additionally, consideration is given to his descriptions of the nature of knowing.

Skovsmose's (1994) notion of reflective knowing arises out of a critical exploration for a critical mathematics education. It stands to reason then that a critical approach would demand self-introspection, reflexivity, and critique. This kind of intense looking to, and interrogation of, one's own practice, is how he defines reflective knowing. Knowing, in other words, emerges from making visible (critiquing) one's internal thinking so that a rethinking can occur. The content of one's knowing can, resultantly, be changed so that one can improve one's practice.

Reflection, from Skovsmose's (1994) perspective, is not done in isolation, in self-indulgent, self-serving ways, but as one of the main ways of inspiring improvement. He asserts that reflection does not just occur, it requires mediation and triggering through "points of entry" (Skovsmose 1994:118). I do not discuss these in the way Skovsmose does because of its deep connections to mathematics. Instead I do so in a generalised way with an interpretation of Skovsmose's (1994) notion of reflective practice: (i) assessing the **correctness** of what one does; (ii) assessing the **choices** one makes; (iii) considering the **reliability** of one's approach; (iv) considering the **appropriateness** of what one does; (v) **looking beyond** what one has done, and (vi) engaging in **meta-reflection**, i.e. reflecting on one's reflections. Reflection bolsters Skovsmose's (1994:196) argument, "that 'knowing' reveals an explosive nature", whilst knowledge is a "controlled concept". Knowing is, thus, not constrained by the strictures of hardened thought, but is dynamic in nature, open to review, and changeable.

Skovsmose's (1994) critically derived reflections on reflection, is challenged by Fendler's (2003) genealogical analysis of reflective practice. Tracing the historical roots

through the influences of Cartesian rationality (Nadler 1989), Dewey (1933), Schön (1983; 1987), and feminism (Diamond & Quinby 1988), she demonstrates the complexities of reflection, its multifaceted interpretations, and the immanence of power, through a critical reading. Fendler's analysis moves beyond what is, what constitutes, how to practice, classify, and gain inspiration, from reflection.

Fendler (2003) argues that Cartesian interpretation of reflection "rests on the assumption that self-awareness can generate valid knowledge" (2003: 17). She asserts that Dewey's motivation for promoting reflection for "self-discipline for purposes of social betterment" (2003:18) was a response to educational reform during the Progressive Era³¹ in the United States of America. Schön's reflective practice deviates from Cartesian rationality by encouraging practice-based reflection which was taken up by feminists (Diamond and Quinby 1988). Feminist theorists, Fendler posits, are contradictory in that they object to androcentric socialisation practices of reflection, whilst promoting reflexivity without due consideration to how reflexivity is itself influenced by oppressive forces. These ruminations on reflective practices are then viewed through Foucault's (1997) "governmentality" lens.

Governmentality (Foucault 1997) is a technology of the self, a kind of a self domination mechanism that regulates and monitors, and ensures that authority from an external source is able to exercise its power in and through internal thought mechanisms, and, in this way, invisibly influences individuals. Thus the issue raised by Fendler (2003) is about questioning the possibility of knowing for oneself, "(B)ecause it is impossible to guarantee an uncompromised or unsocialised point of view" (2003:21).

Despite Fendler's (2003) critique of reflection, Skovsmose's (1994) insight about the dynamic nature of knowing holds, irrespective of how that knowing is influenced. In this study both the dynamic quality of reflection (Skovsmose 1994) and the (im)possibility of self reflection (Fendler 2003) was factored into the analysis and synthesis of data.

Rumsfeld's Creed. On the 12 February 2003, the then American Secretary of State, Donald Rumsfeld, justified the continuation of war in Iraq, despite not being

³¹ The Progressive Era refers to the period from the 1890s to the 1920s. It was marked by fierce opposition to corruption and waste.

able to produce evidence of weapons of mass destruction:

Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don't know we don't know.

In an insightful analysis of what he terms “The Rumsfeld Creed”, Christopher Norris (2004) unpacks the political aims and meaning that Rumsfeld intended the American public to imbibe and an interpretation that justifies the British press' vitriolic response to Rumsfeld's “Gobbledegook” (Steyn 2003). Norris takes issue with “known knowns” as despite its common-sense appeal, the history of ideas is replete with examples of rejected and outdated knowns (Kuhn 1962). The present day example of vilifying butter in favour of margarine and the reversal of that stance, is testimony that “known knowns” are sometimes questionable and not always reliable. Norris describes it as “the capacity for self-deception, manufactured consent, or the will to believe” (2004:781) with specific reference to Rumsfeld's ground motive for using the phrase.

“Known unknowns” refers to the awareness of the possibility that there are things still to be known, that what one knows is incomplete. Rumsfeld, of course, meant that we may never know the whereabouts of the weapons of mass destruction and, therefore, it is not important to consider the existence of weapons of mass destruction. According to Norris, this position is “much closer to the anti-realist position, namely that truth is epistemically constrained” (2004:783). In other words, that truth is knowledge-dependent and without knowledge, truth is not verifiable.

The third utterance, “unknowns unknowns” refers to the many, many things that we cannot possibly know, for example, when and if the Big Bang³² took place, and that a confession of not knowing about not knowing signals “epistemic humility” (Norris 2004:783).

Despite Norris' sharp critique, Rumsfeld's Creed provides three categories

³² The cosmological model that explains the origins of the Universe as arising from a massive explosion.

discernible from his statement with Norris' interpretation in brackets: *known knowns* (will to believe); *known unknowns* (epistemically constrained truth) and *unknown unknowns* (due epistemic humility). When applied to the field of education, for example, Fenstermacher's (1994) review of research in teaching, it becomes possible to see that it deals primarily with "known knowns" and, more importantly, with known knowers, that is, researchers and teachers. The interesting aspect of this study is the mediation of known knowers' knowing (teachers) with unknown knowers' knowing (students).

Technologies of knowing in education

In this section I review a technology amongst many available to teachers in resource-rich contexts to know about how students learn and think about their personalities and preference, their potential, and vocational choices. Whilst technologies like learning styles inventory (Butler 1986; Carbo, Dunn & Dunn 1986), type indicators (Gordon 1979, Keirse & Bates 1984, Myers & Myers 1984), individualised education programmes (Feldhusen & Treffinger 1985; Schlemmer 1987), multiple intelligence approaches (Armstrong 1993; Gardner 1983), right and left mode techniques (McCarthy 1987), and thinking styles modality (Barbe 1985), are not available at the school I conducted research for this study, it seems prudent to review literature about the possibilities, and limitations within these possibilities, to know students.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The Myers-Briggs³³ Type Indicator is a personality identification tool based on Jung's (1971) study of people's behaviour. Jung (1971) discerned that people's personalities and preferences were predictable from their mental processing patterns. Observations over many years yielded two basic patterns of mental processing: perceiving and judging (Jung 1971). Perceiving, from Jung's perspective, is the ability to know from sense data, and judging from evaluating sense data. His idea about perception and judging is yet another set of alternatives to Dooyeweerd's (1997) analytic and instinctive ways of knowing. Where Jung's differs from Dooyeweerd (1997) is that he developed notions of pairs of opposite kinds of perception and judging, viz. the former kinds are about opposite **ways of finding out, namely**, extraverted and introverted intuition, and extraverted and introverted sensing whilst the former are opposite **ways of**

³³ Also known as MBTI

deciding, referred to as extraverted and introverted feeling and extraverted and introverted thinking. Through these ways of finding out and ways of deciding, sixteen personality types can be identified.

The assumptions underpinning typing is that by revealing how one knows and how one judges, one can acquire skills to change one's type or strengthen an existing type. In schools, it implies that teachers may have sixteen different types (or more, since the instrument ignores hybrids and more than two combinations) requiring individualised teaching and learning approaches. The usefulness of the MBTI in this study is not its potential for teaching and learning, but rather how it can be appropriated to extend our understanding of knowing. To that end, knowing can be seen as processes of thinking, feeling, sensing, and judging, and in the inquiry at hand, to explore how teachers' express their ways of finding out and deciding, not as a means to identify personality types, as that would run counter to the validity valued in this study. To state it explicitly, to work within the parameters guided by working against generalisation and typecasting of the research participants.

Whole brain learning. Knowing, I have stated earlier, is closely linked to learning. One of the ways of teaching to increase learning is through the theory of whole-brain learning. This theory is underpinned by neuropsychological understandings of the brain and the way learning may be optimised by exploiting its structures and functions (Bandler 1985; Caine & Caine 1991; Hart 1983; Springer & Deutch 1985). Whole-brain learning is operationalised through the deployment of various inventories that indicate learning preferences, learning styles, personality types, brain dominance, intelligence (IQ), emotional (EQ) and social (SQ) quotients, school readiness, reading levels, and perception, to name a few. From this perspective, teachers come to know and understand their students as learning individuals.

Ellison (1993), an American proponent of whole brain learning, discusses in depth how these technologies can be deployed in the classroom. The curriculum is designed thematically, multiple age groups and activities take place simultaneously, the classroom is arranged for group work and individual learning with both soft and hard furnishings, and with an enormous range of resources and equipment. Parents play a leading role in school affairs and teachers arrange consultations with parents and

children. Through instruments based on brain studies, Ellison (1993) comes to know how learners think and learn, and she can, ostensibly, identify their personality traits, their interests, and preferences. Her approach can be regarded as one process of getting to know learners in a psycho-technological way.

This approach provides a contrast to South African contexts in the absence of such technology and classroom arrangements. Here, in most instances, the numbers of students in classrooms are large, enrollment is age- and stage-based, and pastoral care demands on teachers are enormous due to the range of socio-economic problems faced by families. It is unlikely that the school being researched in this study is influenced by whole-brain learning theories and technologies to teaching, learning, or knowing students. A precluding factor is the cost of the approach, the training required to engage with the whole-brain approach, and the cost of deploying some inventories which have to be conducted by licensed individuals such as psychologists or counsellors. Ultimately, these technologies offer not a definitive knowing of students as individuals, but an interpretation of students as learning individuals who fit a supposedly predictable pattern of thinking. Consequently, in this study, psycho-technological approaches have limited application in South African schools in general and in this study in particular, as it does not inform the analysis of *teachers' knowing* about students other than as learning beings.

Conclusion

In this review of literature some pragmatic choices have been made to delineate knowing and knowledge, to explore the nature of paradigmatic knowing, and how paradigms can be likened to luminol,³⁴ in order to know how and what we know and finally, texts and approaches have been interrogated to provide a working notion of knowing. Based on these discussions, the following about knowing has been deduced about the differences between knowing and knowledge, and about the kinds and elements of knowing that frame this study (see also Fig. 5 for a summary concept map of knowing).

³⁴ Forensic investigators use luminol, a specially created compound which reacts with haemoglobin to produce luminescence. When sprayed on surfaces, it enables investigators, in the absence of light, to see blood, which has been wiped away, washed, or painted over, and is thus not visible in daylight conditions. Similarly, paradigms reveal theoretically how we read the world.

First, as a **notion** distinct from knowledge, knowing is an activity of the mind (Centore 2005; Dooyeweerd 1997; Locke 2003) akin to pre-knowledge notions of primordial thinking (Tekippe 1998), and intuition (Malcolm 2002), is dynamic (Skovsmose 1994), and is related to personal experiences (New Elizabethan Dictionary n.d.). Second, knowing is **characterised** by dynamism (Skovsmose 1994), uncertainty, tentativeness, chance (Steup 2002), and unpredictability. Third, knowing **produces** subjugation, marginalisation, and domination (Kincheloe 1991), hegemony (Gramsci 1977) truth, norms, discipline, and regulation (Foucault 1983), and imaginative insights (Malcolm 2002). Fourth, **paradigmatically**, knowing can be absolute, multidimensional, mediated, contested, or relative. Fifth, knowing is influenced by “**Othering**” in terms of gender and race and, ostensibly, social categories not discussed here. Sixth, knowing can be made **visible** through the use of metaphors. Seventh, knowing can be **unknowable**. Finally, knowing is intricately associated with, is indistinct from, and conflated with, knowledge (Cunliffe 2005), and essential for the **building of knowledge** (Centore 2005).

KNOWING	CONCEPTUAL DESCRIPTIONS
Notions	Distinct from knowledge An activity of the mind A form of primordial thinking Linked to personal experiences and intuition Can be multidimensional, mediated, contested or relative Can happen by chance or luck
Characteristics	Dynamic Uncertain, tentative Unpredictable Changeable / Open to review
Produces	Subjugation, marginalisation and domination Hegemony Truth, norms, discipline and regulation Imaginative insights Reflections Othering (race, gender) Knowledge Individual knowing / Private knowing Common knowing / Known knowns Knowing self
Possibilities	Made visible by metaphors Will to know everything Potential knowing Known unknowns
Limitations	Unknowable / Unknown unknowns Blind spots Conflated with knowledge Alignment with paradigmatic orientation

Fig. 5. Knowing: A Conceptual Map

The conceptual map, an exegesis of knowing, was deployed in multiple ways to see connections between *teachers' knowing* and the literature, to refute and challenge the literature, to extend the conceptions of knowing through an explication of *teachers' knowing*, and to carve out a nuanced, rigorous theorisation of the nature of *teachers' knowing*. I begin the process in the next chapter which details the methodological orientation (knowing) of this study and narrate how data was produced at Amethyst Secondary School.

CHAPTER 3

A Way of Knowing: Blurred Boundaries³⁵

Introduction

This chapter is the second of three foundational knowings which are crucial for comprehending this study. It is the story of the research relationships that influenced data production based on ethnographic traditions. These traditions were used to derive a critical understanding of how and what teachers' know about the students they teach.

Some choices for data production at the outset of this study were survey questionnaires and interviewing teachers from a select number of schools. From a critical perspective, survey questionnaires with roots in positivistic traditions result in ahistorical analysis, producing grand theories of knowing, whilst interviews with a cross-sectional sample of teachers could eventuate in broad-spectrum accounts that conflate contextual peculiarities. The task, it transpired, was to deploy an approach that embraced sociopolitical and cultural dimensions. I surmised thus that a single site, in-depth critical ethnography would avoid apolitical, ahistorical, and generalised analysis of *teachers' knowing*.

To acquire data to realise the above-mentioned goals, I began with an understanding that the production of data is an expression of power. The researcher, as the architect (of data production) and builder (of theory), wields considerable influence in *how* and *what* data are produced. Furthermore, within a critical project, the concern for social iniquities and the theoretical explanations of power are to be made explicit, engaged with and, in the data production space, neutralised (Carspecken 1996). It is easier, however, to consider neutralisation than it is to do it. Neutralisation demands sensitivity and consciousness, and more importantly, viable strategies on the part of the researcher to account for differences between the participants and the researcher in terms of age, ability, status, education, gender, race, class, culture, religion, language spoken, and worldviews. The aforementioned are some aspects of power subsumed in research

³⁵ An abbreviated version of this chapter, (see Amin 2007), was presented at the 4th Malaysian Qualitative Research Conference (QRAM), University of Malaya on September 4, 2007.

relationships which are made transparent in critical works. These aspects of power are discussed in forthcoming sections of this chapter.

This chapter moves from a general discussion of ethnography, to a narrowed explanation of critical ethnography in education and, finally, to its specific application in this study. Firstly, various ethnographic approaches, particularly in terms of how people are studied, how texts are produced, and the reflections that accompany these two processes, are explicated. This is followed by locating critical ethnographic roots in education and its influence on the study at hand. The subsequent section is a narration of the data production story, detailing the various challenges that shaped the inquiry and yielded the data that it did. The chapter concludes with a reflective account of using my biography as a data generation tool.

Ethnographic approaches to knowing

This section provides the theoretical background of the methodology deployed and makes explicit the researcher stance in this study. The discussion is restricted to the role of the researcher as ethnographer from various subject positions emerging in studies in recent years.

Ethnography encompasses a cornucopia of meanings from “traditional and emerging traditions” (Koro-Ljungberg & Greckhamer 2005:287) ranging from a collective term for qualitative work (see e.g. Babbie 2002; Bogdan & Biklen 1998) to a specific method of anthropological research, namely, prolonged interaction and on-site presence in the research context to conceiving it as “an intensive case study” (Cunningham 1997:402). In this study, ethnography has been conceptualised as critical qualitative research in the anthropological tradition. Since much has already been written about ethnographic approaches to research, I will not go into debates about the paradigm wars between qualitative and quantitative approaches (see e.g. Brunkhorst 1996; Guba 1990, Weiler 1991), the contested field of feminist ethnography (see Reinharz 1992; Visweswaran 1997), the proliferation of ethnographic genres (Boyle 1994; Koro-Ljungberg & Greckhamer 2005), and a “critique of typification” by Abu-Lughod (1993:xvi). Historical accounts have already been dealt with by Yon (2003), for example, who provides a critical overview of the history of educational ethnography. His account

includes the formative years when ethnography was constructed as objective observation of exotic others, to the sixties when observing own cultures were in vogue. This period, Yon explains, was followed by the seventies courtship with Marxism and structuralism and emerging critiques of schooling. In the decades that followed, culture itself came under scrutiny and schools were researched to expose the ways in which they were culpable for cultural and economic reproduction that mimicked a wider social order steeped in deep historical practices and received as a natural way of the world. Gender, race, and class were key constructs that were interrogated and critical ethnographic studies and feminist ethnographies emerged as counters to positivistic conceptions of qualitative research. Yon concludes that the growth of ethnography has been accompanied with a proliferation of “multidisciplinary approaches” that view schools “as sites for addressing concerns with differentiation and discrimination based on class, race and gender” (Yon 2003:423). Hammersley (1992:11) also notes that ethnography has “moved from a marginal position in many social science disciplines towards a much more central place”. However, Culyba, Heimer, and Petty’s (2004) counter-claims contest contentions about widespread acceptance. They suggest that the “ethnographic turn” has to do with the emergence of more journals specialising in ethnography rather than more publications in existing journals, with a concomitant shifting of debates from differences between qualitative and quantitative research to “inside the boundaries” (Culyba *et al* 2004:365) of qualitative studies. So what could one construe as constituting “inside the boundaries” of ethnography? Taylor (2002:1-2) suggests the following:

Researchers set out to study people and aspects of their lives and social worlds and to produce a text. The text aims to be nuanced and non-reductive, incorporating change and process without resorting to simplistic aetiological models and thirdly, that the researchers constantly locate their work within the cross-currents of ongoing debates about ethnography and qualitative research.

If one follows Taylor’s argument, then three kinds of activities characterise ethnography: studying people, producing a text, and reflecting critically (on the twin processes of studying people and producing a text). I will now turn to these three

characteristics via descriptions offered in literature, before I discuss paradigmatic influences of critical theory on the ethnographic approach deployed in this study.

How ethnography is deployed depends on how ethnography is conceived. Ethnography has been described in various ways, notably as “naturalistic inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln 2003b; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995; Lincoln & Guba 1985), “ways of life” (Denzin 2002), “human activities” (Baszanger & Dodier 1997), “human experience” (Willis & Trondman 2000), “participant observation” (Bourgois 2002; Denzin & Lincoln 2003b; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995) and “insider accounts” (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995).

Each of these descriptors can be linked to a particular view of participants in an ethnographic project, as well as embodying validity/ethical constructs. My interpretation is a discussion of these rhetorical stances which I pair in the discussion that follows. I consider the pairs to be similar paradigmatically and methodologically.

“Naturalistic inquiry” accepts the social order as a given, with people leading their lives as nature intended. Similarly, “ways of life” signal discursive social formations, markedly different to westernised ways of life, which need to be studied. Participants are often viewed as representing a homogeneous group of individuals who could be traditional, indigenous, native, or exotic. Consequently, the agenda of research is to observe (the *gaze*³⁶ of feminist writings) their activities, habits, and rituals very closely in the so-called natural setting. Individuals in these settings are objects of observation and, it is believed, an astute ethnographer can locate the *truth* that exists out there, a notion critiqued by Lincoln & Guba (2000). By contrast, critique aligned to positivistic views of rationality, is often limited to technicalities of research (validity), not of the claims of *neutrality* by the researcher. The most vociferous critique of naturalistic inquiry and ways of life emanate from persons external to the studies, and sometimes from participants, long after the studies have been completed and published. The resulting texts of both the above-mentioned modes are descriptive accounts of social groups. Descriptions, however, mask the epistemic violence inherent in such accounts as hidden within is “an interpretation rather than an objective description” (Taylor 2002:2).

³⁶ See, for example, Ang (2001), hooks (2001) and Weedon (1997).

The consequence of a *scientific approach* to ethnography is that interpretations are received as authentic accounts.

The second pair, “human activities/experiences”, is predicated on ethnography as a study concerned with humans, limited to human activities and experiences, resting on the idea that by studying *some humans* we may come to universal understandings of *being* human. The researcher is a by-stander or participant-as-observer, and the human subjects are objects of observations. The problems that arise are related to **who** are regarded as humans and **what** are regarded as activities or experiences. Resistances to these approaches are most discernible in feminist writings, questioning whether males can represent female points of views, experiences, feelings, and other aspects of women’s lives (see e.g. Chatterjee 2002; Staudt 2002). Feminists (Ang 2001; Diamond & Quinby 1988; hooks 2001) also draw attention to the researcher and how his (most ethnographers being male) presence, race, class, and culture influence the data that is produced. In other words, the methods and text are invalidated by feminists due to an absence of reflexivity.

The reflexivity vacuum, in a sense, was a catalyst for a shift from rational empiricism to critical subjectivism in ethnographic studies, which is more closely aligned to emergent forms of validity³⁷. The shift from ethnographer as objective onlooker to participant is exemplified by the rhetoric of the third pair, “participant observation” and “insider accounts”. The ethnographer does not position herself as neutral; instead she constructs herself as a participant of the research project. In other words, she embeds herself in the context and acquires the habits of those being studied. For example, in an interpretivist paradigm, insiders are participants and their accounts *and* researchers’ accounts are considered in the analysis. The text is a negotiation between these partners. In a critical paradigm, though, questions are about who is an “insider” and whether an ethnographer can be an “insider”. For instance, can an outsider become an insider by being embedded in the context for a prolonged period, or is “insiderness” about an acquired mentality? I will return to this issue later when I invoke my own role as an insider. The participant/insider ethnographer’s text, from a critical perspective, exteriorises marginals, oppressions and silences. Thus, the power relationship of both

³⁷ See Lincoln & Guba (2003:278-281) for a discussion on validity as authenticity, resistance, poststructural transgression, and ethical relationships. Lather (1993) has also introduced a range of different kinds of validity such as voluptuous validity, ironic validity, and rhizomatic validity.

insiders' and researchers' roles are explored and critiqued. From a postmodern stance, all accounts have relativistic value, resulting in multiple texts that are, in a sense, multiple explorations of truth.

There is yet another interpretation of "insider accounts": a source from the context being studied who provides *inside information* that a researcher may not be able to access, or when observations will not yield the information required. The reliance on an "insider" can be problematic, particularly if the information given is what most participants are reluctant or unlikely to reveal to the outsider (researcher). The co-option of an insider to provide privileged information can be viewed by other participants as disloyalty and betrayal³⁸. The insider is, to state it differently, an "informant". Insiders and informants are paradigmatically asynchronous. Insiders are members, or accepted as members, of the culture/social group being studied, whilst an informant provides information covertly. More important than participants' perceptions of a member's covert/overt relationship with a researcher, is the researcher's constitution of the relationship. Critical ethnographers are more likely to deploy "insiders" knowledge to uncover oppressions, whilst positivistic approaches are more likely to deploy "informants" to triangulate participants' claims for its *truth* value.

It is almost impossible to stabilise the foregoing as "forensic truths"³⁹ (Posel 2004:20) about ethnography. The arguments I make face challenges from a non-essentialised stance. The point I want to stress is that the naming of an approach may be interrogated for its rhetorical value, but it is the practices of research, namely, working in the field, interpreting, analysing, and theorising data that will ultimately indicate how the research should be validated: as announced by the researcher, as experienced by participants, or as interpreted by readers. In the next section I present a brief account of critical ethnography, followed by how contextual forces at Amethyst shaped the data production process.

³⁸ Recently, autoethnography, the study of oneself, has emerged (see Ellis 2004; Parsons 2004). One may consider autoethnography as an extreme expression of "insider" research. Researching oneself, however, does not erase the problems related to betrayal, as writing about one's family, for example, is equally fraught with challenges.

³⁹ Forensic truth is one of four different types of truth regimes proposed by Deborah Posel (2004:20-21). The other three are personal or narrative truth, social truth, and healing truth.

Critical ethnography in education: politicised knowing

There is a plethora of opinions on what constitutes critical ethnography in education. Anderson (1989) considers it to be a move away from quantitative towards qualitative methods, distinctly political in nature, with an interest in challenging grand theories, explaining both oppression and agency, and embracing two forms of critique: of the researcher (critical reflexivity) and ideology (hegemony). Quantz (1992) is of the opinion that critical ethnography eludes definition and is best understood when it is placed “within a discourse” (Quantz 1992:448-449):

Critical ethnography is one form of an empirical project associated with critical discourse, a form in which a researcher utilizing field methods that place the researcher on-site attempts to re-present the “culture,” the “consciousness,” or the “lived experiences” of people living in asymmetrical power relations. As a “project,” critical ethnography is recognized as having conscious political intentions that are oriented toward emancipatory and democratic goals. What is key to this approach is that for ethnography to be considered “critical” it should participate in a larger “critical” dialogue rather than follow any particular set of methods or research techniques.

Quantz’s (1992) position, reiterated by Kincheloe and McLaren (2003:445), is one that meshes methodology and theory, creating a cross-hatched, integrated grounding for the study. He considers the production of data to go beyond techniques because the way data is produced in critical ethnographies is through its connection to critical theory. A critical stance guards against presenting research as *expert* accounts, is sensitive to power circulations (particularly in how the presence of the ethnographer produces data), problematises notions of informed consent and voice, extrapolates *site* beyond geographic boundaries, and deploys rearticulated validity constructs (Anderson 1989; Lecompte 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren 2003; Lather 1993; Quantz 1992).

Criticalists are also concerned about relationships with, respect given to, and representation of participants in research. Researchers are expected to consider “how one’s “subjects” are constructed in the act of research, who the research is actually for, the role of the institution one is studying in the larger society, what the larger society looks like” (Apple 1986:5), before, during, and after the study is concluded. In critical

ethnographic approaches, the *rule* for data production is that it is theory driven and theory, likewise, is inscribed in methods, analysis, and synthesis. Rather than discussing the issues raised in this section, I situate the discussion in the narrative of how critical ethnography was deployed in this study, and present a textured account of my experiences and reflections as a critical ethnographer.

Critical ethnography: researching teachers' knowing

In this section I trace the evolution of ethnographic data production techniques from its *ivory tower* foundations to its *glass house* deployment as it occurred in this study. Ivory tower refers to the anthropological roots of ethnography, and glass house resonates with the opening up of the researcher's life to the scrutiny of the participants. The move from traditional methods to contingent methods in this study is scrutinised within a terrain that questioned the power, position, privilege, and authority of the ethnographic researcher.

Based on ethnographic approaches, students and teachers were requested to keep reflective journals, lessons were to be videotaped, and conversations with participants were scheduled every week. At this site, however, my attempts to co-produce data were hampered by mistrust and suspicion. Teachers were reluctant to let me into their classrooms, reflective journals were not kept, and weekly conversations did not materialise. These challenges forced me to rethink my presence at Amethyst: I could not rely on authoritative power to demand participation in the ways that I desired. The respect for participants' rights were expressed in respecting their decision to rescind the request to keep reflective journals, refusing classroom observations, and replacing them with conversations about my life experiences, critical incidents, family culture, and upbringing to generate data. The unconventional use of my biography as a research instrument was not an integral part of the study design; it was a life raft to keep the study alive, an innovation compelled by contextual circumstances. I narrate how I undertook this study, what made it possible for me to access teacher and student *knowing*, and to be privy to students' and teachers' personal experiences, candidly shared with me. These discussions are divided into three segments: forging research relationships, producing data, and producing *knowing*. The discussion begins with the first-mentioned segment.

Forging research relationships

In this section I recount my initial visits to Amethyst and relationships I forged, first with the head of the school, then with teachers, and finally with students.

Negotiating access. At the initial visit the Principal of Amethyst Secondary school welcomed me warmly. I was treated to tea and we spoke at length about the school, the political, social, and educational changes in the country, and the many challenges the school faced. The most pressing challenge, according to the Principal, was keeping the school functioning despite inadequate funds. The school's budgeted expenses each month exceeded income. Consequently, at this site, there was always a shortage of paper for printing worksheets, assignments, and tests. Fused light-bulbs and broken windows in many classes were not replaced, maintenance staff had been reduced, and faulty electrical connections were not repaired. Furthermore, I learnt that the school was vandalised frequently. The most pressing challenge I faced was convincing the Principal that his school was worthy of study, that the study was not an evaluation of the school and of the actors therein, and that the integrity and dignity of the institution and participants would not be compromised. To that end I provided a detailed outline of the study objectives, the methods of data production, and how participants would be involved. Further, I gave my word that the research process would not derail the school's organisation and functioning, or interrupt/disrupt teaching and learning. I undertook to allow the context to determine when and how to produce data and not to impose my research agenda/schedule on the school. The Principal indicated his support for the project, contingent on obtaining the Department of Education's approval, and teachers and students' consent.

Meeting Teachers. Following the amicable meeting with the school Principal I took steps to satisfy the requirements to research schools. Permission was sought from the North Durban Regional Office. As soon as the regional office granted permission in writing (see appendix B), permission was sought from the school governing body (SGB). The Principal informed me verbally that the research project had been approved. This was followed by meeting separately with members of staff and students to outline details of the study so that teachers and students could make decisions regarding their participation in the project. I planned to study one class of Grade Eight students. Taking

cues from various writers (Emerson *et al* 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson 1997; Anderson 1990; McNeill 1990), I withheld crucial details of the study as “awareness of the exact focus of your study could change people’s behaviour in the setting’ (Anderson 1990:154). Instead of revealing that the phenomenon under investigation was the relationship between *teachers’ knowing* of students and students’ knowing of themselves, I spoke generally about understanding teacher-student interactions and focused instead on the methods of producing data. The concealment⁴⁰ of the exact focus was a decision that would result in negative consequences, impeding the progress of the study, but more of that later.

At the first meeting with teachers convened by the Principal during tea break, I introduced myself and gave the staff details of my research background and study interests. It was apparent from the comments made that they were relieved that I was a university student and not someone employed in the state’s education sector. I outlined the research project, the methods to be used, how data would be produced, and who would have access to data. Teachers raised questions about students acting up for the video-recordings and inquired about my reasons for researching Grade Eight students. It was explained that the first few video-tapings would be dummy runs to allow students to experience being recorded, and that prolonged exposure would reduce tendencies *to perform* for the camera as students become accustomed to being taped. I accounted for my interest in Grade Eight students as they were new to a high school environment and there were thus fewer opportunities to be influenced by prior knowledge of students. I also outlined the nature of the relationship: that decisions would be jointly taken, that anyone could refuse to participate at any stage of the research process, that participants could veto the use of data, and that I was the chief beneficiary of the relationship. A second meeting was scheduled for the next day.

Selecting the Student Cohort. At the second meeting I asked for assistance in choosing one of the three Grade Eight classes to research. I opted for the class they recommended, Grade Eight A. It became apparent to me later, that students at Amethyst

⁴⁰ Herrera (1999:339-340) questions the ethics of covert research and suggests that the choice between open and covert can only be the former as those opting for the latter “don’t have to conduct the study at all”. I plead my case on grounds that concealment was not a pervasive element of this study.

were graded and Grade Eight A represented the *best* of the Grade Eight classes. This was an indication that there was still some concern about being evaluated, and I realised that I had not managed to assuage their fears of being surveilled. Eight teachers who agreed to participate in the study (see appendix G for biographical details), invited me into their classrooms and gave me permission to observe them teaching “at any time”. They also agreed to keep journals and to be interviewed. Although the Principal spoke highly of his staff and praised their commitment and dedication, I was surprised that there was neither reservation about participation, nor were there objections to the study. I was to learn, subsequently, that acquiescence at the outset is no guarantee of cooperation throughout the period of inquiry. Resistance can emerge at any stage and in unexpected ways.

Meeting Students. The Deputy Principal introduced me to the Grade Eight A students. At this initial meeting, I spoke about my research project and the methods of data production – very similar to the details given to teachers. Students asked me questions about what I would do with the data, who would have access to data, and why I was engaged in research. They wanted to know what I would do if I observed students taking drugs, smoking, and stealing. My promise to learners was to conduct research, and not to be a spy for teachers and managers, to not report any type of misbehaviour I observed, excepting for rape and murder. Whilst some students were very excited about being photographed and video-taped, others indicated that they were shy. They asked many questions about doctoral studies. Many students appeared not to understand how one could get a doctorate in education (as opposed to their familiarity with doctors in the medical field). I addressed all questions raised, but as much as I tried to explain the voluntary nature of the research project, most students viewed it as obligatory, evident from the many questions about how participation would affect their grades. Thus, it was appropriate that I informed parents, via a letter, about my study (see appendix E) and sought their consent for their children to participate. Parents did exercise discretion with five families refusing permission for their offspring to participate in the research project. The decision not to participate was overturned by all five families over a period of six weeks. Eventually, fourteen students would actually participate in the study (see appendix H for a list of student participants with some biographical details).

The research project was formalised with a written undertaking of my role and obligations and signed consent to participate by teachers and by parents of students (see appendices D & E). Written consent did not mean a smooth ride on the data production rollercoaster. The ride would begin slowly, jerking to and fro for a while, before picking up momentum near the journey's end.

Producing data

In this section I use the example of Flick's (1999) conception of data production to illustrate the tensions that emerge in a setting that can be regarded as unstable. By "unstable" I mean that Amethyst Secondary School exemplifies a context that faces multiple challenges in terms of changing student profiles and historical iniquities that have not been addressed, the likes of which are presented in detail in chapter four. The particular focus here is the approach I pursued to produce data that in a sense matched Flick's version, and the manner in which the approach was resisted by the study participants, forcing me to adopt a flexible mindset to undermine my assumptions about participants in this project.

According to Uwe Flick (1999:142) data is produced in three phases,

Descriptive observation, at the beginning, which serves to provide the researcher with an orientation to the field under study ... used to grasp the complexity of the field.

Focused observation, in which the perspective increasingly narrows on those processes and problems which are essential for the research question;

Selective observation, towards the end of data collection... focused on finding further evidence and examples for the types and processes found in the second step. (emphasis added)

Flick's three-phase description explicates the functions of the researcher. There is a neat progression from the general to the specific, a methodical, orderly and linear process. Positioned exclusively from a researcher perspective, it does not take into account the power, resistance, and agency of participants. In this study, for example, the path was not

quite methodical and orderly. Locks and blocks of various kinds disturbed the linear progression. Misconceptions, mistrust, and suspicion dogged the data production journey. I tried to understand the reasons for participants' reticence. Now, with the wisdom of hindsight, I understand it to be about how the school community conceived the different phases of data production. The orientation phase was generally accepted as innocuous observations of public spaces by participants and as intrusions by some non-participants. Focused observation took on the ominous form of an invasion, an unwanted trespass into the realm of the private by most participants. The final phase of selective observation only became possible when relationships with participants were nurtured to produce data. A reassessment of Flick's tri-phasal data production plan eventuated in a re-conceptualisation and renaming of the production plan phases from participant perspectives as follows, the innocuous phase, the invasive phase and the reciprocity phase.

The innocuous phase. The initial phase, which resonates with Carspecken's (1996:48) "passive observation" phase, was regarded as innocuous by participants, because I focused on becoming acquainted with the arrangement of the school. On occasion, I spoke to teachers and students, perused books in the library and archival material. Non-participating students also made an effort to get acquainted with me. They were curious and asked many questions about what I was doing at Amethyst. Many were concerned that I was investigating students' involvement in criminal activities. Three messages were sent by persons (who remain unknown) via Grade Eight students that I keep away from some sections of the school, particularly the far end of the playing field and the banks that lead to tin-and-board⁴¹ homes. Parts of the school fence had holes through which students could come and go without being detected by staff. I kept away from the turf claimed by these unknown persons. I opted not to report to members of the school staff the warnings I received as it would be *proof* that I was not keeping my promises about my roles as researcher, that is, not to be a spy. Apart from the warnings to keep away from some areas, this innocuous phase was trouble-free. It was trouble-free for the simple reason that the data was mainly about the structures, ethos, and school statistics.

⁴¹ In chapter four, I provide descriptions and explanations about students' residences.

My primary aims during this phase were twofold: to be visible and to be accepted so that I would cease to be a stranger and merge into the horizon of familiarity and become an “insider”, and secondly, to build a thick “primary record” (Carspecken 1996:41). This approach, however, had unexpected repercussions for the next phase of the research inquiry. Paradoxically, I did not disappear into the realm of the visible and the known. I actually became more conspicuous. As I watched and made notes, teachers and students were watching me, imagining and speculating: who I was, what I was doing at the school, where I came from and where I went at the end of the school day. I was being constructed and construed in ways that would lead to mistrust and suspicion. In the next phase identifying the source of misconceptions would consume my energy and undoing misconceptions and suspicions would deplete time earmarked for the research project. A phase that was innocuous for participants turned out to be “hazardous” for the researcher in the next stage.

The first phase, which lasted about a month (twenty school days) provided me with ample information to consider narrowing my focus to the questions framed for the inquiry.

The invasive phase. Stepping into the classroom, after weeks of hovering outside, was a nervous step for both sets of participants and myself. It became clear, almost immediately, that the focused observation phase was being perceived as invasive by participants. Furthermore, the perceptions students and teachers formed of me were not only consolidated, but other configurations augmented their notions of both research and the researcher. Some of these perceptions, which took me about four months to uncover, included notions about me having a perfect life, being carefree, without responsibilities, free to pursue intellectual interests, fortunate not to be teaching in schools, enjoying privileges, and coming from a privileged background. They had also enquired about me from persons outside the school and came to know that I had formerly been employed in the Department of Education, ran a practice as an educational consultant, and was teaching at a university.

I became aware of the challenges when I faced resistance from participants. Initially there were structural constraints. Although teachers and learners originally agreed to keeping journals, both sets of participants reneged on the agreement. Reasons

were not given but it was fairly obvious to me that very few Grade Eight A students completed homework and it was thus highly unlikely that they would keep journals. Likewise, teachers talked often about stresses they were subjected to at Amethyst, and the keeping of journals was perceived as an additional burden. To compensate abandonment of journal keeping by staff and students, I tried to have informal conversations. Finding time during the school day was *problematic*. Teachers would agree to converse during lunch-breaks but would not be able to keep the appointment because unforeseen circumstances diverted their attention: an injured student would require medical attention, students would be involved in a brawl, an emergency meeting would be called up by the Principal, teaching would continue into the lunch-break or some paperwork had to be completed. Teachers also preferred to spend their free time with their peers, or to complete the many tasks they had to attend to such as marking scripts. When appointments were kept, students would constantly interrupt the conversations with teachers. Noise levels were difficult to contend with as well.

With students, the problems were of a different nature. Some students resented spending lunch-breaks speaking to a researcher, and as all data production strategies were negotiable with participants, I could not insist otherwise. Others were afraid to be seen speaking to me after/between/during lessons for reasons known to them. Some were extremely shy and were loath to talk to a stranger. Another complication was that many teachers had referred to me as an “inspector” evaluating teacher performance. Teachers thought referring to me as an *inspector* would benefit the research project. Furthermore, they wanted to ensure that students behaved when lessons were observed and recorded.

The history of *inspection* in schools is suffused with images of control, authority, and repression. Changing students’ perceptions of me as researcher, not inspector, would take months. There were, however, many students, not part of the research design, who would constantly approach me. They were curious about my work and the equipment I had, asked many questions about what I was doing at Amethyst, wanted photographs to be taken, and offered to help as well. I was particularly concerned because I had no mandate to speak to learners other than those agreeing to participate in Grade Eight A. I dealt with these concerns in two ways. First, I informed the Principal about my dilemma. His response was that I was free to talk to anyone but that I limit what I use as research

data to those from whom permission had been procured. Second, I informed each non-participant that I only spoke to students with permission from their parents to do so. They justified talking to me by saying: “I don’t need permission to talk” or “Why?” or “We can talk to anyone”. I conversed with them as it was in my own interests to use the opportunity to befriend them and to get them to know me as I perceived myself. However, all remarks and conversations with persons not part of the research design were disregarded in the analyses of teachers’ and students’ knowing. The agency demonstrated by non-participants during this phase was surprising. Agency was far more complicated than my understanding thereof due to its discursive expressions. Student participants felt obligated to the research project despite my assurances that they did not have to. Non-participants insisted on engaging with me despite my protestations that they do not. A way of explaining the difference between the two groups is that participants felt they had something to lose (good grades) if they did not, whilst non-participants felt they had something to gain (photographs, information) if they did. Student agency, it seems, is associated with gains or losses of some sort.

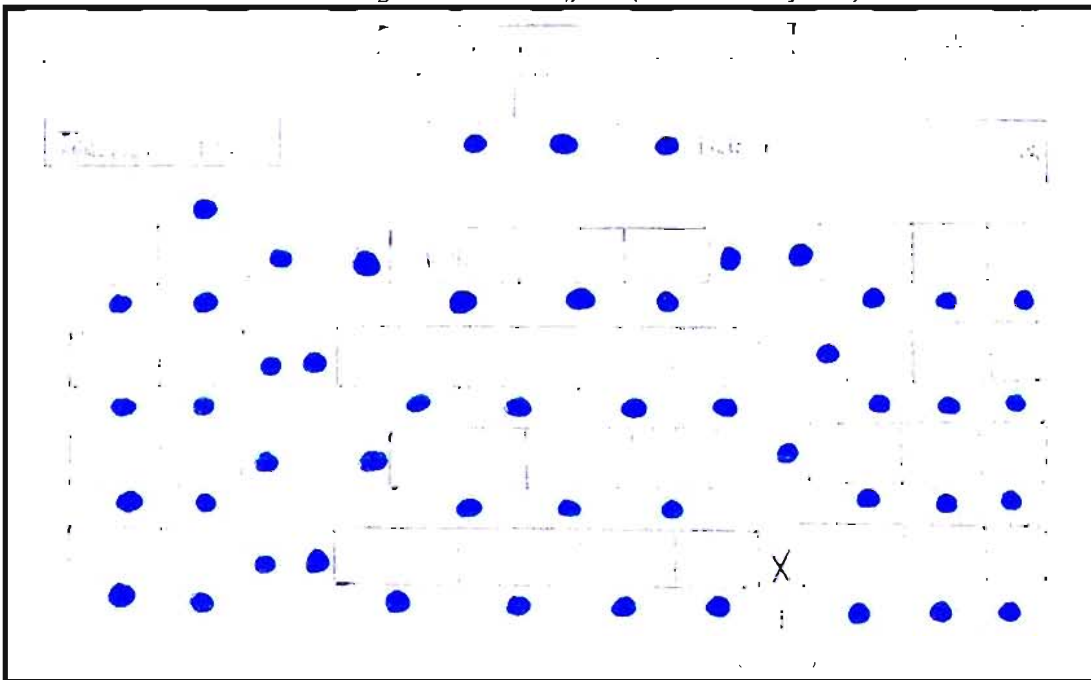
Observing classroom interactions produced another set of problems. Firstly, some teachers were uncomfortable with my presence and I was asked to defer observation on numerous occasions. Reasons given included the following: the students were writing a test and therefore there would be nothing worthwhile to observe; there was a change of plan; administrative issues needed to be sorted out with students; the lesson would not be interesting; and that a previous lesson was being taught again. Knowing that classroom observation was a sensitive issue for teachers, I retreated whenever objections were raised. A strategy that worked in my favour was to use my daughter, Vidya, to videotape classroom observation. It helped that my twenty-one-year-old daughter looked more like a twelve-year-old. Teachers who did not welcome me in their classroom were quite willing to allow Vidya into their classes. But Vidya, a graphic designer, is neither a teacher nor a researcher so I was dependent on her intuition to decide what to record.

Secondly, the Grade Eight class of fifty students had to be squeezed into classrooms built to seat thirty-two students comfortably. With this level of congestion, the inclusion of a researcher created a new set of problems. There was very little opportunity to move about when observing classroom interactions. The use of space in

classrooms meant that lessons could only be observed from one vantage point. (See Fig. 6). Sometimes the only space available was the doorway, and that meant that some parts of the classroom were outside the visual field.

The limitations of video-taping in this classroom setting are not just peculiar to this research project. Ladson-Billings (1998) argues that videotaping is “an artificial representation of teaching”. In her opinion “even unedited videotape of classroom activity reveals but a partial view of the classroom setting and what transpires there” (Ladson-Billings 1998:258).

Fig. 6 Classroom Arrangement (Source: research journal)



Finally, lessons that were observed could not be used for stimulated recall for the reasons stated in the previous paragraph. Furthermore, another reason that precluded stimulated recall was about when to plan for the activity to take place. I could not use teaching time as it would disrupt the teaching schedule. Lunch-breaks were very noisy. Keeping students after school interfered with transport schedules and compromised their safety as most students preferred to walk home or travel in groups.

To know about learners' home backgrounds I thought it necessary to visit their homes and residential districts. But the Principal and members of staff discouraged me

from visiting students' homes. I was told that it was dangerous, that there were hierarchical structures controlling who could go into some areas, that there was a turf war being fought by drug warlords and I would be regarded as a threat or spy, and finally, there was a feeling that my excursions into students' homes would endanger the delicate relationship the school enjoyed with the community. There was constant reference to the outbreak of violence in previous years spilling into the school. Considering that I was guest without restrictions placed on my movement by the school management, and that they were concerned for my physical safety, I abandoned notions of home visits and of walking through the neighbourhood.

Eventually it dawned on me that the power, position, privilege, and authority of the ethnographic researcher were being challenged in oblique ways. I was a stranger, an outsider, unknown, observing, making notes, watching, listening, eavesdropping, asking questions, invading others' spaces, perhaps even unwanted and resented, yet politely and respectfully tolerated. I understood their discontent because they could not subject me to the same level of scrutiny that I subjected them. The video-camera, photographic camera, journal, observation of classroom interactions, and mingling with staff and students, exemplified the researcher's power and privilege to the research participants. In their view I also had special privileges, because there was a perception that I could choose when I wanted to observe and when not to, I could stay away and not have to offer any excuses, that I could come in after school began and leave before school ended, I did not have to prepare lessons, conduct exams, mark assignment and tests, or attend school meetings. I was constantly reminded about how "lucky" I was. As a researcher I seemed to have authority to excavate the school's past, to look into people's private, personal, and professional lives, without revealing details about myself. It was quite reasonable to expect then, that some forms of agency would be forthcoming. Teachers and students were resisting. Unable to express their true feelings about my research project, perhaps because the Principal introduced me and sanctioned the project and various departmental structures had also given permission, teachers and students felt they were in no position to refuse, despite research rhetoric promising a transparent, democratic process. They could not trust me so they politely asked me not to observe a lesson, and ignored, instead

of contesting, forms of participation (journal keeping) that I realised were both burdensome and cumbersome.

Something had to give. A new plan of action was called for to counter the negative consequences of the invasive phase. Innovation was required otherwise the research project was doomed to failure. This would lead to the third phase, based on reciprocity.

The reciprocity phase. After four months of embedding myself in the institution, I had still not yet been able to yield data that would enable me to answer the questions posed by the inquiry: who are the learners? What do teachers know about learners? What is the relationship between *knowing* learners and the lives they lead? Journals were not kept by participants, classroom observations were compromised and *flawed*, stimulated recall was not possible, and interviews had still not been conducted. I had ten weeks before leaving the country to take up a Fulbright scholarship for a year at Michigan State University. The ten weeks included an examination period of two weeks and twenty-one days of winter vacation.

The stumbling blocks, I realised, were the various conceptions the school community had of me. I undertook a conscious effort to unravel what these were. I was driven by fear of contravening paradigmatic coherences. Not having multiple methods and perspectives would mean that the data would be biased as my observations, my field-notes, and my interpretations of video-tapings would be the primary sources. I would be the major constructor of reality. The fear of constructing reality that conflicted with the realities of the researched and the ontological frame of this project gave impetus to changing data production methods. The germ for the new direction was the multitude of personal questions that participants were asking me directly and questions about me to others. I was, I realised, the object of their inquiry.

Participants' interest in me was an interesting turn of (research) events. Of course I was indignant at first. How could this have happened? Perhaps it had to do with the way I was *doing* research. Feminist literature (e.g. Reinharz 1992), refer to the issue of reflexivity, a reflection of the researcher's subjectivities and how those subjectivities generate data. The feminist perspective assumes that sociopolitical categories (e.g. race, gender, class) generate power-resistance relationships and it is thus incumbent on the

researcher to be aware of power differentials and then to build into the research design the ways and means of addressing power imbalances (Fonow & Cook 1991; Lather 1991), in other words to “aim for intersubjective understanding between researchers and the person(s) studied” (Reinharz 1992:46) and in the words of Lather (1991:80), “our own frameworks of understanding need to be critically examined as we look for the tensions and contradictions they might entail”. This study did take feminist perspectives into consideration through the practices of democratic participation, informed consent, co-production of data, and freedom to exit the project at any stage. Further, those who theorise how one researches “up”, “across” and “down” (Reddy 2000) seem to assume that researching those in positions of power is more challenging than researching “down”⁴². In this study, by contrast, students and teachers of a secondary school, who are ostensibly *below* the researcher (university teacher) in terms of institutional hierarchy, appropriated power and subverted the research process.

