Narrating
the Everyday

Windows on Life in Central South Africa

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Dedicated to all the people who so generously
shared their stories with us.

This was the openness
the sky had been promising.
The land dropped and dropped.
The continent here was gigantically flawed.
The eye lost itself
in the colourless distances
of the wide valley,
dissolving in every direction
in cloud and haze ...
'Africa, Africa.'
'Shall we stop and have a look?'

– V.S. Naipaul –
In a Free State (1973:116)

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Acknowledgements

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JAN K. COETZEE is Senior Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of the Free State, South Africa. He is program director for *The Narrative Study of Lives*, supervising and researching projects within interpretive and qualitative designs. His recent publications include 21 articles with postgraduate students, research fellows, and research partners in 2 Special Editions of *Qualitative Sociology Review* – Volume XIII (1), 2017 and Volume XIV (4), 2018 respectively – covering a range of aspects of the lifeworlds of South Africans living in the central part of the country. He is a practicing visual artist and his latest work focuses on books as documents of lives, using old texts juxtaposed with found and sculpted objects to draw attention to the book as symbolic knowledge object and potential source of criticality. An independently double-blind peer-reviewed publication, *Books & Bones & Other Things* (SUN PReSS, 2018) contains examples of this work.

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On Stories and Understanding

The Free State

People say that you only cry twice here—once when you arrive to live, and once when you leave. It's the kind of place where people who are born here, stay forever. Most pass through on their way to somewhere else.

It is a vast and golden grassland, locked in the middle of the country, set free by wide and beautiful skies. The third largest province in South Africa, the Free State spans 129,825 square kilometers, but is sparsely populated and home to only five percent of South Africa's 56-million people. Agriculture dominates the landscape, with huge swathes of farmlands growing maize—a hard task in a thirsty land. There is plentiful game and wildlife. And beneath the surface lie rich mineral deposits of gold and diamonds. But it is not a wealthy place, contributing only 5 percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product.

Its capital, Bloemfontein, where all the stories in this book were collected together, is a slow, conservative, polite kind of space. It does not take long to travel from one side of the city to the other, excepting for the uninitiated, who get caught up in the traffic after church on Sundays. But this is only the soft centre, the privilege of a minority who live in the suburbs. Bloemfontein is not wholly comfortable nor sedate, especially for those who live in the big townships and informal settlements. Here people face day-to-day realities of poverty, persistent racial and gender discrimination, meagre social services, and unsafe living conditions. Life is hard and, to borrow from Tim Winton (2018), hope can be aggressive.

Historically the Free State is associated with the battles and burghers of the old Boer republic and to this day most White residents are Afrikaans-speaking.

The province borders on more districts of the landlocked Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho than any other province, a geographical closeness echoed in rich cultural links: the majority of Free State people are Black Africans who speak Sesotho or Tswana as a first language. Some are descendants of the prominent tribal, religious and secular leaders who rose up to spearhead the country's fight for the rights of Black South Africans—on 8 January 1912 the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) was founded here. In 1923 it was renamed the ANC, the African National Congress, which rules our country today.

The intersection of traditional and modern, of local and global, of privilege and privation, is a key attribute of this book. It features the grounded work of local researchers in critical conversation with international co-authors, and with traditional, modern, and post-modern sociological theory. Each chapter provides a unique window on the lives of ordinary people, as shaped by their historical and contemporary contexts and revealed through their personal narratives.

Stories and understanding

All the chapters in this book reflect on the practice of using narratives to understand individual and social reality. They all reveal dimensions of the same concrete reality: contemporary society of Central South Africa. We invite readers to engage with individual chapters, each of which provide a brief episode—a vignette—in a larger reality. We also invite you to engage with the entire collection, through which a more detailed and clearer picture of the larger reality will emerge.

Except for two[1], all the chapters originated from research in the program *The Narrative Study of Lives*, situated in the Department of Sociology at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa. Each chapter opens a window on an aspect of everyday life in Central South Africa. Each window displays the capacity of the narrative as a methodological tool in qualitative research to open up better understandings of everyday experience. The chapters

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1   Chapter 3 ˋEmotions and Belonging˝ stems from a project on orphans and vulnerable children, conducted by the Centre for Health Systems Research & Development (CHSR&D) at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein.
Chapter 20 ˋInsurgent Citizenship and Sustained Resistance of a Local Taxi Association˝ is part of Sethulego Matebesi's research program.

also reflect on the epistemological journey towards unwrapping and breaking open of meaning. Narratives are one of many tools available to sociologists in their quest to understand and interpret meaning. But, when it comes to deep understanding, narratives are particularly effective in opening up more intricate levels of meaning associated with emotions, feelings, and subjective experiences.

Storytelling

Humans live in storytelling societies. If you want to know somebody, then you must know that person's story. Likewise, if you want to know a particular group, you need to know at least the most important stories told within and about that group. When we share our stories with other groups and cultures, we get to know more about each other. The more we know about one another, the less likely we will be to hold unjustified stereotypes and to spread untruths. So, through our stories, we discover what is true and what is meaningful in our life and also what is likely to be true and meaningful in the lives of others.

We pass our stories on from one generation to another. And in this process, we add to our ever-growing narrative repertoire: our reflections of, and on, the overall reality in which we live. As sociologists, we are particularly interested in the social role and functioning of stories: how they are told, the ways in which they are received or read, the role they perform in the broader social context, how they change, and how they fit into bigger processes related to the living together of people. Our interest in the social role of stories takes us, in the first instance, directly to the individual. Narratives display the goals, intentions, motivations, and after-effects of individual reflection, experience, and action. In the second instance, narratives can also unwrap elements of wider social order— of large-scale social, political, and structural