I amended the design in multiple ways. First I ceased all observations and making of notes on-site. Second, I immersed myself into the activities of the school. I participated and assisted with the school’s Fun Run. I offered to serve relief for teachers who were absent. On one occasion, the Principal asked me to counsel a student who had attacked a teacher. On another occasion, a teacher asked me to conduct a study skills programme for Grade Twelve students. I carried out both these tasks. I was pleased at the opportunities that surfaced, allowing me to express my appreciation to the school in tangible ways. Third, I sat in the staffroom and spoke to teachers, about myself, my family, friends, my background, my concerns about how the press sensationalised educational issues, and the difficulties I experienced as a teacher, exploding the myths that had been generated about my life (good fortune, privilege etc.). It was the revelation of research focus, however, that cemented the relationship I enjoyed with teachers in the final phase. When teachers discovered that I was not interested in teaching competencies and classroom control they invited me into their domains and agreed to be interviewed,

⁴² Priyadharshini (2003) looks at institutional structures in the United States to argue that research is more likely to be conducted with marginalised groups than privileged institutional structures or within institutional structures. She argues that conceiving research as “studying up” or “studying down” is not useful. Post-structuralism, she postulates, offers a rearticulation in the form of “thinking otherwise”. The point being made here, though, is that researching “down” may just be the perception of the ethnographer, not necessarily of participants.

Fifth, relationships with students were strengthened in many ways. I spoke to students, handed out stationery and treated students to a meal. All students in Grade Eight A received gifts (stationery), irrespective of whether they participated or not. I assisted a few students with academic tasks and clarified concepts they did not understand. Girls asked for advice about relationships, sexual activity, smoking, and unwanted attention from boys. Boys' queries concerned dealing with gangsterism and issues of HIV/AIDS. Frequently, when a teacher left the classroom, I was asked to "keep an eye" on students. During these times I was able to engage with students and answer questions about my personal and professional life. I balanced those aspects of my life that were unhappy with those that were happy as I wanted them to know that I understood the world of hardship though I now live in the world of achievement. They were impressed that I did not report students who copied during tests, or those I observed smoking on the grounds, or those cutting lessons. I kept all observations confidential. Though I could not change the minds of all students, I did manage to influence fourteen students to cooperate substantially, that is, by revealing their personal narratives. To do so I had to reveal substantial details of myself, an act of reciprocity.

The narrative I presented to students (see Appendix A) and teachers was revealed in bits and pieces depending on who asked questions pertaining to some segment of my life – students to details of my early life and school days and teachers to my growth and development in the field of education. These are examples of statements made and questions I was asked, some by teachers, and some by students.

Questions around religion: What is your religion? Are you a Hindu / Muslim?

Questions around family: Do you have brothers and sisters? Were your parents strict? Are you married? Do you have children?

Questions about growing up: Where do you come from? Where did you grow up? Did you have a traditional upbringing? Tell us about the times when you were young. Who inspired you?

Questions around origins: Why is your surname Amin? Are you a *European*? You don't have a Durban accent. You have a strange accent. Where do you come from?

Questions about teaching: What was your teaching experience like? Where did you train as a teacher? Where did you teach? How did you deal with disciplinary issues?

Do you have any experience of teaching *Blacks*? What is your opinion of schooling? Did you deal with difficult students? Why are you studying?

Questions about school: Did you get into trouble when you were at school? Did you go to a private school? I bet you had good teachers. Which school did you attend? Did you like school? Were you punished by teachers?

Statements: You cannot understand us. You have a good life. You are so lucky. Could you advise me about ... (numerous issues from giftedness to classroom control, to student leadership and management strategies). You are very untraditional.

Some questions, however, perplexed me. I could not understand how students could mistake me for a “*European*” as my “*Indian*” genetic endowment was so visible (to me). Perhaps it had to do with my fair skin, but I reasoned that could be countered by the presence of at least three teachers at Amethyst who were also fair-skinned. When asked why, the students’ justification was, “You don’t think like an *Indian* and you don’t act like an *Indian*”. These responses were made with reference to my encouraging students to call me by my first name as well as the practice of keeping all observations of students’ “shenanigans” confidential. It appears then that in this instance, students’ conceptions of race is associated with worldviews and cultural practices. “*European*” signals a liberal, anti-authoritarian stance. Perceived as *European* (as opposed to *White*) also explained why I could not merge into the sea of familiar faces. If the dominant discourse regarding race was about *Indian* and *Black* than *European* was the exotic other. Being constructed as a foreigner meant that there could not be a possibility of becoming an “insider”. I remained an outsider despite months of immersion in the context because I had not penetrated the **mind** field, the invisible and intangible segments of Amethyst’s context. Communicating with persons, inhabiting physical spaces, and immersion in the context, are not reliable indicators of a researcher-participant relationship based on trust. It requires reciprocity and transparency beyond details about the research project.

To return to the inclusion of my story, all the descriptions but perhaps not all analyses were open to scrutiny: students to details of my early life and school days, and teachers to my training and teaching experiences. As a way of answering one of the most enduring questions posed to me throughout the duration of this study about my notions of school/schooling, my story is framed as a struggle to conceptualise school/schooling

within a multitude of experiences, of multiple roles and performances as child, daughter, wife, learner, friend, teacher, bureaucrat, and researcher.

Producing knowing

Has the sharing of slices of my life had a direct bearing on what students and teachers revealed to me? Could it explain the foci on hardships endured by learners at home and in school, and on the challenges the teachers faced in a context like Amethyst? Or did it create the space that allowed stories “disfigured by poverty” (Desai 2002:8) to emerge as they did?

To generate the students’ stories I asked for personal narratives. Fourteen students wrote their personal stories. These narratives were produced five days before the study ended. These narratives were written by the students (except for one which was translated from Zulu) and are re-presented (the handwritten essays were typed for the thesis with minor corrections to grammar and spelling) in chapter seven. The problematics of voice, are in a sense, tamed, though not erased. Undoubtedly, my biography influenced the contents to some extent, whilst students’ levels of literacy and language competency limited what could be expressed, and the data could be interpreted as real (in a postmodern sense) or imagined (in a hypothetical sense). I did not, however, contest their stories (then or now).

To generate teachers’ *knowing*, I interviewed teachers. The interviews took place after school hours in their homes or at a restaurant where we shared a meal together (I paid for meals). The questions that arise are: why were teachers treated to a meal at a restaurant or interviewed in their homes and why were students not similarly privileged? The reasons are that teachers could not be interviewed at school as explained earlier. Those who felt they did not have privacy in their homes to speak opted to go out for a meal. Since this was my research project and teachers were going out of their way to accommodate me it seemed like paying for the meal was the least I could do to demonstrate my appreciation. Being welcomed in their homes, where they treated me as an honoured guest, was in the words of one teacher: “A wonderful release. ... to be able to speak about my frustrations as a teacher”. The same hospitality could not be extended to students because students are minors and not in a position to renegotiate the terms

originally agreed upon. Furthermore, as explained previously, I was advised against visiting students' homes.

The interviews with eight teachers also occurred towards the end of the data production period. In the interviews I focused on one main question, "What do you know about students in Grade Eight A?" but these were not formal, or even unstructured interviews. They were conversations that moved back and forth with as many questions asked of me as I asked of them. The route to the focus question journeyed from discussions of the day at school, to students, to private lives, to television programmes, news headlines, school functions, personal opinion, SGB, the Principal, the students, other interests, and so on. It was rarely a smooth trajectory that focused on students' lives only. These long, protracted conversations were captured on tape and then transcribed. The eight teachers' stories are derived from these conversations. Segments from conversations with teachers, dealing mainly with students' lives and school, were extracted, and are re-presented as teachers' stories. I do not provide a sample of an interview in its entirety before I made selections to formulate a teacher's story as some details are personal and may make it possible for participants to be identified.

The selections from interviews posed numerous challenges. Sometimes, a point about students was made as a direct comparison with their own child. Admitting such data made it very obvious who was being interviewed, not to the wider public as such, but certainly to the teachers' peers at Amethyst. A further complication was that teachers' families did not directly or indirectly grant clearance for their personal details to be revealed and thus, on ethical grounds, I chose not to include such data. To that end, the possibility that teachers know students through comparing them to their own children was not admitted as data. In some conversations, peers were directly implicated and named. Although this project was not about verifying truth claims, I felt a responsibility not to disturb social and professional relations at the school and, consequently, excised some extracts. Another consideration was to manage the data analysis process and ultimately, only segments that were analysed were included.

The story of the school (chapter four) is constructed of the following component parts: my observations (see Fig. 7 for an example of a lesson observed), my reflective journal and conversations I had with my daughter who assisted me sometimes with data

production, particularly with videotaping lessons in class. On our journeys to and from the school we spoke about our impressions of the area in which the school is located, the people who lived there, the environment, the kinds of houses, the views, how we felt about the things we saw, the school buildings, what happens outside the school grounds, and how we viewed the school grounds. Spending a prolonged period at the school allowed me to observe, ask questions, and constantly check in a focused manner that the reality I was constructing would, as far as is possible, resemble a construction by those who come to teach and those who come to learn. The school's story was given to various persons (teachers and students) at the school to comment on, make changes, or insert any detail which they so desired, or to delete that which offends. No suggestions were given by anyone to make amends and my description has been accepted unaltered. It is possible that my written account of the school's story was received as an "expert's" version and, hence, was not contested.

Fig. 7 Example of Observation of a Lesson (Source: research journal)

22 APRIL 2003 (Day after Easter Monday - a long weekend) A hot day - morning temperature 25°C	
OBSERVATIONS	COMMENTS
<p>7.50 As Vidya and I entered the school grounds, ten minutes before the siren went off, we noticed that the school Principal and a teacher (name omitted) were standing at the entrance, keeping a watchful eye as students ambled into the school. Both men waved at me and I acknowledged the greeting. As I parked the car, the school security guard, armed with a baton, thrust the control book and pen through the car window. I entered the details required for each column and made my way to the office where I signed the attendance register, which records time of arrival and departure. Students milled around in groups, and sounds of animated discussions and loud, raucous laughter could be heard. Quite a number greet us.</p>	<p>Are they keeping a watchful eye - they were after all, speaking to each other - perhaps making their presence felt? I need to ask the teacher.</p> <p>Control book records comings and goings of visitors and records: time in, name of visitor, purpose of visit, vehicle license plate numbers, signature and time out.</p> <p>How interesting! I'm treated as both visitor and member of staff simultaneously. Groups are sharply divided in term of race and gender.</p>
<p>8.00 ASSEMBLY The bell rang for assembly - students lined up and were welcomed by the DP. It did not appear to me that the full student population was present, which was confirmed by a student who remarked that "a nice amount from each class" was present.</p> <p>8.05 As assembly ended I made my way to the maths room while the students went up to their room on the third floor for registration.</p>	<p>It looks like about 60% of the student population are present. Where are the rest?</p>
<p>8.10 FIRST PERIOD The students come down to ground level and form a line, outside the maths class, which soon breaks up as they realise the teacher is not around. The classroom is locked. Girls stand around in groups chatting to each other - a</p>	<p>I thought the first period began at 8.15</p>

<p>few hit the boys and I notice one girl in particular pointing a finger and threatening a boy (I know not what about). A few boys are running around each other, indulging in quite rough play. I watch carefully to see if it degenerates to a point where I may need to intervene. A few students have made their way to the alcove beneath the staircase. The loud sounds of chatting, shouts and laughter of that group reverberates and now quite a din is palpable.</p>	<p>I wonder why a teacher from one of the adjoining rooms does not come out to control the din.</p>
<p>8.23 The teacher arrives and the students quickly get into place and form lines; boys and girls separately. I'm amazed at the sudden and extremely rapid transformation. He does not say a word about their behaviour during his absence but instead focuses on getting them into the room. At this point I hand him a ream of paper (incentive) that I had brought along. He smiles and says, "<i>this is like gold</i>". The students sit in their places. No time is wasted in organising the room. I presume that problems associated with seating arrangements have been sorted out. Teaching commences - review of test. Teacher hands out test papers. Students chat amongst themselves - softly, just a low buzz can be heard.</p> <p>As I stand next to Portia, I note that she has gold nail polish on. In front of her I note a girl with a 5cm thick furry band on her wrist. I ask Portia about the band. She giggles, then explains that it is used to keep the hair tied in a ponytail. All test sheets handed out by the teacher, as far as I can see, are marked and the marks attained are clearly reflected in red ink.</p> <p>8.27 Somebody is at the door: actually it is two students with a notice. The teacher attends to them for about 30 seconds.</p> <p>8.30 - 9.00 All scripts handed out. A few scripts without names were identified as theirs by students. The actual test questions are handed out to students so that they can check answers. The teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Explains each question and the answer expected. * Clarifies the differences between a histogram and a bar graph. * Explains how the graph has to be read as some students had correctly identified the units but not the true value (the weighting of each unit was not reflected e.g. 4½ is actually 4 500). 	<p>Refreshing to note that height is not significant for forming lines.</p> <p>A short, 10 question, one word answer test was written. From a few books I note that most tests are of one word or multiple choice types. The school has a frequent-test policy and it appears that a short, one-word answer type is most popular. I feel like an idiot. (I thought it had some indigenous cultural value or significance.)</p> <p>I wonder why the teacher does not use the chalkboard to enhance the explanation.</p>

Conclusion

The data production journey began in an ivory tower (researching others). From this vantage point, the taken-for-granted power, position, privilege, and authority of the ethnographic researcher was politely assailed and neutralised in a teaching and learning context where research and researchers held little currency. To regain lost ground meant relocating to a glass house (exposing self) to research participants and to you, the reader.

It was not possible to generate data about students' life experiences and to get teachers to share their stories with me as an insider, or as a bystander, or even as a participant observer. It came about by hard reflection and acknowledgement of being a

stranger, an intruder, and invader. It came about because the relationship between participants and researcher had to be renegotiated as **reciprocal participation** with both sharing intimate details of their lives, blurring the boundaries between researcher and the researched at the data production stage. It came about by recognising that in order to **know** I had to **be known**. It became possible when the designs for data production were adapted to overcome the barriers in the field. Modifications to the design included dispensing with traditional methods like observing, focus group interviews, and journal keeping. To remain true to the ideal of reciprocity, there is no triangulation of data: just as my story is mine alone, the stories of participants are their own descriptions. The stories are, in Foucauldian terms, “experiential truths” (Prado 2000).

Whatever your viewpoint about deploying biography as data generator, the journey has delivered some methodological insights about qualitative approaches to research.

One, research methods are guides and are rarely replicated unaltered. Challenges emanating from participants need to be addressed sensitively. Two, permission to conduct a study from authorities is not the same as accessing data from participants. The former refers to access to the site, the latter is acceptance by participants. Access to a research site does not automatically translate into trouble-free participation. Building relationships is necessary. Three, respect and politeness can mask resentment and reluctance to participate in a study. Four, not challenging the researcher is a way of challenging the researcher. Five, not revealing the study focus is not always a wise move and six, innovation can rescue a research project.

This chapter marks the end of the second of three sets of foundational knowings of this study. In the next chapter I present the final set, the story of the context of Amethyst Secondary School, situating it in its overlapping political, historical, social, and cultural spheres.

CHAPTER 4

Knowing the Context: Foregrounding Background⁴³

Introduction

This chapter is the final of the trinity of foundational knowings of part two that underpin and frame the study about how and what teachers know about students: knowing about the school's context. This entailed a prolonged period of data production at Amethyst. As signalled earlier, Amethyst exemplifies schools facing multiple challenges resulting from a painful historical legacy, but each school is also peculiar and different to other schools through variations of size, class, racial demographics, and geographical location. It is through contextual descriptions that a school can be recognised for its uniqueness, and hence the need to foreground Amethyst's background. Additionally, detailed descriptions prevent the insertion of ahistorical and acontextual meanings by readers.

In the previous chapter I shared the critical data production process and made visible the challenges and eventual outcome of my interactions with participants for this study. Stories of both sets of participants were generated and, based on observations and interactions with staff and students, there was data as well to enable a "thick description" (Geertz 1973) of the study context, which I present in this chapter. The "thick description" of the study site is underpinned by critical frameworks.

Critical approaches influence both data production and emerging theories emanating from the produced data. Data is, in other words, situated knowing which is context dependent. It is thus incumbent on detailing the contextual space because contexts "exceed their dictionary meanings" (MacLure 2003:13), meaning different things to different people and encompassing much more than spatial location and infrastructure. One could include ethos, echoes of days gone by, future predictions, the intrusions of policies, people, programmes, practices, the unspoken and ignored, and symbolic gestures, and artifacts. Or, following Foucault (1984b:253), one could say that school contexts "ensure a certain *canalization*⁴⁴ ... a plunge into a field of social

⁴³ An earlier version of this chapter has appeared in print previously (see Amin 2005).

⁴⁴ Italicised in original.

relations in which it brings about some specific effects” for society. In this case, knowing the context produces a kind of school knowing which explains a particular experience of schooling for teachers and students. It is through this description of the context that the reader is invited to know Amethyst. The description provides crucial insights about the epistemological and ontological universes of the school, its teachers and students. Apart from describing the school context, this chapter can be regarded as an initial attempt at analysis of the context of this study.

This chapter comprises a theoretical rationale for including the story of the school which forms the backdrop of *teachers’ knowing*. Here I consider both representational advantage and crucial descriptions, the first emerging from the field of psychology, and the latter with roots in critical theory. I follow through with arguments for a critical narration that makes explicit the social, political, cultural, historical, and economic influences on the school. The story of the school is, consequently, an intensive “thick description” of the school. The chapter concludes with a brief analysis of the context.

Knowing context: representational and crucial descriptions

Description can be deeply political by reason of selection and its embedded interpretation. Casati (2003:281), for instance, refers to selection as “representational advantage”. Casati’s (2003) perspective is based on the idea that “cognitive systems have made a selection within the referents of a mental representation between several available items or types of items”. In other words, some entities are advantaged by virtue of their representational form and position over other entities⁴⁵. Casati (2003) questions the advantages that some entities have over others, or whether an entity can be represented without being advantaged. From a critical perspective, the questions Casati (2003) poses are immaterial because representational advantage is sought and overtly promoted. Based on Casati’s (2003) stance, one may conclude that the brain decides, unconsciously, the focal points of description. By contrast, Vithal (2003) regards description as integral to critical research, and locates its importance at the centre in critical research, which she terms “crucial description” (2003:107). Her approach to description is about

⁴⁵ Casati (2003:283) uses the example of figure-ground to make the point that the figure (foreground) is more prominent, and remembered for longer periods, than the ground (background).

consciousness and conscience shaping description, in other words, about agency and a transparent moral positioning driving the descriptions.

Vithal (2003:115) characterises “crucial descriptions” as manifesting four key ideas: transparency, transformacy, generativity, and exemplarity. Transparency makes visible the conditions as viewed by the researcher, and in doing so offers the reader the opportunity to critique the analysis that follows. Transformacy is tied to the activist notions of critical research. From this argument, a crucial description can inspire transformation of the context by identifying oppressive elements of the context as grounds for change. Generativity (see also my footnote in chapter one), by contrast, has a productive function “in inspiring new forms of practice and in theory building” (Vithal 2003:116), whilst exemplarity refers to selecting a part of a system, teachers for example, to understand a whole, for example, the education system. The success of the exemplarity function is dependent on the description. I hasten to add that the study on hand is markedly different to the project undertaken by Vithal (2003), if one is to understand how “crucial descriptions” enacts its **crucialness** in this study.

Vithal’s (2003) research is about the practice of teaching mathematics and the opportunities it presents to integrate social, political, and cultural dimensions in mathematics curricula. The crucial descriptions she makes transparent deploy the mathematics class as an exemplar of possibilities for transformation, with dual purposes: to generate theory and critique. Thus, by describing a practice of teaching, it may be possible to understand how one could infuse social, political, and cultural elements into all mathematics lessons, or into lessons in other subjects. The crucial elements offered in the descriptions of Amethyst are generativity (theory building) and transparency (critique of foci and interpretation). The transformacy agenda may be taken up by the school, as I do not advocate transformation at this juncture (for reasons that will be made apparent in the final chapter).

In terms of exemplarity, Amethyst Secondary School serves as an example, not of the whole school system, but of a school affected by social, political, cultural, and economic changes. One can understand from critical and post-structural perspectives, for example, how changes of the political landscape, whilst teacher profiles remain

undisturbed, has a ripple effect on population migration, school enrollment, teaching philosophy, and institutional funding.

The “representational advantage” in this chapter is the casting of the description of the school in a critical mould. Prominence is given to spatial and temporal elements. Spatially, I outline the geographical location, its architecture, spaces within school space and social texture. Temporally, I look from a critical perspective to the past and present, particularly, to identify possible influences and to demonstrate how history, economics, culture, and political ideologies influence present orientations, expressions, and practices at Amethyst Secondary School.

The foregrounding of context is a deliberate measure that integrates and responds to necessary conditions of critical research as explicated in the previous chapters, to wit, an overt abdication of neutrality. The aims are clearly to expose the intricate social, cultural, political, and economic webbing that wrap around the context of Amethyst. Thus it becomes incumbent to challenge reproductive descriptions of schools which are largely left with scant details about material conditions of those institutions. Popkewitz (1998) too makes a point that it is prudent to understand the context in which knowledge is produced, as schools are commonplace and, consequently, are inevitably and irrevocably taken-for-granted spaces.

Implicated in the common-sense notions of schooling are personal experiences as students, or parents, or as teachers, or as readers of media, or as social actors in interaction with other persons. Conducting research in such a terrain is fraught with challenges of various kinds. How can one dislodge these taken for granted notions? How can one make others aware of the uniqueness of each school? A further complexity arises in a developing context such as South Africa. Whose theories have currency? Those who live in so-called “developing” or “under-developed” contexts, are starkly aware of how meta-theories are advanced as universal explanations of the world. The project of researching then has to counter those who purport to speak for all through detailed analysis of not only the research inquiry, but also by detailing the context. Thus foregrounding context is a deliberate measure to avoid replacing one meta-theory with another locally produced one. By providing a thick description of the study site, one is able to understand how theory is bound and grounded to the context of the research

inquiry. The detailed description of the context in this chapter is influenced by a critical narrative approach so that the four key ideas of transparency, transformacy, generativity and exemplarity as promoted by Vithal (2003) may be realised by critical readers.

Knowing context: critical narrative approach

A critical narrative approach is at variance with positivistic leanings, for example, Blumer's (1969:162) contention that "scientific concepts ... strain toward consistence" and a "faithful reportorial depiction" (1969:152) of the views of participants in the public domain. Blumer differentiates "scientific concepts" from "commonsense concepts". He defines commonsense concepts as "detached and disparate" and scientific concepts as "interrelated and linked". Blumer (1969:22) intends participant observers to scientifically produce an objective reality "... from their perspective; they must depict it as it appears to them", which would, in other words, be different to a subjective, common-sense reality. By contrast, critical narrators make no pretence of presenting objective reality – there is a conscious awareness that the participant observer is in the business of creating reality. A critical stance assumes that hegemonic cultural practices are products of iniquitous power relations, discursively expressed in ways that benefit the dominant group (Brodkey 1987; Simon & Dippo 1986). Following Brodkey (1987:70-71), a detailed description of the site provides an opportunity to interrogate key social constructs and contradictions within a specific context.

A critical narrative approach, as suggested by Brodkey (1987), expects the researcher to challenge her privileges as narrator. This is accomplished by continuously drawing attention to the presence of the researcher; interrupting the narrative by bringing in various vantage points to remind readers that the research explication is privileged at the expense of enunciations not present in the text; introducing diversions in the text to dispel illusions of "an unchanging sequence of events that are virtually an uninterrupted reality" (Brodkey 1987:72); including an event "because it represents a hegemonic practice" (Brodkey 1987:71), and by shifting from perceptual description to conceptual understanding.

The construction of the school draws on various sources of data in the tradition of anthropology such as participation, embeddedness, conversations, observations, and

research journal, supplemented with archival material to tell the story of Amethyst Secondary School. Interactions, activities, critical incidents, and critical events⁴⁶ are described, interpreted, and analysed beyond the banalities of everyday school functioning, and re-entered by situating Amethyst in its sociopolitical, historical, and cultural contexts in the form of a critical ethnographic narrative.

Deploying a critical ethnographic narration strategy requires me to remind you, the reader, that the descriptive text of the research context moves between present times and the past, undertakes historical excursions, interjects with contested accounts, and breaks into nineteen sub-stories to highlight hegemonic practices, making the reading of the text (seventeen pages) a laborious task that may test your patience.

Knowing Amethyst Secondary School

The Road to Nirvana. The drive from my home to the school is approximately fifteen minutes (if one keeps to legal speed limits). Often, the journey is slower due to traffic congestion in the morning, as hundreds of people rush to work. Cars, trucks, buses, taxis, and motorcycles jostle for space on crowded roads. Accidents and non-functioning robots (traffic lights) can result in long delays. Getting to Nirvana, where Amethyst is located, meant passing by two industrial areas. The first is a newer industrial area dealing in sales, and the second, situated closest to the school, is a decades-long established manufacturing area. The smog and smells of production fills the air, creeps into my nostrils, and settles on my clothes. The location of vile, manufacturing industries close to residential areas allocated for *Black* people was a design feature of the apartheid state. *White* suburbs were not situated near rubbish dumps and smog-producing industries.

As I turn into a road that leads into the suburban area of Nirvana, the wide double-lane road narrows into a single-lane road, contracting dangerously at times by allowing just one vehicle to pass through. The road surges steeply for the next two kilometres. It is lush and green, in sharp contrast to the snarling traffic and huge factory structures. The scenic beauty is quite breathtaking at sunrise, and at sunset, despite the

⁴⁶ Denscombe (1999:187) draws a distinction between “critical events” and “critical incidents” (italics in original). He argues that “critical events take the shape of planned occasions, such as the production of a drama or a school visit. ... Critical incidents, by contrast, are characteristically ‘unplanned, unanticipated and uncontrolled’”.

haziness caused by industrial smog. Due to the politics of race during apartheid, developing the suburb of Nirvana was marginalised in the past. At present, development is driven by economic priority - there appears to be a focus on developing the industrial area at the expense of Nirvana. The contrast between the newer industrial area with its new structures, clean, broad roads, robots, and landscaped gardens, and the forty-year-old suburb of Nirvana with its old buildings and litter-strewn narrow lanes encroached by untamed overgrowth, is discernible from the crest of the road.

Nirvana. Between huge forest-like trees I spy a few brick homesteads jarring the scene. From afar the homes appear to be scattered in a haphazard manner. Roads twirl between high banks, steep inclines, and deep valleys, giving a rustic feel rather than the neat rows of modern suburban design. On closer inspection it becomes apparent that the homes are built to maximise the lay of the land. Roads have been cut through hilly terrain, circulating in all directions with sharp bends and curves. There are very few properties with level land. Hilly and uneven, with steep inclines, I marvel the human spirit, the engineering feats, the financial burdens, to build houses in such an untenable residential terrain; another example of apartheid design - allocating land to *Blacks* which requires much expense to build homes.

Soon houses made up of cardboard and iron-sheets pave the road on either side. What is striking about the latter mentioned homes is that the constructions begin at the very edge of the road. If I just stretched a hand out of the car window I could touch a house, or if I veer just slightly off the road, I would find myself in the midst of someone's home.

Further on, brick-and-tile homes appear on the horizon. These homesteads have clear boundaries and fences, indicating ownership. Approved by the town planning board, the houses are positioned in streets with names, piped water, electricity, and erf numbers. These homes are legal entities with proper addresses and are entitled to council services like refuse removal, postal delivery, and street lighting. The homes have foundations, brick walls, window panes, doors, security gates, and tiled roofs. There is sufficient land around the house to nurture a garden and to park vehicles, though most home do have garages for cars. By contrast, tin-and-board homes are illegal, make-shift structures, built on land belonging either to the state, or

to private landowners. There is hardly any space between most homes. The homes are fragile as the walls are made of board and iron-sheets, with the roof held in place with rocks. Many of these homes are destroyed during heavy rainfall and storms, leaving the residents destitute and without shelter. What connects both types of residences is the neglect of the environment. Streets and properties, verges, and bush are littered extensively with paper waste and plastic products. All around, weeds and tall grasses obscure streets, and where heavy pedestrian traffic occurs, the verges are hardened and dusty, making a muddy mess during rainy periods.

History of Nirvana. The suburb of Nirvana was created for *Indians* in the early 1960s with approximately 300 homesteads, with limited space for expansion. The forest-like scene described heretofore remains untouched, as it constitutes the sheer side of a hill. To cater for the middle-class population, a primary and a high school were established about twenty years after the creation of the suburb. Apart from a bus service, the residents access all other services (e.g. post office, police station, medical clinic) in nearby suburbs and in the city centre.

New settlers. In the post apartheid era, the residential area has changed from an all-*Indian* population to a multiracial one. *Indian* residents expressed distress by what they regard as “encroachment” of their suburb by those in search of low-cost housing, or no-payment homes, as the new incumbents comprise mainly unemployed, single-parent families, students living by themselves, or with siblings. With few options to purchase low-cost homes, most in-coming families have set up tin-and-board structures in open, unused spaces. There has been a steady increase of new residents in what was once a predominantly middle-class *Indian* suburb.

New geography. The new “geography” of Nirvana is the result of a proliferation of “shantytowns and squatter settlements” (Haarhoff 1995:63) that have become commonplace in South Africa. In the surrounds of Nirvana in particular, these spontaneous housing developments in and near the city centre, relate directly to the reversal of geographical distribution of *Black* populations to the periphery of towns and cities during apartheid. Since 1994, marginalised groups have moved “close to areas of employment, economic opportunities, facilities and service” (Todes 2003:118), whilst service provisioning and upgrading settlements remain dismal for several reasons: “... informal settlement upgrading adjacent to existing communities are frequently

resisted. The different race, class, or ethnicity of incoming residents, lower housing standards, fears of increased crime, and the anticipated impact of low-cost housing on property values are some of the concerns underpinning Nimbyism (not in my backyard syndrome)" (Todes 2003:116). The separation between the original settlers and the informal settlers in Nirvana is mirrored in the separation of their lives, triggered by apartheid and now complicated by class differences, reflected in the homes occupied (formal and informal), the mode of transport used (private and public), and income (employed and unemployed).

At the top of the hill, the road continues for about two kilometres. I pass many more homes, brick-and-tile and tin-and-board⁴⁷. Soon the tarred road shows sign of wear, as large, untarred patches dot the route. A watery, muddy pool appears suddenly at the lowest point of an intersection. Water gushes down from a tap on the pavement. It is a communal water dispenser and a number of females holding various types of containers stand around waiting to collect water. I pass two more communal taps with many more individuals queuing for water. Others make their way home with full containers precariously balanced on the head. Fetching water appears to be a burden borne by women.

The residents of Nirvana. Two distinct communities occupy Nirvana – the original inhabitants (middle-class *Indian*) and the new settlers (dispossessed, poorer classes). As I drive further down the road, I come into contact with the new settlers, plainly visible on the streets of Nirvana. The happy sounds of children's laughter and shouts fill the air. Pre-schoolers scamper here and there without shoes, many with home-made toys, demonstrating the creative bent of some members in the community. Smoke from open fires is visible, as are women washing clothes, and men sitting around in groups. Typically, women are involved with household chores, whilst the men are involved in communal (leisure?) affairs. Litter is strewn amongst the homesteads, and piles of rubbish dot the landscape.

Following Mamphela Ramphele's (1995) insider account of a similar community in Cape Town, I hesitate to draw conclusions about living conditions **inside** tin-and-board homes from the surrounding **outer** conditions, "There is stability and order in the

⁴⁷ These homes are also known by terms such as squatter homes/camps, informal settlements, jondols, tin shanties and shacks.

midst of apparent chaos. The filthy streets contrast with meticulous cleanliness of the interiors of individual homes. Appearances are very deceptive in this setting" (Ramphela 1995:158). I can, nevertheless, based on observations, draw distinctions about community interactions between the informal and formal communities of Nirvana. Unlike residents of tin-and-board areas who engage in communal living practices, it is rare to see the "original" *Indian* residents walking on the streets, or chatting to neighbours, a conspicuous silence and invisibility. On the roads of Nirvana "strangers" living in informal homes are familiar faces, and the "original" *Indian* inhabitants have become strange faces.

First views of the school. As I journey downwards, the school becomes visible just below the rise of the road. Students mill around outside at the bus stop, and at the shops near the school. Amethyst is situated on a triangle-like piece of land. One side, the entrance with access from the road, is directly opposite the shops. The second side is bordered by brick-and-tile homes, and on the third side, by tin-and-board homes. Brick-and-tile properties share a common boundary with school. These houses are fortified in various ways with high walls, or fencing and barbed wire, fierce dogs, home alarms connected to security companies, and security gates, discouraging students from absconding school through their properties. By contrast, tin-and-board homes lie on a level below the school. Boundary-less and unprotected by any security measures, well-worn footpaths leading from the school down steep banks indicate how students enter and exit from school premises through clear, visible holes in the school fence. One path leads directly to a public telephone booth. The starkest contrast between property owners/renters and the makeshift home dwellers is the social construct of race. The former is occupied by *Indians* while the latter, mostly by *Blacks* and a few *Coloured* families. At the point where brick-and-tile meets tin-and-board, race, class, and security structures converge, creating a trinity of barriers to social contact, keeping the groups apart.

Amethyst. As I drive through the school gates and bring the car to a halt in the parking lot, a security guard approaches, and asks me to enter details in a book which records the comings and goings of visitors to the school. The guard accompanies me to the office area. I note the detailed attention given to safety measures. The management offices are protected by locked security gates and the windows are

burglar-proofed. I learn subsequently that the school has been burgled twice within a two-week period. Every computer owned by the school has been stolen. Over the years the school has not only lost furniture and equipment, like two washing machines from the home economics centre, but has had windows broken, toilets and doors damaged, and a teacher's car was stolen from the school's parking lot. All specialist workshops have been vandalised relentlessly, and almost all equipment, tools, teaching aids, and accessories have been stolen; the rooms are bare shells, stripped of their functional components. On one occasion, during the data production phase, a teacher was apprehended in class whilst teaching, searched, and a cell-phone forcibly taken from her. I was constantly warned to be alert as I had a digital video camera and photographic camera on my person every day. I encountered no mishaps throughout my stay at Amethyst.

Once a feature of elite schools, security measures are now common-place in many state schools, as schools are increasingly being burglarised and vandalised. In an insightful comparative analysis of the advent of democracy in South Africa and Russia, Volkov (2004), explains the rise in crime as a result of the state transforming from repressive governance to democratic governance: "In South Africa the post apartheid state had to undergo a deep transformation ... This in turn presupposed a fundamental redefinition of its relation with the rest of society. But it also weakened the state's capacity, and exposed society to violence and crime" (Volkov 2004:13). In other words, the thieving of school property, possessions from peoples' homes, and cars, is not so much an indication of how a manifestation of abundance in the midst of poverty is targeted by the have-nots; instead it is indicative of a perception that **a people's government** (democratically elected) provides immunity from prosecution. Some members of the school community, nevertheless, blame the rise in criminal activity in Nirvana to the "invasion of our area" (Grade Eight student) and because "crime is the culture of shack people" (Grade Eight teacher). Both these views, of invasion and culture, are remnants of apartheid thinking – reifying race and racial differences, engendering territorial behaviour expressed as "us" (*Indian* residents) and "them" (*Black* encroachers) rhetoric in the post-apartheid era.

School infrastructure. This is a huge school with ninety-four rooms of which forty-six rooms are utilised for teaching purposes (twenty-eight classrooms and

eighteen specialist rooms). The separation between management and the rest of the school is captured in the split level, spatial organisation of the institution. The school is laid out over two levels. The administration block (offices; staff room, copy room, stock rooms, staff toilets, library, dual-purpose room and tuck-shop) are on the lower level and are the first buildings one encounters when entering the school. A flight of stairs leads up to the level where classrooms are situated in three triple-storey and two single-storey blocks. Flights of stairs at either ends of the triple-storey blocks lead to the first and second floors, with the area beneath the staircases creating an enclave for furtive activities away from the prying eyes of teachers. Boys can frequently be seen smoking there, and it is a favoured meeting point between classes for girls and boys involved in romantic relationships. The Grade Eight class participating in this study was located in the third block, furthest from the administration area. The single-storey blocks, housing woodwork and technical drawing workshops, are cordoned off. To get to the workshops, students walk a long way along the corridor, down a staircase, passing by the library and then walking through the parking lot.

Politics and the school. Amethyst Secondary is situated close to the Durban city centre. It opened in 1980 with a roll of 488 and a staff complement of nineteen, including the school Principal, with the student population drawn mainly from the nearby Amber Primary School. Tuition was offered to *Indian* children in Grades Six and Seven. The following year, the staff and pupils of Topaz High were relocated to Amethyst. Topaz High catered for learners in the *Indian* quarter of the city. It drew its student population from families living in barracks, a working class, low-cost housing complex, much like the “tin shanties” in Nirvana. The school was “mediocre with mediocre kids” (Amethyst teacher). The parents worked for a brick manufacturing company and for the city council as street sweepers and refuse collectors. When the barracks were razed in the early 1980s, a ramification of the Group Areas act of 1950 to separate so-called race groups, the inhabitants were relocated to townships, at the periphery of the city, like Chatsworth and Phoenix for persons deemed to be *Indian*. Those who resisted relocation became “an evacuee community, a temporary settlement for those displaced by the Group Areas Act and the Slum Clearance Act. ... erect(ing) his own house, usually with second-hand tin and wood ... conditions are makeshift and the usual regulations of health and housing do

not apply" (Meer 1969:108). The children of evacuees constituted a large proportion of the school population of Amethyst in its early days. These learners, an underclass, contributed to the school's "excellent results and high standards and unsurpassed achievement" (Amethyst teacher) from 1983 when the first group of students graduated with matric certificates until the late 1980s.

Two reasons were identified as contributing to the lowering of "standards" at Amethyst in subsequent years. One was the successive appointments of Hare Krishna⁴⁸ devotees to the position of Principal to the school. Both incumbents "came with very idealistic and humanist beliefs and very relaxed attitudes" (Amethyst teacher). In the absence of the rigid surveillance measures, and authoritarian controls, "teachers and learners took advantage" and the school "went down the drain" (Grade Eight teacher). Second, the admission of *Blacks* was widely quoted by students and staff as a reason for poor performance. An analysis suggests that different criteria are applied to evaluate the performance of Amethyst before and after integration. When the school was wholly *Indian*, then managers were credited with poor or successful outcomes. In an integrated racial context, the colour of learners is deemed to influence performance.

The racial homogeneity of the school was disrupted with the admission of the first *Black* child in 1989. As poor, mainly *Black*, families moved into the neighbourhood, the enrollment of *Black* students increased steadily each year thereafter. At Amethyst the admission of many students from formerly excluded groups resulted in *Indian*, middle-class parents removing their children to attend schools elsewhere. The situation was compounded by the relocation of the evacuee community to Newlands West, another so-called *Indian* township. In an effort to contain falling student numbers and to stymie the transfer of teachers to other schools, Amethyst undertook a recruitment drive to attract students from the *Black* townships of Umlazi, Kwa-Mashu, Lindelani, and Inanda. As is the case with Nirvana, these townships were created during apartheid.

In *Black* locations institutions of learning were "the least adequately funded schools, with the lowest teacher qualifications, poorest facilities and highest class sizes" (Christie 1997:112). Caroline Suransky-Dekker's (1998) study, which analyses the

⁴⁸ The Hare Krishna movement is a Hindu organisation founded by Acarya Bhaktivedanta with cells in most countries of the world. They subscribe to non-violence, and venerate all forms of life, including insects. Meat, fish, eggs, onions, and garlic are forbidden foods.

experiences of about a thousand *Black* student teachers, provides troubling insights of education in *Black* apartheid-era schools. Her analysis indicates that *Black* schools were beset with violence, that these schools were managed autocratically, that severe forms of punishment were meted, rote learning was promoted and valued, poverty affected school performance, and that the language of instruction differed from the language spoken by students. It is not surprising, therefore, in the light of Suransky-Dekker's findings, that enlisting students from locations of "low standards of existing schooling" (Fataar 1997:82) was accomplished at Amethyst to the extent that *Black* students now comprise about seventy percent of the school population. Neatly tucked away in the walls of the school is an interlocking economic relationship between the teachers and the taught; a symbiotic relationship based on teachers' need for employment (at Amethyst) and learners' need for "quality" education (outside *Black* township schools).

The school at present. At present (2003), the number of students enrolled at the school is 798. All students are expected to wear uniforms: males wear grey pants, white shirts, black jackets, black shoes, and school ties; girls wear white dresses, black jerseys, black shoes, and ties. Teachers believe that the wearing of uniforms obliterates class differences, with a few teachers diligently ensuring that uniform rules are adhered to: "Here we don't tolerate nonsense. Long hair is out! Nikes are out! Colourful jackets or the wrong coloured pants get them into trouble" (Amethyst teacher). The issue of uniforms sets up an action-reaction relationship between staff and students. Some students find ways to express differences, pushing the boundary of teacher tolerance by offering various excuses associated with poverty (no money / no washing powder / no spare items), or evading teachers who surveil dress. Some teachers react to flouting of uniform rules by focusing on so-called race differences, "You can't tell *Blacks* anything". The issue of uniforms demonstrates that when class differences are obliterated, ostensibly, by wearing similar attire, then race is brought into play to highlight differences.

Financial concerns. Until 1994 at Amethyst, school fees were below R20 per year. All expenses were met by the state. Once amply resourced, the school now has to raise funds to pay for electricity and water consumption, telephone use, additional cleaners, grounds maintenance, repairs to equipment, sports equipment, printing paper, teaching aids and equipment, incentives for students, and any other

expenses that arise. The change from apartheid to democracy has not improved the material conditions of the school. In fact, the exact opposite has happened. The state meets only the cost of salaries of teaching personnel, an administrative clerk, and two cleaners. Only about fifteen percent of students pay the school fees of R550 per year, due to the unsatisfactory socio-economic circumstances of the community. In practice, the state's funding policies for Amethyst translate into a challenging set of obstacles, hampering the support of staff and students' teaching and learning needs.

The ripples caused by the politics of funding have ruptured the school community, highlighting how perceptions of the state are influenced by notions of race. In the words of teachers at Amethyst: "The people's government that guarantees the rights of criminals denies us our rights to good working conditions and quality education"/ "Education has deteriorated" / "The quality of students is so poor that we are frustrated out of our minds". Similar sentiments were echoed by *Indian* students: "This government only cares about *Blacks*." / "This was a top school. Since the *Blacks* came the school has gone down". *Black* students, on the other hand, were of the opinion that "The education here is good" and that, "Some teachers are racist but some are okay". Depending on which racial construct is used as an identity marker, the population of Amethyst views the post-apartheid government as hostile (to *Indians*) or magnanimous (to *Blacks*). Similarly, the quality of education at Amethyst is deemed to be satisfactory by new incumbents, and as being in a state of regression by those resolutely attached to apartheid notions of separate schools for different races.

The school day. The school day begins at a quarter-to-eight each morning and ends at half-past two each afternoon. Students journey from areas like KwaMashu, Lindelani, Durban Central, Umlazi, Inanda, Newlands East, and Newlands West by a variety of transport modes including buses, trains, taxis, and by walking to school. A large number of students are late each morning for numerous reasons. On the one hand, students' complaints are about buses and trains not adhering to scheduled times, heavy morning traffic prolonging journeys, not having money to pay the fare, and having to complete household chores in the morning. On the other hand, teachers' accounts are about students being tardy, getting up late, ignoring school rules, and loitering at shops situated opposite the school and at the bus stop beyond the school's zone of observation. The mismatch between teachers' and students' explanations for

tardiness is based on differences in lifestyle and class. Teachers (middle-class) make use of private transport, and students (poorer class) who arrive late, use public transport.

Classroom space. There are seventeen classroom units with student numbers ranging from a low of thirty-two in Grade Twelve to a high of fifty in each of the three Grade Eight classes. Classrooms in this school were built to seat a maximum number of thirty-two comfortably. Forty is a tight squeeze. Fifty is, evidently, uncomfortable and disruptive for numerous reasons. For one, most classrooms are too small to take in fifty desks and fifty chairs. Second, teachers remain in classrooms, whilst students move from teacher to teacher. Furniture has to be moved from room to room depending on the number of students because there are only enough tables and desks for 798 students and the furniture is distributed according to the number of students allocated to the class teacher, not according to the highest number of students coming in for subjects taught by the class teacher. Consequently, much time is wasted as students run around looking for chairs in other classrooms. When they are not successful in getting a chair, they share seats with other students, or stand at the rear end of the class.

When I observed lessons (without an assistant), I stood at the back against the wall between two desks which hugged my thighs tightly. Videotaping and note-making simultaneously were restricted as I had to clasp my journal between the legs while I held the video-camera with both hands. There was no space to set up a tri-pod to mount the video camera. Additionally, it was not feasible for me to take up a position at the front of the classroom as desks were placed against the board. Writing on the chalkboard was a challenge for teachers as they had to move between desks to reach the board. In many cases, the chalkboard was abandoned as a teaching aid. An overhead projector could also not be used for two reasons: there was only one working overhead projector for use in the biology laboratory, and most rooms did not have electrical connections (in order to reduce electricity consumption). With restrictions on turning out worksheets because of a shortage of paper and lack of textbooks, oral tutelage is the dominant mode of instruction. The irony of "lack of space" is that there are eleven classrooms that lie unused, the result of education policy regulating the number of teachers that can be employed at state expense at each school. Whilst there are rooms, there are not enough teachers to enable all rooms to be used.

The post provisioning norm. The number of teachers employed at Amethyst is governed by the post provisioning norm (PPN) which is also used to determine a school's funding allotment. It regulates how funds provided by the government can be used, that is, mainly for teaching and learning support materials, and "roughly works out to about R100 per child" (school manager). The PPN calculation is based each year on the tenth school day enrollment numbers, and students choice of subjects (each subject has a different weighting) in each grade. No other criterion, such as management staff's administration duty, is factored into the equation. The consequence is the anomaly expressed in class size ranging from thirty-two to fifty, evidence that the number of students in classes at Amethyst is actually much higher than the thirty-five touted by the state as its teacher/pupil ratio for high schools. Teacher deployment is, noticeably, a consequence of the department of education's post provisioning norm. It also explains the reasons school managers who work on the calculation **talk PPN** and the rest of the teaching corps who experience the effects of PPN **talk teacher / pupil ratio** at Amethyst.

Twenty-four state paid teachers are employed at Amethyst. This number includes the management team of six: the school Principal, deputy Principal and four heads of department (HoDs). The four departments are humanities, languages, commerce and maths / science. All the teachers, seven male and seventeen female are of *Indian* origin. This number comprises two appointed as substitutes for teachers on leave. Three teachers live within walking distance of the school, and include two who attended Amethyst Secondary as students. Every member of staff at Amethyst was educated in so-called *Indian* schools, trained as educators in *Indian* institutions for higher education, and garnered teaching experiences in similar race-classified schools.

Staff relations. Relations between members of staff are fragile amongst female teachers at a social level, with a number of splinter groups sharing tea and conversations in different locations of the school. The largest group sits in the staffroom, another meets in the library, other groups gather in classrooms, and a few keep to themselves. A new arrival is often canvassed by some groups trying to increase its membership and its circle of influence.

The social divisions of the staff are exemplified by the experiences of a young teacher being sought for recruitment by two rival groups. The novice was reluctant

to join any of the groups, preferring instead to keep to herself. When news of her impending marriage filtered out, one of the groups organised a “kitchen tea” for the prospective bride. Some teachers from other groups were invited whilst others were not. When the bride-to-be became aware of the situation, she expressed her disappointment as she had no quarrel with anybody. Invitations were hastily extended to the omitted, who immediately declined the “after-thought”. The outcome of this “trivial pursuit” (male teacher) was that the “kitchen tea” had to be cancelled because the bride-to-be “could not spare the time”, which provided a diplomatic end that severed the potential for damaged relations. Male members of staff do not get involved in these frays. According to one opinion: “The ladies’ issues are on-going and have many roots, many branches, and it’s difficult to identify to which tree the branches and roots belong” (male teacher).

At a professional level, however, there is cooperation and a working together ethic amongst the women. For example, the “Fun Run” is an important day in the school calendar. Almost everyone is expected to participate, including a few teachers who run the distance each year. Participation requires that students get sponsorship for each kilometre run. The money generated is used by the school to meet its running costs. Teachers work together in committees to plan the route, road safety measures, teacher duty points, First Aid, and collection of monies. This was a smooth operation (as I participated and was given charge of a duty point) and the Fun Run proceeded without complications. Social differences were suspended as members of opposing groups worked together. As students left the school premises and the staff discussed the Fun Run’s success, a female student was, reportedly, being raped in the school toilets.

I tried to fathom the events surrounding the “rape”. I spoke to eight persons. Some members of staff regarded it as conjecture and rumour mongering. Others believed it to be true and a common occurrence amongst “those people”. One teacher, however, insisted that the learner, ostensibly in her class, had taken a transfer to another school. She believed that the girl’s father had “sorted the boy out” (class teacher). Her class register indicated that a female student did exit the institution a day after the “Fun Run”. The Principal of the school, however, denied that the incident took place on school premises.

Leadership. The relationship between the Principal of school with his management team, and members of staff, is fraught with differences of opinion and different perceptions of the role and functions of a school Principal. There was almost a universal opinion that the Principal was most concerned with the safety of his own body, “as he locks himself up and makes sure that he is always safe” (teacher), a reference to the safety measures in and around the office area. This perspective is countered by the experiences of the clerks working in an office adjacent to the Principal. As the office area is on a lower level and cut-off from the hustle and bustle of teachers and students, when criminals enter the school, the office block is most vulnerable. On two occasions, when the school was held up by armed robbers, the bullets were discharged in the direction of offices occupied by the clerks and the Principal. In view of their vulnerability, the clerks felt that the safety measures were justified. Students analysed the situation differently. *Black* boys in particular felt the Principal was “afraid of us”.

Teachers were most irked by the Principal “sitting in his office. He never walks around the school.” By contrast, the Principal spoke highly of his staff. In his opinion they were committed, hardworking, and “don’t need a policeman checking on them”. Teachers were frustrated by what they perceived to be a “lack of support. He does nothing about the serious problems: late-coming, smoking, drug-taking and drug pushing, gangsterism, and criminal activities by learners. Our lives are in danger all the time”. The Principal conceded that there were serious social problems, but that he was responsible for the safety of **all** persons on the school premises. In his opinion, based on events of the past four years when student activism turned violent, he needed to be circumspect. He stressed that due to race and class differences, conflicts quickly took on racial undertones, “we are accused of racism. These people (*Black* students) can’t be trusted. The next thing you know, the school will be burnt down” (Principal).

Staff-student relations. Two years ago, a newly appointed *Indian* head of department (HoD) and a female student (*Black*) were involved in an altercation. Two versions of how the incident was triggered were recounted to me. The HoD involved in the fracas insists that a student attacked her for using the authority of her position to reprimand the girl involved for coming late to school, and that the attack was unprovoked. Witnesses to the incident stated that the HoD slapped a female

student for coming late and the student retaliated by assaulting the HoD. The accounts concur with what happened subsequently. The HoD filed a charge of assault with the police. When the police came to the school for personal details of the accused, the class teacher provided the information requested. The HoD was immediately placed on special leave for the rest of the term. In the meantime, the serving of papers by police changed the complexion of an incident involving two individuals into opposing poles, with students on one side and staff on the other. The class teacher who gave police the student's home address, was accused by learners of being responsible for the charges being laid. The students revolted, threatened to burn the teacher's car, and to torch the school. The class teacher was escorted to safety by three students who knew what was being planned. Her classroom was stormed and damaged by the rest of the student body. No student attended school for two days following the storming of the classroom. The standoff ended when the Department of Education intervened and charges against the student were dropped. After a period of leave to recover from the assault, the HoD returned to school.

As I am unable to adjudicate which version is authentic, this analysis considers both scenarios. Scenario one, the HoD's account can be understood thus: the iniquitous distribution of power within the school context is tipped in the student's favour. As a school manager, the HoD is constrained by law which lays down guidelines of how students are to be managed. The student has knowledge power (knowing that the manager's authority is limited by law), resistance power (refusing to succumb to school authority), aggressive power (assaulting the HoD), and social power (support of peers). In order to retrieve dignity and authority, the HoD has to rely on her own resources by laying a charge of assault (without the support of education authorities) and then having to suffer the indignity of succumbing to students' pressure to withdraw the charge of assault. This scenario demonstrates that whilst the student can rely on her peers for sympathy and to pressurise the school to act in her interests, the HoD was not able to rely on the support of peers and the Department of Education.

If one analysed the witnesses' accounts then the following might be a reasonable explication. According to education law, corporal punishment in any form is illegal. The HoD was able to lay charges against a student (who has legal rights to self protection) by an illegal act (slapping the student) that triggered the saga. The iniquitous distribution of power is clearly tipped in the HoD's favour. The HoD possesses

knowledge power (how to deploy the law to her benefit), economic power (to engage lawyers), language power (to articulate her version), and social power (support of school management and the Department of Education as no disciplinary action was taken against her). The student only has social power evident in the support given by her peers. This incident demonstrates that when learners cannot exercise legal rights, they express agency through mass action, reminiscent of the Soweto Riots of 1976.

A year before this mass action, student activism was deployed to gain admission to Amethyst. The country was in a transition phase as Nelson Mandela had been released in 1990, and talks were still being negotiated for political change. Many youth, who had sung the slogan “liberation before education”, now made education and the desegregation of schools their priorities. They were impatient with the slow progress towards an integrated society. Not trusting the politicians to negotiate in their interest, the student organisation, Cosas⁴⁹, undertook a campaign to place as many students as possible into schools. To that end, they undertook a survey of schools that had available space. Amethyst was identified as a site where students could be accommodated. The school was forced to admit *Black* students because of threats received to burn down the school should they be refused admission. Thus students from other areas were bused in. Many of these students were much older, in their twenties, lacked basic skills of communication, reading, and writing, and they demanded to be educated. This was the group of students who would influence the course of action the following year and create an atmosphere of fear, mistrust, and alienation.

On another occasion, during the half-yearly examination, an altercation broke out between a teacher and student. A Grade Eight student refused to hand in his exam paper. In his words: “I was joking with the Sir”. The teacher, an unqualified eighteen-year-old substitute who acknowledged that he “lost my temper”, threw a wooden chalkboard cleaner at the fifteen-year-old student. The projectile hit the student, gashing his head. A five-centimetre wound was created and blood squirted out, streaming down his white shirt. The student retaliated by hitting the teacher with a chair. He then ran out of the classroom, returned with a brick and aimed it at the teacher, hitting him squarely in the middle of the chest. The student then ran out

⁴⁹ Congress of South African Students, a national high school student organisation founded in May 1979. The organisation has a rich activist portfolio and participated in political and educational transformation (Badat 1999).

again, found a glass-bottle which he broke and attempted to make his way back to the class with the intention of stabbing the teacher. Before he could do so, he was apprehended by a security guard and taken away to the administration block. I did not witness this incident, but both student and teacher involved provided similar accounts as recounted here. The teacher was immediately taken into safe custody by his parents (a governing body member) to receive medical treatment. The student was detained in the office and his widowed mother called to school. The Principal offered his apologies and asked the mother how the school should deal with the matter. She asked that the school replace the blood-stained shirt as she was unable to afford a replacement. She then left with her son.

Interestingly, the Principal then asked me to counsel the student (but not the teacher!). When I inquired from the student about the rationale for attacking the teacher in three different ways, he replied that the chair and brick did not draw blood, "I wanted him to suffer the way I was suffering with the pain. He did not lose any blood."

In this incident between an *Indian* teacher and a *Black* student, the teacher erred by hitting the student but was not held accountable for his actions. He returned after a few days to continue teaching for the next five months. The incident was not reported to regional education officials, in other words, "the incident was hushed up" (Amethyst teacher). The student was perceived to be a "problem child who needs counseling" (Amethyst teacher). The role of the teacher in triggering the violent turn was overlooked and reconceptualised as another "example of the fears we as teachers face everyday at this school". This incident exemplifies the ways in which race influences interpretations, actions, and the management of the school. As one teacher indicated, "I guarantee you that if an *Indian* child had been cut open the police, lawyers, and trauma counsellors would have invaded the school. It might even have made the eight o' clock news", implying that the consequences differ, depending on the race of students involved in school violence. Poor, *Black* learners, without one or both parents, are more likely to be unjustly treated.

This incident provides insight into how lack of funding plays itself out in schools in a similar situation to Amethyst. Not in a viable position to hire qualified staff, Amethyst resorted to "cheap labour" (Amethyst teacher), employing an eighteen-year-old ex-student, untrained to handle students in a complex context.

On the one hand these incendiary incidents appeared to legitimise the Principal's overriding concern for safety. On the other hand, it is indicative of how it can be deployed to justify inaction, masking fear of physical harm, fear of being accused of racism, and covering up instances of institutional racism.

When data production began in 2003, the school's enrollment was markedly different from the apartheid era, with about forty percent of learners living at distances of fifteen kilometres or more from the school and *Black* students comprising approximately seventy-two percent of the school population. The sharp divide of race and class was now deeply embedded in relationships between students and teachers, but with many of the older, militant students exiting the education system, there was an optimism that "things are getting better" (Amethyst teacher).

Conclusion

The preceding crucial descriptions frame the study context, *albeit* of selected historical slices and structures. The description, I must remind you, is an integral component of the ontological frame of this study. It allows a reader: to get historicised, contextualised, and localised understandings of the experiences of teachers and students of Amethyst. To state it another way, Amethyst can be seen as a school, startlingly similar to other institutions in the country, yet significantly different and unique. It is a crucial description of an institution with its own identity and institutional life. It also serves as a first-level analysis of the research site from a critical perspective. Most important, from the description of the school (as a precursor of exploring *teachers' knowing*) four categories of *knowing* have emerged: race, class, culture, and teachers' work in situations of adversity. Let me elaborate.

Since the fall of apartheid the relative *stability* of the school's first decade of existence has been jarred by the rapid and extensive transformation within its boundaries and outside its perimeter fence. Whilst students' profiles have changed, mainly from middle-class to low-class, and from *Indian* to *Black*, the class and race structures of the teaching corps remain unchanged. The differences in class and race are further complicated by the different cultures and worldviews of new enrollments at Amethyst, creating two polarised groups, constituting "us" and "them" in a variety of permutations: *Black* and *Indian*; pro-apartheid supporters and anti-apartheid supporters of school

arrangements; teachers and students; management and teachers; and original inhabitants and new settlers in Nirvana.

It appears that political change has not only impacted on Amethyst in terms of student enrollments, it has worsened the financial standing of the school and teachers' working conditions. Not only is the school struggling to meet its expenditure requirements each month, teachers have to teach larger classes with fewer resources. By 2003, student enrollment increased by 63% with just a 26% increase in teachers. As a result, classrooms are crammed with students whilst rooms lie empty because there are not enough teachers to occupy vacant rooms. Change has also been accompanied by violent clashes between staff and students, and amongst students as reported by participants. Furthermore, the school and staff have been assailed by burglaries and crime on school premises, depleting stocks of the few irreplaceable (due to lack of funds) resources used for teaching and learning. For both teachers and students, Amethyst is a challenging environment.

The foregoing description of the context of Amethyst may be summarised as a series of problematics for schooling. **Problematic management**, that is, the organisational structure of the school and leadership style of the Principal of the school are seen as confounding factors, worsening the conditions of teaching and learning. **Problematic policies**, buttressed by democratic principles, have enabled the erasure of apartheid legislation, freedom of movement, access to education, teacher employment practices, and curriculum restructuring. However, it has also made teaching more challenging in worsening conditions, quite the opposite of what was expected of democratic change by the community of Amethyst. **Problematic interactions**, particularly between teachers and students, have led to a number of explosive altercations dividing the school along racial, cultural, class, and generational lines.

The preceding accounts demonstrate that a "thick description" of Amethyst allows one to debunk common-sense understandings of schools and when combined with a critical agenda that rejects the notion of "neutral observation language" (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:4), then presenting an objective presentation of reality can be debunked. Amethyst exemplifies how a school is not an island, even if its location within a sharply defined space, skirted with boundary walls and fences, creates the impression of an

island. The institution is surrounded by social, political, economic, and cultural seas. Just as an island, cannot prevent waves from washing its shores and leaving behind residue from the sea, Amethyst too cannot prevent sociopolitical and cultural seepage to influence its functioning. Seepage from past political ideologies interject as racialised discourses; the political reorganisation of the state influences the organisation of the school, the policies it implements, and the conflicts that arise from political change. Economic disparities, a structural feature of apartheid, has morphed, re-emerged, and deepened the stratifications and disparate worldviews of those who enter and exit the school daily. Cultural differences are visible and manifest in what is taught and promoted at Amethyst.

The case of Amethyst reflects powerfully how a critical interpretation exposes the past as a resident in the present. The historical influences of racism and classicism on the politics of education – in combination with fiscal constraint, poverty, democracy, migration, and assimilationist strategies - has resulted in a complicated set of conditions for Amethyst. It is within the space of Amethyst that *teachers' knowing* about students has been placed under research scrutiny. Space is, in the words of Foucault (1984b:252), “fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power”.

This chapter concludes part two of the dissertation which is the foundational knowings of this study. We know about knowing as a concept, how two sets of data were produced, and we know the context in which *teachers' knowing* for this study emerged. This leads to part three: the exploration of *teachers' knowing*.



PART THREE: EXPLORING KNOWING

Part three is the largest of the four parts of this thesis: the exploration of teachers' knowing from a paradigmatic standpoint. It comprises four chapters: teachers' stories, analysis of teachers' stories, students' stories, and analysis of students' stories (refer to shaded section of Fig. 1).

PART ONE Knowing the Study	1 Knowing about researching knowing			
PART TWO Knowing Foundations	2 Knowing literature	3 Knowing methodology	4 Knowing study context	
PART THREE Exploring Knowing	5 Knowing teachers	6 Exploring teachers' knowing	7 Knowing students	8 Disrupting teachers' knowing
PART FOUR Knowing about Knowing	9 Knowing teachers' knowing			

Fig. 1 Organisation of Thesis

Teachers' stories are dealt with before students' stories for two reasons: the study is an exploration of teachers' knowing, not of the students, and it enables readers to experience teachers' knowing about students, and about working at Amethyst from their perspectives. Students' knowing follows thereafter to allow for a nuanced understanding beyond the relativistic positioning of teachers. It is only through the disruption of teachers' knowing by students, that the thesis proposed in part four emerges in the way that it does (and also because of the post-structural turn the thesis takes).

Both sets of stories are re-presentations from a single data source, teachers' stories from interviews and students' stories from their short autobiographical essays. Some details from teachers' stories have been excised whilst students' stories have been edited (grammatical and spelling errors). Though edited, the re-presentations retain the original statements and words of both sets of participants.

In terms of the presentation of stories and analysis, chapters five and six are mirrored in chapters seven and eight. The presentation of both sets of stories is to enable readers to experience participants' accounts before the stories are fragmented for analysis. It is the space reserved for participants' voices to emerge in the way that Vithal (2003) intended, that is, as crucial descriptions, so that the analysis that follows can be critiqued.

The analysis, in chapters six and eight, unfolds in three steps (see Fig. 8 for a diagrammatic representation). Step one is a descriptive analysis of teachers' stories with fragments from the stories captioning the discussion. Step two is a critical interpretation and analysis of the data: a localised, historicised, and contextualised understanding of teachers' knowing. This step is both necessary and crucial because it is the paradigmatic link to and perspective from a critical positioning. It opens up teachers' knowing so that the nature of teachers' knowing can be identified. Finally, step three moves the analysis to a theoretical level by linking the critical discussion to literature on knowing.

THEME		STEP ONE	STEP TWO
WAYS OF KNOWING		Solicited knowing	Critical commentary
		Unsolicited knowing	Critical commentary
		Common knowing	Critical commentary
	STEP THREE	Critical connections to knowing	
		STEP ONE	STEP TWO
KINDS OF KNOWING		Gendered knowing	Critical commentary
		Raced knowing	Critical commentary
		Classed knowing	Critical commentary
		Cultural knowing	Critical commentary
		Professional knowing	Critical commentary
	STEP THREE	Critical connections to knowing	

Fig. 8 Organisation and Presentation of the Analysis

CHAPTER 5

Knowing Teachers: Teachers' Stories

Introduction

This chapter is the first of four which make up part three of the thesis dealing with the analysis of data. In previous chapters I discussed how the study was designed and the ethnographic roots underpinning the inquiry, followed by the sociopolitical and cultural context of the study. This chapter is primarily about the stories teachers related about the students they teach. I present the data generated in this chapter in the form of eight stories. The stories, obtained from an extensive and intensive interview with each teacher, are re-presented here. These stories candidly shared by teachers capture their thoughts, emotions, thinking, perceptions, and conceptions of students at school, in their homes, what they are like, and what they do. I re-present these narratives as data, which will be analysed in the next chapter.

Teachers' stories

The stories in this chapter represent *teachers' knowing* as it emerged from interviews. However, the stories are not unproblematic presentations, there is an acknowledgement that this is a non-neutral re-presentation by virtue of the choices made to include some parts of the interviews and to exclude others. It is not my intention to reproduce the debates about the "ideology of representation" (Morrow 1991:161), or the problematics of constructing and re-presenting narratives (see e.g. Kincheloe 1997; Lincoln 1997; Polkinghorne 1988; 1997; Tierney 1997), but to signal that the issues of crafting of teachers' stories is discussed in chapter three, and that the stories captured here are in no way derived from a "theory unconscious writing" (Welch 1987). The silenced researcher voice in this chapter emerges explicitly in the critical commentaries of the next chapter when *teachers' knowing* about students is analysed.

The teachers' stories re-presented in this chapter can be regarded as situated *knowing*. Firstly, teachers are **situated in schools** and the theoretical knowledge derived from professional training is shaped by school practices, by colleagues at school, and the school context. Though all schools are similar in some respects, they are also markedly

unique, and it is these unique peculiarities that influences *teachers' knowing* in unique ways. Secondly, teachers are social beings **situated within social networks** and their interactions with persons outside the school context also impact on how they experience teaching at Amethyst. Thirdly, teachers are **situated in personal biographies**. Their particular perspective of *knowing* students is influenced by their backgrounds in terms of race, class, gender, culture and ways of life.

These stories need to be read against the contextual descriptions provided in the preceding chapter. Working in tough spaces, in conditions of trauma, teachers have to teach children who possess strategic knowledge of the new political ethos and their role as marginals in social and economic spaces. We are informed about what it means to teach at Amethyst, and more importantly, about how and what they know about students. But, I leave it to readers to know students from teachers' perspectives, in their own words, from their own experiences, before these stories are fragmented for the purposes of analysis.

Knowing teachers' knowing about students: teachers' stories

Veronica

Most of the learners at Amethyst come here because they cannot afford the fees at other schools. They come to school to get away from their poverty-stricken homes. Most of them live in shacks. They don't have water, electricity and toilet facilities. They really don't come for education itself. You find that only about fifty percent of them come for education. The school is a place to use the facilities. I have asked many students why they come to school. Many of them have told me that they come not to learn but to have a seat, to have light, to do some sort of thing. It's quite shocking because the school fees is not that much and they get a chance to educate themselves but they're not looking at that. It's a pity that the government doesn't realise why these kids are in school; they think that the kids are coming here for an education. (VT1)⁵⁰

⁵⁰ This represents a referencing code for analysis purposes. The code comprises three alphanumeric symbols. The first indicates the initial letter of the participant's name, the second, a letter ("T" in this chapter and "S" in

The learners are having a good time in school, just being with their friends. I have heard that some of these learners are involved in hi-jacking (car jacking) and drug dealing. They come from bad environments. They bring their lifestyle into the school. They smoke zoll (marijuana) and they come stinking into class. I report it to the Principal. The police come and investigate but it continues. These kids feel trapped some students have this influence that they feel they can't resist – sometimes because of the threats and because of peer pressure. They are influenced by peer pressure and their parents don't give them guidance to say this is wrong and that is right. They listen to friends because friends become their family. They are poverty-stricken so they feel they have to do it. (VT2)

A major problem is that we cannot use corporal punishment. Because of the rules and the laws we have been given, we cannot hit a child even if the child hits us. That is the first thing the Principal told me when I came to this school: that I cannot use corporal punishment of any form. Learners should be trying to better their lives in school, trying to be doctors, lawyers. Most of them are so intelligent. They just don't know their capabilities. Race does not prevent anyone from doing well. In fact looking at our country, Africans have more opportunities now. The Africans are as good as the Indians academically. (VT3)

There is much racial tension. In most classes Blacks sit on one side and Indians on the other. I try to integrate them but they go back to their places. They just don't want to be together. They label each other. (VT4)

We need programmes so that Indians can integrate with African kids at a personal level. Teachers should know that children are very sensitive, need to communicate more, we tend to know their background but we do not really understand their backgrounds. Understanding the background will make teaching easier. But there are no opportunities to learn about learners' backgrounds because the department has no programs for teachers. But teachers don't know because they don't get involved with the learners. I understand the kids because I get to know them personally. Some are arrogant and don't respond to kindness. They are disruptive just to get some attention. (VT5)

Farida

At this school there is no place to keep valuables safe. It is a common thing for belongings like a textbook, coats, and bags to get stolen. For example a teacher's cell-phone was stolen. All pupils knew who stole the phone yet they stood by each other – nobody was prepared to speak out. Last year about eight students tried to sell me stolen phones. (FT1)

They come to school because education is not a priority – the learning aspect does not draw them, but the social aspect of being with their friends. You'll notice that attendance is higher at times when they are not doing any work. Homework is given, but it is not done. There is very little that we can do as they don't fear anything. It is very frustrating. (FT2)

A good teacher is someone who goes beyond academic teaching and assists pupils. But we need to be compassionate, tolerant, patient, and approachable as well. They don't have parents who are role-models and give advice. As teachers we need to be kind and understanding in certain situations but also to discipline. You have to be nurses, social workers, and parents. We need to know the learners, know everything about them whether they have food, clothing, and shelter. I know some teachers say it is not our problem but I think it is. (FT3)

The kids have very negative attitudes, but now I know the reasons: they have no parents to instill manners. Hunger, being beaten-up and bad behaviour is the result. So how can we reach them? So it is our duty to do the things that are missing and, they do change if we show caring. We have to understand. (FT4)

Some teachers are not sensitive; they are older and have been here for years. They seem to cope by indifference. They have changed because they tried to solve the kids' problems and failed. It would not be fair to say they have given up on helping, sometimes it is a psychological thing– they don't want to be involved as it is emotionally draining. I take food everyday but it is not fair to expect that everyone has to do it. It's a huge responsibility in terms of time and money I have family support to make sandwiches etc. I come from a very restricted, but privileged social environment. (FT5)

We are so different from the kids we teach. We discipline in the same way we discipline our own children at home. These kids will not tell you that they can't afford books or pens. It's not always true that they are forgetful or naughty, they are just too poor. Some

teachers just lay out the rules and they accept no excuses; they don't understand these learners. It's a huge challenge. (FT6)

If I was the Principal I would have to be very strong in management. I will not sit the office- I will do whatever it takes and face the problems head on. I would find solutions like bringing in other professionals constantly. I would make my presence felt. Staff needs help and development with how to deal with kids taking drugs – AIDS and rape. These are common problems. Children abscond and some action against these pupils must be taken. Kids are here, but not in the class. We need to monitor them and get them in the class. Connect with parents, speak to them. When they find out later that the child was absent for a long time the parents sit in shock. If I were the Principal I will contact them sooner, not when the problem has reached a critical point. (FT7)

Saras

When I came to this school it was a culture shock. Many discipline problems. Kids are absent and abscond from class. We have to go looking for them and bring them back to class. I cried everyday for the first week. Now I am more used to them and find it more rewarding. Here it's a huge effort just to get them to pass. Here they are very weak. (ST1)

Most of them live in the squatter settlement behind the school. Most of them don't have parents. They come from very poor socioeconomic backgrounds. Eighty percent of them live on their own. I know of cases where the social workers pay grandparents for feeding, shelter, and clothing. These people keep the money and throw the kids out. There are so many sad cases at this school. Kids come to you with stories of being raped. Boys' bus fares have been stolen and the conductors throw them off the bus. They are involved in the drug trade and nothing has been done. (ST2)

This is a problematic school. Everyone knows what's happening. Bad management is not willing to take a stand. I see from my class drug-taking and gambling taking place. They do it openly because it is tolerated here. The Principal says that it is dangerous for us and that it is part of their culture. Drugs are sold. Indian kids don't do it openly, but Black kids are

brazen. Indian girls have a drinking problem. Black kids are dealers and users, but Indian kids mainly support the sale of drugs. (ST3)

The Principal locks himself behind burglar-bars. He prefers not to know what is happening. He believes that if we take a stand they will storm the school with guns. I don't believe the learners will do this. There are a few, but by and large, parents don't know what is happening and I don't think they will allow the school to be burnt. But we need to bring in the cops more often. Even if they have no parents they have to have some guardian because when they register they come with a guardian. The Principal is just allowing things to happen. Some drug dealers are very bright but their mood changes when they take drugs. (ST4)

I had a girl who was withdrawn, quiet, staying away, crying. Finally I brought someone to speak to her and she confided that she was raped by two outsiders. We don't have counsellors so how do we help those who need professional intervention? Rape is common amongst these kids. During the fun run a male pupil raped a girl – it was kept very quiet. Her father came with a gun. The teachers calmed him down and promised to look into the matter. The child didn't return. She told her parents, not the school. Pregnancy is common. Currently five girls in my class, about 15 years old, have children. Every class has a few. I know this because they tell us or they bring the kids to school. I know many boys have fathered kids. But the boys refuse to take the responsibility. The friends of boys will generally tell us that they have children. Girls hide when they are pregnant, but tell you later. Boys boast to their friends when the girl is pregnant and then the friends tell us that they have fathered kids. It's sad because the girls have to deal with it on their own. The pregnancy rate may be higher but many just drop out of school. There have been teachers who were attacked. A teacher was hijacked, and another was threatened with a knife by school pupils. (ST5)

Pranitha

This school is very different. The children are so different now. I'm teaching for about three years. This is my third school. Most of children are not academically inclined. I haven't been to schools that are affluent but the children's background here is terrible– uncultured.

The standard is very low. I can't see them going to tertiary study. They show no interest in the curriculum. They can't associate with it. (PT1)

Many have problems on the domestic front, family problems, not living with parents, very poor. Most parents are unemployed. Parents take drugs and most of students are also on drugs. You can notice this from their attitude, they are very naughty, talkative, and they'll do something wrong. (PT2)

When I have problems I speak to my HOD who'll tell me that that child's parents are on drugs. We speak in the staffroom. Sometimes I see signs of domestic violence, injuries that the students have. I ask them and they open up and tell what happened to them. One of the things we have to do for our form classes is to enquire about the children's backgrounds, their parents' employment, their religion and so on. You can learn a lot from that. (PT3)

In one incident an Indian child had a deep cut on her hand. She told me that she came home late and her father came to her with a knife. She tried to block it and it cut her hand. I wanted to take it up but she begged me not to because he gives her mother a hard time and would beat them all up. Others don't open up. But she told me a lot. (PT4)

The Blacks are so used to violence, for them it comes as part of life. They are neglected when it comes to food, education, dress, and hygiene. They are bright students. Thirty percent are very bright. Some are just not interested. They lack general knowledge. Their learning is very restricted because of restricted exposure. (PT5)

Indian kids are very bright but Black children have problems because of social problems. I know of another Indian child. Her mum is always walking around on the street looking for a job. She always tries to sell whatever she can but she is a bit of a problem-maker. Her father is an alcoholic. Yet this child is an extrovert and comes across as a happy child. She is very artistic and creative. You would never know about the problems at home. (PT6)

I don't give assignments or homework as they are not interested in homework. I rather give group work. We do lots of drama. In my learning area you can see their talent – they are very talented and I am talking about all the learners. They love dancing, music, and acting. They are so different. Socially they just come alive. OBE gives them a chance to show their full potential. (PT7)

Navin

The biggest problem facing our school at the present moment is to get learners into class on their own. Often we are forced to chase them into the class. There are many reasons why the kids are not in the classroom. It has to do with parental discipline, discipline at home. They are not made to understand and value education, and the other reason could be that these kids are coming from schools where they have been kicked out, where no work has been done in the classroom, expecting the same atmosphere in this school. So they haven't really been disciplined to go to class, to listen, to do what the educators want them to do. It is not that they are not thirsty for education. The whole concept of education is like going into a shop and buying a loaf of bread. They don't believe that if you are to get educated that they have to do things and to do things they have to get into the class and follow the instruction that they are asked to do by the teachers. I think they find that the moment the teacher is less strict, they seem to take advantage. (NT1)

The other issue is, if you tend to give them a lot of work, they won't do the work and they won't attend classes. It's a common problem among all of them. So it's a fine line between being strict but not strict enough; strict in the sense that these learners need to be nurtured with small amounts of work that they can handle and that they can enjoy doing. I find that with my own experience. Initially I used to end up being frustrated when I gave them work. I was operating at a level that was very high for their intellect and they couldn't make head or tail of what was happening. But now I realise, I have to give them the same amount of work in small doses. You start with the very simple work, and you progressively increase the intensity, but over a longer period of time. (NT2)

Usually from the time of enrolment, we seem to gain a lot of knowledge about learners. Most of these learners come from single-parent homes, probably living with their mothers. Few of them know who their real fathers are. Few of those learners actually live with their mothers, and their mothers aren't able to supervise their work after school and to see whether they are coming to school on a regular basis. Many of these mothers are working as domestic maids or in factories and some of them are living far away from the school where their children are attending. So these learners are living with their relatives and, from my

discussions with them, I've come to realise that these boys and girls are highly abused. (NT3)

We have had girls in Grade Eleven, some of them getting up as early as four in the morning, doing the complete house-work until seven and only dressing-up and coming to school after that. When they return home after school, they have to wash the clothes, cook the meals, and have everything ready, and by the time they are finished they don't have time to study. So if you look at it critically, among them, there is a high degree of exploitation. The teacher can guide and do a certain amount of work, then they have to work on their own. These learners cannot cope because they don't have the time at their disposal. Then also there are living conditions, many of them are living under terrible, pathetic conditions in the squatter settlements, and they don't even have a chair to sit on. (NT4)

I know of a girl, Thandi, in my class who is depressed. She lives with her brother and sister. Her parents are late, probably died of Aids. For her to come to school, she is forced to have a boyfriend who is a policeman, because her brother and her sister, although they are at work, they don't give her any money. When her brother comes home from work, all the lights must be off with the result she finds it absolutely difficult to study. So her boyfriend gives her money to buy candles so that she can study, as well as have money to come to school, to cloth herself, and have pocket-money. She also told me that her sister gets drunk and abuses her, to the level that she even hits her with a sjambok (**leather strap**), and she showed me the marks. Even if they are not inclined to be romantically involved it becomes a question of survival. (NT5)

There was another case that I had this week, where a girl in Grade Ten, Agnes, came to me. She told me that her mother actually boiled a pot of water and wanted to throw it at her. She has been abused everyday from the time she can remember. The mother gets drunk and takes out all her frustration and the mother told her straight that they are so poor that she should get fat and leave school and go to Point Road, so that they can be rich, in other words, to become a prostitute. But she is very interested in being educated. (NT6)

We have to be very cautious when you report cases of abuse, because as educators and the school, we do not want to get the brunt of the community. If you look at the situation in which our school is situated, for this community of abusers to come and attack the educators,

as well as to burn down our school buildings, can just be done in a matter of a few hours.
(NT7)

What I've been doing, in consultation with the Principal, I have asked these learners to contact the welfare authorities. We also inform them of clinic dates, and often also have given learners telephone numbers of the department of welfare, because if it works through their people, it is much safer than we as a person of another race taking the onus onto us. Immediately they would look at it as though we are being racist. So you've got to be very cautious when you handle issues like this. So with that we seem to have found some success, because I did speak to Thandi and apparently the social work department has contacted her parents and they are already making means to get her relocated to a place of safety. The same with Agnes, she is very keen, and I have told them that what ever happens to them that they should not give up their quest for education. These are two learners who are determined, but there are other learners who are just as determined, but who don't have the mind to do it.
(NT8)

Many of them feel that if they report their parents, they are disloyal, so they prefer to be abused. With the result many of them are forced to leave school. We tend to lose a lot of children because of this abuse and this is what many educators tend not to understand. We as educators have a mindset, where we feel that if a learner is not doing his or her work, that the learner is damn lazy. We are not willing to look beyond that, and say that there must be a problem. (NT9)

Girls and boys do not have similar problems. Boys are much more lazier than the girls. Because of the lack of parental guidance, these boys tend to stray, hanging around street corners, smoking, drugging, drinking and many of them get involved in petty thefts and also we have at school some of our learners who have been involved in car-theft and hijacking. So I think that the problem with the boys has got to do more with the siblings, when they go home all the girls have set chores. (NT10)

With the boys, they are left free, there's no mother, the mother is at work, and often the fathers are not around, because the fathers have left the mothers when the children were young. So the boys are just doing what they want, there is no guidance. I think any learner from the formative years, from the time boys go to school until the time that they are about

16 or 17, they need to have very strict discipline. So what happens is these boys resort to all sorts of unwanted habits and with the result that becomes more exciting to them than their schoolwork. (NT11)

The problem is mainly with boys but you can turn them around. For example, one chap who has been a car thief and a car hijacker, I have been able to turn him around in the last three years. And now he realises that getting money the easy way is not the best way, and he is doing Grade Eleven this year. There is another fellow who was also doing that and he has changed as well. They openly discussed it and they could confide in me. And they knew that if they confide in me that it will remain with me I wouldn't go and report them, but my goal was not to get them arrested, I mean although they have been arrested, my intentions were to change their mindset about stealing things and being dishonest. (NT12)

I know all the thugs here, but they know that they can trust in me, because I believe you can befriend them. One thing that I have found that works miracles with the boys, and even the girls, is getting them into your own space. Like the boys, if you use simple words like "Hello my friend. How are you?", automatically the respect is there. They know that you are caring, even the girls, "Hello my darling", with no intention, as an endearment, and you realise that they tend to open up because these are terms they are not accustomed to. They are not treated like human beings in their own society. In their own society they are bullied. So I think that if you know how to handle these people, you can get a lot of work done. (NT13)

You know a lot of our teachers shout at them and one thing that the learners of today don't like is when you are shouting at them constantly or nagging them. Teachers say they don't have time but with the new system of teaching, if you have a 55-minute lesson period, no teacher can teach for 55 minutes. You teach for about 30 minutes and for 20-25 minutes you set them work. And that gives you enough time to supervise their work as well as to counsel one or two of them at a time. Do that four times a week and you would have helped between four and eight learners in just one week. (NT14)

Tara

Most of the kids are not with their parents. They are with guardians or family. They are not even from around here. They come from outside this area. Only the Indian kids have their parents. Most of the Black kids are not with their parents. If you want to see a parent the kids will tell you, "My mother is working", or, "My mother can't come from the farm". Recently we had a child whose parents are from the Western Cape. He is living with guardians here. What he does is get dressed for school, take his lunch and books and get on the bus but he doesn't come to school. He was going elsewhere. I didn't know how to contact his parents. Fortunately they phoned to check his progress and I asked them if he was ill because he hadn't been to school for three weeks. They came over and made some excuse that he finds it very difficult to find his way to school. His parents are oblivious that he is not interested in school. His guardians can't handle him. (TT1)

I found you reach a point after which there is nothing you can do. You are blocked by parents or family, or guardians or the child. Sometimes even by the Principal or the teachers. There is some indication that it is none of your business because once you get involved you are committed. There are some repercussions. How can I tell parents that they are at fault? They always offer some psychological excuse. We know those that these kids take drugs; they smell, their eyes are bloodshot, and you can even smell alcohol. The kids know that Indian teachers are scared. I am terrified and that restricts me from getting involved. Our lives are in danger. Someone actually told me, "Don't come and change the culture of this school" – it was offered like advice. Teacher training has been inadequate to prepare for South African schools. (TT2)

In another instance two students were fighting over a pair of scissors. When the teacher tried to intervene, they attacked her. Fortunately, some students prevented the teacher from getting stabbed. So these are things we deal with on a daily basis. Some kids are prone to violence and we have to get to know that. That's why we need guidance counsellors. It's not important that they do well academically – they need help with social and cultural aspects. (TT3)

We can try our best to make them academically inclined but they are just not interested. They are to blame for their own failure. They are more interested in drugs and

romances. They have no guidelines: no-one telling what is wrong or right. They are independent: they make their own decisions and follow their own minds. Being young in this place is problematic. They want you to be their friend. That is okay but then you find they challenge you all the time. They enjoy the subject when teaching, but classroom discipline becomes a problem the moment the teaching ends and they have to work on their own. (TT4)

I am here for eight years. Over the years we sifted out the riff raffs. There was a time when it was unbearable. Now the pupils are decent. Now only a handful is ill-mannered. Their interest is lacking in schoolwork. They fail simple subjects. You know there are some subjects you can learn from the notebook and pass, but still they fail. They disrupt the entire class, they feel they want attention, but I can get that under control. But you can sense the peer pressure to behave badly, to fit in with not studying. Over time peer pressure gets to them. They perform well in Grade Ten, but in Grade Eleven they start failing due to romantic liaisons. They lose interest. They look at you with blank faces when you teach. Sometimes I wonder if I taught. Some are arrogant. That drives me up the wall. (TT5)

When we came into the new order we became deskilled, we were not trained for coping with apartheid baggage. How do you fill in this gap? We don't have the time. How do we help them? Some kids are doing subjects for the first time in Grade Eleven – never did it before, not even in primary school. Now we have to fill the gap and the syllabus suffers. At the end of the year we have to answer for the bad results. Its not that we weren't working but we were getting them up to speed. At this school some people will rehearse the exam papers. The kids will do well and the teachers will be praised. Now I am a bad teacher. (TT6)

Last year I came to do tuition on a Saturday and I was held up and had a knife held up to my neck. They took my cell-phone and my purse, and my gold chain was yanked from my neck. The Principal did not even mention it at the staff meeting. My life was in danger and the Principal did nothing. There is no value for our lives. He sits in the office with the door locked. He is not exposed to danger. This is a no-win situation. The system makes you hard, to lose your humanity. I used to do so much beyond the call of duty but that incident has stopped everything. You can't wear jewellery to school. You want to help the learners but you have to be wary and alert to danger all the time. The sad part is that the office did not

acknowledge my extra efforts. That's the main reason, I think, that the incident made up my mind not to do the extra bit. You know, everyone needs a pat and it is so disheartening not to be recognised. All of us need some praise. (TT7)

This is a new lot. I'm getting to know them, but I don't teach them, which is such a pity. Generally, I encourage competition. I like to inspire them to be the best. Even for school fees I handle them tactfully. I tell them that I know their problems, but the school fees are due. And I tell them about getting a Friday off from school if everyone pays their fees. I make them aware like when I see them at the tuck-shop I don't single them out; I speak to them as a unit and just mention that I noticed people buying, but they haven't paid school fees. I don't demand fees. (TT8)

They come from very diverse backgrounds. I know of one child who has so many problems. The parents are separated and there is drinking and abuse in the home. The parents' separation affects her performance. I called her mother about her heavy absenteeism and she promised she will send her to school, but that did not happen. The father wants them back – he promised to stop drinking. Children are pawns of their parents. Some don't have dads. About twenty-nine children in my class are not living with their parents. Sometimes there is no contact with parents. The contact numbers I have are either incorrect, or changed, or the wrong numbers are given. Sometimes we cannot even contact the parents in an emergency. This one child had a very bad nose bleed. We could not contact the parents – we have to follow the law about contacting parents for medical attention. I did my bit but you never know whether to take action or not because of not being able to make contact. (TT9)

The school day is so short. How do I find time to get information? I get to know them by talking to them. I always tell them that they can confide in me. But everyone does not respond. Sometimes I get it directly from children. Sometimes someone else will tell you. For example when you talk to Nitasha everything comes across as hunky-dory. She lives in a one-room house with her aunt. At one time she had no place to stay – her mother asked me if I could let her stay with me. Her mother couldn't keep her, her father didn't want her, but she dresses so neatly, so extrovert, so intelligent so how will we know? Okay, in this case the mother told me, but what about others? Sometimes you feel you have to be a mind-reader.

Some times learners confide in me, but they don't want anyone else to know – because other teachers react differently. I have to respect that. (TT10)

Sometimes we share experiences in the staffroom. There was a time when we felt we were gossiping about the learners in the staffroom, but lately, because of the divisions in the staff, they are more consumed by staff issues. The pressure of teaching is so much and now we have to watch our backs. The place is not good to work in. This context is very frustrating. There are so many cliques here. Staffroom lot, library lot, neutral lot who are not, they just don't declare their support. We have the pro-Principal lot, the anti-Principal lot, and the I-am-not-part-of-this-staff lot. There is so much bickering and people make it their mission to hound and make others miserable. It's terrible here, not because of the learners, because of poor management and staff division. (TT11)

Gerald

I came from a school that was well organised with good quality results. I'm equipped with the best possible skills, great ideas from practical experience, academic training, and good management exposure but I came to realise that this school was another ball game altogether in terms of organisational structure and learner profiles. So all my strengths just fell away. I had to start learning from scratch again. (GT1)

In 2000 this wasn't like a school. People just walked in and out, smoked and drank and did what they liked. When managers would try to do something, you were targeted. You'd be walking and something would be thrown at you. They did it mainly as a warning. They would aim at you from the upper floors. There is a constant threat of injury and violence aimed at teachers. You have to learn what your boundaries are in handling learners. They don't confront you directly but when your back is turned, they throw things at you. (GT2)

To discipline those I don't teach, I just monitor by my visibility. They stop whenever they see us. For example, if we see learners are smoking, we just approach them and they run away down the banks. We can't follow of course, because they disappear into the community because all this- taking drugs, drinking, stealing, and smoking is promoted within the

community. The way I approach it is during the science lessons, doing it academically and giving them scientific facts. But we don't know how to control this type of behaviour. Perhaps only the police can handle these problems. The element of danger is always there. (GT3)

The classroom is my domain, the one place where I can take control. I demand discipline and I am consistent. To maintain discipline doesn't need strength or special training – be consistent, set rules that you uphold, don't use threats. I identify specific learners and speak to them individually and ask reasons for bad behaviour. Because when you speak to the whole class they think you are talking to others and not to them. (GT4)

Learners come from different kinds of backgrounds. They have no role-models, parents are not academically inclined. They look to teachers for guidance. I know of two learners who smoke dagga everyday especially at the end of the day. They hang around after school then I realised they were looking for someone to chat. The language barrier is there but we spoke about smoking– so you see they reach out and you have to respond. Give them a thought or hope for tomorrow. Be someone for them – but do not to get too involved. (GT5)

I don't get to know learners very well – I do get confused with names very easily. I cannot associate a name with the child. What is going on in their homes I don't get involved in that. In the class I do the job and if anything from outside the class needs attention, I keep away from it, but I do speak in general about how people can grow up and do better than where they come from. You can't raise your voice to reprimand. Learners immediately think of the race dimension. Are you singling them out? Are you screaming at them because of their race? So it has become very complicated to deal with learners. (GT6)

Bernice

I regard myself as a professional and as a professional I have a piece of work to do and that is to educate these kids. I have engaged in a lot of disciplinary enrichment. I furthered my studies, I've attended numerous workshops, seminars and staff development programmes. I regard myself as a highly skilled and developed educator. I can tell, quite honestly, my lessons are planned, executed, and assessed with precision. (BT1)

When the kids walk into my class they know what I expect. I get on with the lesson. There is no unnecessary chit-chat. I set the standards and I expect each and every one to achieve. I accept no excuses, I don't condone disrespect and ill-discipline. Everyone has to be punctual and show interest. I don't tolerate any nonsense. In class, teaching is of the highest priority. (BT2)

You see, I don't have to know my learners. I know myself and they have to conform, it is the only way to achieve. What does it help me to know them personally? I'm not interested. And if I were, where is the time to know them, their problems and life trials? I can't do anything about their life. My job is not to listen to their problems. (BT3)

I am a teacher. Everyone is equal and I treat them equally. In any case they always use emotional blackmail. I don't fall for their stories. All of us have had some difficulties in life. They must learn that that is life. They will have to find their own paths otherwise we are creating a culture of dependence on others to solve problems. My job is to provide them with skills to think, to find jobs, to become independent, and to accept life as it comes. (BT4)

I take my job very seriously. I spend hours and hours after school to get my paper work done. I sacrifice my personal time to give these kids a good education. I am definitely not going to sacrifice teaching time to getting to know them. In any case they will only allow me to know that which will benefit them – like why they come late to school, or why they can't do homework. (BT5)

Somehow my attitude works. They do my homework, they come on time to class and as you will note from my register, absenteeism is very low in my class. Maybe that says a lot. I don't know my kids and they do well. Others know the kids but the kids don't perform. I think that says everything. (BT6)

Conclusion

These eight re-presented stories represent *teachers' knowing* about students in this study. It is the first stage of analysis, a description of how teachers come to an understanding of their roles, functions, and work, at Amethyst.

Teachers knowing, the introduction suggested, is situated *knowing*: driven by the school's context, teachers interactions with people and personal experiences. From their descriptions, the reader gets a glimpse of the challenges they face at Amethyst. The present political, social, and economic conditions in the country have complicated their work in a school that once produced excellent student performances. Now it is a site of tensions, complications, and frustrations. The teachers are also situated in social networks that bring them into contact with students, their fellow-colleagues, school management, and sometimes, with parents. Through these networks they discover that the students who attend Amethyst have problematic backgrounds that are brought to school. Based on their personal experiences, the stories reveal that working at Amethyst has complicated their roles and functions, making the workplace untenable, and depriving them of professional satisfaction. Moreover, they have to deal with a multiplicity of challenges without structural support from the government. Indeed, a reading of teachers' stories might compel a sympathetic response leading to government-bashing, but that is not the focus of the study. The analysis, instead, is driven by a critical agenda to deepen understandings about the nature of *teachers' knowing*.

Read from a critical perspective, the stories are unpacked in terms of firstly, how teachers come to know. Their sources appear to be students, teachers, parents, and school managers. Secondly, what teachers know from these sources can be construed as gendered, raced, classed, cultural, and professional *knowing*. There is, undoubtedly, but not unexpected, a divide between teachers and the taught, emanating from differences in race, class, gender, culture, and the values of education. The peculiarities and complexities of the divide may be attributed to the impact of political transformation on schooling and teachers' work.

From teachers' accounts, one can derive through analysis, an understanding of what it means to teach, interact, monitor, counsel, and observe students, and through these processes how they know their students. It is important to remember that it is a *knowing* from teachers' perspectives, without being mediated by stories from students.

In the next chapter I present an analysis and interpretation of these stories, and in so doing, open up *teachers' knowing* to critical analysis.

CHAPTER 6

Teachers' Knowing About Students

Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of the agenda of part three to explore *teachers' knowing*. Earlier in part one of this dissertation, I introduced the study aims and objectives, and in part two, the literature underpinning this study, data production approaches, a thick description of the teaching context, details about teacher participants, and presented their stories. This chapter, the analysis of the stories derived from interviews, explores teachers' discursive accounts of how they come to know and what they come to know about students. The contents of the interviews were not necessarily prefaced with *how* and *what* they know. These two overarching themes, drawn from the stories, are my own construction: a consequence of reading the data to answer the research questions of this study. Hence, the analysis I present is one meaning-making endeavour of all possibilities of *teachers' knowing* about students from the data. My interpretation can be regarded, according to set theory, as one subset of the universal set, one amongst many possibilities not considered.

Two themes frame the analysis of *teachers' knowing*: how teachers know and what teachers know. The themes are not of equal weighting. There is far more data about what teachers' know about students, hence theme two is substantially lengthier than theme one. Theme one comprises of three ways of *knowing* and theme two, five kinds of *knowing*. Ways and kinds of *knowing* are derived directly, or are adapted quotes from teachers' stories. Words quoted from teachers' stories are in italics. In some cases, direct quotes have been manipulated for grammatical purposes, for example, small caps to replace capitals, and in those instances brackets indicate where this has occurred. Each way and kind of knowing is described from teachers' perspectives, followed by a critical commentary of that perspective. Each of these ways of *knowing* and kinds of *knowing* are explored in depth, supported with data from teachers' stories referenced in brackets. Moreover, some sections are accompanied by figures to obviate readers returning to the stories to read data, and to enable an interpretation of the data without cluttering the discussion with a list of quotes. A short line after the interpretative commentary, similar

to the line at the end of this paragraph, indicates the conclusion of the discussion of that segment of the theme. Where direct quotes are not included, the reference codes indicate the data sources⁵¹ alluded to.

The organisation and presentation of the analysis follows the explanation provided in the introduction to part three (see also Fig. 8).

THEME ONE: WAYS OF KNOWING

This theme is concerned with the ways in which teachers reveal **how** they are informed about students. Reading the stories with the research question uppermost in mind yielded three main ways of *knowing* about students, which are labelled **solicited** knowing, **unsolicited knowing**, and **common knowing**, followed by their analysis in this section.

Solicited knowing

One of the ways in which teachers get to know about student is by soliciting information. Soliciting is done in a number of ways such as asking students, talking to students, seeking biographical information, and sourcing information from parents and colleagues. Each of these modes are analysed hereunder:

⇒ ***I have asked students (VT1, PT3)***. Teachers get to know about students by asking. In an example given by Veronica, she asks students for the reasons they come to school. This question, seemingly, a benign inquiry related to education, provides unintentional access into students' out-of-school spaces because the personal cannot be separated from the educational, which in turn are linked to the socio-cultural and the political. From students' responses teachers become aware of the values students have for education, which are, in some instances, not what teachers expected to hear.

⇒ ***I get it directly from children (TT10)***. Sometimes teachers know students from information directly communicated to them. Information is not shared with all teachers,

⁵¹ The reference code comprises three alphanumeric symbols. As explained in chapter five, the first indicating the teacher, is represented by the initial letter of the teacher's name. The second is a capital letter 'T' indicating teacher and the third, a numeral, indicating the paragraph and source of data in the text.

but with some teachers, for example, Navin, who makes time during his teaching programme to counsel students (NT14). Information about students' lives is gleaned from these confidences. Getting information directly from students does not mean that it is always about the informant, because *sometimes someone else will tell you* (TT10), meaning that some *knowing* is based on hearsay information.

⇒ ***I get to know by talking to them*** (TT10). Veronica and Pranitha get to know students through initiating communication with students. According to Veronica, it is a way of *get(ting) to know (students) personally* (VT5), in other words, not only as learners, but as members of families and communities. By talking to students, teachers gather information about the occupations, pursuits, and functions of students' families, and peers.

⇒ ***We ... enquire about the children's backgrounds*** (PT3). Teachers get to know about students backgrounds by asking them about it. Enquiring about students' backgrounds is warranted by school protocol. At the beginning of each year, Amethyst teachers develop profiles of students, which are kept in their mark-books. Student profiles include names, gender, race, religion, home language, birthdates, home address, contact numbers and parents' employment details. This information is solicited from students, captured as written text and finally deployed as documentary evidence. Soliciting information about religious affiliation and parents' employment status is a legitimate route into students' private worlds.

⇒ ***I asked them (parents)*** (TT1). Sometimes the source of *knowing* comes via parents. In one instance, related by Tara, she asked a child's parents to explain their son's prolonged absences from school when they telephoned to enquire about their son's academic performance. The parents, who reside in another province hundreds of kilometres away, explained that their son was having difficulty adjusting to his new surroundings. Tara's experience indicates that asking parents does not always justify student behavior to teachers' satisfaction because parents protect their children by mak(ing) *some excuse* (TT1). In another case, Tara telephoned a parent (TT9) to ask about a girl's *heavy absenteeism*. From the conversation with the student's mother, she learns about the parent's separation and the way in which *children are pawns of their*

parents (TT9). These two examples demonstrate that teachers not only glean information about students, but about their parents as well.

⇒ *I speak to my HoD (PT3)*. Another way of *knowing* students is by asking peers for advice. When Pranitha faces problems with a student, she consults her head of department (HoD). From these interactions, she learns about students' home backgrounds and about their parents.

Critical commentary: solicited knowing

Solicited *knowing* is a proactive stance to elicit information about students directly from the concerned student or from others who teachers feel may be able to enlighten them. Rich sources of solicited *knowing* include asking students specific questions and school protocols which generate biographical information from students. The former sources of information elicited and then generalised as knowledge of students, or as *knowing* about students, depends on who is asked for information. Since all students choose not to answer questions, those who do, in a sense, speak for all. Not all parents are consulted by teachers, and those who are consulted, appear to represent all parents. By the same token, not all HoDs and teachers are consulted, and thus the information received is partial and incomplete. In the case of the latter, personal, individualised *knowing* about students is possible as students have to provide information about themselves. This information is captured in a written format and becomes official *knowing* about students. Through the mechanism of gathering information, students and parents/guardians can filter the information they volunteer. That this *knowing* may be suspect, as it is dependent on "truths" from sources who are the subjects constituting the document, escapes teachers, as is the process of turning utterances into documents. There is awareness, though, that not all information given is kosher, e.g. *the contact numbers I have are either incorrect or changed or the wrong numbers are given* (TT9), yet the information is relied on because it is the only information on hand and, furthermore, is a historically established school practice. *Knowing*, one can surmise, depends on writing it down. It is one of the ways students are known and yet, perhaps, not known.

Solicited *knowing* rests on entrenched hegemonic practices as questioning is a teacher's prerogative. Questioning is also a legitimate teaching strategy including the

expectation of responses from students. It is not surprising, therefore, that solicited *knowing* sources *teachers' knowing*.

Unsolicited knowing

Information volunteered by students, parents or their peers is an unsolicited means of *knowing* students, as illustrated hereunder.

⇒ ***I have heard from students' peers (VT2). Friends tell us (ST5).*** Veronica glean information about students through communication initiated by other students i.e. classmates, friends or contemporaries give information about peers. Via this unsolicited mode Veronica learns about students' illicit activities. Confirmation of information given to teachers comes through direct observation or other forms of evidence; for example, marijuana abuse (VT2) is apparent because Veronica can smell it on students as smoking smells penetrate clothing and hair and is palpable long after the deed has been committed. Teachers also get to know about students' relationships with their peers and blood relatives and about activities they pursue in and out of school. Friends sometimes provide teachers with details about students' personal lives or behaviours. It is through this source that teachers get to know, for example, that schoolboys at Amethyst *have fathered kids* (ST5).

⇒ ***They confide in me (NT12).*** In other instances, students confide in teachers because the problems they face are serious and they have no one else to turn to. Students guide teachers as to the kind of interventions they require. The student who confided in Pranitha expected empathy, not actions like contacting parents or welfare officials, whilst in the case related to Navin he was able to direct the girl to a social agency to assist her. These cases provide insight into the dynamics of poverty-stricken families and how young girls are expected to contribute to family income.

⇒ ***Her father came with a gun to school (ST5).*** Information sometimes becomes known through the actions of fathers. For example, teachers learn about the rape of a girl a day after it happened when her father stormed into school armed with a gun. The teachers were not aware of the incident because the victim opted not to report the incident

to school personnel. They only become aware of the incident because her father chose to deal with the matter in the way that he did.

⇒ ***The mother told me (TT10).*** A conversation with a mother exemplifies another parental source of information. In the example that Tara quotes, she refers to a student, Nitasha, who comes across as not having any problems (TT10). It is only when Nitasha's mother approached Tara for help that she came to know that Nitasha has been made homeless by a father who would not keep her and a mother who could not due to lack of socioeconomic means. Nitasha's silence about her home circumstances challenges teachers' observed evidence because not all observations are what they seem, and in this case, observations in school do not reveal what happens outside of school.

Critical commentary: unsolicited knowing

Unsolicited *knowing* is advantageous for filling gaps in *teachers' knowing* about students but, at times, it also compromises understanding. According to Veronica, unsolicited *knowing* is not a reliable means to know students because *we tend to know their background but we do not really understand their background. Understanding the background will make teaching easier* (VT5), thereby drawing a distinction between *knowing* and understanding. To know is not enough to understand because students and teachers have different experiences and conceptions of family, childhood and community. Even attempting to be understanding does not make teaching easier for Veronica as she discovers that some *are arrogant and don't respond to kindness* (VT5). Understanding means, too, that teachers must look beyond symptomatic responses to unearth deep socioeconomic causes. It requires a shift from descriptive knowing to conceptual understanding of school and society. At times it requires awareness that unsolicited *knowing* can be biased, incomplete, and deceptive as is demonstrated by Nitasha's circumstances. Why would a girl portray herself as happy and without problems when her mother indicates otherwise? The counter: why should she not? For one, Nitasha may not want to volunteer information about herself which she may feel is of no concern to others. Two, it may be that she wants to preserve her personal dignity. Three, she does not deem it proper to reveal family issues. Four, that problems at home do not trouble her. Five, living with her aunt is a better option. Six, she is optimistic. Seven, that she

does not view her situation as a problem. Eight, she views problems at home as “normal”. Whatever her rationale, it indicates the slippery nature of unsolicited *knowing*, its partiality and incompleteness and teachers reliance on versions and reasons given by parents or others.

Common knowing

Common *knowing* refers to information that is believed to be widely known by teachers, students and the community of Amethyst. Teachers express common *knowing* in a variety of ways.

⇒ ***There are common problems (FT7)***. Teachers know about the many challenges that students encounter. These challenges appear to be universal as intimated by Farida, Saras and Navin (FT7, ST5, NT2). Students’ problems emanating from home and community result in negative behaviours and habits. Based on students’ negative behaviours, teachers come to know their backgrounds, family life, cultures, and the things they do in and out of school.

⇒ ***Everyone knows what’s happening (ST3)***. Teachers know about students because it is common knowledge. When Saras says *everyone*, she means students and teachers. Teachers and students comes to know because they can see (PT3) what is happening, they talk about what is happening and they hear (VT2) about students’ pursuits. In a sense, she implies it may not be necessary to know individuals because everyone knows what Amethyst students indulge in, and consequently, through *knowing* some students one is in a position to know all students. Furthermore, through a process akin to mentoring, the “everyone-knows” phenomenon is operationalised. New incumbents appointed as teachers at Amethyst are advised and informed by their peers about students’ behaviours, attitudes and backgrounds as well as the school’s culture of practice (TT2).

⇒ ***We see what students do (GT3, ST3, PT3)***. Teachers know about students from direct observation of students’ actions and activities during lessons and outside classrooms. Of particular concern to teachers is where students choose to act - in areas clearly within teachers’ visual fields - demonstrating disregard for school rules and

disrespect for school personnel. These visual evidences confirm what teachers have come to know about students from their peers and students. When faced with evidence that authenticates what they have been told by others, it becomes difficult for teachers to know students otherwise.

Critical commentary: common knowing

Common *knowing* is asserted primarily through seeing and hearing. *Knowing* students are involved in activities that are neither expected of school-going adolescents nor should occur in a school is disconcerting for teachers. More troubling is not being able to act, especially when they observe students' "shenanigans" from the upper floors while they teach, as they are unable to leave classrooms unattended and by the time they are free to investigate students' "delinquent" activities, the students involved have disappeared.

Common *knowing* may be understood in terms of universality and peculiarity. The former implies that problems of particular individuals apply to all students and the latter that a cluster of problems experienced by students is unknown in other communities but endemic to the student community of Amethyst. Teachers' ideas of common problems (FT7, ST5, NT2) are related to both universality and peculiarity.

Teachers unable to match specific Grade Eight students to specific problems express universality noticeably. All examples are of students in the upper grades. It appears that that speaking of Grades Nine, Ten, Eleven and Twelve speaks to Grade Eight students as well. Peculiarity, on the other hand, is expressed in two ways. The first relates to believing Amethyst students are unique and the problems and challenges of teaching at Amethyst are unlike problems and challenges in other schools. Teachers know that at *this school* (FT1 PT1, ST1, NT1, GT1) students' value for education and home conditions differ when compared to values and home conditions to students in other schools. Universal *knowing* enables teachers to know all students merely by *knowing* some students. Multiple universals come into operation in terms of how gender, race, class, and ability become the means to know students.

The second expression of peculiarity relates to management of students' common problems. According to Farida, *teachers don't understand* (FT6) and the school

management⁵² is weak (FT7, TT11). In effect, saying that Amethyst is a special case because of a combination of problems in the community and school, particularly teacher indifference and weak leadership. She implies that in other schools faced with similar sociopolitical and cultural forces, strong school leadership and teacher sensitivity ameliorate the situation. To her way of thinking, context is the constant and school management/teachers variables of influence. Through common *knowing*, teachers' not only presume to know students, they also learn about their own vulnerabilities, professional limitations to act on student misconduct, challenges of context, and how management operates at Amethyst.

But common *knowing* can be problematic too. A case in point is Farida's example. Farida struggles to make sense of all she knows (FT3/4/5). Teachers, she believes, need to be understanding but also need to be excused when they are not. She does not approve of students' "shenanigans" but is compassionately supportive and provides sandwiches for the hungry. She knows students do as they please and display a bravado appearing to be immune to action from school authorities yet insists that school management should respond *strongly*, meaning, *do whatever it takes and face the problems head on* (FT7). She suggests *professionals* be brought in, implying that agency to deal with students lie outside the Amethyst teacher cohort's competency. *Knowing* about students translates into *knowing* the limits of professional competency as is captured in the remark; *teacher training has been inadequate to prepare for South African schools* (TT2). Whilst knowing that students' problems are common, teachers can intervene in common and uncommon ways as will be demonstrated in the next theme. Farida's example represents common *knowing* as complex, convoluted, contradictory, and challenging when working in a school like Amethyst.

In the next section, solicited, unsolicited, and common ways of *knowing* are opened and connected to the literature surveyed in chapter two.

⁵² A collective reference to Principals, Deputy Principals, and Heads of Department

THEME ONE: CRITICAL CONNECTIONS TO KNOWING

Notions of teachers' *knowing* can be linked to solicited *knowing*. This way of *knowing* can be seen to be a deliberate mental activity as defined by Dooyeweerd (1997). *Knowing* is commodified through generalisation, and, following Dooyeweerd's (1997) definition is, therefore, knowledge. This demonstrates how a process in the minds of teachers gets translated as knowledge, confirming Centore's (2005) and Locke's (2003) contentions that knowledge is built on knowing derived through the senses. In other words, *teachers' knowing* is conflated with knowledge (Cunliffe 2005) and how teachers get information becomes the basis of their knowledge about students. As a truth claim, teachers' knowledge is similar to Foucault's perspectivist notion of truth (Prado 2000).

Teachers' knowing is based on experiential reality (truth) (Foucault 1984a), as the personal intimations provided by some students are regarded as the experiences of all students, resulting in partial and incomplete *knowing*. Due to the way *knowing* is sourced, *teachers' knowing* may be characterised as uncertain and tentative. Moreover, *teachers' knowing* has limited currency, as the information is incomplete with many blind spots, reminiscent of one of the quadrant's of Luft and Ingham's (1955) Johari Window. Despite the uncertain quality of information, it is, nevertheless, circulated as truths about students.

Teachers' knowing is tentative and uncertain. Although Cunliffe (2005) and Dooyeweerd (1997) draw sharp distinctions between knowing and knowledge, the critical analysis of unsolicited ways of *knowing* demonstrates that *knowing* is also different to understanding. To put it differently, *knowing* does not necessarily mean that teachers understand their students. Furthermore, unsolicited means deliver descriptions (biased, incomplete, and deceptive) that challenge the literature on knowing.

Common *knowing*, information about students that teachers posit is widely known, is strongly linked to visual knowing mooted by Edward's (1987). This category of *knowing* about students is steeped in evaluating them against norms that teachers value, such as, behaviour, attitudes, and their conduct in classrooms. There is also a dominating view (Kincheloe 1991) that all the students at Amethyst are alike and thus sweeping generalisations are deployed to describe and to know students, which can be likened to Rumsfeld's "known knowns" (Norris 2004). Teachers, in other words, know

what they must know. “Known knowns” work in conjunction with “Othering”, as by classifying students in terms of race, gender, class, and ability, teachers purport to know the children they teach primarily as different to teachers.

Teachers' knowing and knowledge is conflated as evidenced by common *knowing*. In terms of the Johari Window (Luft & Ingham 1955), it comprises knowing self and knowing others. At Amethyst, *knowing* self and others are conflated. When teachers discuss how they know about students, the discussion is framed by their experiences and their feelings as professionals, which is more about themselves than about students, demonstrating the possibilities of *knowing* about professional work from their descriptions of students.

Based on how they come to know, *teachers' knowing* is a mental activity that produces experiential truths. Some *knowing* is tentative and uncertain, and at times, *knowing* and knowledge are conflated.

.....

THEME TWO: KINDS OF KNOWING

This theme is concerned with **what** teachers know about students. The “what” specifies *teachers' knowing* about the details of students’ lives, actions, behaviours, attitudes, interests, and personalities. These details give an indication of teachers’ constructions of those they teach. A critical reading of the data has resulted in identifying five kinds of *knowing* emerging from teachers’ accounts: gendered *knowing*, racialised *knowing*, cultural *knowing*, classed *knowing*, and professional *knowing*, which are discussed in that order.

Gendered knowing

⇒ Amethyst teachers identify and know students as gendered individuals (ST5, PT4, NT5), with normative male and female ways of being.

⇒ ***Girls and boys do not have similar problems (NT10)***. Teachers know girls are more prone to physical and sexual abuse and boys more likely to engage in criminal and immoral misconduct (see Fig. 9). It appears that boys are creators of problems and girls are targets of violent attacks at home and at school. Teachers know girls are particularly

vulnerable to violence in the home (PT4, NT5/6). In a case related by Pranitha (PT4), a female student was attacked with a knife by her father because she came home late.

The father's manner of controlling his daughter is evidence that girls' comings and goings are regulated and can provoke violence when they stray from parameters laid down by parents.

Fig. 9 Gendered Knowing

- Boys
 - Deal and use drugs (ST2, NT10),
 - Gamble (ST3)
 - Smoke (NT10)
 - Consume alcohol (NT10)
 - Impregnate girls and boast about it (ST5),
 - Loiter (NT10)
 - Steal (NT10)
 - Not supervised and guided by parents (NT11)
 - Do as they please (NT11, TT4)
 - Not controlled by parents (NT11)
 - Need strict discipline (NT11)
 - Lazier than girls (NT10)
 - Assisted by teachers to be rehabilitated (NT12)
- Girls
 - Experience violence and abuse (NT3/5/6; PT4, ST5, FT4)
 - Do household chores (NT4)
 - Vulnerable to violence at home (PT4)
 - Get pregnant and face motherhood alone (ST5);
 - Depend on boyfriends for financial support (NT5)
 - Referred to welfare authorities by teachers (NT8)

Here Pranitha's *knowing* contradicts her own and her peers' beliefs that all parents promote immoral activities (FT3/4, VT2, NT1/10/11, TT4). The manner in which discipline and control over girls is exercised is, in Pranitha's opinion, a form of abuse which she would have liked to report but did not follow through at the behest of the girl.

Cases disclosed by Navin (NT5/6) provide insights into expectations of girls' contributions to their families. The first example concerns Thandi, an orphan, living with her older siblings. She is expected to

clean the house, do without money and is not allowed to switch on the lights at night to do homework. She is also beaten with a sjambok (leather whip). Her option for survival is a boyfriend who provides her with pocket money, clothing, and pays her school fees. This arrangement makes Thandi vulnerable to pregnancy, which could complicate her situation considerably. It also indicates how, from a young age, girls become dependent on male figures for protection, support and maintenance. In the second example, Agnes lives with her biological mother in poverty conditions. Her mother is an alcoholic and has physically abused Agnes since childhood. Now she is being coerced to contribute to the family coffers by becoming a prostitute. Despite abuse in the home, it seems girls are more likely to remain living in untenable situations making them more vulnerable to abuse as they are loath to report parents to authorities (NT9). Boys may be also be abused at home but they, perhaps, do not tell teachers about it or in some cases, by the time they reach high school they have well-developed physiques discouraging abuse and physical

strength offering a level of protection against violence. An alternative interpretation may suggest that boys are socialised to not report abuse for fear of being labeled weak.

⇒ **Boys resort to all sorts of unwanted habits (NT11). Girl(s) ... withdraw (ST5).** A noticeable difference between males and females, from teachers' perspectives, is how they come to know about the challenges boys and girls face. Boys do not confide in teachers but are observed engaging in activities frowned upon by school personnel like *hanging around streets corners, smoking, drugging and drinking* (NT10). Girls display signs of depression like *withdrawing* and *crying* (ST5). These expressions may be related to socialised ways of behaving. Girls are expected to be subdued and boys more boisterous; girls to talk about their problems and boys to bear their problems stoically. Of course, not all girls break down and seek assistance/understanding from teachers and some boys do seek advice. In a case related by Pranitha (PT6), a female student successfully hid her problematic home circumstances from school personnel whilst some boys do discuss issues with Navin (NT12). It is apparent, therefore, that gendered modes of *knowing* students are not always reliable.

Boys have fathered kids ... girls hide when they are pregnant (ST5). Teachers know about boys and girls connection to pregnancy and parenthood (ST5). When girls become pregnant boys responsible for the pregnancy boast to peers about their romantic conquests, which are then relayed to teachers by friends. Girls, by contrast, hide their pregnant conditions. The pregnant status of girls, however, is not brought to teachers attention by either the impregnated or her peers. The acts of concealment signal feelings of shame and embarrassment experienced by girls. Boys can boast about their virility and their ability to attract the opposite sex, expressions of masculinity in the form of testosterone power, but girls do not because pregnancy is associated with promiscuity and immorality.

After the birth of the baby, there is a reversal of behaviour. Boys become silent about fatherhood, ceasing to boast about their sexual exploits to their peers, probably because of its association with paternal responsibility, which teachers know they do abdicate (ST5). Girls, on the other hand, confide in teachers or reveal their "mother" status by bringing their children to school. A possible explanation is that school-going mothers may need to justify poor academic performance or to seek exemption from

academic expectations. By revealing that they are mothers, they are probably more likely to be treated sympathetically.

⇒ **(B)boys, they are left free (NT11).** Navin's *knowing* reveals how boys respond to poverty and deprivation. They get involved in delinquent and criminal activities (NT10). Girls, it seems, do not respond similarly. The explanation he offers is that girls are given chores to do at home whilst boys are not and thus have opportunities to engage in unsavoury activities (NT10). Navin reasons that boys do as they please because their mothers are at work and their fathers have forsaken their families. Due to the absence of parents, boys lack discipline during critical stages of development (NT11).

⇒ **The problem is mainly with boys but you can turn them around (NT12).** Interventions by teachers differ substantially for girls and boys, influenced by notions of gender differences. Navin, for example, deals with students on a one-to-one basis by deploying teaching time to communicate with students, to offer advice and to build relationships (NT14). Girls are referred to social welfare services, clinics and given telephone numbers of service organisations (NT8). Boys are guided and mentored personally, sometimes for a number of years by male teachers (NT12).

Critical commentary: gendered knowing

Teachers' knowing is gendered. They understand that boys and girls are different, have different experiences and are treated differently. Gendered *knowing* is predicated on biological determinism and a male/female binary opposition. The logic of biological determinism rests on body parts and functioning, creating a gendered identity as well as channelling one into a prescribed social order. The prescribed social order is expressed as a binary opposition, pitting one against the other, privileging the male biological form (by accepting e.g. their violent actions) whilst the female form is expected to conform to social norms. These assumptions about gender, normalised and taken-for-granted over time now operate as truths for Saras and Navin. According to their rationality, for example, girls are abused and boys do drugs because of their biology. A critical explanation is that it has to do with subjectivity, i.e. the making of boys and girls, socialised into particular traditions rather than biological determination. Teachers,

however, are aware of the role of the social influencing students, but not of the gendered nature of the social milieu.

Girls' bodies are more disciplined and more controlled than boys. Teachers understand, too, that the existing social order makes girls vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Boys escape the pressures and responsibilities of contributing to home and family, and are more likely to be involved in delinquency and criminality. According to teachers, girls respond in typical feminine ways and boys in masculine ways. A case in point is Saras' *knowing* about schoolgirl pregnancy and motherhood (ST5). She believes early parenthood is *common*, citing five mothers in her class as evidence. So what explains the silence by seven of the eight teacher participants to mention student pregnancy, motherhood and fatherhood? One reason may be that pregnant girls drop out of school (ST5). Another, the presumption that school-going parents' issues lie outside the realm of the school or that school-going parents are viewed as less problematic than students involved in stealing, bullying behaviour, and attacks on teachers.

Two incidents of rape recounted by Saras (ST5) highlight the gendered nature of teachers' responses. In the first incident, a female student's change in behaviour leads Saras to discover that the girl was raped by two outsiders. *Not knowing* what to do and explaining rape as a common phenomenon in the student's community, Saras takes no action. In the second incident, a female student reports to her parents that she has been raped. The school's response, initially, was to keep it quiet, silence indicating teachers' recognition of the stigma of rape. The school vows to investigate the matter only when confronted by the raped girl's angry father. No investigation transpired because the student did not return to Amethyst. It appears then that Amethyst teachers have not only bought into a culture of silence surrounding sexual violence of girls, but they also flout the law, which makes it statutory for teachers to report abuse to authorities, a case of social mores superseding legal imperatives.

The one-to-one counselling approach provides an opportunity to analyse how advice given to students is gendered. Different strategies are deployed to counsel boys and girls. Girls are encouraged to contact social welfare services, attend clinics and given telephone numbers of service organisations, in a way, handing the problem over to other agencies (NT8). In the final analysis, girls are left to deal with their problems by

themselves. Whether they have access to telephones or transport to commute to clinics is unknown. What is known is that many girls leave school (NT9). Boys by contrast are nurtured and mentored. Navin, for example, invests enormous time to the teacher-student relationship (NT12). In one instance, he counselled, guided, and influenced boys to give up hijacking (carjacking) in favour of getting an education over a three-year period. A possible explanation may be that as a male teacher Navin feels that he is not in a position to assist girls and that a long-term, close relationship with boys is more acceptable than with girls.

The freedom that boys enjoy coupled with irresponsible behaviour imply that boys require the presence of fathers as mothers cannot control them (NT11), in effect a belief in the importance of patriarchal figures in families. An analysis points out that despite the absence of masculine figures in families, patriarchal presence pervades. Boys' misdemeanours are more acceptable than girls. Girls are disciplined, regulated, and surveilled. Boys, by contrast, are allowed to do as they please. A gendered code operates in a larger social context than the family, therefore, there does not have to be a male parent or a female parent present to teach role performances as there are accessible role-models in school, in neighborhoods and possibly on TV, radio, and film.

Knowing about students as gendered subjects is not confined to students; it also highlights teachers' culpability in reproducing existing gendered relations.

Racialised knowing

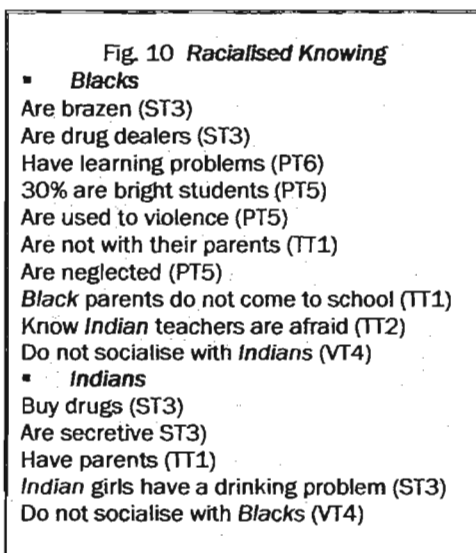
Amethyst teachers identify and know students as raced subjects that is, as either *Indian* or as *Black/African*.

⇒ ***We are so different from the kids we teach* (FT6).** Teachers recognise themselves as different to those they teach. A statement like *the children are so different now* (PT1), harkens to the past when students, all *Indian*, were unlike the present cohort. The changes in student attitudes and behaviours were discernible since the year 2000 (GT2), when Amethyst began the process of admitting large numbers of *Black* students. Political change, which nullified racial separation in schools means that Amethyst which was once an "*Indian* school", has now become a deracialised space as far as student intake is

concerned. The school's teaching profile, however, remains unchanged. Against this backdrop, it is understandable that teachers view the challenges they face as race-based instead of expressions of wider socioeconomic and political changes.

⇒ **Indian kids are very bright but Black children have problems (PT5).** Race based beliefs are also notable in statements about *Black* students regarding ability, *they lack general knowledge* (PT5), and activities, *drug taking and gambling* (ST3). This distinction between *Black* and *Indian* is contradicted as demonstrated by Pranitha's thinking. From a general account of students, she slips into particularising students in terms of race: *The Blacks are so used to violence, for them it comes as part of life* (PT5). She signals that violence amongst *Blacks* is acceptable because it is endemic to that particular race group, but the examples of violence she quotes concern *Indian* students (PT4/6).

⇒ **Indian kids don't do it openly, but Black kids are brazen (ST3).** For some teachers, *Black* students are "Othered" as alien and inferior (see Fig. 10), for example, *only the Indian kids have their parents* (TT1). Though both *Indian* and *Black* students indulge in prohibited enterprises, how they choose to do so, *Indians* furtively and *Blacks* boldly, is linked to racial differences rather than socialised ways of being.



The question of parents is more complex. Pranitha maintains that *Black* students *are neglected when it comes to food, education, dress and hygiene* (PT5), hinting that this is about parental neglect and generally applies to most if not all *Black* students. *Indian* students' experiences of abuse at home (PT4/6), she purports, are the exception and not the norm. Pranitha's apartheid understanding of race persists, resulting in an inability to realise that *Indian* students' secretive tendencies could conceal parental abuse, neglect,

and possibly, other family problems.

⇒ **The Africans are as good as Indians academically (VT3).** Not all teachers use the lens of race in the way Pranitha does. Veronica, for example, is of the opinion that *race*

does not prevent anyone from doing well (VT3). Political change, in her opinion, has made the difference in erasing the notions of inferiority and superiority because there are opportunities now for everyone that did not exist in the past. Whilst she does not make assumptions about academic ability related to race she does know that *racial tensions* (VT4) exist at Amethyst. In this case, *knowing* race is restricted to awareness of antagonisms between students of different races.

Critical commentary: racialised knowing

Apartheid categories of *Black* and *Indian* are deployed as a way of *knowing* students (VT3/4/5, ST3, PT5/6). For these teachers there is a clear distinction between politicised notions of *Indian* and *Black* (the only groups mentioned), a carryover of colonial and apartheid thinking. South Africa's legacy of Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonial rule from 1652 to 1910, followed by *White* rule to 1994, has resulted in strong foundations fostering and enculturating beliefs about individual differences based on colour.

The examples at Amethyst demonstrate that apartheid categories of race still have currency in the post-apartheid era whether in support of *Indian* superiority over *Blacks* (PT6) or believing that racial differences are not tied⁵³ to race (VT3). Students are known as racial subjects and their behaviours are believed to be typical of a given race. Parenting styles and academic performances are also associated with race with *Indian* students' pitched as the benchmark. In this way racialised *knowing* contributes to teachers' understanding and insight of students, whilst paradoxically, also compromising understanding and *knowing* about students.

Some teachers can see the link between who students are and their race. Race is seen as influencing students to behave in particular ways and to experience their lives in the way they do because it is preordained. For example, parents are neglectful because it is a genetic condition of their race. Others make no such connections. When teachers are confronted with contradictory evidence as regards race differences and a racialised explanation cannot hold, they rely on exceptions to explain anomalies. For instance violence and abuse are associated with the *Black* race whilst reports of *Indian* students

⁵³ The paradox apparent here is that Veronica asserts, through race labels, that racial differences do not exist.

being abused are interpreted as exceptions by Pranitha. She appears to be oblivious of contradictions as she avers that *Black* students' problems emanate from *social problems* (PT6) followed immediately by an example of alcoholism in an *Indian* family. Pranitha's thinking can be analysed in two ways. One, from *knowing* about *Indian* students' problems at home she anticipates that it is worse in *Black* homes. Or two, because *violence for them comes as part of life* (PT5), meaning that all *Black* students experience hardship at home. Pranitha cannot help but rely on her experiences as *Indian* to know students as racialised subjects. Through the mode of *knowing* race, Pranitha purports to know *Black* by *knowing Indian*. Veronica, by contrast, is beginning to move beyond racialised *knowing* (VT3). Though contemporary democratic laws recognise all individuals as equals, and there is awareness of human rights and social justice, teachers at Amethyst battle to understand and know students beyond conceptions of race.

Cultural knowing

When teachers are unable to impute students' ways of living to race or gender than they ascribe it to culture.

⇒ *We are so different from the kids we teach it was a culture shock* (FT6, ST1). Farida and Saras know that they are different to the students they teach. This *knowing* is fuelled by construing students' background, their attitudes to school and property, race and gender profiles, activities and academic performances, characteristics and values, as being foreign to teachers' backgrounds. Clearly, there are differences between teachers and students of Amethyst in terms of race, class, family values and social mores. This is not unusual in any school. The very categories of **teachers** and **students** speak to difference. As a binary opposition, in this instance, teacher is regarded positively and student negatively.

⇒ *Violence for them comes as part of life* (PT5). Teachers know that the hardships that students face at home like abuse, violence, *neglected when it comes to food, education, dress and hygiene* (PT5), is experienced by *Blacks* and is an articulation of *Black* culture. She implies that violence is acceptable for *Black* students because it is their way of life. When such behaviour is deemed to be cultural than it legitimises and justifies

non-intervention by teachers particularly when teachers' stance is supported by the school Principal as well (ST3). Students and teachers know about the drug dealing, alcohol consumption, and gambling activities, taking place on school premises. Despite *knowing* about these extreme examples, teachers are reluctant to get involved in substantial ways to assist students. The reasons given by teachers appear to be an overwhelming concern about the consequences of involvement and interfering with the norms of the community's social order (see Fig. 11).

How did this interpretation materialise? It is based on past history when students rebelled and resisted because of perceived discrimination and dissatisfaction with being

Fig. 11 Reasons for Teachers' Non-involvement
 It is dangerous for us (ST3),
 They will storm the school with guns (ST4),
 Attack the teachers and burn down our school buildings (NT7),
 You have to be wary and alert to danger all the time (TT7),
 There is a constant threat of injury and violence aimed at teachers (GT2).
 There is very little that we can do (FT2)
 Teachers are not sensitive (FT5)
 We are different (FT6)
 Discouraged by peers/Principal (FT7, ST3, PT3, TT2)
 Emotionally draining (FT5)

denied access or being disrespected. How dissatisfaction and anger were **historically** expressed, is being conflated with **predicting** how involvement will be received in the future. By conflating these temporally influenced responses, teachers' justify keeping a distance. Perhaps it is an expression about teachers' reluctance to commit to complex, time-consuming pastoral care which may be an added burden to the challenges already being faced.

Despite a complex set of contextual restraints, Navin and Farida do support students in different ways. Farida provides food to students (FT5). She assumes that hunger is a common problem. Whilst this approach does not break down structural challenges faced by students, it serves to ameliorate the material conditions of their lives.

⇒ ***The children's background here is terrible – uncultured (PT1)***. Poor families represent “unculture”. By *uncultured* Pranitha is referring to students' poor academic performances, lack of interest in the school curriculum, *problems on the domestic front, family problems*, and being *very poor* (PT2). Pranitha conflates impoverishment with being *uncultured* (PT1). As a teacher, she finds it difficult to contemplate that students are trapped in poverty and cannot change the economic status of their family.

Critical commentary: cultural knowing

Culture, loosely understood as patterns of behaviour and worldviews, differs from one group to the next. As a group, teachers consider their culture to be different to student culture as they believe it to be compatible with violence and delinquency. Their own culture is seen as superior and refined.

Students are seen as representing a culture with which teachers cannot identify. Teachers link actions of students and their families to particular cultural beliefs and ways of living. For example, injuries and signs of domestic violence (PT3) are seen as part of a culture that sanctions violence and abuse. But, the issue of culture is complicated. When some students confide in teachers they realise that students are victims of abuse. Teachers, however, also witness bullying and attacks on teachers by students, and know students as violators. Thus, they are confronted with *knowing* students as both innocent victims and guilty violators. The resulting dilemma, a duality encompassing victim and violator, is perplexing for teachers. A way out is to view both violation and victimisation as cultural expressions. In practice, it means that whilst teachers disapprove and look down on violations, they concede there is nothing that they can do for victims of so-called cultural practices.

There appears to be two reasons to account for teachers' reluctance to get involved in students' problems: one is based on fear of retaliation and two, a belief that students' activities are *part of their culture* (ST3) an opinion expressed by the school Principal. Saras struggles to make sense of the Principal's reasoning and links culture to race. She knows, from her own observations, that *Blacks are brazen* (ST3) and are drug dealers. *Indians*, by contrast, *support the sale of drugs* and do so covertly (ST3). *Black* culture is deemed to promote violence. It does not explain, however, violence in *Indian* households. It seems that at times Amethyst teachers conflate culture with race and at other times, students actions are received as cultural expressions by teachers. Based on Saras' reasoning, students' audacity and secrecy are sociocultural / racial expressions.

Teachers regard rape, abuse, and bullying as cultural values of the poor. Yet Saras who is privy to students sexual and physical abuse (ST2), concedes that *nothing has been done* (ST2). What then could be the value of *knowing*? Could it be that the information takes on a spectacular quality, not out on display in the public arena, but perhaps as a

shocking event shared in hushed tones amongst the teaching corps at Amethyst, fuelling despair at having to teach *at a problematic school* (ST3)? Teachers reveal two ways of dealing with such serious situations: they advocate that school management deal with students' issues or, that professionals be brought in. Bringing in the law to deal with rape appears not to be an option for some unknown reason/s, though the police are an option when school personnel and property are threatened (ST4). Saras represents teachers who are overwhelmed by disclosures of rape and laments that there is no counsellor at Amethyst to deal with sexual abuse/indulgence (ST5), signalling that competencies for pastoral care for some students should come from counselling specialists. In a context without counsellors, like Amethyst, one can surmise that little support is available for students, particularly, in the light of teachers' reports of widespread personal, emotional, and educational challenges faced by students.

Gambling and smoking are also viewed as cultural expressions. Teachers know about gambling and smoking because they see it happening. It is obvious that if teachers can spot students then their peers can also see these indulgences and more importantly, know that actions are not taken to deal with culprits. Whilst these contextual conditions demoralises the teaching fraternity of Amethyst, it emboldens students who break school rules and model perpetrators behaviour. For teachers of Amethyst, observations are powerful confirmations of the challenges students negotiate daily. There is also an awareness of their own professional challenges and limitations.

The culture of poor families is pathologised. Impoverishment is conflated with *uncultur(ed)* (PT1). Pranitha does not rationalise that students cannot change the economic status of their family. Students are not responsible for the lack of access to cultural capital, an important factor that influences school performance and achievement. Students cannot be faulted for being unable to associate with the school's curriculum. Amethyst advocates curricula and teaching that emphasise worldviews out of sync with the real world of Amethyst students. Culture in the world of the poor is recast as uncultured by teachers with control of education and access to cultural capital.

The promise of harmony, understanding and reconciliation, which accompanied the ushering in of a new democratic order in 1994, has been shattered by the realities of co-existence at Amethyst. In this instance, the politics of fear have undergone changes.

Fear of state brutality, policing mechanisms and processes has receded, whilst “swart gevaar” (*Black danger*) continues to fester in the post-apartheid era. Teachers of Amethyst had not quite expected that deracialisation would impact at the school level in the ways it has. They had not anticipated the movement of *Indian* students out of Amethyst and the influx of *Black* students to Amethyst. They had neither expected poor families to move into the suburb of Nirvana, nor the setting up of informal homes so close to the school’s premises. They had not predicted that schools would be fiscally constrained, resulting in fewer teachers employed to teach increasing numbers of students. What is expressed as difference and culture shock is actually an accumulation of stressors and changes attributed to student behaviour/values. At Amethyst differences in worldviews, between teachers and students, biases *teachers' knowing* about students.

Differences depend on how students are constructed in relation to teachers. As the analyses heretofore indicate, students are constructed negatively. First, there is a supposition that in the communities that teachers come from there are no persons with criminal intent; that no-one consumes alcohol, takes drugs or smokes; that the children from these communities excel at school and value education for the opportunities they provide; that parents are exemplary; that members are moral stalwarts. The implication is that the world of teachers operates differently from the world of students, not in terms of geography, as three teachers do live in close proximity of the school: it is in terms of personal values and actions that set teachers apart from students.

Knowing students - who they are, where they come from and which worldviews they promote - translates into understanding the context of teaching as affecting teachers and teaching. When compared to who Amethyst teachers are, where they come from and which worldviews they promote than the context of teaching at Amethyst is fraught with challenges, conflicts and frustrations. Figure 12 illustrates the point:

Teachers	Students
Adults	Adolescents
Middle-class	Poor
<i>Indian</i>	<i>Indian and Black/African</i>
Legal/educational constraints for dealing with students	Freedom to act irresponsibly without fear of punitive measures
School is valued as an educational site	School is valued for reasons other than education

When compared to the past (positive memories of commonly shared worldviews between teachers and students) differences in the present (divisive and negative) are amplified and serve to widen the divide between the teachers and students at Amethyst. Under apartheid, each so-called race group was cocooned with few opportunities for communication and interaction. Schools, in particular, were sites of cultural homogeneity, with teachers and students sharing a common culture, *Indian*, perceived as being alike with common worldviews. But *Indian* is a multiplicity of cultures, languages, and beliefs. With the demise of apartheid, differences are now heightened in unanticipated ways and teachers depend on conceptions of culture (in addition to race, gender and class) to rationalise differences.

Classed Knowing

In this section teachers demonstrate *knowing* about students by recognising them as belonging to a particular class through descriptions of homes (property), parents (occupations and activities), values (education, family), culture, and attitudes.

⇒ ***We know their background (VT5)***. The background of the underclass is a key lens through which *knowing* occurs (see Fig. 13). Students from poor backgrounds are regarded as constituents of a society (unemployed, lacking skills, wealth, and property)

<p>Fig. 13 Knowing Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Home Circumstances Lack role-models (GT5, FT3, PT2/3) Not given moral guidance (VT2, FT3/4, NT1/11, TT4) Live on their own (ST2) Have terrible backgrounds (PT1) Are uncultured (PT1) Have many family problems (PT2) Their parents are unemployed (PT2) Do not know their fathers (NT3) Are abused at home (NT3/5/6/9, TT9, PT4) Engage in illicit activities (NT2, GT5, VT2, FT1, ST2/4/5, PT2)
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markedly different from middle-class Amethyst teachers (employed, educated, skilled). From the vantage point of middle-class affluence, Amethyst teachers imagine life and living conditions of students. Teachers describe the temporary abodes of students, which are clearly visible from Amethyst, as *shacks* (VT1), *squatter settlement* (ST2, NT4), *bad environments* (VT2) and *terrible, pathetic living conditions* (NT4). Students' homes are indicators of

deprivation and poverty. These make-shift homes are constructed of tin, board, wood, and plastic sheeting - extremely hot in summer, cold in winter, and unsafe in windy and stormy conditions. The conveniences of modern homes, electrified, plumbed, and

equipped with appliances and furniture typifying the homes of teachers, is uncharacteristic of informal homesteads. Teachers know from discussions with students that *they don't have water, electricity, and toilet facilities* (VT1) and the wider community in which students are located, is a *community of abusers* (NT7), a *society of bullies* (NT13) promoting *drug-taking, drinking, stealing, and smoking* (GT3). Students home backgrounds are considered to be *bad environments* (VT2) for children because they experience bullying (NT13), abuse (FT4, PT5), negligence (TT4), exploitation (NT4), abandonment (ST2), and violence (TT3). Additionally, students living with parents are beaten (NT5, FT4) and given household chores to do (TT4) whilst those living on their own do as they please. There are, in the words of Saras, *many sad cases* (ST2) emanating from such *pathetic conditions* (NT4).

⇒ *They don't have parents who are role-models* (FT3). Teachers know that the parents of students are poor role-models (see Fig. 14). Students, they infer, behave in the way they do because of active support by parents to misbehave and from directly

Fig. 14 <i>Knowing Parents</i>	
▪	Fathers
	Few students know real fathers (NT2)
	Are alcoholics (PT6)
▪	Mothers
	Get drunk (NT6)
	Want daughter to be a prostitute (NT6)
	Trouble-maker (PT6)
	Are employed as domestic maids, factory workers (NT3)
	Few live with their children (NT3)
	Cannot supervise or control sons (NT11)
▪	Parents
	Do not instill manners (FT4)
	Do not give students guidance / discipline (VT2, FT3, NT1/10/11, TT4)
	Take drugs and alcohol (PT3/6, TT9)
	Are violent in the home (PT3/4/5, TT9)
	Are not role-models (FT3, GT5)
	Abuse their children (NT3/4/5/6)
	Promote drugs, stealing, drinking and smoking (GT3)
	Cannot be contacted (TT1/9)
	Grandparents abuse social grants (ST2)

observing their parents attitudes and activities. Mothers drink and fathers abdicate their responsibilities. Parents are not able to steer students away from petty thieving, car theft and hi-jacking and hanging around street corners. They make poor role-models because they *are not academically inclined* (GT5) and do not *instill manners* (FT4). The absence of role-models results in negative attitudes (FT4) at school. Teachers claim that students are not able to differentiate right from wrong

because parents do not practice moral restraint, specify good conduct, or regulate their children's insubordination.

Teachers also know that parents are not interested in their children's welfare when they are at school (TT1/9, FT7) because they cannot contact them when students fall ill in

school or wish to know why students are not at school. And, when contact is made, *they always offer some psychological excuse* (TT2) for their children's misconduct. These parental stances are viewed as characteristic of poor classes. Constituting students as members of a poor class has resulted in a negative framing of students' parents and families by Amethyst teachers. Family, the social unit generally upheld as a moral unit of culture and society, is viewed as a contagion, destroying poor students' lives.

Poor families, in teachers' opinion, are immoral formations for a number of reasons. One, students *do not know their fathers* (NT3), implying that students' mothers are promiscuous and do not know the identity of the persons who fathered their children or that in poor communities men do not take responsibility for paternity and do not participate in family life. The family unit, teachers imply, is incomplete without a male. Two, for teachers, the home is the breeding ground of student problems. Living with parents means exposure to smoking, drinking, drug taking and stealing. Three, teachers believe that not only are students exposed to unacceptable habits, but drinking, smoking, and illicit activities are promoted at home. Four, students are victimised and exploited by family members making family life unsafe for students (PT4).

⇒ ***They really don't come for education itself*** (VT1). Teachers discussions with students and questions asked, in particular, have made teachers aware that students do not come to school for education (VT2, FT2). Furthermore, educational tasks are not completed (see Fig. 15). Students' priorities appear to be to satisfy social needs and having *a good time* (VT2). School is a place for things that are not available at home like a place to sit, use of toilet facilities and so on. It also provides opportunities to accumulate desirables like cell-phones, bags, textbooks which they cannot afford, and money.

Fig. 15 **Knowing Students**

What students do not do

Homework (FT2; PT7)
 Attend class (FT7, ST1, NT1/2)
 Attend school regularly (FT7, ST1; TT1/9)
 Respond to kindness (VT15)
 Report peers' misdemeanours (FT1, NT9)
 Work (NT2/10) Study (TT5)
 Admit that they cannot afford stationery (FT6)
 Listen (NT1)

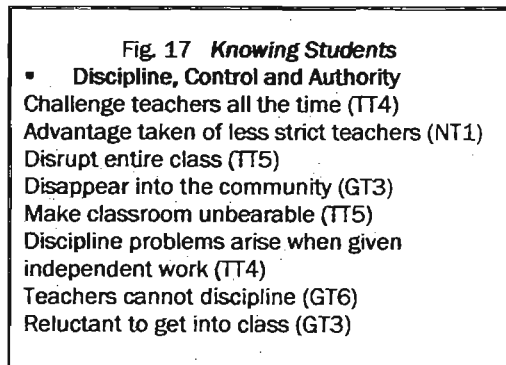
School is also a haven from the hardships of living, to escape their deprived living conditions. Though teachers know about troubling home conditions they are still shocked at how opportunities to be educated which, would lead to better lifestyles are squandered in school. A case in point is Veronica's *shock* (VT1) that students do not

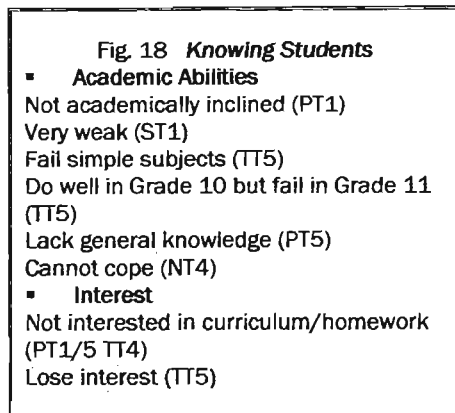
come to school for education as she regards the school fees at Amethyst to be low when compared to rates charged at other schools.

Teachers know what students do in school by observing and interacting with them (see Fig. 16). Students do as they please, steal, smoke, gamble, consume alcohol, sell and use drugs. Tara and Gerald have also experienced violent confrontations with students (TT7, GT2) and know of a teacher whose cell-phone was stolen by students. Teachers are also concerned by non-compliance with school requirements and expectations. Students do not complete homework, rarely study, are easily distracted and attend classes irregularly – all indicators of students disregard for education. The repercussions are particularly severe for teachers as teaching becomes challenging under these circumstances. Complicating the task of teaching is the loss of teachers' authority and control over students (see Fig. 17). Students do not fear teachers and do as they please. Teaching is often disrupted because teachers have to search for absconding and missing students before classes can begin. Teachers at Amethyst know they face challenges daily at school: students are at school for reasons other than education. Students are involved in shady activities and they do not complete tasks given. Consequently, teaching at Amethyst is burdensome for many teachers.

⇒ ***Here it's a huge effort just to get them to pass (ST1).*** Teachers at Amethyst have to

work hard to prepare students for examinations. Working with academically disinclined students, who show little interest in education, makes the task of teaching particularly challenging (See Fig. 18). Teachers are hampered in their work, because students lack general knowledge, are easily distracted and cannot cope with educational requirements.



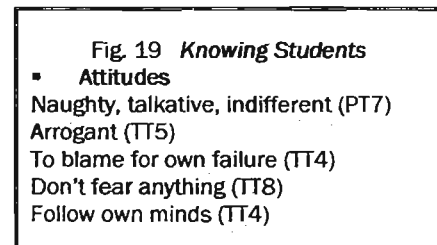


It appears to teachers that students cannot even pass subjects considered to be easy. They identify attitudes (not caring for education), change in behaviour (passing Grade Ten and then failing Grade Eleven) and being weak, as key factors for poor performance. The factors are personal and internal to students. The culpability of teachers (external factors) is, therefore, not considered.

⇒ *You can notice from their attitude (PT2).*

Teachers at Amethyst explain students' attitude as being *very naughty, talkative and they do something wrong (PT2)*, *they look at you with blank faces when you teach (TT5)*.

From students' attitudes, teachers surmise that education is not important to them (see Fig. 19). These are also ways of affronting the teacher and undermining teacher authority. Traditionally, school is a space in which teachers dictate the norms of behaviour, they regulate student activities and react against acts of



wrongdoings. At Amethyst, few teacher prerogatives are exercised, for reasons outlined in the previous section. Teachers know that students do as they please, *they don't fear anything (FT2)*, and more importantly, deduce that the appropriation of teachers' rights by students is a consequence of family interest and values. As willful individuals, students ignore teachers and *follow their own minds (TT4)*. Consequently, it is extremely difficult for teachers to believe they can influence students and provide guidance. In view of students' attitudes to teachers and schoolwork, teachers expect them to perform poorly and hence, students are blamed for poor academic performance.

Critical commentary: classed knowing

To teachers, the home appears to be the breeding ground of students' problems especially because their families are incomplete due to an absence of one or both parents. Those students living with parents are exposed to smoking, drinking, drug taking, and stealing. The *knowing* is paradoxical because students without parents-as-role-models

also acquire these bad habits. It appears then, that parents do not make a difference because students living with parents and students living without parents (orphaned or abandoned) seem to share similar problems with respect to role-models. How can teachers know of such contradictions and not be aware that their *knowing* is contradictory? Gerald provides a clue to explain the dilemma: he knows that *taking drugs, drinking, stealing and smoking is promoted within the community* (GT3). It seems, thus, that the influence of the wider social milieu is more potent than the family or school for that matter as a question then arises: are teachers not good role-models? And, if they are, it means they are in competition with parents/peers to influence students. It transpires then that student agency to choose role-models and to resist the codes of conduct promoted by the school is not considered by teachers.

What teachers learn about students are the extreme cases of hardship and survival or perhaps, it is what teachers remember as not a single teacher recalls positive aspects of students' lives or schooling. Or it could be that only students with problems approach teachers with the intention of revealing aspects of their lives. Could it be that students do so in order to justify poor academic performance and incomplete work? In effect, the *knowing* is uni-dimensional as it does not provide other pieces of students' lives. It is lopsided in the direction of sad events and experiences.

When teachers interpret students' choices they do so from their own perspectives and are thus not able to do so from student standpoints. One example is the practice by students' peers to protect the identities of perpetrators (FT1). Confidentiality or solidarity, in this instance, is deplored by Farida. There are other explanations not entertained by Farida, for example, that not all students know the identities of perpetrators; that informants may endanger personal safety if they implicate peers; that students have their own code of conduct. From Farida's stance one can infer that a code honouring friendship and loyalty to peers is not morally sound as is apparent from her reasoning, *they have no parents to instill manners* (FT4). In this instance, *manners* possibly means obeisance to school authority. Due to the serious nature of student misconduct and code of silence of peers, all students are imputed with negative characteristics. One can deduce, perhaps, that the challenges faced by teachers at

Amethyst are so widespread as to result in such generalisations. These activities are of concern to teachers because they undermine teachers' authority, rendering them impotent.

Whilst wanting to understand students, it is difficult for teachers to understand how children can be abused and deprived by their families. Amethyst teachers' understandings are limited because they take ahistoricist (ignoring political, cultural and social dimensions) and essentialist (inflexible and definitive) positions about family. A family unit is more than biological parents and children. It is preceded by a history of how the family emerged. It ranges from biological parents to single parent families to adopted parents and living alone. There are numerous explanations for the absence of a father/mother, pregnancy, guardianship and the choice to live in informal homes. There are reasons why parents cannot be contacted or are reluctant to come to school. There are reasons why students tell teachers the things they do about their family life. There are many gaps that source *teachers' knowing* based on *knowing* class. As teachers are unaware that their *knowing* about students is incomplete they believe that they know students.

From the perspective that education is necessary, desirable, and valuable, teachers pass judgements about students' lives. From middle-class perspectives, children are known as vulnerable and valuable, helpless and dependent, in need of protection. The role of parents is to meet these needs and to hone their children's potential by investing in education. For poor communities, conceptions of childhood are influenced by affordability – vulnerable, needy and helpless children are luxuries that are not viable. Children have to be resilient, self-sufficient, street-wise and contribute financially as labour or income-earners. Teachers, as proponents of the former conception of childhood/adolescence are poised diametrically to latter understandings of childhood. However, when survival is at stake the rules and norms of parenting change. When parents/guardians cannot provide then children have to help. What may be unpalatable for Amethyst teachers are the options exercised / promoted: dependency on a boyfriend (NT5), prostitution (NT6) or housework (NT4). The picture is far more complicated when students' involvement in buying and selling drugs is viewed as criminal rather than as economic activities. Consequently, *teachers' knowing* exposes their worldviews and

assumptions rather than real understanding of students, their lives and the world as they experience it.

Teachers purport to know students family life and family values based on students *negative attitudes* at school as outlined in Figure 18. In the absence of home visits, teachers construct a direct, linear relationship between students' behaviour on the one hand, and family lifestyle and values on the other hand. This means that teachers make a number of suppositions. First, that parents are the primary, most important, and most enduring influence on students' attitude. Two, that students displaying undesirable behaviours and characteristics are actively influenced to do so by their families. Three, values and characteristics acquired from home are impervious to influences from teachers. Four, poor parents make poor role-models. Five, poor communities support a culture of violence, abuse, immoral and illegal activities. Based on the abovementioned suppositions, one can infer that for teachers at Amethyst, education cannot make a difference to students who school there.

As an educator, Veronica believes that education is important for their future, for career choices allowing students to *better their lives* (VT3). As a middle-class person she considers school fees at Amethyst to be low and it is from this standpoint that she cannot fathom why students choose to come to school for reasons other than wanting to be educated. Further, her perspectives of education preclude understanding that the reason for attending school is predetermined. Schooling in South Africa is compulsory for students and they come to school to fulfil a legal obligation. Students also understand the political nature of education, how education operates hegemonically and has a normalising tendency. In other words, students know that they require schooling to be included into a society that values educated persons, as uneducated persons are constituted as insignificant others. Going to school may be significantly different from being educated. The latter and former may appear to be the same for some students, hence the response that they do not come to school for education. This explains Veronica's shock at student responses as she is not in a position to consider that legal and social obligations can be viewed as opportunities (or burdens) of different sorts as she believes it to be the opinion of all students. It is from classed *knowing* of some students that Veronica knows all students. (VT1).

Veronica uses the lens of middle-class values to judge students' preferences and choices regarding the time they spend in school. She has difficulty accepting students' immediate physical needs which includes escaping from harsh living conditions. In a sense the information is solicited and then rejected. To know students socioeconomic status is to not know students choices and preferences because Veronica's middle-class values interfere with *knowing* the reasons students' value school from the standpoint of impoverished persons: that school is a place of refuge, not just education.

From teachers perspectives it appears that conditions at Amethyst (see also chapter 4) are new experiences. Past history of the school, however, reveals that students from informal settlements at Amethyst are not a new phenomenon. So how are latter-day experiences different? It is different because in the past the students, all *Indian*, were identified as same, not other. Under apartheid, institutions were stratified according to political categories of race. As such, only so-called *Indians* could enrol at Amethyst. Sameness was thus an effect of race stratification. In the post-apartheid era, race differentiation, has been replaced with class differentiation at Amethyst. Part of the problem is that teachers' major focus is on perpetrators, because student shenanigans are so widespread. They barely mention good students and perhaps fail to realise that their professional identity can be reclaimed by acknowledging the presence of students who do not engage in the activities mentioned heretofore.

At present, for some teachers of Amethyst, *knowing* about students classed positioning is a vital frame for *knowing* about the kinds of families they belong to and the kinds of problems they face. It also allows teachers to rescue their professional identity as inability to deal with the complexity of students issues can be justified as a class, rather than an educational, issue.

Professional knowing

Professional *knowing* is linked to how teachers' conceptions of teaching, their roles and functions, and academic training and practices enables them to know students. It relates to how they are able to control students, evaluate their performances, exercise professional judgement, and execute their responsibilities ethically.

⇒ ***It has become very complicated to deal with learners (GT6).*** Teachers know that working in an environment like Amethyst is complex. Not only do students *bring their lifestyle into school* (VT2), but teachers are expected to be understanding and sensitive despite disapproving their lifestyle. Disciplining students is complicated as well. Gerald's experience is that he *can't raise (his) voice to reprimand* (GT6) students and *singling them out* can be interpreted as racism (GT6, NT8). Furthermore, students do not come for education and have needs beyond skills acquired through teacher training (VT1, FT7, ST5, TT6). Sometimes students' activities are so serious they warrant bringing in the police. Police intervention appears to be unsuccessful because *it continues* (ST3, VT2). At other times when teachers are attacked by students, teachers cannot retaliate (VT3), in effect stripping teachers of their authority to act. Additionally, teachers cannot report or confer with parents, as they cannot be contacted (TT1/9). The result is a paralysis exemplified by an inability to act against students' aggression, ill-discipline, and negative attitudes.

⇒ ***I don't give assignments or homework (PT7).*** Teachers know that students are challenged by the demands of education and their personal circumstances. In view of these challenges, Amethyst teachers know their teaching practices have to be adapted to students needs. Farida, for example, advocates a two-pronged approach of caring tempered with discipline towards students (FT4) and development programmes for teachers (FT7). This approach advocates balancing students need for emotional care with teachers needs to set boundaries and limits with recognising students as victims of circumstances. This could require specialist skills to deal with students problems. Unlike Farida's approach to look to herself to assist students, Saras looks outwards: the police to deal with criminal activities and counsellors for social, emotional, and economic problems. If followed through, this approach would demarcate teaching roles and functions from care-giving. The focus would be on supporting learning.

Pranitha does not give homework or assignments (PT7). She also adapts the curriculum so that students' preferences for dancing, music, and acting are built into teaching programmes. This approach requires that all teaching and learning be confined to school hours. For a life-skills teacher this approach is ideal but it would pose a challenge to infuse song and dance into mathematics and science programmes. Pranitha's

dilemma is that the decisions she makes presently to cope with students present circumstances have long-term implications that could impact on career choice, further study, and the making of disciplined learners and thinkers.

Navin's approach is to water down the curriculum by providing tuition *in small doses* (NT2) as well as using teaching time to counsel students (NT14). Based on Navin's approach it appears that almost half the teaching time available has to be programmed to allow students to complete work in class (NT14). This time is also deployed to counsel students. Here the tensions between teaching and meeting students' needs are resolved by taking on a counselling role at the expense of pedagogical content.

Tara used to offer extra classes on a Saturday but abandoned it after she was attacked by students (TT7), confirming perceptions that Amethyst is a dangerous space. This example demonstrates that support and care by teachers are opportunities exploited by some students to steal from teachers or to attack them.

⇒ ***This context is very frustrating (TT11). This is a problematic school (ST3).*** The frequency and extent of students' activities is demoralising and frustrating for teachers (ST1). Students are not afraid of authority, which teachers' believe is linked to the leadership style of Amethyst managers. According to Saras, Amethyst is a *problematic school* (ST3) because students know they can do anything they want with impunity (ST3). In cases when attempts are made to apprehend students, they escape into the community lending credence to teachers' beliefs that the community supports student delinquency (GT3). Gerald has experienced some success in curtailing smoking and gambling by making himself visible on school grounds. A visible presence, however, interrupts students' activities for a short period but does not prevent it because presence by itself is not enough to stop student "shenanigans". Proximity is equally important. Teachers on the upper levels are not in a position to act, follow or chase students; hence, the discrepancy between Saras' accounts of what she sees (ST3) but does not act upon, and Gerald who can as he reportedly chases students until they disappear into the informal settlements close by the school as they know he cannot follow them there (GT3).

Another frustration for teachers is students' lack of interest in and commitment to education. Homework is not done, students stay away or bunk classes. They know what

students do and can do nothing because they are *blocked by parents or family, or guardians or the child. Sometimes even by the Principal or teachers* (TT2).

⇒ *We need to be compassionate* (FT3). Teachers know that in a context like Amethyst, with many students facing problems at home and school, they need to be sympathetic and understanding. On the one hand, there appears to be sensitivity by teachers to students' backgrounds, home conditions, and needs (VT5, FT3), whilst on the other hand, a realisation that all teachers are not inclined towards sympathetic approaches. They *seem to cope by indifference* (FT5) not because of insensitivity but because their compassionate approaches have failed, or they find it *emotionally draining* (FT5).

⇒ *I regard myself as a professional* (BT1). Bernice is the only teacher deliberately choosing not to know or talk to students about their lives and experiences. She focuses instead on her professional training and expertise to teach. Though she avers that *knowing* herself as a professional is more important than *knowing* about students, the underlying reason may have to do with a preconceived idea of students, i.e. that students are dishonest. She knows, for example, that students come up with *excuses* (BT2), manufacture *stories* (BT3), and *only allow (her) to know that which will benefit them* (BT5). Hence, she prefers to know students as a theoretical construct, that is, essentially as learners. To proceed as a teacher means to be single-minded about her roles and functions as an educator. Educator, in this instance is a narrow concept and consequently, she approaches teaching according to a recipe that works for her, *(t)hey know what I expect. I get on with the lesson. There is no unnecessary chit-chat. I set the standards and I expect everyone to achieve. I accept no excuses. I don't condone disrespect and ill-discipline* (BT2).

Compared to Veronica, Farida, Saras, Pranitha, Navin, and Tara, Bernice's approach is radically different in that she relies on her professional training to succeed in a challenging context. She does not, reportedly, experience frustration, anger, impotence, and demoralisation because in her class, students complete homework tasks, are punctual, attend classes regularly, and perform academically (BT6). Like Bernice, Gerald too signals a need to focus on teaching. His stance is not as extreme as Bernice. He keeps

away from students personal issues but does address it, albeit, in a generalised and depersonalised way: *be someone for them – but do not get too involved* (GT5).

⇒ ***Our lives are in danger* (TT2).** Teachers at Amethyst have endured physical attacks, loss of personal property and threats by students (FT1, NT7, TT2/5/7, GT2). According to teachers they are vulnerable for a number of reasons: the school is situated close to a *community of abusers* (NT10); students' attack others with instruments, which can be used against teachers trying to intervene (TT3); and they know *Indian teachers are scared* (TT2). The most prevalent opinion is that the Principal does not take preemptive or corrective actions despite reports of students' wrongdoings in full view of teachers and students (VT2, FT7, ST3, TT7). They believe the Principal's fears fuels students' bravado because *the kids know that Indian teachers are scared* (TT2). Navin, however, reveals another side of the Principal. He consults the Principal for advice (NT8) and receives it. Students with problems are encouraged to seek assistance from social welfare. Navin approves of this approach *because if it works through their people, it is much safer than we as a person of another race taking the onus onto us* (NT8).

⇒ ***Teacher training has been inadequate to prepare for South African schools* (TT2).** Teachers at Amethyst express lack confidence to teach in a post-apartheid context because they were trained to teach in an era when sociopolitical structures were stratified and organised by apartheid ideology. The authoritarian ethos of apartheid political order permeated social structures and were reproduced in schools such that teachers wielded more control and authority over students than they do in the present time. They express feelings of inadequacy to deal with the challenges they face, for example, deracialisation (VT5), drug taking, AIDS, rape (FT7, ST5) and childhood pregnancy (ST5). Despite their teaching qualifications, they feel professional assistance is required from counsellors (ST5) and the police (GT3). Veronica would prefer intervention from the Department of Education (VT5). In other words, from officials far removed from Amethyst, its surrounds and communities. Veronica signals reliance on authority and officialdom and diminished regard for her own personal and professional experiences at Amethyst. She exemplifies the helplessness of teachers as they struggle to know and understand those they teach.

⇒ ***If I was the Principal (FT7)***. It is the opinion of teachers that the Principal does not demonstrate strong and decisive leadership despite reports of students' misdemeanours in the presence of teachers and students (VT2, FT7, ST3, TT7). The Principal's stance is viewed as *bad management* (ST3) for a number of reasons. Teachers feel he is *not willing to take a stand* (ST3), that he sits in his office and refuses to know about the challenges teachers face daily (FT7), and that he allows *things to happen* (ST4). They are not convinced that students will damage the school should management intervene (ST4), which is the cornerstone of the Principal's rationale for not taking action.

Critical commentary: professional knowing

What students do not do frustrates teachers (FT2, NT2, TT5) because it is connected closely to teachers' core functions and professional competencies. It is reflective of teacher identity, who they are, and how they can be evaluated professionally. It seems that not being able to experience professional satisfaction means that Amethyst teachers are highly stressed and are denied professional realisation and achievement. In this case the analysis points not so much to *teachers' knowing* their students, but, to teachers' conceptions of teaching in relation to professional identity, in other words, *knowing* themselves. So what does it mean to be a teacher? It means teaching in classrooms attended by students. It means that power differentials are to the advantage of teachers with students deferring to teachers. It means that teachers are in control of the classroom context, can teach uninterruptedly and the occasional problems that surface can be dealt with without denting their professional image. It means that students perform at expected levels. At Amethyst the context is different. Students' refusal to be punctual, their irregular classroom attendance, absence for various reasons, and not meeting academic requirements, subverts the traditional conception of teaching. To this a layer of complexity has to be added – the widespread problems faced by students, the socioeconomic profiles, the sociopolitical backdrop and deep historical differences that teachers are confronted with, make teaching at Amethyst a complex, challenging, and troubling enterprise. It also challenges and troubles teachers' professional identities.

As professionals, teachers know they must modify teaching strategies to accommodate students' needs. The approaches to teaching adopted by teachers are desperate measures to meet the needs of students, to compensate for what students do not do. Every choice has strengths and limitations and some choices are possible because the subject being taught or the grade being taught supports the approach. For example, it would be difficult for a Grade Twelve teacher to dilute the curriculum as Grade Twelve students write national examinations. The decision not to give homework and assignments by some teachers enables others to give homework tasks (BT6). Navin's practice of counselling students relieves other teachers of having to counsel those students. In a way, supporting students means supporting teachers. *Knowing* what students do not do is *knowing* that teaching is demanding, frustrating and requires specialised skills.

Whilst compassion is not necessarily a specialist skill, it is a particular orientation to teaching. Compassionate approaches come with a set of responsibilities. It requires resilience in the face of rejection as some students do not respond to kindness (VT5). Of course, it can also be seen as a "soft" approach making teachers more vulnerable to resistance, to excuses for non-performance and to prolonged testing of teachers' "goodness". Some teachers feel that compassion is not just driven by students' needs and circumstances but by an abstract other, "the system" not recognising or rewarding teachers' challenges in a problematic context like Amethyst (TT7).

Farida, however, feels that compassion is an important characteristic for those involved in education. She feels teachers need *to be kind and understanding ... to be nurses, social workers and parents* (FT3) with support from school managers. But her stance is neither confident nor certain. She reflects on teachers strategies for survival in the face of challenges of student problems: indifference (due to past failure) and distance (as it is emotionally draining). Farida, however, is trapped by reductionistic rationality, *we have to understand* (FT4) she insists even as she knows, *there is very little we can do as they don't fear anything* (FT2). But she expresses faith in professional help. The paradox of *knowing* is that she considers the category, "teacher", to be expandable incorporating social work, nursing and parenting (FT3). But the expanded category, teacher/parent/social worker/nurse, is neither resilient nor competent to deal with *drugs*,

AIDS and rape (FT7), hence her call for *professionals* to intervene. Furthermore, there are teachers resisting this expanded category (VT5, FT5, NT14, TT2/7, GT6, BT3/4/5). The dilemma for teachers is how to express care and how to set limits at school for problems that are rooted elsewhere.

Despite teacher frustrations, one teacher in particular succeeds in realising her teaching objectives. How can Bernice's success be explained? First, she distances herself from emotional entanglement with students and directs her energies to teaching which she describes as *the highest priority* (BT2). Second, she has confidence in her professional training and has pursued professional development programmes (BT1) making her a highly skilled professional. Third, she prepares for teaching by completing administrative tasks after hours (BT1/5). Fourth, she chooses to sacrifice her personal time to use teaching time optimally (BT5). Fifth, she is not sympathetic to students' personal stories and excuses (BT4). Sixth, her approach is self-sustaining; her *attitude works* (BT6) because teachers like Navin, Veronica, and Farida provide the emotional support students need. They are the pressure valves that allow for students pent-up emotions to be released in their presence and contained in Bernice's classroom. It would be quite interesting to see how students would respond if all teachers at Amethyst adopted Bernice's approach. Bernice's approach, however, does give insight into how students from difficult backgrounds can be disciplined and educated. Though she comes across as unsympathetic she does care about ensuring that learners gain from schooling, that they do acquire knowledge and skills useful in the future. Bernice and Gerald, to a lesser extent, exemplify how it is possible to reclaim teachers' professional identity within a context like Amethyst. *Not knowing* students is a way of *knowing* them.

It is not only students who shape teachers' professional identity: the school Principal is intricately involved. The Principal's unwillingness to act and efforts at self-preservation by keeping his doors locked, barring his office windows, and remaining within the safety of his office, are powerful symbols of the need for safety and avoidance of contact with students. These overt symbols, seen by teachers daily as they pass the office area on their way to teach, are constant reminders of threats to body and property.

Teachers have been physically attacked (TT3/7, GT2) and these tangibles of safety and security reminds them of their own vulnerability as well as the privileges

enjoyed by the Principal. As males⁵⁴, Navin and the Principal believe that direct involvement with student issues will endanger their lives. Gerald too concurs that *the element of danger is always there* (GT3). The approach is not one that would find approval of female teachers, Saras, Pranitha, or Tara, as they prefer confrontational leadership to an approach that preserves a distant style espoused by the Principal. Could this gendered difference be co-incidence? A possible explanation might be that female teachers are not only more vulnerable to violent attacks from students, but that students may consider females as “soft” targets, less worthy of respect, and present more challenges to female teachers than they would to males.

The explanation for male teachers' reluctance to confront culprits *head on* is provided by Gerald (GT2): he recounts events from the year 2000 when students threw things at school managers as they passed by. He believes these were *warnings of injury and violence aimed at teachers* (GT2) validating the Principal's beliefs that students would damage property and injure teachers. But, does the argument still hold three years later? Considering that Gerald implies that the situation has improved (GT2), Saras that it is *more rewarding* (ST1), and Tara that *now the pupils are decent* (TT5), it appears that the dangers faced in the year 2000 have dissipated considerably. Perhaps the desire for a change in management style by female teachers is justifiable due to changes in student profiles and a waning of threats. Another explanation may be that female teachers are not ashamed to admit that they require help to deal with the complexities of the teaching context at Amethyst, whilst male teachers may not be as inclined as it simultaneously exposes their own supposed weaknesses. As males, they may feel pressured to preserve a tough exterior, of competence, and of being in charge. The Principal in particular may not want to make known his struggles to lead in such a challenging context.

Through *knowing* about students, teachers not only presume to know students, they also learn about their own vulnerabilities, professional limitations to act on students' misconduct, challenges of context, and how

Fig. 20 *Fatalistic Statements*
 There is very little that we can do (FT2)
 They tried to solve the kids' problems and failed (FT5)
 The Principal says it is dangerous for us (ST3)
 Sometimes I wonder if I taught (TT5)
 You reach a point after which there is nothing you can do (TT2)
 This is a no-win situation (TT2)
 It has become very complicated to deal with learners (GT6)

⁵⁴ The sample of teacher participants is skewed. There are six females and two male participants in this study.

management operates. Student agency, they know, operates in the absence of teacher agency.

Teachers like Tara, Farida, Saras, and Gerald do not believe that they can make a difference to students' lives (see Fig. 20). Students' life experiences are additional factors eroding teachers' confidence and agency because *teacher training has been inadequate to prepare for South African schools* (TT2). They feel powerless and inadequate. Impotence is reinforced in multiple ways: the school Principal does not institute disciplinary measures against students (FT7, ST3/4, TT7), because he fears violent retaliations; lack of a will to manage student misbehaviour bolsters students agency as they know, as do the teachers of Amethyst, that *Indian teachers are scared* (TT2); there are few recourses to punitive measures (VT3, GT3) emboldening students even further, and the failure of the police to stem criminal undertakings of adolescents (VT2). All of these are stark evidence for teachers that adults are powerless against children. What is at stake in a situation like Amethyst is that of teachers professional identity: *I'm equipped with the best possible skills, great ideas from practical experience, academic training, and good management exposure but I came to realise that this school was another ball game altogether So all my strengths just fell away* (GT1).

As witnesses of activities that they do not approve, coupled with *knowing* that the situation regarding students is beyond their capacity, and being powerless to act, teachers have become aware of the threats to their professional identities. Now that they have experienced teaching at Amethyst, they question their training and qualifications because *they were not trained for coping with apartheid baggage* (TT6). Teaching competency, they realise, is more than pedagogical content knowledge, teaching methods, classroom control, and discipline. Teacher training curricula, it seems, lacks sociopolitical, economic, psychological, and cultural dimensions, affecting teaching and learning. The result is stressed teachers, and destabilised professional identities. At Amethyst, it seems that professional identities are fragmented, shaped, and reshaped by students' lives, school leadership, the educational system, and social, political, economic and cultural challenges.

THEME TWO: CRITICAL CONNECTIONS TO KNOWING

Notions of knowing are discernible in the correlation of *teachers' knowing* about students to gender and race, social class, cultural beliefs, and professional competence. This form of *knowing* could be regarded as an "Othering" (Ang 2001; De Beauvoir 1972). In terms of a binary opposition (Derrida 1974), teachers tend to deploy this "us" and "them" separation to stigmatise students' race, class, culture, and subject position as learners. Students' behaviours, attitudes, interests, values, and culture are perceived as different, aberrant, and inferior. "Othering" is supported by teachers' normative values. The norms for gendered behaviour, that boys are often judged more harshly than girls, are as indicated by Levy, Taylor, and Gelman (1995), and Zucker, Wilson-Smith, Kurita, and Stern (1995). Gendered *knowing* also produces Foucault's (1984b) notion of "disciplined bodies", particularly of girls. Surveillance of girls simultaneously makes them blind to their (teachers) complicity in promoting gender norms.

Teachers' knowing can also be construed as unpredictable. As trained professionals one expects that their training would prepare them sufficiently to deal with issues of the profession, but that is not the case here. They state explicitly that they do not know how to deal with the following: with students who are raped; problematic students; giving advice. Unpredictability is a paradigmatic knowing not linked to specific theories of knowing. But if articulated as blind spots (Luft & Ingham 1955), they represent what is known to others, but not to self (teachers). It can also be interpreted as "due epistemic humility" (Norris 2004:783), to state it differently, as confessions and recognition of their limitations to deal with the challenges they know students face.

Teachers' knowing as a hegemony (Gramsci 1977), arises in a number of ways. It continues to support apartheid thinking that links *Black* persons to violence and social problems (Vally & Dalamba 1999) despite evidence of violence and social problems amongst *Indians*. It construes family in terms of middle-class norms which are the known knowns (Norris 2004) of the prevailing authorities who control schooling. Students' inaccessibility to middle-class cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977) is recast as "uncultured" by teachers.

Teachers' knowing is productive of different kinds of truth: by conflating their *knowing* and knowledge (Cunliffe 2005), teachers justify their reluctance to get involved

in students' problems; rape, bullying, smoking, domestic violence, and gambling are regarded as the "cultural" values of "them" (students); and they perceive middle-class persons as exemplary students, parents, and citizens.

Teachers' knowing has a contested element: contradictions of so-called race-based behaviours are explained by way of "exceptions", not as contesting their *knowing*. Students who are innocent victims and students who are guilty violators are rationalised as cultural expressions. These explanations are akin to Rumsfeld's interpretation of "known unknowns" (Norris 2004): that it is not important to know what is not known.

Finally, *teachers' knowing* is relative to who they are as professionals. Their "known knowns" is "a will to believe" (Norris 2004:781) that they exercise their roles in professional ways.

To summarise, kinds of *knowing* demonstrate that *teachers' knowing* can be unpredictable, contested, and relative. It produces different kinds of truth, hegemonic thinking, and "Othering".

Conclusion

This chapter began with the aim of answering two research questions: 1. How do teachers come to know the students they teach? 2. What do teachers know about the students they teach? The analysis indicates that there are three ways of *knowing* and five kinds of *knowing* about students. The ways of *knowing* includes solicited, unsolicited and common *knowing*. Solicited *knowing* is generated by teachers actively seeking information about students. Unsolicited *knowing* comes about through information volunteered to teachers and common *knowing* is information about students known to "everyone" in the school community, and which are asserted primarily through seeing and hearing. Each of these three ways of how teachers' come to know compromises *knowing* as the information gleaned is often partial, incomplete, and deceptive. Teachers are dependent on information that is not reliable, does not allow for understanding, and is generalised. Through the opinions of some individuals, knowledge of some parents and some students, teachers purport to know all students, their families, and their lived experiences.

The lenses of gender, race, class, culture and profession frame teachers' ways of *knowing*. As gendered subjects, male and female students are seen to experience life differently in school and outside school, a result of social constructions and norms of male and female roles. Students are not always known as individuals but as "boys" or "girls". Racial stereotypes based on apartheid ideology continue to inform teachers with negative behaviours more likely to be imputed to *Black* students than they are to *Indian* students because the racial category *Indian* serves as a benchmark for evaluating *Black* students. Through *knowing Indian* students, teachers purport to know *Black* students.

The class divide between teachers and students seems to influence teachers' judgements about students' values for education, family constructions, interests, attitudes, and behaviours. As middle-class individuals, teachers at Amethyst are unable to understand the lived experiences and values of poorer classes. Poor families do not share teachers' values and views about school, education and child-rearing practices – economic hardships influences the ways of living of poor students.

Culture appears to be closely linked to race and class, and teachers deduce that students "cavalier" attitude to schooling is framed by their cultural practices. Finally, teachers imply that their professional identities are shaped by students' activities, attitudes and interests, and the pedagogical context. They feel ill-equipped to teach at Amethyst.

The above-mentioned are interpretations based on teacher stories. In the next chapter I introduce the student participants of this study. They narrate their stories about life in and outside school. We get glimpses of life and living from their perspectives and how these glimpses disrupt *teachers' knowing* based on teachers' stories.

CHAPTER 7

Teachers' Not Knowing: Students' Stories

Introduction

This chapter marks the halfway point of part three of the exploration of *teachers' knowing*. Their stories, narrated in chapter five, and analysed in chapter six, allowed for conclusions to be drawn about how and what they know about the students they teach. A progression towards synthesising the analyses of teachers' stories at this point, however, would limit the understanding of *teachers' knowing* to their "situatedness" as teachers, influenced by professional knowledge and networks, personal biography, and the contextual complexities of Amethyst. Furthermore, the understanding of *teachers' knowing* derived from their narratives (three ways of *knowing* and five kinds of *knowing*) limits critical theorisation possibilities. Therefore, in the second half of part three, there is an opportunity to further the understanding of *teachers' knowing* by juxtaposing them with students' stories to reveal how *knowing* concurs, digresses, challenges, contradicts, or affirms teachers' stories. Students' stories make it possible to understand the nuances and nature of how and what teachers' know from students' vantage points.

In this chapter, students' lives, or at least those aspects they chose to share, are unfurled through their stories. They reveal their experiences at home, in school, and with their parents, peers, and teachers. They expose their family arrangements, relationships with parents and siblings, members of their extended families, peers, and teachers. They provide glimpses of how race, religion, gender and patriarchy, culture, and language are intricately woven into tapestries of life. Furthermore, the stories reveal students' complicity in confounding how and disrupting what teachers' know about them as students.

The students' stories presented here are re-presentations (typed) of their written accounts. Some cleansing of the data has taken place. Incorrect spelling was corrected, texts were divided into paragraphs and local idiom is explained in brackets. Issues raised in chapter five, about the problematics of narrative construction and

presentation, applies to students' stories as well. One story, by Akhona, was orally recorded and then translated from IsiZulu to English, all other stories were written by students. The stories are made up of students' original words and sentences.

Students' stories

Kamla

I was born to my parents after 13 years. It was a strange surprise to them as they never guessed that they would have another child after so many years. Because I was a premature baby I was kept in an incubator. I was a very happy and contented child. I must say that as I grew up I turned into a spoilt brat who got whatever she wanted. (KS1)⁵⁵

My siblings and I are extremely close and cannot think of even being separated. During the years my sister and I really had our ups and downs. We laugh remembering the silly arguments that took place and how my mom, dad and brother used to be our referees. (KS2)

In the year 1995 I attended pre-school and the following year went on to Grade One. 1996 is an unforgettable year as that is when I met one of my best friends. My teacher was very stern but I liked her a lot as I was one of her pets. Actually, to tell the truth, all my teachers liked me and treated me as if I were their own child. I realised this on the last day of my primary school years when they really expressed their gratitude to me for being such a good pupil. (KS3)

In 2001 I became a prefect. From the time I was in junior primary school I wanted to be a head girl as I thought she had power and respect. It seemed to be a title I wanted and through my faith and capability I succeeded. Later that year I won ten awards. It was a great achievement and I am very proud. (KS4)

This year I started to attend Amethyst Secondary, which is a huge challenge for me as high school work is tough. High school, though, is another experience altogether. In high school there are students who use common, vulgar language, have bad attitudes, and

⁵⁵ The coding deployed here is explained in chapter five.

they even smoke and drink and use drugs. They have boyfriends and girlfriends – these are things I'm not able to deal with. I want to be different, unique, not like them. I have a good upbringing and I set high standards of behaviour for myself. (KS5)

I do have two best friends. They like me for myself; for being the person I am. They are, however, influenced by the others, but the good thing is that they don't expect me to change. They are basically good children. We heard lots of bad stories about this school but it is not the school, it is the students' behaviour. If they set standards for themselves this school can have a good reputation. The teachers here are dedicated, especially if the learners cooperate with them. (KS6)

Personally, I am intelligent, spontaneous and very short-tempered. I get annoyed with silly things. My sister and I get along but my brother and I are exactly alike and we have a special bond. We are very close. My brother got married three months ago so this is a new era for me. We have had to adapt to my brother's marriage – we have to speak less and I can't just go to my brother at any time. Our family's entire lifestyle has changed to accommodate his wife. My parents are very proud of me even if they don't speak about it often. These are the highlights of my life. (KS7)

Mohamed

I was born in 1990 at Addington Hospital. I have very loving parents and a brother who is out of school and looking for a job. My brother and I fight often but when we are on friendly terms he buys me gifts. Recently he bought me a cell-phone. (MS1)

The most important thing in my life is the breakup of my family. My early life was hard. Sometimes we had no food to eat or a place to sleep. My clothes were old and torn because my dad was an alcoholic. He used to swear my mother and chase us out of the house. He had a girlfriend and that is why he treated my mom so badly. Also I was sickly because I suffered from asthma. This really affected me because I felt neglected. (MS2)

We had to live with my aunt and we should worry a lot about my dad because he liked this other woman. Later on my mother took us away to live with her parents. We

lived with my mother's father because my grandparents were separated. My grandfather also had another woman so my granny left him. They were Tamils. My mother was born a Tamil. My grandfather became a Christian because his girlfriend converted him. My dad's parents are Muslim. He is a Muslim and so the Imam (**Muslim cleric**) jacked him up. He gave up all his bad ways and took us back. After we went back my mother converted to Islam. (MS3)

We love our religion. It is very important to us as it made my father a better person. But I would prefer to be a Christian – because we have to go mosque five times a day and we have to fast for a whole month. We cannot even drink water during the fasting month. So it is easier to be a Christian. Even being a Tamil is easier. I am Muslim, because every Friday we go to mosque and pray. (MS4)

We spend time together most of the time by going to the casino even though it is not allowed by our religion. In the holidays we went fifteen times. My dad likes gambling. I also enjoy gambling. When I was six-years-old we were suffering and my mum only had ten rand left. I took the last ten rand and I put it into the slots machine at a shop. I hit the jackpot and won nearly R1 000. That really saved us because my mother could buy groceries and everything. One other time I had R15 and I wanted to take the Lotto but my brother stopped me. That night the six numbers were the winning numbers. It was for six million. My mother cried so much because we would have been so rich. We go very often to the casino. That's the only entertainment my parents like. Most of the time my parents win money. They play the machines but my mother also likes the roulette. (MS5)

Now there is peace at home. My dad works and earns good money. He does not drink and he is very good to my mother. He even allows my mother's family to visit and stay with us. My mother works with my father. There is good income. We have food everyday and they get me whatever I need. My parents have not had a fight for eight years now. We are a very happy family. (MS6)

Jabulani

I was born in 1989 at home. My parents were very poor and my mother would say that all her children must be born in the ancestors' house. I was a healthy baby. They used to call me Fatboy. A few months after I was born my father died. It was very hard for my mother to look after us. We had no money. I had to go to Durban town to stay with my family. My brother stayed on the farm with my mother. (JS1)

When I was seven-years-old I started school at Amber Primary. I could not speak English well but later I became good. I used to carry my small lunchbox to school. Inside I always had putu (cooked maize meal resembling cous-cous) and sometimes meat and sometimes chicken. Sometimes I had no lunch. I never told anyone that I had no lunch. My mother also said I must not tell anyone I don't have a father. I must tell everybody I have a father and a mother. I also told we were rich, and we have three taxis and a big house. (JS2)

I made three friends. But Curtis is my best friend. Now we are in the same school and in the same class. One day I told Curtis my true story. He never told nobody so we have a secret. He tells me his secrets also but I can't tell you because he is my friend. (JS3)

Curtis and I share a lot of things. Sometimes he gives me lunch and sometimes I give him my lunch. We use to also copy from each other. But one day when we were in Grade Five we were copying from a book when the Sir (male teacher) caught us. We wanted to lie but the book was open and the Sir could see it. After that day we learnt a lesson and from that day we don't copy anymore. (JS4)

I am very happy to be in standard six (Grade Eight). I am the first one in my house to go to high school. My mother she wants me to be a Big Boy. She says I must have many businesses or be a doctor. I want to be a taxi driver. Taxi drivers are rich and they drive nice hi-aces (mini-buses). My taxi will be clean and I will play loud music so all the passengers will fight to drive in my taxi with me. (JS5)

Curtis

My name is Curtis and I was born in 1990. I used to live in Newlands East, where all the Coloured people live. We are Coloureds because we have twisted hair. My granny is Indian but we look like Coloureds. In school the children should tease me about my hair. I asked my mother why she gave me hair like that. She said God gave me my hair. God knows how we should look like. Only rude people want God to change them. So now when the children tease me I say God gave me beautiful hair. (CS1)

When I was five-years-old, we moved just near this school. My father did not come with us because he likes to be near his friends. In the weekends they drink and fight with everybody. Sometimes big, bad fights happen. They should bust windows. My mother said we better go. We live in a very old place. Only poor people live here. We are poor but we are not like beggars. Beggars have no home and they sleep in the streets. I have one brother and three sisters. When I was small my mother used to work in a factory. (CS2)

I was in Amber Primary for seven years. I was very shy. Up to now I am very shy. My best friend is Jabu. He stays near me and we go everywhere. In the weekends we play together and do lot of mischief. Sometimes we get into a lot of trouble. My mother says I don't be like a proper Christian boy. To be a Christian the pastor says we must be honest and well behaved and we mustn't take drugs and things like that. The people in this school take drugs and they smoke. The girls smoke in the toilets. The boys smoke on the grounds. They bully us small guys. Lucky I don't carry money because they just take it away. (CS3)

Last year my father got very sick so he came to stay with us. My mother was looking after him. He died last month. But I did not tell the teachers. When they find out they come to the funeral and see our house. Then in school they will say "Shame, you live in the shacks and you don't have a father". I don't like them to know where I live. Jabu and I have to like lie. Some of the children know we lie but they don't tell the teachers. Lucky, I don't have to shave my hair like the Hindu boys otherwise the teachers will know my father died. I like this school. I have many friends from my primary school. (CS4)

Leela

I never told anybody my life story before. I'm telling you because I noticed you didn't spy on the boys when they were copying. We live near the school. I walk by myself because I don't like friends. That's why I come late. We are four children and I am the oldest. I am thirteen-years-old. My mother was twelve years when I was born. My father was fifteen years. They don't look like mothers and fathers, they look like friends and brothers and sisters. (LS1)

We are very poor. My father is always shouting and now they are fighting everyday because my mother is having another baby. My grandmother says she is good for making babies. My father doesn't go to work. He sleeps most of the time. Most of the time he is drunk. When he gets some work he does it. When he doesn't get work he hits us and swears us the whole day. Even the next-door neighbours hear everything because they can hear him scream. (LS2)

My mother is always sick, sick, sick. I do things like cleaning the house, washing the clothes, washing the dishes and cooking the food and feeding the naughty, naughty children. At night I wash the smallest baby. He is three-years-old. He does not like my mother to bath him. Sometimes we don't have lunch. I give my food to him. I get tired and sick but I don't go to the doctor. It is expensive. (LS3)

I am not happy at school. The teachers shout me when my work is not done. I stay away a lot to help my mother. The teachers always ask me for a letter but my mother does not know how to write letters. She cannot read. One day in primary school I wrote a letter. The teacher got so angry and said I mustn't think she is stupid because she knows that I wrote the letter. She told everybody and the other teachers would pass funny remarks at me. I never did that again. But I still have to stay away because there is so much to do at home. Here in the high school they don't worry you. It's okay if the boys don't worry you. At least I still manage to pass all my subjects. (LS4)

My mother gets too tired to go to Church. My granny says we are half-breed converts. My granny is a Hindu but my father's side is Christian. I like the Church. They teach us good things and bad. We don't worship statues and things like that. My mother

does not light the lamp anymore, which is a good thing because now our luck will change. My father says he is a saviour – he saved my mother from the Devil. Christians can save the whole world. I pray, pray, pray everyday for my sins. (LS5)

I am not happy that my mother is having another baby. I will have to wash, wash, wash more clothes. When I grow up I don't want to be a mother. No, no, no. I will work in a nice office. I will type letters for my boss. I will cook good food for my brothers and sisters when they visit me. (LS6)

Daniel

I was born in October 1990. That time we lived in Entshongweni. My father is a school Principal. My mother works in a factory. It was not hard to buy Nestum (Infant food formula) to give the baby milk. I was crawling and walking and running. My father play with me everyday. (DS1)

When I was five-years-old my father and mother took me in a train. They leave me in the Junior Primary school. My teacher was Miss Gumede. She love me very much. If I need to go outside she said OK and me too I love her. My mother come every Friday to school and ask Miss Gumede what kind I am. She said it right, I was a good boy. My mother hug me and take me home. In primary school I was clever. (DS2)

Then we went to stay in Kwa-Mashu. We have a nice house in Mashu. We have electricity at home and water. I've got many things to play in Mashu. I like to play soccer and table-tennis. So this is so nice people can't do the bad things like being a criminal because there is so much sport. (DS3)

Schools in Kwa-Mashu are not right. The boys are dangerous. The teachers are good but the children are dangerous especially in high school. They steal from you and sometimes they hit you. (DS4)

My sister is 18, my big brother is 23 and my small brother is 10. My brother came to this school and my sister is at Varsity College. This is a nice school. Not much fighting

and stealing. The teachers are right and they treat me nicely. The Indian children are nice. The girls are very nice too. (DS5)

I come to school by train. From Kwa-Mashu station I get off at the station and it takes me thirty minutes to walk to school. I get up very early. I leave home at seven 'o'clock and get to the station at 7.30 and I get to school by eight 'o'clock. The train ride is safe because there are lots of children on the train. My happiest years were in JP (junior primary) because the teachers loved me very much. I am doing well in this school. I do all my work and my father say I must read everyday. When I am big I want to be a school Principal. (DS6)

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Zinhle

I was born in 1989 in Victoria Hospital in Durban. My mother gave birth to me when she was only sixteen-years-old and still in school so her mother didn't approve of this child. We had to leave the house and go stay with my father. My family moved to Mandini after I was born and we lived there for nine years. (ZS1)

In Mandini I lived with my whole family. It was a wealthy family but the place we lived in was full of ups and downs. Some members of my father's family are Whites and they do not want any contact with us. My grandmother owned a shebeen (tavern) and my grandfather worked as a chef in one of the hotels there. My father worked night and day so that we had all the things we want. In our yard there was an orange orchard and my granny had a big garden so when everything was ripe we used to go and sell the vegetables and fruit in the green market. Then the white side of the family took away the farm and the orchard and we had to move from there. (ZS2)

The first school I attended was in Stanger in 1996. I changed schools three times as we moved from Mandini to Durban to Mandini and then back to Durban. In 2002 my mother and my small sister who was two months old died. Now I stay with my father and

grandparents. I came to this school this year. It's not where I want to be but I have an opportunity to get educated. (ZS3)

In my family we didn't believe in ancestors until my aunty became very sick. We were expected to go and buy a goat and cut off its skin and put it on our arm. So we did and my aunty regained her life. My family believes in Christ so we are all expected to be Christians like our parents. My life story has a lot that I don't want to talk about because of the mistakes my parents made and I hope one day my children would be proud to talk about their life story. (ZS4)

Emily

I had a normal childhood. I was born in 1990. When I was one-year-old my mother gave birth to my brother. I love him very much and we are very close. I hate it when the girls try to chuff him. He is too young for girlfriends. I also have an older sister. We fight a lot because she likes to boss me around. She is very jealous because I have more boyfriends than her. She does not even have a boyfriend. (ES1)

I attended school for the first time in 1995. In Grade Three I met my best friend. We share many secrets. I tell her about all my boyfriends. She organises for me and when she wants to meet her boyfriend I organise for her. In 1998 I had a crush on a boy called Naresh. He was very cute but also very shy. After about a year he asked me out. I felt like the most happiest girl in the world. (ES2)

In Grade Five I had the most horrid teacher. Her name was Ms Tulsi. She hated my friends and me. She said we were only interested in boys. One day she caught me kissing Naresh. She made a big fuss. The Principal called my parents to school and they said I was a cheapy. My mother was fussed up and crying but my dad said it's not a problem. My sister said that's what happens to girls who kiss the boys. The boys are the princes but the girls become the frogs. (ES3)

In 2002 I had to say goodbye to some of my friends as they were going to other high schools. When I came to this school I fell in love with a boy named Reuben. Ms Jeeva

is very cruel to me because she heard of my primary school stories. She always thinks bad of me. One day she called me to her room and said because I was big built I mustn't chase boys. I told her I don't chase the boys. The boys are always asking me out. Sometimes I go out with them. She said I have a lot of cheek. (ES4)

One day Reuben gave me a clap when he saw me with a boy. I don't like love them. We should like just hold hands. We had a huge fight. After that Ms Jeeva hit a moan when she saw me talking to Reuben. She really shouted me in front of the class. I felt very bad because of all the mistakes I made. I wanted to break off with Reuben but Reuben says I must not worry because she is jealous. He wants to marry me. I think I will marry him and we will be happy like my parents. (ES5)

Welcome

I was born in 1989. We are a family of four. I am the first child and I have a younger brother. We lived on the farm with my mother's family. In 1993 we started living with my father. My father and mother got married in 1994. I was very happy for both my parents. It was a nice wedding. I carried the ring for my father. My father kissed my mother at the wedding. (WS1)

I started school in 1995. I went to an Indian school in Phoenix. My best friend was Curtis. We did our thing together. In Grade Three we went for an excursion to Mitchell Park. We saw animals in the zoo and had lunch in the garden. (WS2)

In Grade Five we went to stay in Richards Bay because my father found a job there. The school there was very different. I was supposed to be in Grade five but they sent me to Grade Four because I didn't know my school work. It was an Afrikaans school. I was very embarrassed. During that time my mother was very sick and she died in 2000. I was sad. I couldn't talk or eat. They sent me to stay with my grandmother and grandfather. They were good to me. I was sad because I did not see my father for nearly two years. Then I saw him. But now he is married. My stepmother is nice. He has a new family. There are two children. I have not seen my new brother and sister. (WS3)

So now my grandparents look after me. When my mother died the bank she worked for gave us money and also my mother saved her money. Now me and my brother are living from that support. My father sometimes he gives us money, but most times he don't. But my granny says she won't let us starve. She pays the school fees and buys us nice clothes and shoes. We live in a nice house and we have electricity and water. We have a TV and everything. Last year I saw my father again. I was so happy. I don't know when I will see him again. I am very sad about my mother. My brother doesn't feel the same way. My father is happy because I am a big boy and he don't have to look after me. Sometimes I dream we will be a family of three, me, my father and my brother. (WS4)

Yolanda

Hi! My name is Yolanda. I am 13 years old. I live in Newlands East. I was born in Durban. My father was born in Cape Town and my mother was born in Johannesburg. My father is a Coloured and my mother is a Muslim. But we are Christians. (YS1)

When I was small I never used to go to nursery school without lunch. When I was in nursery school I never used to like my teacher because every time I used to write untidy she always had a comment about it. She always used to pick on me never the other children, only me. Until one day I told my mother and my mother came to sort her out. My mother said that she had a problem that is why she was always having a comment about me to the other teachers. She got so scared that she left me alone after my mother's visit. (YS2)

In our home we are very poor, like in primary school I never used to bring lunch in Class One (**Grade One**). Lucky there was a soup kitchen so every break I used to go and eat there. (YS3)

I enjoy going to school. It is important to get clever then you can sort out all the troublemakers. Some teachers are nice and some are bad. Like some teachers used to always pick on the same children. They like ask the same question everyday, "Where is your homework?" and the children will say the same thing like, "I forgot". Some teachers

are just stupid. And some teachers are very cheeky. We have to sit quiet. It's like we can't speak or stand. Sometimes I don't learn in class. I like close my mind and smile nicely and I know when to like make a comment. It is easy to fool the teachers. (YS4)

My father's sisters are very cruel to me and my family. Like the last time when we went to Cape Town for the December holidays my grandmother used to chase us out at seven 'o clock in the morning, and we only came inside at 4.30pm. We used to go sleep at 6.00pm. My mother could not say one word because my aunties would scream and shout and say for everything, "Hulle is bederf" (They are spoilt). My mother says they don't know about respect. In church the pastor preaches so much about respect. That's why till today I do not like my grandmother and my aunties at all. And today I thank God that I have beautiful, good parents that brought me up the right way. When I grow up I want to be a nurse one day to help people who are in pain. (YS5)

Akhona (Translated from IsiZulu)

I am very slow in writing so I will tell you my life story. It is not interesting. I was born in 1985 so I am seventeen-years-old. The children in this class say I am a madala (old man) so sometimes I hit them when they call me like that. Yes, I have to go to the office every week because I knock the ouens (boys). At the office those people don't listen to me. When they see me they start to scream and she says "Akhona, I am sick and tired of you". One day I want to tell her I am sick and tired of her. But they don't listen. In this school if you are a bad boy you are always a bad boy. But who made me bad? Me, I wasn't born bad. Bad things happen to me. (AS1)

My father forced my mother to love him and when she got pregnant he ran away. My mother gave birth to me in the bush. We had no place to go. Every night we slept in the bush. We used to go begging for food and money. One day she saw a cousin and she was crying for us to come home. (AS2)

We went to live with my mother's family. My grandmother gives me her evil eye. She loves me but every time she says I am just like my father. Who is my father? I don't

know him. What does he look like? I don't know. Maybe he died. I don't know. If he came to see us I will kill him. He can't just be a father like that. I like babes (girls) but I don't force them to love me. My grandmother told me one day that I have bad blood and I must pray for my ancestors to take away the bad spirits. But I don't have money to buy the cows and goats. I don't like to see the Inyanga (**traditional healer**). He wants a lot of money to fix me up. They think I am a broken car which they can fix up. The Inyanga is the mechanic. When I have money I will get fixed up and bad things will not happen to me. (AS3)

Even in school bad things are happening. The teachers are always cross because I don't have stationery and things like that. I can't tell them we live in the bush so that's why I didn't do my work. When you walk home through the grass the big boys catch you and take away your school things. That primary years was bad. The teachers were just failing me. They ask me what kind parents I have. My mother couldn't go to school because she didn't have a nice dress to wear. Sometimes she came near the school and asked another lady to say she is my mother. When I go to the office I see I have a new mother. But I'm not stupid. I say to myself "This must be my mother's plan" so I just listen like she is my mother. This lady, she don't know me and when the school people said I don't do my work she hit me in the office. The Principal was very happy. I was unhappy with my mother for sending this bad lady. (AS4)

Now it is not so bad. My grandfather buys me stationery and the school uniform. I do gardening in the weekend so I have my own money. Now the bigger boys are worrying me to smoke zoll (**dagga**). They say I have money to buy zoll. I don't like the zoll. It makes the eyes red and my grandfather he keeps a big sjambok (**leather whip**). He hits me if my eyes are red. (AS5)

When I am older I will not leave my babe when she falls pregnant. I will be a present father. I will be there. Nobody should grow up in the bush with the sky as a roof and the grass as walls. Snakes will not walk over my child and ants will not bite him. (AS6)

Ishara

I was born on 23 July on a Saturday at 6 'o clock in the morning in St Aidan's hospital. I was the first child in our family and the second child was my brother. I have grandparents from my mother's side and my father's side. I started school at the age of seven. I had a nice, understanding teacher whose name was Mrs Mooloo. She was a wonderful person. All the teachers I had in primary school were wonderful. Last year I was very happy to leave Amber Primary. (IS1)

My parents were very happy to have a daughter because at that time I was the only baby girl in Fernwood Road and everybody used to give me attention. Everyone was very fond of me because I was a very friendly child. (IS2)

In my primary school I was very happy. I had many friends. Most of them have gone to another high school in Durban. In Grade Seven I was a prefect. It was fun because it was like you were as good as a teacher. You could be in the blocks but the other children could not be there. My little brother was in Grade One. He looks up to me. This year he misses me in primary school. (IS3)

Rowena

My name is Rowena and this is a story of how I live my life. I am the fourth child. I have three older sisters and a younger brother. My brother is spoilt rotten. My sisters are always seen as angels. I am the naughty one. If I do anything wrong I get beaten up by my mother. My father is a softy but he works long hours as a taxi driver. He leaves early in the morning and comes late at night. I don't like to tell him anything because he has so many worries in the family. My grandmother doesn't like my mother and my aunties always have showdowns with my mother. Home is not a happy place. My mother cries a lot. She just hates my granny and aunties. When my father gets fed up with my mother he stays at my granny's house. Then my mother gets her revenge. She doesn't let us visit my father. Once I bunked from school to go see my dad but that turned out to be a bad mistake because when my granny was fighting with my mother she boasted that we even bunk

from school to come to her house. My mother gave me beating. My granny has a very big mouth. (RS1)

My primary school life was very exciting and I never used to get into trouble at school. When I was in standard five (Grade Seven) I had a best friend named Pravin. He was one of the best things that happened to my life. When I felt down he was always there to pick me up and he made me feel happy. I told him all about our family problems. He also had problems so he understood how I felt. Then his family decided to move out of the area and so I lost my best friend. The day I lost my best friend it felt like the end of my life. Fortunately I made another friend, Emily. We became best friends until we both fell in love with the same guy. Eventually we had a fight. Later on I realised a boy wasn't worth fighting for so we put everything behind us and we are still best friends today. (RS2)

This is the first year of my high school years. I really hated coming to this school until I met a boy called Conrad. I fell hopelessly in love with him. But from the day I turned thirteen, my nightmares at school began. I have had many problems with Ms Jeeva. She is a busybody and likes watching the girls like a fox. She does not even want us to talk to a boy. It is so hard to be in a classroom with boys and not talk to them after school. We have to behave like nuns. The trouble began with a girl called Saloshna. She also liked Conrad and tried to break us up many times. When she couldn't break us up she started to tell stories about me to Conrad's teachers. She told Ms Jeeva that I was drinking in school and from that day onwards Ms Jeeva is always after me. She watches me all the time. But the worst thing of all is that she told my mother about this and I was beaten very badly. There were many times when I wanted to run away from home. She makes me cry in school and I felt so embarrassed. Till today she watches me very carefully. (RS3)

Quarisha

I come from a mixed background. My father is Muslim and my mother is a Hindu. From the day that I was born there were problems. Mother wanted me to be Hindu but my father said no. His family is very powerful and they gave me a Muslim name. We have

problems everyday. I also have two bothers and a younger sister. My big brother is seventeen-years-old. My second brother is fifteen. The youngest sister is ten years and I am thirteen. My brothers do what they like. My father has no control over them. They don't listen to my mother but my father says that is her fault. One time he caught them smoking, but my dad could not hit them because they are so big. In the fasting month they don't fast but I have to fast. (QS1)

Now the big problem is that my big brother made a girl pregnant. She is thirteen-years-old, the same age as me. The biggest problem is she is a Christian girl. She also comes from a mixed-up family. They are half Coloured, half Hindu and half White. But she is dark. She is staying in our house. Last week there was a big bust-up because her parents came to fight with us. The police had to come and sort it out. But the problem is not sorted out. I think she must go to her house. Her parents must help her with the baby so my brother can finish school. (QS2)

My father works as a waiter in a hotel. My mother is a housewife. Both my brothers dodge school. My sister and I are good learners. We go every day to school. I like school. The teachers here are very good and understanding. Sometimes I get annoyed because they make me sit next to a stupid learner. Especially the boys. I don't like boys. They like to bully the girls. They must have their ways. Some of the girls in my class have boyfriends. The boyfriends are bad to them. They go out with many other girls. They don't respect the girlfriends. When the girl falls pregnant they disappear. They still come to school but they disappear from the girls' lives. The girls have to manage by themselves and they have to face all the problems alone. If I or my sister falls pregnant my dad will kill us. (QS3)

I love reading. It is my favourite hobby. Some stories are very interesting. When I read I forget who I am. I get into a new world without any problems. Even the schools in books are different. But this school is not so bad. Some teachers are nice and a few are excellent. But one or two are really rude. At least at school the work keeps me busy and I don't have to think about the problems at home. I think when I grow up I don't want a family. It is a big problem to have a family. (QS4)

I really want to have a dog as a pet but because we are Muslims we cannot keep a dog. I have pictures of dogs which I keep in my schoolbag. I wish I had my own bedroom then I could put it up on the walls. (Q55)

Conclusion

These stories, recounted by students, invite us into their personal spaces, allowing us to peek at slices of their lives, revealing the angst, joys, thoughts, and feelings of young boys and girls as they experience them. While some stories are detailed, others focus on issues of family dynamics, romantic liaisons, friendship, or schooling. Grandparents, it appears, play significant roles in some lives, and religion features strongly in their understanding of school, family life, and gender roles. One can conclude that students' lives are complex, and the dynamics of family life are not visible and cannot be inferred by teachers from *knowing* their socioeconomic statuses, or the location of their homes. Students' stories, in a sense, provide details of what it is not possible for teachers to know.

It is important to remember that students' stories are included in this dissertation primarily for the purpose of understanding *teachers' knowing* because *teachers' knowing* can only be explored critically by including students' accounts. To that extent, in the next chapter, students' stories will be subjected to the analytical framework deployed for teachers' stories to **deepen** and **mediate** our understanding of *teachers' knowing*.

CHAPTER 8

Disrupting Teachers' Knowing About Students

Introduction

This chapter marks the final segment of part three, the exploration of *teachers' knowing*. Under regular circumstances, the worlds of students and the worlds of teachers are circumscribed by differentials of various sorts: age, power, experience, and values, to name a few. These worlds overlap at school, *albeit* for different reasons, ostensibly, teachers to teach and students to learn. The demands and rituals of schooling leave scant time for all teachers and all students to share stories about self, school, and family life, and living in parallel universes circumscribe both opportunities and motivations to know each other. To that extent, this segment brings their discursive worlds together through analysis, and later on, through synthesis.

The stories by teachers as re-presented in chapter five and analysed in chapter six account for *teachers' knowing* from their perspectives. We know now how teachers come to know about students and what they know. From teachers' stories, there are three ways of *knowing* about students, and five kinds of *knowing* about students. But *teacher knowing* has to be read against stories students have written about themselves. We can anticipate that these stories will cohere with some aspects known to teachers, whilst some aspects will conflict with *teachers' knowing*. One must keep in mind, furthermore, that the students' stories, represented in chapter seven, are autobiographical accounts. Students were not, for example, asked to comment on what teachers said. Thus students' stories provide a unique opportunity to understand the dynamics of *teachers' knowing* based on insights provided by students. It does not allow for a point by point comparison. It does, however, allow for a critical reading framed by the themes and sub-themes generated in chapter six.

I analyse students' stories using the analytical framework deployed in chapter six⁵⁶. Following a similar strategy, the analysis is framed by two themes. Each theme is discussed in three steps: discussion of theme one, followed by a critical commentary for

⁵⁶ Similarly, the referencing of data and data figures follow the trend set in chapter six.

each sub-section, and making connections of the theme as a whole to literature (see also Fig. 8). This chapter has one additional step made possible by mediating *teachers' knowing* with students' accounts, to understand what teachers **do not** know.

THEME ONE: WAYS OF KNOWING

In this theme, I discuss, from students' points of view, the three ways of *knowing* identified in chapter six: solicited information, unsolicited information, and common information.

Solicited information

Teachers' knowing about students is based on information elicited from students, their peers, and parents, through modes of asking, speaking, and enquiring. In this section, students reveal how they respond to solicitation of information and the impact of solicited *knowing* on their relationships with teachers.

⇒ ***I also told the teacher (JS2)***. Students provide teachers with information by telling about themselves. For instance, when Jabulani is asked about his home background and about his parents, he remembers to heed his mother's advice not to *tell anyone* (he does not) *have a father* (JS2). He conceals the death of his father and unilaterally decides to embellish details of his life with accounts of his father as owner of property and motor vehicles. In this instance, teachers are privy to a manufactured truth and are unaware that his father is deceased, or that the family is facing financial hardships. Similarly, Akhona feels he *can't tell them we live in the bush so that's why I didn't do my work* (AS4). Bereft of information about Akhona's living conditions, teachers formulate their own reasons for homework not being done and, consequently, students are censured and embarrassed in the presence of their (students) peers.

⇒ ***The teachers ask me for a letter (LS4)***. Leela's response to a teacher's request for a letter from her mother explaining *why* (her) *work is not done* (LS4) is to fabricate one to conceal both her mother's illiteracy and her own heavy workload at home. The teacher recognises Leela's duplicity, and relays the incident to other members of staff, amplifying Leela's pain and shame. What is not known is the reason for Leela's duplicitous actions, hence, Leela's behaviour would be ascribed by teachers to dishonesty, lack of respect,

and ill-discipline. Similarly, Akhona does not explain to teachers the reason his mother does not respond to the school's summons to discuss her son's progress (AS4). Teachers, it appears, are not privy to information that would allow them to understand students' situations or actions. To students, teachers' reactions may seem to be insensitive and inappropriate as implied in the statements by Akhona: *the teachers are always cross ... The teachers were just failing me* (AS4).

Critical commentary: solicited information

Solicited information appears to be unreliable at times. Not all information solicited is accurate though there may be many occasions when teachers are given authentic accounts. The examples of Leela and Akhona reveal that sensitive information about their lives is deemed private and personal and, in particular, not to be shared with teachers who represent middle-classes and are alien to the world of poor, underprivileged students. Students are ashamed to reveal their poverty-stricken backgrounds, their parents' illiteracy, or single-parent family status. Concealing information appears to be ways of preserving their dignity and respect for their way of life. But concealing information can be divisive as students are conceived negatively by teachers.

Teachers may not be aware of the influences of patriarchal formations on students' ways of life. Jabulani's story illustrates a dimension of patriarchal authority. His mother has been socialised into accepting and perpetuating a cultural truth that a family without a male as head of the family is an aberration. Consequently, she instructs Jabulani to conceal the death of his father and to keep up appearances of being a *normal family* (JS2). Consorting with his mother as co-custodian of family honour, Jabulani supplements the myth of *normal family* with a fictive account of his father as an affluent businessman. The invocation of a wealthy father shrouds the social embarrassment of being fatherless, symbolises the power and prestige of the male figure in the family, and serves to create a convincing tale that young Jabulani can proudly publicise to teachers.

The aforementioned accounts illustrate that solicited *knowing* is premised on assumptions that students are willing to confide in teachers; that they will be truthful. Students by contrast, are ideally positioned to inform teachers' perspectives. They can choose to reveal, to conceal, or to be silent. Amethyst teachers are unable to authenticate

students' versions through home visits or communication with parents/guardians as they claim parents are often difficult to contact and, therefore, they are reliant on information, however flawed, presented to them.

Unsolicited information

Teachers gain much information about students from information volunteered by students about themselves or others. This segment provides insight into the dynamics of volunteered information.

⇒ ***Some of the children know we lie (CS4)***. When Curtis' father dies after falling ill, Curtis does not tell teachers about his father's passing. Though his peers know about this, they too do not tell teachers about this sad event which could justify, for example, absenteeism or poor academic performance. Letting teachers know about the death of a parent means home visits and the opportunities it presents to teachers to see actual home conditions. It appears there is a wider conspiracy to prevent teachers from *knowing* about where and how they live (CS4). Thus all information volunteered to teachers is not a "true" reflection of students' lives or reasons for their behaviour. Peers know that that incorrect information is given to teachers and *they don't tell the teachers*. A prime motive for lying or withholding information is that students do not want teachers condescending pity as expressed by Curtis: *they will say (s)hame you live in the shacks and you don't have a father (CS4)*.

⇒ ***I tell her because she is my friend (ES2)***. Some information is volunteered to friends, not teachers. The information about the loss of a father (CS4), lack of wealth and property (JS3), boyfriends (ES2), and family problems (RS2), is personal and private. These are entrusted to friends because they know that friends experience similar conditions of living and are unlikely to tell teachers about their intimate problems.

⇒ ***She told the teacher a lie (RS3)***. Rowena explains, from students' perspectives, what gets told to teachers and the outcomes thereof. When she and a fellow student vie for the attentions of a male student, the loser wreaks havoc for Rowena by telling a teacher that Rowena *was drinking in school (RS3)*. The teacher privileged with the information is known as a *busybody and likes watching girls like a fox (RS3)*. The

repercussions are dire for Rowena. The teacher, Rowena feels, keeps her under constant scrutiny, embarrassing her, and reducing her to tears at school. Furthermore, the teacher tells Rowena's mother what she had heard and Rowena is *beaten very badly* (RS3) at home. Emily's experience is similar (ES3). Her parents were also called to school and informed about her interests in boys.

Critical commentary: unsolicited information

Information voluntarily given to teachers is screened and carefully selected by students, be it about themselves or their peers. There is a determination to keep unpleasant details from school personnel, indicating that unsolicited *knowing* about family life relayed to teachers is recast to project favourable conditions. As far as students are concerned, some things can be told to teachers and some things are to be left unspoken.

Unsolicited information given to friends is more likely to be realistic experiences as they are unlikely to reveal confidences to teachers. Friends know what can be shared with teachers and what cannot. Information which is likely to reveal broader elements of living, suffering, hardship, a world they imagine is foreign to teachers, is deemed not suitable for teachers. There is a move to present a dignified front, of maintaining reputations, of presenting a façade of comfort and prosperity. It appears they do not want teachers to know about their homes or about their parents. For students, schools represent normative values about family and living. Asking details about one's father and mother, about their employment status, and home addresses, are not only enquiries needed to complete protocols required by Amethyst, it simultaneously signals what is "normal". "Normal families" constitute a mother and a father, a comfortable home, a street address, and employed parents. Curtis, Akhona, and Jabulani exemplify students who would prefer that their "abnormal" family situations not be known by teachers.

Parents' complicity in keeping up appearances is highlighted in Akhona's story. His mother sends a proxy pretending to be her son's mother so that she does not embarrass her son. Poverty-stricken, living in the veld, bereft of money, and suitable clothing, Akhona's mother feels unworthy to go as herself (AS4). Akhona demonstrates wisdom honed in marginal circumstances by reckoning that the strange woman claiming

to be his mother *must be* (his) *mother's plan* (AS4) and goes along with the charade, despite it being to his detriment. Teachers thus cannot know that the woman in the office is not Akhona's mother or the reasons for her pretence.

Students are more likely to relate personal characteristics and behaviours to teachers than to family circumstances. Romantic relationships, for example, appear to be something that can be reported to teachers. In Rowena's case we see how information, whether true or false, can be deployed as a vindictive measure to deal with rivals. Not privy to the truth, and believing them to be "insider accounts" as informants are students, teachers tend to believe stories about students' activities, particularly when activities are negative and are corroborated by their own eyewitness accounts of such activities.

It is ironic that when students' choose to conceal unsatisfactory details about their backgrounds, teachers are still less than generous in their opinions of students' families and culture. Students hoping teachers would have a wholesome view of parents and families are not aware of teachers attributing personal interest, aptitude, attitude, and performance to family background and culture. In fact, teachers are not aware of the sacrifices made by Akhona's mother, for example, to provide for her son and to maintain family dignity. Instead, parents are constituted negatively and students are known as particular articulations (often negative) of their families. However, it must be remembered that students are implicated in informing *teachers' knowing* about themselves.

Common information

From students' perspectives, this segment provides insight into how information about students becomes widely known within the community of Amethyst. Common *knowing*, from students' perspectives, is explored by examining specific incidents to understand, on the one hand, how these incidents become universally known to peers, teachers, and the community of Amethyst, and on the other hand, the rationale for students' actions. Common *knowing* is asserted through seeing and hearing and the analysis indicate the reasons behind students' actions, and how these actions impact on students based on teachers conceptions of students.

⇒ ***The Sir could see it (JS4)***. Jabulani and his best friend Curtis do everything together, including sharing class work. In one such instance of sharing, a teacher spies him and Curtis copying from a book. Their first instinct, to lie to the teacher, is thwarted because evidence of copying is plainly visible. The boys resolve not to copy again, but for the teacher, perhaps, copying is one more issue complicating the role of teaching.

Emily's experience is different in that it is not an accidental discovery as that of the boys caught copying. Her escapades are discovered because a teacher she describes as watching the girls like a fox (RS3), vigilantly follows her activities. The teacher, Ms Jeeva, was made aware of Emily's interest in boys from primary school sources (ES4) and, consequently, Emily is a target of her surveillance in high school. Rowena too feels harassed as she believes Ms Jeeva expects girls *to behave like nuns* (RS3). Observing students allows teachers to know about students' activities, but not their thoughts, reasons, or emotions.

Students know that teachers know about them by watching them. Ms Jeeva, notably, is likened to a fox with a keen sense of vision and ability to identify her prey and to follow her/him relentlessly. Students feel like trapped animals in her presence and know that any transgression on their part will be discovered.

⇒ ***She told everybody (LS4)***. When students do not acquiesce to school demands or regulations, they know teachers talk to others about their non-compliance. Leela relates an episode that was shared by teachers and became common *knowing*. *Not knowing* that Leela stays away from school to assist her mother at home, a teacher asked her to bring a letter from her mother to explain her persistent absenteeism. This request for a letter, standard procedures for schools, is an ominous order as Leela's mother is illiterate, a fact that she does not want the school to know. In this instance, young Leela tries to satisfy both the school's request for a letter and to hide the shame of her mother's illiteracy by writing the letter herself. The teacher, of course, easily recognises the handwriting and confronts her. The incident did not end there as other members of staff were told about her ploy and she had to endure *funny remarks* (LS4). Leela confirms that the sharing of information amongst teachers is a way of disseminating *knowing* about students despite the *knowing* being incomplete and biased.

⇒ ***We heard lots of bad stories about this school (KS6).*** Students know about the school before they decide to attend it. From the perspective of an exemplary student, Kamla has heard many negative things about Amethyst. In her opinion, *it is not the school, it is the students' behaviour (KS6)* which is bad. The school's bad reputation, according to Kamla, has to do with *students who use common, vulgar language, have bad attitudes and they even smoke and drink and use drugs (KS5)*. Students' bad behaviour, she avers, is well known and it tarnishes the school's reputation. She sees it as a problem of students, not of teachers. Though it is not clear who the informants are, it is probable that students and teachers hear about *bad stories* from similar sources. Kamla's accounts of students' activities concur with *teachers' knowing* about students.

⇒ ***She heard of my primary school stories (ES4).*** Students know that the things they did in primary school haunt them in high school, as teachers get to know about their activities in primary school. Emily's friendships with boys during her primary schooldays are conveyed to Ms Jeeva, a teacher at Amethyst, resulting in her negative opinion of Emily (ES4). As a young girl, Emily is not expected to be involved in romantic relationships, and this irks her teacher, particularly when she spies Emily talking to boys (ES5), confirming her opinion that Emily is a "bad" girl. The outcome of Ms Jeeva hearing about her past and witnessing her behaviour in the present makes matters worse for Emily, as she is insulted in the presence of her peers. Emily expresses her emotional and psychological anguish with the words, *I felt very bad because of all the mistakes I made (ES5)*. It appears that teachers at Amethyst are in contact with primary school teachers and, hence, it is one of the ways information about students is relayed to secondary school teachers.

⇒ ***She was always having a comment about me to the other teachers (YS2).*** Students know that teachers talk about them to other teachers. In one instance, Yolanda recalls a teacher who "persecuted" her in nursery school (preschool/kindergarten). She felt she was the only student selected for negative comments in class and spoken about to other members of staff. Eventually, Yolanda's mother did come to school *to sort her (teacher) out (YS2)*. The parent, in effect, threatened the teacher. It is possible when considering how Emily's past experiences are conveyed to teachers at Amethyst that an incident about a parent *sorting out* a teacher gets conveyed to the school as well.

⇒ ***Even the next-door neighbours hear everything (LS2)***. Home for Leela is a chore schedule, *cleaning the house, washing the clothes, washing the dishes and cooking the food and feeding the naughty, naughty children (LS3)*. It is also an arena of constant arguments between her parents. The fights between parents can be heard by neighbours, and thus all that transpires in the household is known to neighbours, including Leela's peers. It is probable that Leela is not an informant because she is loath to have friends (LS1), but neighbours listening-in may be implicated in dispersing information. Problems of families, resultantly, become known and are relayed within the community and to school personnel, creating a notion that family strife occurs often in students' homes.

Critical commentary: common information

The chief modes of common information dissemination are through the senses of listening and seeing. Teachers receive information and they witness incidents taking place in school as well. Often teachers are not given explanations of the rationale behind students' actions and, consequently, interpret students' experiences in and out of school from a teaching perspective. Why do students engage in activities that give them a bad reputation? One way to understand this conundrum is to interrogate students' activities from two perspectives, viz. students and teachers.

Curtis and Jabulani are firm friends and enjoy working and playing together. They share all activities as an expression of their close friendship. In class, however, friendships are not allowed to dominate the learning agenda. On the contrary, teachers' agendas dominate, articulate, and decide classroom practices. Jabulani and Curtis may have been copying from a teacher's point of view because an independent work ethic is valued and promoted in schools. As such, independent work is the hallmark of "good" students. Working together takes place on particular occasions when teachers specifically instruct students to do so. It is the teacher's prerogative to decide when and how cooperative activities take place. From this perspective, students who decide to work together are *copying*, in other words, infracting a school rule. That Jabulani and Curtis were not intending to contradict a school practice is immaterial. The power differential favours teachers' and marginalises students' points of view. Furthermore, Jabulani and Curtis acquiesce to the school's point of view, resolving not to *copy anymore (JS4)*. It is

apparent that Curtis and Jabulani's views about right and wrong in respect of *copying*, is in agreement with teachers' views, and hence they consider their conduct to be inappropriate. This example demonstrates that when values emanating from divergent positions are in opposition, then the value touted by teachers is more likely to inform their *knowing* about students.

"Bad" incidents have a long shelf-life and fuels *teachers' knowing* about students. From students' stories it is apparent too that teachers are implicated in the way *knowing* about students is made common. Discrete incidents involving students, that are heard of and witnessed by teachers are shared with colleagues and generalised as common *knowing*. Some *knowing* about students migrates via teachers from primary school to high school and becomes embedded as common *knowing*. A case in point is Emily's experiences with Ms Tulsi in primary school and Ms Jeeva at Amethyst. Both teachers probably consider that acquiring education be prioritised above romantic relationships. Emily, however, is already mapping her life out. She wants to be happily married *like* (her) *parents* (ES5). Would Emily be able to share such aspirations with teachers who would like students to be driven by ambition and striving for professional careers? Probably not, since she has already been labeled a *cheapy* (ES3), a pejorative description implying lack of morals. Emily does not consider her behaviour to be promiscuous. She is aware of her attractiveness to the opposite sex and anyone opposing her relationships like her sister or teacher, is deemed jealous (ES1/5). Considering the troubling numbers of schoolgirl pregnancies at Amethyst, teachers like Ms Jeeva are probably not driven by jealousy, but by a concern for the consequences of early sexualisation. However, Ms Jeeva's approach is constituted as harassment by Emily despite her good intentions. Just as teachers do not know the rationale for students' actions, students likewise may not understand teachers' rationale in the ways they communicate with students, and about students.

Kamla represents students who concur with teachers. She has much in common with teachers in terms of worldviews, home background, interests, and values. As an academic achiever, all her teachers like her and treat her *as if* (she) *were their own child* (KS3). She is loved at home and has experienced love and acceptance at school and, therefore, school is place of *great achievement(s)* (KS4). Kamla's school experiences are

positive when compared to Yolanda's victimisation for untidy handwriting. Yolanda's mother has to threaten her teacher to protect her child from harassment. Whether legitimate or not, threats probably make teachers' wary of students. It appears *teachers' knowing* is largely influenced by students who are different and unlike Kamla. She is different to most of her peers because she sets *high standards of behaviour* (KS5) for herself. From this perspective, students could change teachers' conceptions of students *if they (students) set standards for themselves* (KS6).

Though students activities are presumed to be known universally by the community of Amethyst, what is not known are their feelings of pain (RS3, ES5) and embarrassment (LS4, AS4). Teachers do not have access to these emotions because students conceal their emotions. Finally, it has to be noted that common information about Grade Eight students emanates predominantly from primary school sources and from teachers' experiences of teaching Grades Ten and Eleven. One can deduce, therefore, that Grade Eight students of Amethyst at present are known from their past activities and presumed future activities.

THEME ONE: CRITICAL CONNECTIONS TO KNOWING

Connections to the literature surveyed in chapter allows for the nature of teachers' *knowing* to be interrogated as it merges from the critical commentaries. Thus far the analysis reveals that:

Teachers' knowing can be seen as uncertain and incomplete. An interpretation of solicited accounts provides insight into the inaccurate details that are supplied to teachers by students. According to Luft and Ingham (1977), this indicates that teachers are not privy to private knowing, or in terms of Rumsfeld's Creed (Norris 2004) represents "unknown unknowns": the things students do not want teachers to know.

Teachers' knowing has a normative dimension (Foucault 1984a) because teachers occupy positions of authority which vests them with powers to set up the parameters for what is acceptable or not acceptable. It is this dimension that allows teachers to determine the normality or abnormality of aspects of students' lives inside and outside school.

Teachers' knowing is partial and produces truth (Foucault 1984a) through hegemony (Gramsci 1977). As professionals with authority and status, teachers' are positioned to pronounce what is truth. Thus untruths and incomplete accounts are received as truths because teachers' are not open to suggestions that what they witness (and which confirms parts of what students tell them) is a partial account.

Teachers' knowing comprises blind spots (Luft & Ingham 1955) because they do not know that they do not know, Rumsfeld's (Norris 2004) "unknown unknowns".

Teachers' knowing is relative to who they are as professionals (Kincheloe 1991). As teachers, they dominate the discourse on *knowing*, and subjugate and marginalise students' knowing. *Teachers' knowing* is, in a sense, one-dimensional, partial, incomplete, and flawed.

THEME TWO: KINDS OF KNOWING – STUDENTS AS SUBJECTS

In the analysis of *teachers' knowing* in chapter six, five kinds of *knowing*, namely, gender, race, class, culture, and profession framed the discussion. The same kinds of *knowing* are used to analyse the ways in which students' stories disrupt their *knowing* in this section.

Gendered subjects

Students at Amethyst identify themselves and other persons as male or female (see Fig. 21). Students are socialised into particular performances deemed gender appropriate, creating a gendered identity as well as channelling them into a prescribed social order. The analysis of this segment provides insight into how gendered practices are enacted at home and at school and how students respond to gendered expectations.

Gender Reference	Data Sources
Brother/s	KS2/7; MS1/4; JS1; CS2; LS1/6; DS5; ES1; WS1/3/4; IS1/3; RS1; QS1/2
Sister/s	KS2/7; CS2; LS1/6; DS5; ZS3; ES1/3; WS3; RS1; QS1/2
Daughter	IS2
Mother / Mom	KS2; MS2/3/4/5; JS1/2/5; CS1/2/3/4; LS1/2/3/4/5/6; DS1/2; ZS1/3; ES1/3; WS1/3/4; YS1/2/5; AS2/4; IS1; RS1/3; QS1/2
Father / Dad	KS2; MS2/3/4/5; JS1/2; CS2/4; LS1/2/5; DS1/2/6; ZS1/2; ES3; WS1/4; YS1; AS2/3/6; IS1; RS1; QS1/2
Wife	KS7

Stepmother	WS3
Aunt/s / Father's sister/s	MS3; ZS4; YS5; IS1
Madala (old man)	AS1
Woman / lady	MS3; AS4
Grandmother / Granny	MS2; CS1; LS2/5; ZS2; WS3/4; YS5; AS3; IS1
Grandfather	ZS2; WS3; AS5
Girls / Babes	CS3; DS5; ES1/2 AS3/6; RS3; QS2/3
Boys / Guy/s / Ouens	CS3/4; LS1/4; DS2/4; ES2/3/4/5; AS1/4/5; RS2/3; QS3
Boyfriends	KS2; ES1/2; QS3
Girlfriends	KS2; MS2; ES1
Inyanga (male traditional healer)	AS3
Nuns (women celibates)	RS3
Imam (male Muslim cleric)	MS3
Pastor (male Christian clergyman)	CS3; YS5
Nurse (female medic)	YS5

⇒ **Girls smoke in the toilets ... the boys smoke on the grounds (CS3).** Curtis notes the differences between males and females by identifying smoking patterns. Boys' smoke in spaces visible to teachers and students, whilst girls do so in the girls' toilets away from the prying eyes of teachers and male students, as smoking is still not deemed appropriate for girls. The school toilets present a private space for forbidden activities allowing girls to breach school rules and social mores without fear of discovery and retaliation. There are two possibilities for Curtis' knowing about what girls do in the toilets. Firstly, tobacco smells wafting through the air betray girls' doings in school toilets and secondly, female peers have alerted him to girls' activities inside school toilets. It is probable that teachers are similarly informed.

⇒ **Boys are dangerous (DS4).** The data indicates that at school, boys are more likely than girls to engage violently with peers, which explains why Daniel attends school in Nirvana and not KwaMashu. In his experience, boys are dangerous. According to him, vicious forms of bullying by male students take place in township⁵⁷ schools. They steal from students and hit them, typical expressions of masculine behaviour confirming teachers experiences with boys at Amethyst.

⇒ **My big brother made a girl pregnant (QS1). If I or my sister fall pregnant, my dad will kill us (QS3).** Girls experience gender differentiation in the home. Their movements, behaviour and activities are regulated and surveilled more closely than are male children. Boys and girls are treated differently in families and moral codes are more flexible for boys than girls. Boys can do as they please whilst girls are controlled. Due to

⁵⁷ Townships refer to sprawling suburbs created for Blacks during apartheid.

their physical strength boys cannot be controlled (QS1). When it comes to cultural practices, girls are conditioned to exercise cultural norms like fasting whilst boys are exempt (QS1).

The differences are more pronounced with issues of relationships and pregnancy. Quarisha's example reveals how a family's response is influenced by gender in respect of pregnancy. Quarisha's seventeen-year-old brother has made a thirteen-year-old girl pregnant. Despite religious/racial differences, the pregnant girl has been allowed to live with Quarisha's family (QS2). Though the father accepts his adolescent son's sexual conduct he denies his daughters similar freedom. Quarisha and her sister are threatened with death should they fall pregnant (QS3).

Quarisha notes, too, that boyfriends often abandon pregnant girls. Pregnant schoolgirls, it appears, have to *manage by themselves and they have to face all the problems alone* (QS3).

⇒ ***Boyfriends are bad ... they don't respect the girlfriends* (QS3).** Boys display disrespect to girls in a number of ways. When it comes to romantic relationships, boys show scant respect for girls. As related by Quarisha, boys make girls pregnant and then abscond. They also cheat girlfriends by going *out with many other girls* (QS3). If a girl has to engage in similar practices as exemplified by Emily who is observed chatting and holding hands with another male student by her boyfriend, than she risks violent retaliation (ES5). Quarisha's observations regarding boys' abdicating their responsibility to pregnant girls is also well-known to teachers.

⇒ ***I do things like cleaning the house, washing the clothes ...* (LS3).** Home is still the domain of female chores. Leela has to cook, clean, wash clothes, bathe children, and keep the home clean. Though her father is unemployed, he does not assist with household chores or caring for his children. In their home it is women's work, thus Leela assists her mother, pregnant with a fifth child, to run the family home. The needs of family supersede Leela's need for education, and need to engage in activities that thirteen-year-olds enjoy.

⇒ ***We have to behave like nuns* (RS3).** At school, boys and girls receive different kinds of attention. Teachers are more likely to exercise control over girls, and to keep girls under surveillance than they do to boys. Girls are watched over carefully and

summoned by teachers when they do not approve of their relationships with male students (ES4, RS3). Students like Emily feel they cannot even speak to boys but she does know of a way to subvert the taboos placed by teachers by colluding with friends, *she organises for me and when she wants to meet her boyfriend I organise for her* (ES2). It appears boys do not receive such attentions from teachers and can, presumably, associate with anyone they please.

Critical commentary: gendered subjects

Students are gendered subjects fulfilling gendered roles and expectations. At home and at school they are channelled into a preconceived worldview supporting the ascendancy of males over females. The main foci regarding female gendered roles and expectations are purity, morality, labour, and temperament.

Girls are expected to behave according to gendered customs that are time-honoured. The “good” reputation of girls, their circumspection and modesty in all situations, as well as virginal status, signal their good backgrounds and the exemplary parental guidance received. To that end, girls at Amethyst “play the game” of projecting a clean image by smoking in the school toilets. Their reputations cannot be tarnished if they can successfully conceal participation in forbidden activities. Unfortunately, the care they take to cloak their smoking habits from teachers comes to nought as their peers inform teachers about their “goings-on” in the toilets. The above example provides the basis for teachers to associate notions of class with a failure of poor parents to oversee their daughters rather than viewing it as an act of resistance to gendered norms.

The issue of pregnancy clarifies the norms that regulate girls and boys’ conduct and the complicity of females in sustaining norms that discharge males of responsibility and burdens females. In the case related by Quarisha, her brother attempts to respond to his responsibility to the thirteen-year-old he has made pregnant by bringing her home to move in with his family. This is a shared responsibility, as his parents probably provide financial assistance. Quarisha raises a number of objections to the *status quo* in her home. Firstly, she objects to the girls’ genetic make-up as she regards the girl as *mixed* and *dark* (QS2). Secondly, she objects to the problems the pregnancy has engendered between her family and the pregnant girl’s family resulting in the *police* (having) *to come to sort it out*

(QS2). Finally, she objects to the effects of the pregnancy on her brother's education and in her opinion, the pregnant girl's *parents must help her with the baby so my bother can finish school* (QS2). Quarisha's objections are ironical for the following reasons: her own background, in her opinion, is *mixed* (QS1), there has always been family strife in her family related to issues of religious faith and most important, she admits to not liking boys because they *don't respect the girlfriends. When the girl falls pregnant they disappear* (QS3). She is not aware of the inconsistencies of her opinions. Two sets of norms operate, one for her family and another for others. In this instance, Quarisha seems to be ignorant of her complicity in upholding male prerogative and female disadvantage. Teachers are privy to information about boys' reactions to pregnancy and girls' challenges in dealing with pregnancy. They are not aware of the forces that produce and sustain gender differences.

Teachers are also implicated in sustaining and producing gender differences. Girls are targeted for surveillance. Female teachers, who convey the norms that shape female conduct, monitor their movements. "Good" females, they imply, do not consort with boys and should *behave like nuns* (RS3), in other words, they do not associate with males⁵⁸. Boys on the other hand are not constrained in similar ways. Indirectly the message teachers transmit to female students is that the burdens of maintaining purity and upholding a moral order lie in girls' hands.

Messages at home and messages at school intersect when it comes to gender norms, especially discernible in bolstering patriarchy. Patriarchy refers to the dominance of men over women. From this perspective, the authority of the family is vested in the male as husband, as father, and as head of the household. Patriarchy is constituted, on the one hand, as a responsibility and duty of males to care, maintain, and protect the family thereby benefiting females. On the other hand, it benefits males as their authority exempts them from household chores and child-minding duties even when they do not provide financially for their families, enjoying freedom of movement, expression and indulgences of various kinds not available to females.

To understand the above, Leela's story is instructive: Her father was fifteen-years-old when she was born and presently, he is a twenty-eight-year-old parent to four, with a

⁵⁸ The issue of same-sex relationships was not raised by teachers or students.

fifth child due. He typifies young, poorly educated, unemployed, and impoverished males (LS1/2). As a teenager, Leela's father expressed his masculinity through virility. His early sexual exploits inducted him into parenting and spousal roles without the financial means to provide for a family. As an unemployed male with a family, he expresses his frustrations by being abusive and aggressive at home and disregarding his marital obligations. It is left to Leela to assist her mother with household chores and care of children while he abdicates family responsibility by taking refuge in male prerogatives of engaging in intemperate activities like drinking and lazing around (LS2). He fails to notice the toll of labour on his thirteen-year-old daughter (LS3) or that she has to stay away from school to help her mother (LS4).

In this case, family responsibility is primarily a female burden despite the negative effects on the health of Leela and her mother. Family planning is also constituted as a female responsibility. From the remarks of her mother-in-law and the arguments with her husband, it is apparent that Leela's mother has to bear the blame of procreation whilst the culpability of the male progenitor is ignored (LS2). One can infer that as a young male, Leela's father is conscious of the entitlements, liberties, exemptions, and immunities intrinsic to patriarchy.

Students are educated about a world articulated by gender differentiation. Practices at home, particularly through observing enactments of "mother" and "father", are acquired and expected to be replicated in the future. An example is the issue of marriage in a patriarchal society. When a man and a woman of different faiths marry, the wife is expected to share her husband's identity by assuming his name, religion and by moving into his domicile. After Mohamed's father leaves his lover and returns to family life, his mother adopts her husband's religion as an act of peace and reconciliation (MS3). In doing so, she provides her husband with an excuse for his behaviour and assumes the role of the guilty party – the husband strayed because of a failing on her part. The private act of religious conversion is simultaneously a public confession of her failings as wife and mother for not complying with socially entrenched mores. The return to family life of the reformed alcoholic and philanderer (Mohamed's father) vindicates patriarchal belief of the benefits of female acquiescence (the mothers' religious conversion) to male supremacy.

The case of Curtis' family exposes how they suffer the indignities of a father and husband who prefers the company of friends, carousing, disturbing the neighbourhood and, occasionally, shattering window-panes (CS2). Though opting to leave the offending spouse to care for her children in an impoverished environment, Curtis' mother does not escape her pastoral duty to her husband. Unemployed and bereft of marital support, she provides refuge to the fatally ill husband and nurses him like a dutiful wife until he succumbs to illness (CS2). Wifely duty, a notion emanating from constructions of the traditional role of married females, is an insidious aspect of patriarchy because it depends on the complicity of women in their own oppression.

Names are about identification of person and identity giving clues to, for example, gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation. In this particular instance, Quarisha's parents are caught up in the tussle over which religion is symbolised by the names given to their children. In patriarchal formations, as is the case of Quarisha, the children follow the father's name and are therefore, universally recognised as "Muslim children", clouding the fuzzy tensions that trouble Quarisha.

The examples discussed above illustrate the ways and means of acquiring notions of gender roles and functions. Curtis, Mohamed, and his brother are presumably being inducted into historical patterns of male prerogative. Quarisha and Leela observe womanhood as "subalterns", glimpsing their futures as adult females. Teachers culpability is expressed in their control of girls' moral conduct, perhaps because girls are easier to rein in (an effect of patriarchy). Or perhaps not, but rather because teachers are also products of patriarchal households, patronising an order that has been relayed through the ages, that is so deeply embedded and submerged into the psyche, that it is almost difficult to recognise it as "man-made" fiction.

Racialised subjects

Students identify themselves as racialised subjects. Their stories reveal how they understand and frame race, influenced by skin colour, parentage, religion, hair, and space.

⇒ *My granny is Indian but we look like Coloureds (CS1).* Curtis comes from "mixed" parentage but he considers himself to be a *Coloured* person because he *looks*

like a Coloured person (CS1). *Coloured* as a race group is peculiar to South Africa, being one of four recognised political markers of identity during apartheid and continuing its existence in the post-apartheid era. One of the main indicators of race during apartheid was hair texture, which Curtis deduces makes him a *Coloured*: *we are Coloureds because we have twisted hair* (CS1). The other reason he mentions is his old residential address, Newlands East, a township created by apartheid masters for *Coloured* people in KwaZulu-Natal.

Curtis understands race as being linked to hair texture and place of residence. Since moving to Nirvana, where a diverse population resides, he has discovered that it is his hair that is primarily used to as an indicator of race.

⇒ ***My granny says we are half-breed converts (LS5)***. Leela's mother is of Hindu stock, whilst her father is a Christian. Due to differences in religious beliefs, her paternal grandmother labels her grandchildren *half-breed converts*, a reference to the parents' inter-faith marriage and the subsequent conversion of Leela's mother and her children to Christianity. In this instance, religion is conflated with race, and the marriage between adherents of different faiths is regarded as producing *half-breeds*, meaning the children are impure, not only genetically, but spiritually as well because they are converts. In this instance, the religious orientations of parents determine their children's pedigree. Parents of the same faith produce "pure" specimens whilst parents following diverse beliefs produce *half-breed converts*.

⇒ ***My father is a Coloured and my mother is a Muslim. But we are Christians (YS1)***. Similar to Leela's example, Yolanda's parents come from different religious and racial backgrounds. In both cases, religion is strongly associated with race. *Coloured* persons are predominantly Christians whilst *Indian* persons could follow Hinduism, Islam, or Christianity (dominant faiths – there are others). In both cases, the mothers assume their husbands religious identities by converting to Christianity because a wife's conversion to her husband's faith is promoted in patriarchal societies. A male's faith supersedes a female's faith.

⇒ ***I went to an Indian school (WS2). Indian children are nice (DS5)***. Daniel and Welcome refer to race when describing school choice. Amethyst is an *Indian school* (DS5, WS2). Identifying schools as racialised entities is a consequence of apartheid

structuring of society, as schools were situated in areas specific to each race group, with *White* schools generously funded and *Black* schools severely under-funded. The funding of *Indian* schools fell between these extremes. In view of South Africa's history, Amethyst represents better quality of education than *Black* township schools for Daniel.

⇒ *Some members of my father's family are Whites (ZS2).* Once again a student refers to her mixed parentage. In this case, it is an issue of colour. Zinhle's father is the offspring of a *White/Black* relationship. Her father chose to marry a *Black* woman and it appears that because they are not racially "pure", the *White* members of the family *do not want any contact with us (ZS2)*. It appears that marriage across colour lines are still rejected by some persons in post-apartheid South Africa.

⇒ *They are half Coloured, half Hindu and half White. But she is dark (QS2).* In this example Quarisha conflates religion with race. She is referring to the parentage of brother's pregnant girlfriend. Each "*half*" refers to the composition of the girl's family background, which does not meet Quarisha's approval because *she is so dark (QS2)*. It appears the girlfriend might have been acceptable had she been fair. It seems that colour is more important than pedigree. The dismissal of pedigree is understandable in view of the fact that Quarisha also comes *from a mixed background (QS1)*, but her redeeming feature is her fair skin. Once again, the "mixture of races" has to do with mixtures of religion rather than race.

Critical commentary: racialised subjects

During apartheid, only four race groups existed: *Black, Coloured, Indian* and *White*. All shades of skin tone were contracted to match one of these four exclusively without considering plural articulations thereof.

Amethyst students' make reference to religious faith in combination with three constructions of race linked to apartheid viz. *White, Coloured* and *Indian*, adding a layer of complexity to the notion of race. Based on students' stories, a number of assertions about students' understandings of race can be made: race has to do with colour; race and religion are intricately intertwined; physical characteristics are indicators of race; residential area is an indicator of race; parents determine one's race; and race can be either pure or mixed.

The links between race and skin colour are well known, particularly in the context of South Africa's apartheid history. Quarisha connects skin colour to genetic inheritance and religion to race. A mixture of *half Coloured, half Hindu and half White* has resulted in a dark skin (QS2). To her way of thinking, a dark skin is unattractive and undesirable. Moreover, it threatens and complicates the issues that are the frontlines of battle at her home. Her mother, a Hindu adherent, has resisted changing her faith to that of her husband, a Muslim. Since the arrival of children, conflict has emerged as each parent has tried to impose their religious identity on the children. The father is the winner of the battle to impose his will and faith on his family, due mainly to patriarchal support. The combination of race and religion is a nodal point that exposes the power dimension of race. Fair skin, the favoured skin colour, dominates, as it is associated with positive qualities and the father's religious orientation, gaining strength from patriarchy, has ascendancy over the mother's faith. Given the family's history of religious intolerance, Quarisha's fears about the potential for increased levels of family strife as an outcome of her brother's relationship with a girl from a *mixed-up family* (QS2), are not far-fetched. Furthermore, the expected baby represents a hybrid of two *mixed* families, in other words, a "mixed, mixed-up" baby. This example demonstrates that apartheid categories of race are being challenged and neutralised by a proliferation of hybrids.

The notion of racial purity originating from beliefs about race as biologically determined and genetically transferred, hinges on mono-racial relationships to preserve the distinctive features associated with a race group, for example, language and religion. Procreation across races produces *half-breeds* and *mixed-up* children as revealed by Leela and Quarisha's experiences. Their genes, viewed as tainted by "mixed marriages", make them vulnerable to ostracisation and ridicule by, for example, members of the patriarchal family as experienced by Leela (LS5) presumably because the father's blood is seen as superior to the mother's blood.

The success of apartheid race ideology is emphasised in Curtis' story. He constitutes himself as *Coloured* by virtue of physical characteristics, namely, *twisted hair* (CS1), reinforced by residing, in his younger days, in a suburb allocated for *Coloured* persons during the period of racial segregation. Teased by his peers, he finds comfort in the explanation given by his mother that *God gave him his hair* (CS1). The notion of

divine authority is not a new argument, as apartheid masters deployed passages from the Bible to justify the policy of segregation. For believers of a divine being, like Curtis, the power of god is impenetrable and race categories are immutable, divine ordinations.

Students are subjected to racialised identities and are knowledgeable about race as markers of identity, rather than as a social construction. Some students acquiesce to imposed racial identities, some experience race in nuanced and complicated ways and others do not consider it an important dimension of their identities. Students' understandings could be regarded as expressions of and against apartheid ideology. Teachers, by contrast, are still bound to essentialist notions of race. They are not aware of the subtleties of difference undermining notions of racial homogeneity, which explains why they link students' activities, attitudes, and behaviour to race.

Cultured subjects

Culture in this section refers to the influence of belief systems shaping students' social and moral conduct, particularly the primacy of religion in their lives.

⇒ ***We love our religion (MS4)***. Religion appears to be one of the most important cultural expressions of students' lives. A number of students' parents come from different religious backgrounds (see Fig. 22) and the central role of religion is most conspicuous in these families. Mohamed expresses deep affection for his avowed religion because *it made my father a better person (MS4)*. His father's diversions, gambling, alcoholism, and adultery, leave the family destitute and dependent on maternal welfare and generosity (MS2/3). Not only is the mother left to fend for the family's survival but her children witness her humiliation, emotional and economic hardships, as well her abiding affection for an errant husband and father (MS2/3). The father's rehabilitation and resumption of a peaceful family life comes through the intervention of an Imam, a Muslim cleric, and the mother's conversion to Islam. Mohamed, however, faces a dilemma regarding the strictures of religious faith and his penchant for pleasure seeking. In his opinion, *it is easier to be a Christian. Even being a Tamil is easier (MS4)*, as Islam requires going to mosque five times each day, fasting for a month, and refraining from gambling (MS5).

Like Mohamed's mother, Leela's mother has renounced Hinduism, "Othered" as *the Devil*, and has embraced her husband's avowed faith (LS5). Religious differences are

Fig. 22. Children of Inter-faith relationships⁵⁹

Mohamed	- f. Muslim	& m. Tamil (Hindu)
Curtis	- f. Christian	& m. Indian
Leela	- f. Christian	& m. Hindu
Yolanda	- f. Christian	& m. Muslim
Quarisha	- f. Muslim	& m. Hindu
Zinhle	- f. Christian	& m. Traditional African faith

not tolerated in these families. According to Leela, not lighting the lamp, a practice of Hinduism, *is a good thing because now our luck will change* (LS5), demonstrating the belief that the "right" religious practice can bring about prosperity whilst the "wrong" one can lead to

poverty. The "right" religion is the faith pursued by the father.

Quarisha's mother resists conversion to her husband's faith and the consequence is daily conflict in at home. The children are aware that the mother would prefer them to follow her faith but she does not have the agency to combat both husband and his family, which provide a *very powerful* (QS1) support base for the husband. Paternal grandmothers appear to play a significant role in ensuring that grandchildren follow their son's bidding (LS5, RS1, QS1). In Zinhle's case, the family has amicably included elements of traditional African faith in the practice of Christianity.

Contrary to teachers' conceptions of being uncultured, students demonstrate the influence of religious culture on their families, and they do subscribe to religious ways of living.

⇒ ***To be a Christian, the pastor says, we must be honest and well behaved*** (CS3). Students do attend services at religious institutions (MS4, CS3, LS5, YS5). At these services, students' learn about restrictions, *going to the casino ... is not allowed by our religion* (MS5); moral values, *the pastor says we must be honest and well behaved and we mustn't take drugs* (CS3); about good and bad, *we don't worship statues* (LS5); believing in Christ, *we are all expected to be Christians like our parents* (ZS4). Religion appears to shape and influence their views of the world. It provides guidance and promotes conformity. Consequently, one can conclude that students do get exposure to moral values at home.

⇒ ***Me, I wasn't born bad. Bad things happen to me*** (AS1). Akhona renders insights about his lifestyle. He lived for a long time in the veld, without a roof over his head.

⁵⁹ f.=father m.=mother

Through his example, it appears that it is not a cultural practice to live in the veld or to experience problems at school. However, living in the veld was the option his mother chose to exercise when she became pregnant and was abandoned by the male responsible for her pregnancy. He points out that he is not an innately bad person; he is a victim of circumstances. Born into poverty, he feels he cannot reveal to teachers the reasons he does not possess stationery, do homework, or why his mother does not come to school when teachers summon her (AS4). Akhona is acutely aware that it is not his genetic make-up, but the social set-up that confounds his life and creates challenges at school that are difficult to overcome.

⇒ ***He hits me if my eyes are red (AS5).*** Contrary to teachers' opinions that smoking is a cultural practice promoted by the community, Akhona reveals that family members do discipline children. In his case, since his living arrangements have improved, older boys harass him *to smoke zoll* (AS5). His grandfather links red eyes to smoking marijuana and beats him with a leather whip when he sees that Akhona's eyes are red. Akhona's dilemma is about how to satisfy his bullying peers and his grandfather without getting a beating. Teachers are unaware of the pressures he faces from peers to smoke and from his grandfather to refrain from smoking.

⇒ ***I don't have to shave my hair like the Hindu boys (CS4).*** Funeral rites and rituals are cultural practices. According to Curtis, Christian mourners do not mark their bodies in any way to symbolise that a member of a family has passed away. By contrast, he is aware that in some Hindu families boys are expected to remove the hair on their heads. The removal of hair is a kind of advertisement about a death in the family, which teachers can read. Curtis is glad there are no such giveaways in Christianity, as he does not want teachers to know of his father's passing, as teachers making a home visit would discover the unsatisfactory conditions of his home environment. Despite not making home visits, teachers do have some ideas of students' deprived home conditions.

Critical commentary: cultured subjects

Deviating from teachers' conceptions of students as "uncultured" or acculturated into unacceptable behaviours and modes of being, students' stories

demonstrate that religion is deeply implicated in their lives. Religious faith, strongly correlated with patriarchy, influences students' understandings of "right" and "wrong".

Mohamed, for example, shares experiences beginning with childhood in a troubled marriage and ending with reconciliation and amity. He is aware that Islam does not sanction his father's hedonistic conduct. Through Mohamed's account, insight is gained into the effects of patriarchal abuse of authority and dominance, and the regulatory effects of religious faith. The family's ejection from home exemplifies how a male, by virtue of gender privilege, can be self-indulgent, irresponsible and hedonistic, and then return and continue family life. The rehabilitation of the husband/father is not a result of self-reflective remorse or appeals from his family, but is, instead, a reaction to the Imam, a higher "male" authority and religious leader (MS3). This example illustrates the hierarchical mode of patriarchal operation: whilst Mohamed's father enjoys unfettered sovereignty over family, he is subject to religious authority and morality. Mohamed's mother is not only subject to male authority in the home but is dependent on the authority of a male clergyman to rein in her husband. But, the taboos of religion are not followed perfectly as Mohamed knows from his father's example. Though rehabilitated to family life, Mohamed is aware that his father contravenes Islamic teachings by gambling in casinos, a habit he has himself acquired. Thus religion may set down the parameters of conduct, but is no guarantee that adherents will subscribe fully. Mohamed exemplifies the dilemmas of religiosity. He is torn between his love for Islam and knowing that adhering to its tenets are difficult.

As expressions of culture, religious practices are not unproblematic. Students' stories indicate that power differentials emerge when adherents of different religions marry. As discussed previously, the religion followed by the head of the family is deemed superior to his spouse's faith. As a result, the children adopt the father's faith (LS5, MS3). However, acceptance of the father's faith is accompanied with a damning of the mother's faith: *we don't worship statues and things like that. ... My father says he is a saviour – he saved my mother from the Devil* (LS5), demonstrating that the espoused superiority of one religion depends on vilifying another.

Akhona's life in the bushveld is unfortunate and unacceptable rather than "uncultured". Forced by circumstances to squat in the bush, he reveals his struggles to

maintain a dignified façade. The irony of the shame he and his mother feel about their living arrangement, is that middle-class persons pursue nights under the skies referred to as “camping”. Camping out, romanticised as an outdoor adventure, is regarded as a superior cultural expression in contrast to persons actually living in the veld. The hegemony of positively perceived “camping” over negatively perceived “squatting” is that the former is accompanied with the conveniences of modern living such as comfort, shelter, lighting, and refrigeration, whilst the latter exposes the stark reality of outdoor living: sleeping in tall grass, snakes crawling over the body, and being bitten by ants.

One can conclude then, that whether one is cultured or not, depends on who is in a position of power to define culture. Since the power differential favours teachers' conceptions of culture, students are assumed to be uncultured. Close inspection, however, reveals that students' practices of living are complex, regulated, and morally bound.

Classed subjects

Class refers to the similarities amongst students, which distinguishes them as a group, from teachers. The data shows how students cannot be clumped together as a type as there are many differences amongst the cohort of students informing this study.

⇒ ***We are a very happy family (MS6)***. Opposing *teachers' knowing*, students' reveal that not all of them are living in unhappy circumstances. The family members of Kamla (KS7), Mohamed (MS6), Emily (ES5), and Ishara (IS2) share amicable relationships with each other. In these families, children are loved, nurtured, and encouraged to do well at school. Additionally, religion is not a divisive factor in these homes presumably because mothers and fathers share similar faiths. There are also no paternal grandmothers and aunts interfering with family lifestyles and practices.

⇒ ***Home is not a happy place (RS1)***. For Rowena, home is not a happy place. She is regularly beaten by her mother for disobedience. One of five children in her family, she is regarded as *the naughty one* (RS1). A complicating factor is the intrusion of her paternal grandmother and aunts in family matters. Arguments between her parents result in Rowena's father moving into his mother's home. Vindictiveness by Rowena's mother and grandmother make matters worse for Rowena, as going to see her dad, despite being

forbidden by her mother, results in a *beating* because her *granny has a big mouth* (RS1). Her woes are exacerbated by reports from a teacher, Ms Jeeva, regarding her conduct in school. The problems at Rowena's home, however, are not peculiar to any particular class and could apply to any family anywhere along the socioeconomic continuum.

⇒ ***We are poor, but we are not like beggars* (CS2).** Curtis draws a class distinction between being poor and being homeless. One can deduce that lower classes operate according to their own conceived hierarchical structures with beggars and the homeless forming a substrata of the poor. Living in a place with many other poor families is, in his opinion, better than having *no home and* sleeping in the streets. Additionally, the decision to live in an informal home, without electricity, piped water, and physical comforts was made by his mother to escape *big, bad fights* (CS2) in which his father was frequently involved. In view of the legitimate reasons for moving into an informal structure, this family continues to articulate its classed position as superior to that of beggars.

Teachers, it seems, are not aware of the nuanced hierarchical differences amongst the poor as they refer to students as a unity, more alike than different.

⇒ ***My granny says she won't let us starve* (WS4).** When parents die or move away, students are not always left to fend for themselves. Members of their extended families, particularly grandparents, step in to take care of orphans and abandoned kids. For example, after the death of Welcome's mother and remarriage of his father, his grandparents began caring for Welcome and his brother. The boys are safe, school fees are paid and they live in comfort. In another example, grandparents take care of Akhona and his mother, demonstrating that the community does care for its members, thus challenging teachers' notions that the community encourages immoral activities.

⇒ ***I have a good upbringing* (KS5).** Kamla represents students whose home background is stable and happy. The family is close-knit and members support each other (KS2/7). Her *good upbringing*, as well as her wish to be *different, unique, not like them* (KS5), influences her firm moral stance and *high standards of behaviour* (KS5), debunking teachers' notions that all Amethyst students endure problematic home lives.

⇒ ***Who is my father? I don't know him* (AS3).** Akhona's story exemplifies the child who is a victim of circumstances. Conceived out of wedlock and abandoned by his father, his mother runs away to escape censure for being an unwed, young mother. He has never

met his father, but has to endure his grandmother's accusations of being *just like* (his) *father* (AS3), in other words, his genes, which she refers to as *bad blood*, are presumed to influence his character and behaviour, instead of his social environment. Ominously, he is being held responsible for his father's actions despite never having met him. The example of an absent father is more likely to be widely known by teachers than homes where fathers do participate in family life.

⇒ ***She said I have a lot of cheek* (ES4).** Emily shares her experiences at school with a teacher who regards her as promiscuous and a "boy-chaser". The teacher regards her as displaying *cheek* when she tries to correct the teacher's misconceived notions of her promiscuity. Students, it appears are not expected to contradict teachers' versions or interpretations.

⇒ ***The principal called my parents to school* (ES3).** The cases of Emily and Rowena (RS3) reveal that some parents do go to school when the requested. In both instances, the parents' reactions support the school and rejects students' version of events, indicating that parents, despite being poor, do share teachers' concerns about their children, their characters, and attitudes.

⇒ ***It is important to get clever* (YS4).** Students from poor, socioeconomic backgrounds do value education, though not always concurring with teachers' values. For Yolanda, it is the key to *sort out all the troublemakers* (YS4). Her story also reveals that *it is easy to fool teachers* (YS4) by feigning interest. For Kamla, school allows her to express her intelligence, to achieve her goals and to win awards and accolades for academic performance. These rewards inspire her to do her best. For Quarisha, schools provides a means to escape mentally from the troubles of home life, *the work keeps me busy and I don't have to think about the problems at home* (QS4). For Leela, however, the demands of school complicate her life. Her workload at home leaves little time to meet school requirements. Considering the demands presently on Leela to cook, clean, wash clothes, and care for siblings, and its effects on her physical and mental well-being, she is not in a position to appreciate the values of education for the future. And in the absence of crucial information, teachers are not in a position to understand students' rationale for attending school.

⇒ *When I grow up ... (QS4)*. Students stories' indicate that though they are poor, they do contemplate their futures (see Fig. 23). Their aspirations are expressed in terms of what they want to do or what they do not want to be. Parents and home conditions appear to dominate contemplations of their futures.

Jabulani	Taxi driver (JS5)
Daniel	School principal (DS6)
Yolanda	Nurse (YS5)
Emily	Marry and be happy (ES5)
Akhona	Be a "present" father (AS6)
Quarisha	Not to have a family (QS4)
Leela	Not to be a mother (LS6)
Zinhle	Make her children proud (ZS4)

Students aspirations can be categorised as follows: wanting to follow in their parents' footsteps, Emily and Daniel; wanting to be unlike their parents, Akhona, Quarisha, Leela, and Zinhle; and following their own desires, Jabulani and Yolanda. It is clear that students are concerned about their futures and that education is required for

some aspirations to be achieved.

Critical commentary: classed subjects

Students' social standings are discussed with reference to family environment, the role of parents, value for education and their future aspirations.

Students' home environments span the range from "bad" to "good". The terms, "good" and "bad", are used guardedly as it refers to the overall predominance of the quality in a family rather than asserting it in as an uninterrupted, uncompromising state. "Good" environments are recognisable by a lack of strife, harmony between parents, the sharing of common worldviews, and income from employment. Students fortunate to live in peaceful homes include Kamla, Mohamed, Jabulani, Daniel, Emily, Welcome, Yolanda, and Ishara. Welcome's experiences in peaceful home surroundings shatter the illusion that good families produce happy, satisfied individuals and illustrate the complexity of family structure and life. The death of his mother and subsequent remarriage of his father has resulted in him and his younger brother moving into his maternal grandmother's home. Despite her care and provisioning for education, shelter, and nourishment, he longs to be reunited with his father. His sadness cannot be dissipated by good home conditions.

"Bad" home conditions are marked by unemployment, religious strife, interference from members of the extended family, and disagreements between parents.

Curtis' mother had to leave her husband and home to move into an impoverished settlement characterised by informal, make-shift homesteads to prevent her children witnessing his drinking, carousing, and belligerent behaviour. The act of relocating from a suburban home to temporary, make-shift quarters suggests the fluid nature of class categorisation as homes are symbols of class. A suburban home is associated with middle-class norms whilst temporary homes are abodes of the poor. It matters not that the move was made in pursuit of a healthier home environment for her children, because teachers' impute class to a tangible economic feature and not to the rationale for choices. Teachers also do not discern nuanced class differences amongst the poor, for example, that Curtis is in a better position than are beggars.

Leela's home environment depresses her. Her parents, young enough to *look like friends and brothers and sisters* (LS1), cannot cope with parenthood. Her mother, twelve-years-old, and father, fifteen-years-old when she was born, illustrate the consequences of teenage parenthood on children. Poor, uneducated, with four mouths to feed, and a fifth baby on the way, they depend on young Leela to shoulder some of the burdens of family responsibility.

Present fathers and absent fathers appear to be destabilising forces in "bad" families as illustrated by the examples of Curtis and Leela's home conditions. Akhona's case is a counterpoint of home life in the absence of a father. His father absconded and abdicated his responsibility after making his mother pregnant. His mother, by contrast runs away to hide her pregnancy, demonstrating remarkable courage by courting uncertainty, poverty, desolation, and desperation when she chose to bring up her son in the veld without shelter or money, and resorting to begging to survive (AS2). The mothers of Curtis and Akhona exemplify the care and concern that poor parents feel for their children. The state of deprived and disadvantaged living, clearly visible to the naked eye, overshadows indiscernible maternal care and concern for children and it is unsurprising, therefore, that teachers view parents as negative influences on their children.

Despite teachers' assertions that students are left to their own devices without guidance, some students' stories indicate a commitment by members of the extended family, particularly grandparents, to improve the quality of their lives. Welcome and

Zinhle are taken care of by their maternal grandparents after the deaths of their mothers. Similarly, Akhona's maternal grandfather assumes responsibility for his unmarried daughter and her son. In these instances, maternal grandparents ground the undecidable living circumstances of their grandchildren. Paternal grandmothers, by contrast, are confounding forces committed to sustaining patriarchal formations as exemplified by the stories of Leela and Yolanda.

Finally, concerning the aspirations of poor students, it appears they are more likely to be influenced by their parents than they are by school personnel. Vocational choices are restricted due to lack of access to cultural capital. Though they are aware of the importance and value of education, there are few opportunities to be inspired by "real" possibilities in their surrounds. The careers they are exposed to are those that they can access in the community, primarily service-orientated jobs. Thus, attempts by teachers to inspire students to follow professional qualifications, is a challenging task. Perhaps, the reluctance of most students to buy into visions espoused by teachers is a more realistic stance when considering the improbability of poor parents to pay for further education. Teachers, by focusing on possibilities rather than probabilities, are not in a position to know how poor backgrounds restrict career choice.

Professional learners

This section analyses students' practices in school as "professionals" by virtue of them having spent at least seven years in schools thus far. By professional I mean that these students possess intimate and expert knowledge of their subject positions as students. They know what is required of them, they know about the roles and functions of teachers, and how schools operate.

⇒ *The teachers shout me when my work is not done (LS4).* Leela is unhappy at school, as she cannot fulfil her scholastic obligations. Chores at home consume her time and deplete her energy levels. Conditions at home are bad because she has assumed the mantle of mothering children, cleaning the home, preparing meals, and feeding her siblings whilst bearing witness to tensions between her parents. Leela prefers not to share her problems with teachers and, consequently, they do not reduce demands on academic

performance. Thus, Leela stays away from school quite often (LS4). Teachers are not privy to her circumstances and, therefore, could come across as insensitive educators.

⇒ ***Some teachers are nice and some are bad (YS4).*** Students' opinions of teachers

Fig. 24 Opinions About Teachers	
Complimentary	
Kamla	Teachers are dedicated (KS6)
Daniel	Teachers are right (DS5)
Yolanda	Some are nice (YS4)
Ishara	Teachers are wonderful (IS1)
Quarisha	Teachers are very good (QS3)
Uncomplimentary	
Emily	Always think bad of me (ES4)
Leela	Teachers shout at me (LS4)
Yolanda	Some are just stupid (YS4)
Akhona	Teachers are always cross (AS4)
Rowena	Make me cry in school (RS3)

are split evenly between complimentary and uncomplimentary poles (see Fig. 24).

Depending on students' home environments, interests, and aptitudes, schooling is experienced either positively or negatively.

Achievers like Kamla, Quarisha, and Ishara tend to relate more positively to teachers than students seriously disadvantaged by personal circumstances, e.g. Akhona and Leela, as home

environments are important for physical and mental well-being, and disposition to school. School could probably be a happier place for these students if teachers could get students to confide in them.

⇒ ***Some teachers are just stupid ... it is easy to fool the teacher (YS4).*** Yolanda describes daily classroom rituals, repetitive behaviours by teachers and students – *(t)hey like ask the same question everyday, "Where is your homework?" and the children will say the same thing like, "I forgot"* (YS4). In her opinion, this constitutes stupidity on the teacher's part. She cannot understand the rationale for asking a question when everyone knows that there are some students who do not complete homework. This example confirms teachers' views about how the context of Amethyst compromises their professional roles and functions. One gets a glimpse of how just one element (amongst a host of others) of the rituals of schooling and students' "refusal" to participate make the task of teaching a challenging one.

⇒ ***I really hated coming to this school (RS3).*** Rowena expresses her initial feelings about attending high school. Moving away from the security of spending years in an institution (primary school) she knows and has enjoyed, is unnerving and unsettling. She changes her feelings after meeting a boy at Amethyst, her present boyfriend (RS3). Rowena's story highlights the importance of students' romantic liaisons at school, and how the opportunities a school presents for friendships to emerge and be sustained are

necessary for the emotional well-being of some students. From teachers' perspectives, however, schools are not spaces for fraternisation, but are places to receive an education.

⇒ ***This is a nice school (DS5)***. Daniel's arrival at Amethyst is positive and optimistic, Rowena's is the opposite. The differences between Daniel and Rowena's experiences can be traced to their primary schooldays. Whilst Rowena's experiences of primary school were happy ones, Daniel's were dangerous. He attended school in KwaMashu and in his opinion, *schools in KwaMashu are not right (DS4)*. High schools, in particular are *dangerous (DS4)*. For him Amethyst represents a better school because there is *not much fighting and stealing (DS5)*. His brother has also been a student at Amethyst, and seemingly, it is a better option than a KwaMashu school. By contrast, for the teachers of Amethyst, it is the most challenging context they have worked in. They cannot take comfort in the knowledge that there are some schools that are more problematic than Amethyst.

⇒ ***At the office those people don't listen to me (AS1)***. Akhona's experiences in the principal's office highlight the deployment of power by teachers to silence and marginalise a poor student who is not comfortable with revealing aspects of his life outside school. Teased and taunted by his peers, he retaliates in inappropriate ways but is unable to use provocation by students as a defense as he is not given an opportunity to explain why he hits children (AS1). The attitude of teachers can be justified because Akhona admits that he has *to go to the office every week because (he) knock(s) the ouens (AS1)*. The frequency of going to the office has led to the situation where it is immediately assumed that he is guilty. Each instance is not investigated on its own merits and Akhona feels that *in this school if you are a bad boy you are always a bad boy (AS1)*. The teachers, he surmises, can only know him as a *bad boy*. In the absence of vital information from Akhona, teachers cannot help, but know him as a *bad boy*.

Critical commentary: professional learners

This commentary focuses on schools as an intersection point allowing an analysis of power dimensions along two axis: teachers and students. Traditionally, teachers critique and comment on student achievement, participation, and experience of school. Students' stories, by contrast, provide an opportunity to penetrate their thinking about

schools and teachers. Their stories are, in a sense, a report card on teachers. Some “scores” are complimentary, some are circumspect, and a few are harsh.

Schools are spaces in which two opposing populations interact. Teachers are adult, employed, knowledgeable, educated, and professional persons, with a purpose to teach. They are in schools because it is a career choice. By contrast, students are dependent, adolescents, obligated by law to attend school. The freedom of choice to follow teaching as a career is constrained by obligations pertaining to roles and functions. Students’ obligation to attend school is undermined by choices to subvert or realise the goals of education. From the above-mentioned perspectives it is possible to understand why the intersection (of students and teachers) is fraught with challenges.

The first challenge is negotiating the differential needs of students and teachers. When some students, for example, Leela, attend school they are accompanied with the burdens, pains, and obligations of family and home and are, therefore, ill-prepared to participate in desirable ways. In reality, school adds to burdens already borne by students. When a student has chores like cooking, cleaning, feeding children, and washing of clothes, it is almost certain that activities not impacting on present day survival such as school homework, is sacrificed. Incomplete homework is not always about resistance, it is, as Leela’s story indicates, just not do-able. Incomplete homework, however, strains the relationship between students and teachers and in the absence of information about why tasks are not completed, teachers make pronouncements about students’ attitudes, interests, and behaviours that do not reflect the realities that shape their actions.

Not all students experience school negatively. Many do enjoy school, *albeit* for different reasons. For a few individuals, it is an escape from deprived home conditions, a refuge from poverty, an opportunity to be educated, realise dreams and ambitions, to find love and romance, or to meet friends. For teachers, whatever the conditions and contexts of work, their satisfaction and professional achievement is dependent on students’ performances. Students, it appears, enjoy more options than teachers do.

The second challenge has to do with harmonising the needs of students with the needs of teachers. Teachers are obliged to keep discipline, monitor students’ performances and activities and to make educational demands. Amongst a host of student needs, the ones need that they seem to need, are teachers who are understanding, and

teachers who will not bruise their egos. It seems that these needs are on a collision course because the very nature of teachers' roles and functions disturbs students: Akhona having to account for his actions to the principal, monitoring Emily and Rowena's interactions with male students, and demanding completed tasks from Leela. Undoubtedly, teachers' needs supersede students' needs, as the power differential is tipped in their favour in the classroom. But deploying power can lead to unintentional consequences. A case in point is Yolanda's observation that *some teachers are just stupid* (YS4). She cannot understand why an intelligent professional would ask the same person the same question everyday. If a student never does homework, why does a teacher think that asking for it will make a difference? What explains such repetitive, ritualistic behaviour? Perhaps a way to answer is to respond with a series of questions – what would happen if the teacher stopped asking? Would it signal defeat? And how would those who do homework react? Is asking a way of keeping control? It is complex. What is important to realise, though, is how some teachers construct students based on their performances in class. It appears then that despite their subordinate position in the power relation at school, students do make judgments and have opinions of teachers.

THEME TWO: CRITICAL CONNECTION TO KNOWING

The analysis of kinds of *knowing* delivers the following insights about the nature of *teachers' knowing*:

Teachers' knowing is relative to who they are, as opposed to who students are. As middle-class parents and subjects, they cannot know, Rumsfeld's "unknown unknowns" (Norris 2004), about the hardships of students' home conditions, the tussles that students endure, emanating from the inter-faith marriages of their parents, the sacrifices that students' mothers and grandparents make, the disciplinary measures that students live by, that in some instances fathers are destabilisers of family life, or that some students do enjoy coming to school.

Teachers' knowing produces "Othering". Students' stories confirm that teachers' demeanour to females reproduces the gender norms that subjugate females at home

confirming the findings of female subjugation by Bleier (1984), Butler (1990), Haraway (1981), and Hubbard (1983).

Teachers' knowing is biased and partial as they continue to identify students in terms of apartheid categories of race. But students' stories reveal that race-typing is complex due to inter-racial marriages, is linked to religion, relates to physiological and physical characteristics, and in one instance, because it is regarded as a divine gift. It seems, therefore, that students are more aware of the complexities and oppressive nature of racial profiling that Carrim and Soudien (1999) argue against.

Teachers' knowing produces truth (Foucault 1984a) from their positionality. As middle-class subjects they can, and do, pronounce students lives in derogatory ways, pathologising their modes of living, their behaviours, attitudes, interests, their parents, family values, and aspirations. In a sense, these are teachers' "known knowns" (Norris 2004). From Cunliffe's (2005) interpretation, *knowing* as an "activity" becomes the knowledge "commodity". The certainty of this kind of *knowing* makes it unlikely for them to consider alternative explanations.

The notion of blind spots (Luft & Ingham 1955) is applicable to *teachers' knowing* as well. These are elaborated at length in the next section as disruptions of *teachers' knowing*.

DISRUPTED KNOWING: TEACHERS' NOT KNOWING

The analysis of students' stories allow for a deeper exploration and understanding of *teachers' knowing*. The stories reveal that students actively withhold information, demonstrating how students' shape *teachers' knowing* in particular ways. *Teachers' knowing*, resultantly, is circumscribed and contained in ways unanticipated by students – absence of information is filled in by teachers such that the reputation students sought to preserve are tarnished, or embellished, by suppositions and extrapolations of various sorts. Chapter six revealed in detailed what teachers' know but here I consider **what** teachers do not know about students. From students' stories one can deduce that the teachers of Amethyst are not aware of:

⇒ *The important role that grandparents play in the lives of students' lives.* Grandparents either enhance or disrupt family life. Mohamed's maternal grandfather

provided refuge when the family had to nowhere to go (MS3). Likewise, Akhona's grandparents rehabilitated them into the family after their harrowing years of living in the veld. Zinhle and Welcome continue to benefit from the support provided by their grandparents to their widowed fathers. In each of the aforementioned cases, the children experience an enriched family life because of the financial and emotional support of grandparents, debunking the stereotype of the lack of adult care and support in poor families. But grandparents also complicate family life. Leela's paternal grandmother holds the daughter-in-law, not her son, responsible for family planning (LS2), whilst her maternal grandmother calls them *half-breed converts* (LS5). The attitudes and perceptions of both grandmothers contribute to family disharmony. Both Rowena and Yolanda's grandmother and aunts are cruel to their mothers and siblings (RS1, YS5) demonstrating how the tensions between adult members of families impact on children.

⇒ ***That religion plays a very important role in the lives of students.*** The moral compass and cultural force in the lives of students is religion. It is also the regulatory framework and foundation of family life of the community of Nirvana. Curtis, for example, lauds the teachings of the Church and Mohamed reflects on how the Imam, a Muslim cleric, was able to influence his father to *give up all his bad ways* (MS3). Yolanda also provides insight about the teachings of the church, particularly the importance of respect (YS5). But, religion is also the confounding dynamic of tensions within families, particularly in its support of patriarchy. The stories of Mohamed, Leela, Yolanda, Zinhle, and Quarisha bear testimony to the unsettling consequences for children when adherents of different religious faiths marry. Mothers' faiths are not tolerated or respected and the fathers' faiths dominate. Mohamed's mother converted to her husband's faith whilst Quarisha's mother had to acquiesce to her husband's desire to give the children Muslim names. Family tensions dissipate when the wife adopts her husband's faith unconditionally as outlined in Mohamed's story, whilst tensions fester and intrude in family life when the mother resists conversion as recounted by Quarisha. The problems of inter-religious marriages impacts negatively on children's emotional well-being influencing how they experience life in general and school in particular.

⇒ ***That students are more likely to prioritise religious identity over race identity.*** With the exception of Curtis, students are more likely to mention their

parents/grandparents racial identity than their own and that race and religion are sources of tension in families. Students prefer to highlight their religious identity, for example, Mohamed (MS4), Curtis (CS3), Leela (LS5), Zinhle (ZS4), and Yolanda (YS1). Quarisha refers herself as to herself as *mixed* (QS1) by virtue of religion, not race and the tensions in their home can be traced to issues of faith. Whilst teachers are still bound to apartheid categories of *Black*, *Coloured*, and *Indian*, students' stories reveal the arbitrary nature of racial categorisation in South Africa.

⇒ ***That in some instances the parents of students are very young.*** The stories of two students, Leela and Zinhle reveal the young ages of students' parents. Zinhle's mother was sixteen when she was born, whilst Leela's father and mother, fifteen and twelve years-old respectively when she was born, highlight the plight of families multiply disadvantaged by age, unemployment, poverty, alcohol abuse, and many mouths to feed. The politics of home life are also complicated by inter-faith marriage and Leela and her siblings have to bear name-calling by their maternal grandmother, a Hindu, who disapproves of her daughter's marriage to a Christian man. It is not surprising, therefore, that education is not a priority for this family. Leela's high absentee rate at school is due to her having to take on the burdens of running a home and caring for her siblings. She has to be the adult in the family because her father refuses to be a responsible parent and she has to perform the roles of mother because of her mother's frail health. Leela's story, in particular, provides insight into why some families do not value or participate in school affairs.

⇒ ***Reasons parents do not come to school when summoned by teachers.*** Teachers are not aware that in many instances parents are unable to come to school, not because they do not care about their children's education but because the reasons are other connected to poverty, loss of a parent, and illiteracy. Akhona's mother sent a proxy because she felt she did not have suitable clothing to face school officials. It is possible that the mothers of both Curtis and Jabulani would not receive messages from their children if they were to be summoned to school as both boys are reluctant to reveal the economic hardships of family life. In Leela's case her father is a drunkard and her mother's health is poor, damaged by the burdens of multiple pregnancies, economic, social, and emotional hardships. An additional reason is that her mother is illiterate and is highly likely that she

would feel intimidated in a space in which literacy is valued. Zinhle and Welcome's mothers are deceased making it harder for a single parent to take time off from work to come to school.

⇒ *Students' negative constructions of teachers.* Teachers are perceived as condescending, insensitive, malicious, unnecessarily intrusive, and partial. Curtis finds teachers' attitudes condescending even when it is an expression of care and concern and this influences his decision not to reveal the death of his father to school staff. Sympathy about his home environment, which he translates as pity (CS4), is not what he wants as he possibly is not proud of how and where he lives. Leela perceives teachers as insensitive, particularly when schoolwork is not completed (LS4). She does not tell teachers about the chores she has to see to and the disruptions at home which prevent her from coming regularly to school or to complete homework. Consequently, their expectations are unrealistic, but by withholding vital information she does not realise that their intentions are good, not malicious. Both Emily and Rowena perceive female teachers as interfering *busybody* (RS3) who interpret their primary role function as policing female bodies (ES3; RS3). Yolanda and Akhona perceive teachers as unfair, singling them out for disciplinary action (YS2; AS1/4). Akhona, in particular, feels that he is not given an opportunity to give his side of the story and that once *you are a bad boy you are always a bad boy* (AS1).

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the subject positions of students and the implications thereof for how they are known by teachers. The analysis indicates that students are gendered, racial, cultural, classed and professional subjects. As gendered subjects students' experiences as male and female differ and, additionally, they are channelled into specific male and female roles at home. Girls are expected to perform household chores whilst boys are made aware of their privileges as males. However, irrespective of gender, boys and girls are disturbed by family strife, loss of a parent, and poor socioeconomic prospects.

Racial identities are superseded by religious identity. Apart from Curtis, students do not readily identify their race but they do feel the effects of racial categorisation,

particularly from senior members of the family who resort to name-calling highlighting their racial "impurity".

Cultural subjection is discernible through espousal of religious practice, an important factor in students' lives, complicating relations amongst members of families of inter-faith unions and also providing a foundation for family values. Students are sensitive to their poor socio-economic status and actively seek to conceal information about financial hardships. Poverty influences students' motivation to be educated and vocational aspirations in ways that markedly different to those advocated by teachers.

As professional learners, students know and experience teachers either as "good" or "bad" depending on their success in school. Achievers are positive about school and teachers, whilst students who have interests not promoted in school like romantic relationships, or those who find learning challenging, perceive teachers as unkind.

Students make concerted efforts to prevent teachers from *knowing* about the material conditions of home and life at home. There are sharp divides between the spaces inside school and outside school. Students' behaviours in school give teachers no clues about their religious affiliations and beliefs. Teachers do not have insight into extended family systems and the kinds of support and education students do receive at home or the sacrifices some mothers make for their children. Likewise, students cannot make sense of the rituals of schooling, or the importance of education. Students also do not realise their culpability for the perceptions teachers' have of them. They are unaware that by keeping up appearances, teachers' infer their backgrounds, families, lifestyles, behaviours, and attitudes negatively.

One interpretation of the disruptions to *teachers' knowing* that arises from students' stories is that it is both dangerous and useful. It is dangerous because of the negative constructions of students, their families, and ways of life that are engendered by teachers. It is useful that for teachers' not to know about students' opinions of their professional because it allows them to carry out their roles and functions in a difficult context. *Knowing* might make their work more challenging, demotivating them further.

Another interpretation is that *teachers' knowing* is in the realm of primordial knowing (Tekippe 1998). Their *knowing* precedes conceptual thinking about what and

how they know students as it lacks the sharpness and precision of conceptual knowing (Tekippe 1998).

The analysis of students' stories has deepened understanding of how and what teachers' know about students. They do confirm much of what teachers' know and simultaneously, compromise *teachers' knowing*. But, from the foregoing one can deduce that *teachers' knowing* is strongly shaped by students, particularly their complicity in confounding teachers. More important than students' complicity in keeping teachers' ignorant are the reasons for the conspiracy to keep information from teachers. It points to deep fissures between teachers and students created by class, race, and worldview differences. More importantly, it shows that *teachers' knowing* can be uncertain, tentative, and harmful to students. It also demonstrates that *not knowing* students may be useful when focusing on teaching and preparing students academically. In the next chapter, the findings of chapter six and chapter eight are united by a topological metaphor that extends our understanding of the nature of *teachers' knowing*.



PART FOUR: KNOWING ABOUT KNOWING

Part four is the last of a four-part process of reporting a study that sought answers about how and what teachers know about students (see shaded section of Fig. 1). The journey involved providing an overview in part one, and introducing readers in part two, to foundational knowings integral to the study: literature, methodology, and context. In part three, unfragmented stories by both sets of participants, of teachers and of students, were presented and analysed. This chapter draws the parts together, to produce a thesis about teachers' knowing about students in a context of adversity.

The first three parts were predominantly argued from a critical perspective, but part four moves into a post-structural perspective to make sense of teachers' knowing. This part also re-enters the domain of teachers (the classroom) for the purpose of reflecting on teachers' work as knowing professionals who have to teach, and to care, for the students they encounter at school, and more importantly, to consider these possibilities in the light of knowing about knowing at Amethyst.

PART ONE Knowing the Study	1 Knowing about researching knowing			
PART TWO Knowing Foundations	2 Knowing literature	3 Knowing methodology	4 Knowing study context	
PART THREE Exploring Knowing	5 Knowing teachers	6 Exploring teachers' knowing	7 Knowing students	8 Disrupting teachers' knowing
PART FOUR Knowing about Knowing	9 Knowing teachers' knowing			

Fig. 1 Organisation of Thesis

CHAPTER 9

Knowing is Dangerous; Not Knowing is Useful

Uncertain the profit, certain the danger.

T. S. Eliot - *Murder in the Cathedral*.

Introduction

This study began with a critical frame that sought answers about how and what teachers' know about students. The intention throughout this endeavour has been to explore *teachers' knowing* beyond taken-for-granted iterations, beliefs, and conceptions of those they teach and, at this juncture, to theorise the nature of *teachers' knowing*. The path to insight involved deploying critical ethnography to produce data over a six-month period at a secondary school.

The study site, at an apartheid-era creation, is not too distant from Durban's city centre. The institution has struggled with its morphing character, particularly after the demise of apartheid and the opening up of the school to those excluded during the period of segregation. Though steeped in changes of various kinds, for example, student profiles, curriculum, the community it serves, and funding, one feature has remained unaltered – the racial composition of the teacher population⁶⁰. Political change has introduced uncertainties of various sorts, and has destabilised the ethos and culture of the school in a number of ways: conflicts between teachers and students, conflicts amongst students' peers; students' participation in activities that are unacceptable and harmful; severe lack of funds to meet the financial needs of the school; and lack of human and teaching resources. It is within such a dynamic, uncertain, challenging, and adversarial space that data was produced to interrogate *teachers' knowing* about students.

At the site, data production was impeded by various confounding factors that eroded trust between the participants and me (the researcher). Consequently, the researcher-researched relationship had to be assessed and reconfigured for the data production process to continue. Reconfiguring entailed a radical amendment to the design process. Traditional forms of data production were abandoned and replaced by a conscious effort to reveal my story to participants, eventuating in the form of an

⁶⁰ I am aware that highlighting the unchanging racial profile of teachers highlights my own interpretation of what constitutes change or non-change at Amethyst.

exchange of data – my story for their stories. Reciprocal participation enabled the data production process to be completed and two sets of data were generated: teachers' stories and student stories. Eight teachers' stories based on interviews were woven into texts, whilst fourteen students' autobiographical essays comprising lived experiences were re-presented as they related them. Both sets of stories were composed with participants original statements.

Juxtaposing students' accounts with *teachers' knowing* has been useful to reveal the nature of *teachers' knowing*, unveiling how teachers constitute students through *knowing* them in particular ways, and revealing, in chapters six and eight, how students constitution as subjects at home, and at school, allowed them to be known in particular ways. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that students consciously prevented teachers from *knowing* about their lived experiences. The placing of both sets of data under a critical gaze yielded three ways of *knowing* (solicited, unsolicited and common) and five kinds of *knowing* (racialised, gendered, cultural, classed, and professional). I have argued too, at the end of chapter eight, that when juxtaposed with, and mediated by students' lived experiences inside and outside school, what teachers know is flawed, incomplete, partial, complex, contradictory, and uni-dimensional.

In this chapter, I shift paradigmatic gears from critical to post-structural perspectives. The shift has been necessitated by an agenda to move beyond the stability of critical obsessions with power dynamics, to broader conceptions of understanding *teachers' knowing* about students. Thus, through the deployment of post-structuralism, *teachers' knowing* is rearticulated within a shifting, unstable dimension.

The rearticulation of *teachers' knowing* is a thesis predicated on two abstractions from the analysis: that *teachers' knowing* is dangerous and, that choosing not to know is useful. Further, I explain that both *knowing* and *not knowing* are not polar opposites on a continuum, but are paradoxically, cohabitants of a common space. The paradox is explained by deploying a topological⁶¹ way of knowing to demonstrate that within the realm of *knowing* one can arrive at its alterity, that is, *not knowing*. I argue that *knowing* and *not knowing* are not oppositional categories but are connected in and through

⁶¹ From the word topology, a branch of mathematics that investigates the nature of space with basic ideas drawn from set theory.

teachers. Moreover, I assert that the functions of teaching and caring, mediated by *teachers' knowing*, form the foundation of teachers work, and that within a context like Amethyst, these functions cannot be performed/activated simultaneously by an individual teacher at Amethyst.

I conclude this chapter by glancing backwards to reflect on the research aspirations and processes and forwards to consider possibilities and challenges in view of the thesis generated.

Teachers' knowing about students

The survey of literature indicates that humans have a desire to know (Centore 2005) and that knowing is, from a positivist perspective, uncertain and imprecise, but also from a critical lens, dynamic and fluid (Skovsmose 1994), an activity of the mind (Cunliffe 2005), associated with personal experiences, socially constructed, and an effect of power (Foucault 1984a). Apart from a Foucauldian perspective that questions the possibility of knowing (Fendler 2003), and Derrida's (1974) notion of deconstruction which undoes what is known by reading multiple meanings present and absent in texts (Sim 2001), the literature selected for perusal does not indicate that knowing is, by any means, dangerous, or that not knowing is useful. So why do I make these assertions? Let me explain.

Teachers' knowing is dangerous. At Amethyst *teachers' knowing* is dangerous for a number of reasons. First, because *teachers' knowing* is partial and incomplete, and is not derived through an empirical process, but imputed to all from observing a few, without verifying the veracity of this kind of generalisation. *Knowing* cannot, from students' perspectives, be seen in the way Goldman (1967) and Pappas and Swain (1978) would describe as justified, reliable truth. Moreover, partiality also results from students' deliberate measures to prevent teachers from getting insights into the material conditions of their lives. Consequently, teachers interpret students' actions from their own perspectives, not as students are, but from their (teachers) own meaning-making. In a sense, *teachers' knowing* about students is of the "known knowns" type as mooted by Rumsfeld (Norris 2003), that is, that they know there are things to be known about students, but what they know are assumptions about students rather than who they

actually are as individuals. Second, *teachers' knowing* is dangerous because internalised, professional ways of *knowing* students can complicate students' lives in unintended ways, for example, being beaten up by a parent or exposing students to censure, surveillance and embarrassment. Through their middle-class lenses, teachers are precluded from understanding how students material conditions of living impose limits on agency, family life, and academic potential, which result from different cultural capitals that not only provide a vantage point to judge each other, but also allow for the possession of knowing how schools operate, its values, and performative acts (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977), or a hegemony in the Gramscian (1977) mode of giving meaning to, and setting the standard of how, and what, being a student is.

A third reason is that teachers' *knowing* reproduces gender and class oppressions and extends the shelf life of apartheid race ideology. As the producers of generations of future thinkers and leaders, they are not able, through their professional practices, to transform mindsets within a challenging and changing sociopolitical space. Racialised knowing, in the absence of considerations of anti-race notions (Carrim & Soudien 1999), is implicated in the continuation of epistemic violence and results in *Black* students construction as violent and criminally-minded persons, whilst so-called middle-class *Indian* culture, family life, and norms, are used authoritatively as the benchmark against which all students are evaluated, particularly as teachers are, in a manner of speaking, *Indian* insiders.

A fourth reason is that when teachers purport to know students, they are conflating this *knowing* with *knowing* about themselves as professionals. In other words, they know themselves, they know the limits of their professional competence and they know that they are not professionally trained for a changing sociopolitical landscape. What is being expressed is not so much about *knowing* students, but rather about *not knowing* students, a case of the builder (fluid, undecidable and dynamic knower) becoming the building (monolithic, codified knowledge), which can be likened to Cunliffe's findings that two types of knowledge, "knowing how and knowing that" (2005:547) are conflated. In a similar way, Amethyst teachers are so aware of the contextual challenges which dominate and influence how they know their students, that they cannot know students individually. Instead students are known as a collective, and

knowing is projected on to new incoming students (Grade Eight A students) from those who have previously passed through. In a sense, the teachers conflate predicting what students will become rather than knowing who they are at present. Unlike Nostradamus who, it is believed, could predict important historical moments, (and which truth value is force-fitted retrospectively) when teachers resort to prediction they express, from a post-structuralist lens, *not knowing*.

A fifth reason is derived from the analyses indicating that there is much that teachers do not know about students' lives, inside and outside school. Conjectures fill up the details that teachers do not know and **some knowing** about students is deployed, inflated, expanded and presented as **knowing everything** about students.

Finally, *teachers' knowing* is dangerous because it is about a false sense of certainty, of regarding *knowing*, not as a dynamic concept as espoused by Skovsmose (1994), but as irrefutable knowledge used in the same conflating and interchangeably synonymous ways that theorists like Belenky *et al* (1986), Cunliffe (2005), Fenstermacher (1993), Küpers (2005), and Tirri, Husu and Kansanen (1999) do.

The notion that *teachers' knowing* about students is dangerous is not to be interpreted as promoting an idea that teachers are dangerous persons in the school system. The danger lies at the cognitive level⁶², of not being aware of the contradictory, partial, incomplete, and complex segments that are signified by their claims to *knowing* students, resulting in unwanted and unintended consequences for students, and for teachers' teaching practices and constructions of their professional identities. Teachers, of course, are influenced by dominant rhetoric that lauds the usefulness of *knowing*, which has been extensively propagated and promoted within the profession of teaching because the empty signifier "knowing your students" is a respected and important value. *Knowing* is consciously sought, shared and remembered. But *knowing* is not just a floating cognitive idea though it may be so as a rhetorical announcement, it is experientially significant, making its impact felt in the lives of individuals, an element not pursued by philosophers and theorists alike. *Knowing* is pursued under the assumption that its interpellation as

⁶² Not meant as an autonomous biological process, beyond the control of the person, but that the choices made as "subjects" in the Foucauldian sense of governmentality, nevertheless, take place in the mind for meaning making. Governmentality refers to Foucault's notion of biopower in which hegemonic patterns of thought masquerade as self determined goals and are self-regulated and self-disciplined towards that achievement.

coded knowledge extends understanding, which is markedly different from *not knowing*. Teachers are not dangerous persons, they too are seduced by the belief in a dangerous idea that the empty signifier, “knowing your students”, is useful.

Teachers’ knowing should also not be construed as deliberate self-serving, self-deception in the way that Rumsfeld intended (Norris 2004), because the data demonstrates how students are complicit in this deception, actively confounding *teachers’ knowing*, and because teachers do not know that they do not know.

Not knowing is useful. Notions of a will to know (Cunliffe 2005; Lonergan 2003) preclude discussions about the merits of *not knowing*. But in this study the notion of *not knowing*, that is, a refusal to know students, emerges as a useful approach. Amethyst teacher, Bernice, exemplifies the approach of *not knowing*. She consciously makes the decision to not know students in the face of common-sense instincts and, purportedly, enjoys successful teaching where those who choose to know struggle to meet the demands of teaching and are overwhelmed by the challenges of teaching those they know (or think they know).

So why is *not knowing* useful? Bernice’s approach provides clues. The students in her class attend school regularly, they are punctual, complete assignments, pay attention during teaching, actively participate in lessons and pass the subject she teaches. These are the same students who are taught by Farida, Gerald, Navin, Pranitha, Saras, Tara, and Veronica, who experience quite the opposite. What explains the differences in experiences between Bernice and her colleagues at Amethyst? The only identifiable factor is Bernice’s refusal to know students. Bernice knows there are “known unknowns”, the category of knowing that Rumsfeld (Norris 2004) does not mention because unlike Rumsfeld, Bernice makes an ethical choice in students’ interest, whilst Rumsfeld would not admit to denying the existence of truths that would reveal his subterfuge. But what if this argument is without foundation because Bernice is an example of “the Gettier Problem” (Steup 2002), an illusion of success, a fluke, and lucky happenstance? The analysis suggests otherwise. Gerald, who adopts a less rigid stance of *not knowing* by not “getting too involved” and approaching teaching “academically”, also experiences success with students in his class, though not to the same degree as Bernice.

It appears then that there are suggestions of a relationship between *not knowing*

and successful teaching. Furthermore, teachers cannot know, Rumsfeld's "known unknowns" (Norris 2004) for the following reasons: there is an indication from students that it is not within teachers' roles and functions to know things that do not concern the academic performance of students; parents are complicit in ensuring that teachers do not know their about their children beyond the legal requirements of what schools are entitled to, and some of this information, the analysis highlights, may be misleading; students' peers participate in keeping up appearances and support the conspiracy of the fictions that are transmitted to teachers; the contextual challenges are debilitating and overwhelming resulting in a focus on how students affect professional performance rather than on getting to know students; and because teachers possess agency, the choice to "not know" and to exercise this choice.

In view of the reasons for being unable to know, it makes sense to "not know", as I have already argued that *knowing* is flawed and incomplete, that teachers are not privy to students' experiences as gendered, classed, cultural, racial, and professional learning subjects apart from that which they want teachers to know. If we argue against *not knowing* than we are, by implication, arguing for flawed *knowing*, for incomplete *knowing*, for misinformed *knowing*, for unwittingly *knowing*, and for that which misinforms, and makes teaching far more challenging at Amethyst⁶³. If that be the case, then *not knowing* has to be valuable.

The strength of *not knowing* is its promise for working in untenable conditions and contexts where social, economic, and emotional traumas are so intricately bound together, and where the tyranny of "frustrating teaching" as a hegemonic *knowing*, can be displaced with an approach to pedagogy that delivers hope, achievement, and success. What *not knowing* does is force a rethinking about the core roles and functions of teachers and schools. Are schools' core functions about promoting mental health and well-being or about vocational, academic and intellectual prowess? Perhaps, it is not a choice between these two, but about providing for both. Yet, one must concede that a sympathetic ear does not change the material conditions of students' lives, it offers amelioration at school for a limited period and then it is back to experiential realities.

⁶³ Here I am mobilising the *reductio ad absurdum* argument to refute the absurdity of a *knowing* stance and, simultaneously, to support a *not knowing* stance.

There is no guarantee that sympathy, arising out of *knowing*, does anything more than continue the tradition of victimhood, of pity for the down trodden, whilst *not knowing* cherishes a different ideal, to go beyond, to look ahead, and to keep the focus on academic achievement – to ensure that students are imbued and bolstered with knowledge and skills which they can deploy to rescue themselves, to be prepared for employment, and escape the cycle of poverty, and emotional trauma. Perhaps I contradict myself, for does not Navin succeed in changing the ways of two criminally-minded boys? A careful perusal of the data shows that he changes that which is within children's control to do so, like their actions, and thinking, but it does not change that which is outside their person, like their economic, social, and home conditions, which operate at systems' levels.

It appears to me that *not knowing* is a more critically and socially just approach to teaching, as it allows teachers to function without succumbing to marginalising the non-traumatised and those without challenges at the personal level, in effect, treating all students equally in an academic setting, so that in one instantiation, students are driven to strive for academic achievement instead of focusing on emotionally debilitating distractions that cannot be resolved by *teachers' knowing*, understanding, or sympathy. *Not knowing* offers viable possibilities for working with students whose lives are compromised by low socioeconomic conditions and problematic family relations.

To strengthen this argument, I now turn to a metaphor to make sense of these two antithetical findings about *teachers' knowing*.

A topology of knowing: the Möbius strip

I propose that a way to understand *teachers' knowing* is to deploy a topological metaphor based on the qualities of the Möbius⁶⁴ strip as it offers an opportunity to visualise the paradox I will present shortly. The Möbius strip was discovered independently by two German mathematicians, Johann Benedict Listing and Ferdinand Möbius in 1858. The strip is created by taking a length of paper, giving it half a twist and then joining the ends to form a single, unending ring, (see Figure 25).

The Möbius strip has unique properties not easily discernible at a glance. It has only one side and one edge. In other words, it is a single surface that is non-orientable,

⁶⁴ Möbius is sometimes also spelt as Moebius.

markedly different to the two distinct sides of a coin, or the recognisable interior and exterior of a circle. The properties get more curious⁶⁵ when the strip is split in two by slicing it through the centre parallel to the edge. Instead of two separate bands, it yields a much longer strip with two half-twists and loses its one-sidedness and single edge. In other words, it ceases to be a Möbius strip and reclaims its orientations of interior and exterior and of having two edges. However, if the slicing of the strip takes place about a third of the distance from the edge two strips are yielded, a Möbius strip and a non-Möbius strip. The former is thinner and the latter is thicker comprising two half-twists.



Fig. 25 *A Möbius Strip*

These unusual characteristics of the Möbius strip and the effects of cutting it lengthwise provide an interesting metaphor for understanding paradoxes. A paradox exists when, for example, a statement appears at first glance to be logical but a deeper analysis reveals the point (which is itself exactly indiscernible) at which the logic collapses, and reveals its dependence on an unstated other, for example, white exists only in relation to it not being red or black or colourless, the “trace” referred to by Derrida (1974).

⁶⁵ Apart from its curious properties, the history of the Möbius strip is curious as well. Listing devised the strip in July 1958 and Möbius two months later. The honour of naming the strip after the first known creator was denied to Listing.

The Möbius strip has been deployed by theorists like Giorgio Agamben (1998) and Slavoj Žižek (2005) to explain complex paradoxes, which I will elaborate at this point, to illustrate the usefulness of the aforesaid to demonstrate the lines of invisible connections between seemingly irreconcilable stances. Both theorists underscore the value of the topology of the Möbius strip to visualise abstract notions like “the Nomos Basileus”⁶⁶ and “normal life” during periods of political strife.

Agamben looks back into history to argue the paradox of ancient sovereignty as postulated in Pindar’s fragment 169. He reasons that there are no differences between two authoritative functions, “*Bia* and *Diké*, justice and violence” (Agamben 1998:31) vested in the person of the king, which merge into one just as the “two sides” of a Möbius band are one continuous surface. These “two antithetical principles” (Agamben 1998:31) are connected in and through the sovereign, the embodiment of law. The sovereign, Agamben explains, is

the point of indistinction between violence and law, the threshold on which violence passes over into law and law passes over into violence (Agamben 1998:32).

In other words, law is exercised violently (in the forms of punitive measures meted e.g. execution) and violence, in turn, is a legitimised expression of law. The sovereign is able to choose how law is interpreted and exercised due to his unique position as law-maker and law-administrator, a law unto himself, standing both inside and outside of law, which, in effect, results in the paradox. This insight makes it possible to read in present day applications of law, the paradox of justice and violence as one and the same.

Žižek’s (2005) deployment of the Möbius strip theorises perceptions of citizens of Bosnia by persons in the United States who questioned his decision to talk about popular culture whilst his country was beset by ethnic cleansing, civil strife, and violence. He reflects on this insistence by those living in a *fiction of peace* to restrict him to focus on war and violence. Through the topology of the Möbius strip he explains that the

⁶⁶ The Nomos Basileus, Pindar’s fragment 169, reads: “Law the king of all things, mortal and immortal, with sovereign hand brings forth what is most violent and makes it just” (in Lloyd-Jones 1972).

differences between “bloodthirsty ‘Balkanians’ in Sarajevo” (Žižek 2005:1) and the “normal” citizens elsewhere in the world

is exposed in all its arbitrariness, and we are forced to renounce the safe distance of external observers: as in a Möbius band, the part and the whole coincide, so that it is no longer possible to draw a clear and unambiguous line of separation between us who live in a ‘true’ peace and the residents of Sarajevo who pretend as far as possible that they are living in peace – we are forced to admit that in a sense we also imitate peace, live in the fiction of peace.” (Žižek 2005:2).

The point he makes is that peace and its opposite, the fiction of peace, are one and the same. The conceptions of difference are obliterated and the two forms of peace are likened to the **fiction of two surfaces** of a Möbius strip. By traversing the one surface (of peace) there is a sudden discovery that one is on the other side (the fiction of peace). Peace is, in other words, a construction and a fiction only visible through the special topology of the Möbius strip.

It is important to note what this kind of topological knowing advocates: that two irreconcilables become fused through mediation: in the first instance though the concepts justice and violence are distinct, their distinctive elements evaporate and they coincide perfectly, reconciled as one and the same through sovereign power. Through sovereign authority, violence is justice and justice is violence. Similarly, true peace and fictional peace are shown to be arbitrary conceptions of *truth*, they are both imagined conditions. Both groups of persons, “Balkanians” and “others” live peaceful lives (irrespective of the presence or absence of violence at national level).

In the analysis of this inquiry concerning *teachers’ knowing*, I appropriate two interconnected concepts from Agamben (1998): “zone of indistinction” and “authoritative functions”, and from Žižek (2005): “fiction of two surfaces”, and “unambiguous line of separation”. The “zone of indistinction” arises out of “authoritative functions” being vested in one and the same individual, whilst the “fiction of two surfaces” is really an “unambiguous line of separation”. These two interconnected concepts from Agamben (1998) and Žižek (2005), are used to theorise *teachers’ knowing* in the next section.

A paradox of teachers' knowing: Not knowing is knowing; knowing is not knowing

They know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer

They know and do not know that action is suffering and suffering is action

T.S. Eliot – *Murder in the Cathedral*

I have now reached the point at which I present my thesis based on the findings of this study, specifically, that *teachers' knowing* is a paradox. By paradox I mean that the category *knowing* students, as laudable, positive, and necessary information that “good teachers” enquire about, retrieve, and gather, leads to counterproductive consequences. The logic of *knowing*, in other words, leads to unexpected, and seemingly, illogical conclusions.

Remember, the analysis has established that what teachers' know is incomplete, biased, and dangerous, whilst *knowing's* polar opposite and antithetical concept, *not knowing*, has been shown to be beneficial in this study. These findings, that *knowing* is dangerous and *not knowing* is advantageous, challenge naturalised, taken-for-granted understandings of these concepts; an inversion of and a contradiction to common-sense knowing. How has this seemingly illogical conclusion been reached, and how can it be explained? To answer the questions I pose, I turn to Agamben (1998) and Žižek (2005) to explain that *knowing* and *not knowing* lie in a “zone of indistinction”, and that an “unambiguous line of separation” unites them. In other words that **not knowing is knowing and that knowing is not knowing.**

In everyday language the categories *knowing* and *not knowing* are polar opposites, distinct from each other. But when exploring *knowing*, *not knowing* unexpectedly emerged as a category, erasing the distinctions that cleaved them. In Derridian (1974) post-structural terms, they are arbitrary distinctions which can be shown to be a binary opposition, or an “unfair pair” (MacLure 2003:10), sharing an interdependent, symbiotic relationship. The indistinctions between *knowing* and *not knowing* occur because teachers' “authoritative functions” include being both knowers and not knowers. More importantly, they have authoritative decision-making powers to choose between *knowing* and *not knowing* about students. Furthermore, one can deduce that *knowing* and *not*

knowing are “two fictions”, or two versions of a singularity, resulting in an “unambiguous line of separation”.

The indistinctions between *knowing* and *not knowing* are not accidental. It begins with the ways in which knowing is sourced: solicited *knowing* and unsolicited *knowing*. The same information (flawed, biased, and partial) is transmitted to teachers by students, their peers, and family members. Written records are no more than the fictions, (flawed, biased, and partial) accrued through solicited and unsolicited ways. Furthermore, common knowing emerges from solicited and unsolicited accounts, with the actions of some students generalised to all. *Knowing* thus replaces *not knowing*, and what is not known, interpellates *knowing*.

Likewise, kinds of knowing are also implicated in the indistinctions between *knowing* and *not knowing*. Five kinds of *knowing* were identified in this study: gender, race, class, culture, and professional. As gendered beings, students were known as being typically gender-specific in orientation, without considering alternative possibilities that transgress received truths about male and female performances. So the possibility that some boys are victims of abuse or that some girls are criminally inclined are not known, but nevertheless, teachers purport to know students by virtue of their gender. Similarly, concerning raced *knowing*, the problems besetting *Black* students are discussed in terms of *Indian* students, blurring the distinctions between *Indian* and *Black*. Culture too is a conflation of race and class, and the distinctions between race and class *knowings* are ambiguous. The analysis of professional *knowing* reveals that *teachers' knowing* about their professional identity is cast in terms of *knowing* students, in effect, a not knowing of students. Through these ways of *knowing*, teachers know one by *knowing* all, the particular becomes the universal, and through *knowing Indians*, *Blacks* are known, engendering many indistinctions, each, when combined, creating tiers of *not knowing* that interpellate *knowing*.

Specifically, Žižek's (2005) notion of two fictions then clarifies how an unambiguous line of separation between *knowing* and *not knowing* emerges through the examples of Farida and Bernice. The “goodness” value of *knowing* is shattered when we recognise that Farida's *knowings* are fictions based on isolated and singular experiential truths without being mediated by students' experiences (assuming that mediation by

teachers was possible). *Not knowing* is also a fiction because it is a voluntary choice not to know what is known, and thus, Bernice lives in the fiction of *not knowing*. But she, in fact knows, but does not want to hear about it, because she knows what she does not want to not know. By not listening to students' she has created her own fiction which displaces the "known knows" about students. I use "fictions" and not "interpretations" as interpretations signal some kinds of hermeneutical truth values, whereas fictions raise questions posed by post-structuralists about "what is truth?". In this case the "truth" about knowing is a postmodern one: *knowing is not knowing*. Let me demonstrate by way of the Möbius strip, these "zones of indistinctions" and "unambiguous lines of separation".

Like Agamben (1998) and Žižek (2005), I argue that the Möbius strip provides a tangible way of knowing about the nature of *knowing*. *Knowing* and *not knowing* may appear to be occupying different positions (the fiction of "opposite" spaces) of a one-sided, and non-orientable, Möbius surface, but as one moves *knowing* far enough over the surface, it eventually coincides with *not knowing*. One explanation is that *knowing* begins with a Derridian trace⁶⁷ of *not knowing* accompanying it. As it traverses the one-sided strip, *knowing* begins to diminish and *not knowing* increasingly becomes more visible until it totally eclipses *knowing*, which now becomes the trace.

As concepts, *knowing* and *not knowing* may be distinct, but it is in and through teachers that the distinctions are erased. Thus the topological metaphor holds because *knowing* and *not knowing* are both fictionalised accounts, providing a false basis of understanding *knowing* as a concept. This occurs because teachers are inside and outside the *knowing* dilemma, both functions, as seekers of *knowing*, and as interpreters of *knowing*, are vested in teachers. Teachers are, consequently, the mediators and embodiment of *knowing* and hence, I argue that through their personages, the zones of *knowing* and *not knowing* fuse and become indistinct, like the "two" sides of a Möbius strip which are one and the same side. The one-sidedness can only be made visible when one traverses the full length of the strip to demonstrate that *not knowing* is *knowing* and *knowing* is *not knowing*.

Consequently, in agreement with Laclau's contention that language produces "tangentially empty signifiers" (2000:185), I submit that the concept *knowing*, as an

⁶⁷ By trace Derrida means that words, as a sign, are "marked by things that lie outside it" (Williams 2005:33)

empty signifier, includes the meaning of, and simultaneously occupies the space with *not knowing*. I therefore conclude that when teachers at Amethyst shared their *knowing* about students, they also included *not knowing* about students and that when *not knowing* was posited, it included *knowing* about students: in other words, a paradox. The paradoxical nature about teachers' *knowing* and *not knowing* about students creates a new concern: what does it mean for teachers' work?

Teachers' work: knowing and not knowing; teaching and caring

When I began this study it was with apprehension of the nation's elaborate prospects for education based on an extravagantly expanded explication of teachers' roles and functions: teachers as mediators of learning; interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials; leaders, administrators and managers; scholars, researchers and lifelong learners; community members, citizens and pastors; assessors; and learning area specialists (DoE 2000). These norms and standards may be described as generic expectations that are ahistorical, decontextualised and decentered articulations of teachers' roles and functions. Driven by a social justice mandate to undo the perversities of an oppressive past, educational authorities re-inscribed roles and functions without due consideration to how school contexts influence the fulfilment of these roles and functions. There is an assumption that successful teaching and professional competency is teacher driven, but the example of Amethyst suggests that contextual forces may be far more potent drivers of successful teaching and professional competency. Teaching competence, professional fulfilment, and optimism, are connected to, and influenced by the context.

A critical re-articulation of these norms and standards collapses them into two phenomena⁶⁸ that form the foundation of teachers' work: ***knowing how to teach***, and ***knowing how to care***, with both teaching and caring connected to *knowing*. The former implies knowing about content and pedagogy. The latter implies *knowing* about students as learning and social beings. In other words, there is a choice between ***knowing that*** and ***knowing them*** that a teacher at Amethyst can embrace.

⁶⁸ To support this argument the following have been identified as teaching functions: mediators of learning; interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials; leaders, administrators and managers; scholars, researchers and lifelong learners; assessors; and learning area specialists. The caring function comprises just one norm and standard: community members, citizens and pastors.

The choice is often not a conscious selection. When teachers are engaged in activities like explaining a concept, or giving instructions, the focus is on teaching. When teachers are counselling students then the focus is on caring. The former meets intellectual needs, the latter emotional needs. These two processes cannot take place simultaneously at Amethyst because the nature of the work involved in caring and teaching demands different kinds of conscious attention. Attention to one precludes the other.

Caring requires identifying and responding to students' emotions and diverts from the thinking required to provide intellectual stimulation which is the teaching component. Likewise, when a teacher is engaged in teaching, attention is concentrated on pedagogy and content, with emotions relegated to the margins. Thus Bernice is not a cold, unfeeling teacher. She does not marginalise caring, but expresses it as a care for meeting students' intellectual and academic needs. And Navin is not shirking his teaching roles by using teaching time to counsel students. He is, in a sense, teaching students for emotional survival. Both kinds of caring and *knowing* are important to and significant aspects of teachers' work. The explanation can be clarified if, in a sense, teachers could be visualised as standing on the edge of a Möbius strip and falling into either one of the two roles: to teach, or to care. From a post-structural perspective, there is an arbitrary distinction between caring and teaching. In other words, caring and teaching are on the **fiction of two sides** of a one-sided surface, succumbing to the **fiction of difference**. From this perspective, teaching and caring are *alter egos*⁶⁹ (teaching-as-caring) of each other. But the "zone of indistinction" between caring and teaching is a theoretical idea. In practice, these are regarded as separate concepts and functions, and it is to practical understanding that I now turn my attention.

The study site illustrates that in a demanding context where students' emotional, personal, and social needs are severe, both teaching and caring are required in equal measure. But it is not possible for these functions to be carried out, in its conventional sense, by a single individual. The depth and breadth of challenges facing teachers at Amethyst mean that either teaching or caring has to be sacrificed in order to survive. It means that teaching and caring functions need to be collective and collaborative efforts;

⁶⁹ From the field of psychology implying more than one self, the other self or second self, in a single body.

that these core functions must be shared amongst teaching personnel. It appears then that the expectation for each and every teacher at Amethyst to fulfil the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE 2006b) is unrealistic. Such a demand is demoralising, frustrating, and disabling for teachers who have to teach in conditions of economic constraints and to care for large numbers of students with socioeconomic and personal adversities.

Conclusion

This study began with an idea to explore what it means when a teacher claims to know students and ended with a post-structural conception of *knowing* as a paradox. In undertaking this project I chose to work in a field viewed as undecidable from post-structural perspectives. This viewpoint necessitated stabilising the field by temporarily moving into “freeze-frame” mode to produce, analyse, and synthesise data. Having accomplished the research goals outlined at the beginning, I am now in a position to release the study from its fixed state, to reclaim its unstable and undecidable character, in effect, exposing the study to critique from all perspectives and directions. There were a number of additional decisions taken between the two endpoints of this study, and at this juncture, I revisit and reflect on those decisions and consider possibilities inspired by the thesis.

The decision to focus on *teachers’ knowing* rather than on teachers’ knowledge has allowed me to explore the differences and connotations of these terms. *Knowing*, in this instance, has been useful (and dangerous too) because it demonstrates how that which is tentative, fluid, dynamic, and interim (knowing), is translated into that which is monolithic, fossilised, and accepted truth (knowledge), as poignantly captured in Akhona’s statement: “In this school if you are a bad boy, you are always a bad boy”. Awareness of these differences, as well as awareness that *knowing* is an avatar⁷⁰ of *not knowing*, could inspire teachers who speak with authority and certainty, to be hesitant, tentative, and reflexive, not in a feminist sense, but in a sceptical sense, doubting their *knowing*, and hesitant to reproduce assumptions through stereotyping and generalisation.

⁷⁰ Avatar refers to the descent to earth of the Hindu god Lord Vishnu, in any one of ten possible forms. Each of these ten manifestations/incarnations is regarded as an avatar. Thus, *knowing* & *not knowing* are viewed as incarnations of each other.

Of course, scepticism, as a pervasive mode of operation may be crippling, leading to not being able to carry out the role functions expected of the profession. In order to function, teachers must operate on assumptions: that what they teach is relevant, or that students are listening to them, as without such assumptions scepticism may lead to inaction. I cannot predict how knowing about *knowing* will be realised by any individual, and in that vein, must admit that this study's data was sought, interpreted and analysed by one and the same person (me) and is, therefore, also a paradox of (researcher) knowing. Indeed, the nature of *knowing* demands "due epistemic humility" (Norris 2004:783), making me hesitant to state with confidence and certainty how this study will benefit teachers. Moreover, I rely on generativity (Vithal 2003) to inspire readers to seek and assess critically, the applications and possibilities emerging from this study.

Amethyst does not represent schools in South Africa, it reflects an image that is framed and interpreted from critical and post-structural perspectives. Critical perspectives that unveil how and what it is possible to know about students, and post-structural perspectives that reason that *teachers' knowing* is paradoxical in nature. The choice of Amethyst Secondary School as the study site was fortuitous. As a context steeped in changing historical practices, of differences, marginalisation, and injustice, to democratic ways, it demonstrates how traditional ways of exercising one's professional being are moulded, remoulded, and mould the sociopolitical texture of schools within a national framework for transformation. But transformation at Amethyst can be seen as more about complex, sociological geographies of teaching, learning and social traumas and less about changing historical practices, because at this site, the static world of teachers contradicts the dynamic worlds of students. It is at the interface of such complexity that old ideas, wisdoms, and professional conceptualisations of teachers collide with new post-apartheid, urbanised youth from unfamiliar backgrounds. The intensity of educational and pastoral care demanded of teachers mean that they have to traverse sociopolitical changes and harmonise these with educational and psychic demands in adversarial contexts. It is at this nexus that the full impact of pedagogical unpreparedness of apartheid trained teachers emerges as a significant confounder of professional satisfaction and profound impediment to successful teaching outcomes in a complex post apartheid context.

The site, and the singular research focus on *teachers' knowing*, without even considering the many facets of teaching and learning, illustrate the complexity of teachers' work, and how, the function of teachers-as-knowers, is a complex web of uncertainty, stress, and frustration, and also a space in which success is necessary, desirable, and possible. But within such a precarious context there is a suggestion of how successful teaching can be achieved as exemplified by Bernice. She asserts that *not knowing* students leads to success.

There may be some questions surrounding the issue of Bernice's reports of successful teaching as this study does not provide evidence of teaching outcomes. There is no evidence either of the other seven teachers "unsuccessful" teaching. Each person's experience constitutes truth in this study; it is not an aggregation of seven teachers' truths in opposition to Bernice's truth. Remember, it is Foucault's (1984a) notion of "experiential truth" that underpins this study. Attempting to triangulate Bernice's (or any participant's) claims contradicts the ontological frame of this study. In other words, all participants' realities have been accepted as they reported them.

Choosing critical forms of ethnography not only allowed for a critical ethic for data production, it also mandated a critical self-reflection of the researcher-as-knower. Ethnography presupposes that the researcher becomes an insider by virtue of the length of time spent *in situ*. But this ethnographic truth did not hold in this case, and the dominance of ethnographic doxa about insider information was not easily discernible as the kernel of the data production complication. It took months of immersion in the context to realise I was not being received as an insider, that I had to create a research brand that was sensitive and trustworthy without the pretensions of insiderness, to restate, of remaining the exotic "other". But having been in the field for seven months, means that I was towards the end of that period, no longer an outsider, nor was I truly an insider. I was the **outside insider** (from a participant perspective) or the **inside outsider** (from a researcher perspective). It seems I am not the one, nor the other and equally, I am neither, but throughout the data production period, one or more of these hybrid subjectivities were projected onto me by the field, and enacted by me in the field.

To some extent, the "critical ethnographiness" of this study suggests an emergent form that moves beyond traditional conceptions of agency-based methodology, a kind of

“post praxis” that merges critical agendas and post critical stances, united by socioethical, reflexive postures and relationships of reciprocity between participants and researchers. Telling my story (Appendix A) to participants, for the purposes of rescuing the study, exemplifies how this emergent form holds promise for working in situations of uncertainty. In that sense, it promotes an ethical activation through catalysis. Paradoxically, as a critical work designed to resist Lather’s (1991) notion of catalytic validity, catalysis does emerge unexpectedly, indicating again the uncertainties that court “post praxis” work designed by accident and desperation.

When I began this study, it was with the consideration that “*knowing* students” is an empty signifier. The responses of teachers at Amethyst confirm the assertion that *teachers’ knowing* is signified by a proliferation of interpretations based on race, gender, class, culture, and impact on professional competency. These are the primary framers of *knowing*. *Knowing*, in other words, is dominated by what teachers hear, observe, and experience when working with students, and what is not known and invisible, is subordinated and ignored. Consequently, *knowing* means different things to different teachers and includes *not knowing*. What transpires from such signification? According to Laclau (2000:18), “it sets up the terrain for hegemonic articulations to take hold”. Depending on which *knowing* enjoys hegemony, then some possibilities or challenges emerge.

Four *knowings* jostle for hegemony at Amethyst: race, class, culture and gender. A hegemony of racialised *knowing* works against desegregation and integration. A hegemony of class *knowing* clearly defines the borders between teachers (us) and students (them) without hope for reconciliation and inclusion. A hegemony of culture also bifurcates the school community into “us” and “them”. A hegemony of gender, consolidates and promotes patriarchal formations and the surveillance of females. In combination, as a recurring mantra to explain the difficulties of teaching and caring at Amethyst, race, class, cultural, and gender *knowings* work against the spirit of democracy to produce an educated citizenry. But there also continues to be a hegemony of a fifth, professional *knowing*, that is pervasive across the teaching corps of Amethyst: that the context is demanding, that students have many challenges to face at home and at school, and that teachers are not skilled to teach in post-apartheid South Africa. These hegemonic

articulations will no doubt continue to be part of the landscape of teaching and caring at Amethyst. But, there is another possibility should one take a post-structural view of *knowing*.

The paradox of *teachers' knowing*, that *not knowing* is a *knowing* and *knowing* is *not knowing* emerging from this study, is a means to reason the values of being sensitive, to being sceptical, to being open to possible explanations that teachers may not know. Bernice, perhaps, best exemplifies the prospects of teaching successfully at Amethyst. Her stance of *not knowing (knowing)* about students is not unjust, or harmful, or a malevolent attitude. It is a viable alternative to successful teaching in transformational contexts beset by sociopolitical, socioeconomic, personal, and professional adversities. And Navin exemplifies the caring professional, with a firm belief that through intentionally *knowing (not knowing)* students, he makes a difference by choosing to care for those opting for counter-social paths.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Biography as Research Instrument

Refractions of a Reflected Life

When I was growing up in the seventies, schools were tools for the transmission of a particular political ideology known as apartheid. In fact, the political background before 1994 underpinning the context of Amethyst, applies to schools I attended for *Indians* in a Pretoria township. The township, Laudium, was set up by apartheid authorities as a model for showcasing to foreign guests, politicians, and apartheid denouncers, how benevolently *Blacks* were treated. To that end, it was fairly well-developed with tarred roads, piped water, schools, a civic centre, a park, shopping centre, a public library, and a health clinic. Entrepreneurs also built a cinema, and religious groups raised funds to build a mosque, a temple, and a church. As Pretoria was dubbed 'the Jacaranda City', the streets of Laudium were paved on both sides with jacaranda trees and the city council water trucks arrived once a week to hydrate the trees. I must admit there was a certain sense of pride of growing up in this privileged space, some notion of being superior to other *Blacks* growing up in townships that were not so well-endowed.

At school many of my teachers, all *Indian*, predominantly male, were professionally under-qualified to teach. Most of them had left school with a junior certificate (standard eight) followed by a one-year teaching diploma. The few who completed standard ten and graduated with two-year teaching diplomas were important exemplars of how inadequate qualifications could be improved by studying through the University of South Africa which offered tuition by correspondence. I would, in later years, use the same strategy to acquire Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education degrees whilst in full-time employment as a teacher.

High school was regimented by teachers with the assistance of students selected as class captains and prefects. Some students, of course, resisted control by staying away from school, consuming alcohol, ingesting and injecting prohibited drugs, smoking, and

engaging in sexual activity in remote corners of the school. The less serious forms of resistance, cutting classes and arriving late for lessons, were the most frequent transgressions. Formally sanctioned punitive measures for transgressions included corporal punishment, writing lines, and detention. More often than not the formal was followed by the informal, the punishment we feared above all: a lethal censure in class by one or more teachers in the presence of the transgressor's peers; hurtful missiles that punctured the emotional mantle and bruised egos.

School uniforms, grey and white, had to be worn daily though there was some laxity during the winter months when jackets and jerseys (sweaters) of other colours were allowed. Not all teachers were concerned with matters of dress and appearance but a few would not proceed with teaching until every student had been inspected.

The primary focus of girls' appearances was skirt length. No skirt could be shorter than two inches above the knee. After the mandatory checks we would fold up the waist band to shorten the skirt, reverting to the longer version before we went home, because at home, this fashionable stance of "showing leg" was considered a serious breach of cultural morality, and in extreme cases led immediately to the end of schooling. Some school personnel were keepers of cultural morality not so much out of respect for parents' wishes, but rather because it was a morality they themselves embraced. Fancy hairstyles, long finger nails, and make-up were not allowed. Shaped eye-brows were frowned upon.

Boys had other issues to contend with. Hair that hung below the shirt collar and facial hair were banned. Irrespective of the heat, boys had to wear ties and black blazers.

Controlling the dress code of the school was not easy. Those who came late escaped discovery. Some students cut classes of the teachers who checked dress and appearance. A large number of students from privileged backgrounds of wealth, or status, could wear what they like without reproach. I remember the daughter of a school principal wearing a very short, red skirt each Friday. The teachers would joke about her particular version of grey. It was clear then, as it is now, that family status and economic power were prerequisites for privileged treatment by teachers. Sometimes it was just

about how teachers closed ranks to protect their own. There were silences, for instance, about a student who teased her hair into a fancy up-style and wore thick make-up daily. She was romantically involved with a married teacher. We saw the two together daily in a classroom during lunch breaks. The affair continued until her final year in school. “Improper liaisons” between teachers and students did occur. In the eleven years I spent attending schools, five of my teachers (all male) married their students.

Subject choice was severely restricted in high school. Two languages, English and Afrikaans, as well as mathematics and history were compulsory subjects for the advanced classes. There was a choice between general science and biology, and between accounting and business economics. I chose general science and accountancy. It came as a quite a surprise later to learn that one could study a subject like Geography in high school, a subject not offered to students at the high school I attended.

Growing up in what was then a small township like Laudium, had advantages and disadvantages. On the plus side teachers knew our background and families, where and how we lived, and the number of siblings in each family. On the minus side, teachers knew our backgrounds and families, where and how we lived, the number of siblings, as well as all the socio-cultural skeletons in each family’s cupboard. Students would bump into teachers at the shopping centre, in the cinema, in the homes of friends, and at social functions. Lapses in decorum were made public as personal details were turned into embarrassing spectacles in the classroom.

Sometimes, we were embarrassed because of our family background. Once when a teacher was marking my book he asked me how many more children from my family would be attending school. When I replied that I was the last child, his retort was: “About time, don’t you think?”. I was often ashamed of admitting that I was one of eight children. I was fortunate that teachers had no idea about siblings that did not survive because those who came from families with more than a dozen were ridiculed periodically. The “danger” of a large family size was relayed to us by many teachers at every opportunity. We were constantly reminded about how the population was

increasing because “*Indians* breed like rabbits”. The irony of teachers’ pontifications about family size is that they themselves belonged to large families.

Living in a closed community meant that our parents knew teachers personally. They invited teachers into our private worlds, sought their counsel and allowed them to treat us with impunity. Consequently, when dealing with students, teachers were a law unto themselves.

Despite these practices, it is clear to me retrospectively, that there were two kinds of teachers: one kind reminded us constantly that “life is tough”, that school was a waste of time and that most boys would graduate from school with a BSc (behind the shop counter) and girls with a BKs (behind the kitchen sink). Another kind was dedicated to teaching, and inspired us to do well academically in the face of political oppression. Political activism, however, was neither encouraged nor promoted.

Laudium schools were seen, at best, as politically inactive and, at worst, as puppets of apartheid administrators. However, political awareness germinated in school. An overt act of resistance was the refusal by students to sing the anthem of the apartheid government on republic day. The presence of police and so-called dignitaries representing the regime turned this non-violent refusal into quite a dare, though not as daring as the outbreak of violent resistance at schools in Soweto and Lenasia, townships in Johannesburg. Such benign defiance did not go unpunished and we were tormented with detention and the writing of hundreds of lines. More serious forms of political resistance resulted in expulsion from school and imprisonment.

We were careful not to violate the fuzzy boundary between the benign and the serious. For many girls, stepping into the political arena was particularly hazardous as their parents would force the girls into marriage to dissolve activist notions. Marriage was the antidote for many “problems” parents had with daughters. Social alchemy, however, transformed the marriage antidote into a cultural poison which stained family honour and blighted cherished reputations when girls chose marriage partners spurned by their families.

Schools were different spaces depending on my age and stage in life. As the last born of eight children, of devout Hindu parents who were already grandparents, my birth was a matter of much discomfort and embarrassment for my mother. I was, from the moment I drew my first breath in the external world, an aunt. As an aunt I was not a child because in our household being a child was determined not by age, but by social hierarchies and relationships. As a female my path was already predetermined by my parents. I had to receive training in keeping house, cooking, know the procedures of religious rites and rituals, and what social mores and norms to preserve for posterity. I had to be schooled to attract a suitor, settle down and pass on these cultural chromosomes to my offspring.

There was another template for boys. My brothers were privileged – they could come and go as they pleased. My brothers were encouraged to study and we had to do their bidding – make a sandwich, iron a shirt, polish their shoes, serve tea, make their breakfast. The list is endless. These ways of living were unquestioned. That’s how life had always been construed in our family.

As a young child I had to compete with grandchildren for the affections and attentions of my parents. School allowed me to assert myself as a successful scholar. Not being able to compete in terms of cuteness, I could do so on ability. I outperformed the children in the family at school. I skipped a class by completing two years of work in one year and established myself as the “bookworm” in the family.

Despite these dominant influences, home was not an insular cultural space. Contradictions were part of the fabric of growing up. Though Hindu religion and culture were of primary importance, we were exposed to other cultural nodes. My dad insisted that I attend Sunday school which was run by Jehovah’s Witnesses. He derided *Indian* (Bollywood) movies and shared his enthusiasm for the supposed realism of Hollywood’s portrayal of life. The names of Hollywood stars like Gary Cooper, Grace Kelly, and Burt Lancaster were well-known in our home. The trials of the Kennedys and the British Royal family were followed with keen interest, and I recall clearly my dad’s disgust and disappointment when Jackie Kennedy married Aristotle Onassis. These

conversations of the occident often took place whilst the strains of classical *Indian* artists like Ravi Shankar and Allah Rakha reverberated in the background. Western music too echoed in the home as my siblings were avid followers of rock and roll and pop music. A poster of Elvis Presley, embroidered by my sister, was prominently displayed on the wall of our sitting cum dining area. My mother, too, was enthralled by the English way of life. The dining table at home covered with cloth, not newspaper, eating with knives and forks, and a menu dominated by soups, stews, roasts, and puddings set us apart from our neighbours and relatives. My mother used spices with circumspect and was convinced that spicy food caused ulcers, thus in our home, almost all our traditional foods were anglicised.

Whilst thus influenced by English notions of living, my mother prepared us for our future roles as traditional wives and mothers. We were advised never to walk out of a troubled marriage. Hardships had to be endured. She shared with us her experiences as she wanted us to be. I remember her recounting one such experience vividly. My mother was just thirty-five years old when my eldest sister got married. A few weeks before the marriage women related by caste descended upon our home and instructed my mother about how to style her hair. As a mother-in-law she could not have a side parting, henceforth she would have to wear her hair with a centre parting. The message was explicit: the community dictated the norms and women, in particular, had to abide therewith. These contrary ways of living were confusing. It signalled a move towards modern ways of thinking and being which were then undermined by cultural practices and messages from our elders. Later, I would interpret these moves rather loosely only to face the consequences of cultural pressure.

School was also a haven as it allowed for socialisation with peers which was important for surviving the challenges of adolescence. It enabled me to find a space away from the pain of losing three sisters to marriage within five months, and included one who had eloped with a Muslim man in an age when such liaisons were taboo. The outcome of this social crime was my mother's physical and psychological debilitation. She took a three year "sabbatical" from motherhood to mourn her cursed fate as the

progenitor of a daughter who had brought great, unbearable shame to the family. Though not yet a teenager, the responsibility of running the family home fell on my shoulders as I was the only daughter still at home. Each school day, for a few hours, I was able to escape the burdens of housekeeping. Almost all the females I knew, Muslim, Hindu, and Christian, were similarly affected by some problem or other. Being able to converge in a space away from the prying eyes of family, we girls could share our burdens with each other. With the support of this “sisterhood” we plotted ways to subvert socio-cultural norms without being detected, provided alibis for each other, and assisted each other with home chores and schoolwork.

Though school was conceived for political ends by government, it was appropriated and deployed by parents to meet a new trend in the seventies when *Indian* men began seeking educated girls as wives, requiring at least some high school education with preference given to girls who completed standard ten. Nevertheless, a number of girls I knew could not complete schooling as they were married off within a year or two of the onset of puberty. In my own case I wanted more than matriculation. My parents understood that times had changed and completing standard ten was important, but studying further, they insisted, would jeopardise future marriage opportunities because “an educated girl would challenge her mother-in-law”. In other words, a woman with a career would threaten and weaken the centuries old constructions of the world my parents knew, breaking its continuity and reproductive strands. For my family then school would provide me with a qualification, neither for a career nor for recognition as an exemplary South African citizen, but rather to enter the marriage market with an advantage over girls who were not so qualified. School was a means of reproducing an understood social world because once girls were married they were expected to continue the tradition of protecting the family culture, religion, and lifestyle, and simultaneously be concrete evidence that their parents were exemplary cultural and social stalwarts.

But school did much more than reproduce traditionally held values. It would also imbue me with the agency I needed to rewrite my future. Some teachers constantly

ignored the script that required girls to be passive; to pass time in school until they could fulfil parents' aspirations. We were encouraged to think, debate, question, and write. We were inspired to dream of the possibility of a career even though apartheid, religious affiliation, and cultural belief narrowed choices to careers like teaching, nursing, and office administration for girls.

I always wanted to be a lawyer but gave up the idea when I learnt that Latin was integral to law studies. Being brought up to speak Afrikaans outside the home and Gujarati at home, I had to deal with the issues of language painfully. Competency in Afrikaans, the language of the oppressors, was perceived as being sympathetic to apartheid ideology. Afrikaans, which emerged as an expression of resistance to British imperialism became in its turn, the most visible and tangible expression of oppression. At school I'd had to not only hide my competency in Afrikaans, but also to grapple with the complexities of the English language. I sat daily with the dictionary and spent hours doing crossword puzzles and reading classic literature (Dickens, Austen, Hardy, Shakespeare, Donne, Eliot, Marlowe, the Brontës). I was just not confident with my proficiency in English and decided, therefore, to become a medical doctor. A medical degree was expensive for working class families. Besides, one needed permission from the Ministry of the Interior to attend a university for *Whites*. The possibility of undertaking this route had become apparent two years before I completed school. Three students, a male and two females, from Laudium High, had passed the matriculation exam with distinction. They qualified for admission to the medical school at the University of the Witwatersrand, and were the first "home-grown" medical doctors from the community. It was a revelation, simultaneously revolutionary and inspiring.

Most tertiary institutions were accessible to *Whites* only. In Pretoria there were no academic institutions for *Blacks*. Johannesburg had a teachers' college for *Indians*. Similarly there were only two hospitals where *Blacks* could train as nurses. Just a few *Blacks* received government permission to study at the University of the Witwatersrand. Many parents were not prepared to send their daughters to study at the only university for *Indians* in the country which was situated six hundred kilometres away in KwaZulu-

Natal. In my case, my father also wanted a guarantee from me that I marry someone of his choice should I pursue a medical career. I was not prepared to do so. I settled on becoming a teacher because it was the cheapest option and one of my sisters was prepared to assist me financially.

The teachers college for *Indians* I attended in Johannesburg was housed in a disused high school. The buildings comprised twelve rooms, a high school laboratory and a library. The only sporting facilities available were a pair of tennis courts, a badminton court and table tennis. The structures were old, dilapidated and cold. Our lecturers were mainly *White* males. Two *Indian* males, however, inspired me. The one was the first *Indian* teacher in the Transvaal to graduate with a master's degree in education and the other, the first with a PhD. It was inconceivable then to imagine that I would one day pursue similar intellectual goals.

I met my husband, Jay, when I was sixteen. I had moved to Durban in the final year of schooling because the generation gap between my parents and me seemed unbridgeable and it gave me an opportunity to get to know my married sisters. Whilst at school the idea of a romantic liaison did not tempt me because I knew that such a relationship was doomed and I had seen the effects of my sister's elopement on the family and had no inclination to impose such consequences on my mother in particular.

Though Jay was a Hindu and gujerati-speaking, we differed in terms of caste. I was from the so-called "labour" caste and Jay from the 'merchant' caste. Despite these differences, we did not consider the relationship to cause a problem and were quite taken aback when both sides objected. His family members were vegetarians and I came from a meat-eating background. Years later both sets of parents realised that they could not change our minds and they finally relented. All my mother's teachings about life, family, marriage, and culture came to pass, but not as she had anticipated. With a "powerful" ally at my side, someone who was single-minded, and quite impervious to outside pressures, I was able to live life differently. Jay, whom I consider to be a pragmatic patriarch, encouraged me to study and to work, offset with moderate pressures to meet family, cultural, and religious obligations. Until I was able to

experience freedom of expression, albeit under a protective cloak, I would have never guessed that marriage could have an emancipatory dimension.

As a teacher, I taught in similar contexts to those I attended as a student. By then, schools for so-called *Indians* were better resourced and most teachers were qualified. All schools I taught in were for *Indians* only. Authority was concentrated in the position of the principal. It was rare for a teacher to challenge the authority of the principal as punitive measures like being transferred to a distant school were deployed to rein in the rebel teacher. Parental role in school matters were peripheral – assisting with fund-raising, attending meetings, and supporting school functions.

To be considered a good teacher I had to interpret the curriculum for each subject exactly as the education department's subject adviser dictated. Though the education department's officials were not often at school, surveillance of what and how one taught was done by proxy: it was quite disconcerting, on numerous occasions, to discover a manager hiding amongst the students, furtively evaluating my teaching. These were referred to as "inspections". I was inspected by heads of department, the principal and deputy principal. Reports on my performance were written, and deviations from official prescriptions were remedied through consultations with one of the managers, followed by more inspections.

Students at schools I taught were generally docile. They listened, acquiesced to school rules, regulations, order and organisation. There were also the few who rebelled, cut classes, smoked, bullied, stole, lied, and did not complete homework. The school generally referred serious misconduct (stealing, violent behaviour, gangsterism, drug addiction) to state psychologists. Recommendations ranged from remedial measures to institutionalisation in a reform school. Reform school took away all parental rights and made the child a ward of the state.

During my tenure as teacher, parents rarely questioned the school's approach to discipline. We were immune from the rhetoric of "transparency", "community participation", "accountability to parents" and "democratic processes". We succumbed to the authority of the principal and "the department". My career as a school-based

teacher ended three years before the advent of democracy in 1994. In 1989 I had been selected to train as a teacher for gifted students. The training opened up new vistas and theories of pedagogy. I taught exclusively to gifted children and later moved on into a bureaucratic environment.

In recent years, based on discussions with teachers, students, and parents of different races, linguistic groups, religious affiliations, and gender, it appears that my experiences of schooling as both student and teacher differ from latter-day experiences. Schools are different, they insist, due to a variety of factors: political change, a proliferation of new educational policies, a new curriculum, social justice concerns, parent participation in school governance, changes in student population, and a politicised and unionised teaching fraternity, amongst others. In the post-apartheid era, the government views schools as valuable sites to negate past practices, to neutralise the toxins that course through curricula, and to rupture the seamless transfer of oppressive ideology from one generation to the next. The content of the politics has changed but the notion of school as a tool for political purposes and goals has not.

Changes in the educational landscape began in the early 1990s. Schools began admitting students from different race groups (albeit problematically in controlled and limited ways). Prescribed texts were rewritten to include silenced histories and knowledges of South Africa, followed by a total overhaul of the education system with the introduction of outcomes-based education in 1997. A multiplicity of new education policies was enacted and the philosophy of Constitution of the Republic South Africa (1996) and the South African Schools Act (1996) incorporating the Bill of Rights underpinned and shaped the new curriculum.

The noble ideals for schools envisioned by the new government have not been accepted unproblematically. Change in education has been fraught with contestation, conflict, and resistance. During this transitional phase I was neither a teacher nor a student: I was a bureaucrat ensconced initially with Psychological Services and thereafter with the Curriculum Development Unit. Both of these were regional educational departments serving schools in the North Durban Region. My own

experiences, evidently, are insufficient to understand schooling in the present. Looking back it seems life at home and life outside home, or to put it another way, life inside school and life outside school were, in many ways, alike in influencing the emergent being, sometimes symbiotically, often antagonistically.

Appendix B: Permission to Conduct Research



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATAL
PROVINSIE KWAZULU-NATAL



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS EN KULTUUR

NORTH DURBAN REGION	ISIFUNDAZWE SENYAKATHO NETHEKU	NOORD DURBAN STREEK
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Address: Turco House 17 Victoria Embankment Ikhehl: Esplanade Adres:	Private Bag: Isikhwama Sepost. Private Bag: Durban 4000	Telephone: (031) 360-6265 Ucingo: (Exams Help Desk) Telefoon: Fax: (031)332-1126
Enquiries: Mr SP Govender Imibuzo: 350-6267 Navrae:	Reference: N/17/03 Inkomba: Verwysing:	Date: 24 January Usuku: 2003 Datum:

Mrs N Amin
9 Normandy Crescent
Westville
3630

Dear Mrs Amin

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: NORTH DURBAN REGION
N. AMIN : PhD : Reg. No. 9903559 - University of Durban Westville

1. You are hereby granted permission to conduct research along the lines of your proposal, subject to the following conditions:
 - a. No individual associated with [REDACTED] Secondary may be forced to participate in your study,
 - b. Access to Educators, learners and classrooms is negotiated with the principal and Governing Body by yourself;
 - c. The normal teaching and learning programme of the school is not to be disrupted,
 - d. The confidentiality of the participants is respected; and
 - e. A copy of the findings should be lodged with the Regional Senior Manager on completion of the studies.
2. This letter may be used to gain access to schools.
3. May I take this opportunity to wish you every success in your research.

Yours faithfully,

Mr SP Govender
Regional Co-ordinator: Research
for Regional Senior Manager

Appendix C: Ethical Clearance



University of
Durban-Westville

PRIVATE BAG 934001 DURBAN
4002 SOUTH AFRICA
TELEGRAMS UDMWEST
TELEX 6-25228 SA
FAX: (031)204-4382
☎ (031)204-4111

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION



TEL: 031 204 4111
FAX: 031 204 4382

ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED
TO: THE HEAD - RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

12 MARCH 2003

MRS N AMIN
EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

Dear Mrs. Amin


ETHICAL CLEARANCE - NUMBER_03025A

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

"Teacher knowing and learners lives"

Thank you

Yours faithfully


MS. PHUME XIMBA
[for] HEAD: RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

PS: The following general condition is applicable to all projects that have been granted ethical clearance:

THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE CONTACTED IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY APPROVAL SHOULD THE RESEARCH INVOLVE UTILIZATION OF SPACE AND/OR FACILITIES AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS/ORGANISATIONS. WHERE QUESTIONNAIRES ARE USED IN THE PROJECT, THE RESEARCHER SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE QUESTIONNAIRE INCLUDES A SECTION AT THE END WHICH SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE PARTICIPANT (PRIOR TO THE COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE) INDICATING THAT HE/SHE WAS INFORMED OF THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND THAT THE INFORMATION GIVEN WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

- cc: Director of School
- cc: Supervisor

Appendix D: Teacher Consent

Nyna Amin
Student No 9903559
University of Durban-Westville
KwaZulu-Natal

Dear Teacher,

My name is Nyna Amin, a doctoral student from the University of Durban-Westville. I am engaged in research work concerning the construction of learner identities and have selected _____ Secondary School as the study site. The study entails observing teaching and learning situations in the classroom, and all other interactions outside the classroom during the school day. Learners and teachers will be interviewed, participate in group discussions and keep reflective journals.

I promise

- * That all information will be confidential and will not be divulged to your peers, school managers, the School Governing Body, department officials, parents or learners. The only persons with access to information will be Dr Michael Samuel, Dr Renuka Vithal (doctoral promoters) and myself.
- * That all written reports and accounts of this study will not identify the school or persons involved.
- * That the information gathering process will not disrupt the teaching and learning situation.

Should you require further clarification about the study, please feel free to contact me at 031-2607255 or personally at a time suited to your convenience.

Nyna Amin

Appendix E: Student Consent

Nyna Amin
Student No 9903559
University of Durban-Westville
KwaZulu-Natal

Dear Parent / Guardian,

My name is Nyna Amin, a doctoral student from the University of Durban-Westville. I am engaged in research work concerning the construction of learner identities and have selected _____ Secondary School as the study site. The study entails observing teaching and learning situations in the classroom, and all other interactions outside the classroom during the school day. Learners will be interviewed, participate in group discussions and keep reflective journals. I am seeking your permission to allow your child / ward to be a participant in this study, which will provide insight into the critical role that schools play in shaping learners' identities.

I promise

- * That all information regarding your child will be confidential and will not be divulged to teachers, school managers, or learners. The only persons with access to information will be Dr Michael Samuel, Dr Renuka Vithal (doctoral promoters) and myself.
- * That all written reports and accounts of this study will not identify the school or persons involved.
- * That the information gathering process will not harm your child.
- * That the information gathering process will not disrupt the teaching and learning situation.

Should you require further clarification about the study, please feel free to contact me at 031-2607255.

Nyna Amin

Appendix F: Change of Thesis Title



12 April 2007

Ms. N Amin
Student No: 990355959
C/o School of Educational Studies
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms. Amin,

RE: Change of Thesis Title

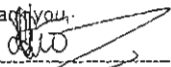
The Faculty Higher Degrees Committee at its meeting on 26th March 2007 has noted and accepted your motivation for change of thesis title from:

Teacher knowing and learners' lives

To

The paradox of knowing: Teachers' knowing about students

Thank you,


TRACEY ANDREW
Postgraduate Office

Tel: (031) 260 7865
andrewk@ukzn.ac.za

cc: Professor R Vilhal
Professor MA Samuel

Faculty of Education
Deputy Dean (Postgraduate Studies and Research)

Postal Address: Pivotal Bag X03, Airwood 3603, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 1169/1024

Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 7354

Email: maleisoner@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

Founding Campuses:

Edgewood

Howard College

Medical School

Pietermaritzburg

Westville

APPENDIX H: Student Participants

Student participants

Of the class of fifty Grade Eight students, fourteen students agreed to participate in the study. Eight female and six male related their personal. No other biographical details are presented to prevent identifying students participating in the study.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Coding
Kamla	F	13	KS1 – KS7
Mohamed	M	13	MS1 – MS6
Jabulani	M	14	JS1 – JS5
Curtis	M	13	CS1 – CS4
Leela	F	14	LS1 – LS6
Daniel	M	13	DS1 DS6
Zinhle	F	14	ZS1 – ZS4
Emily	F	13	ES1 – ES5
Welcome	M	14	WS1 – WS4
Yolanda	F	14	YS1 – YS5
Akhona	M	17	AS1 – AS6
Ishara	F	14	IS1 – IS3
Rowena	F	14	RS1 – RS3
Quarisha	F	13	QS1 – QS5

Fig. 27 Student Participants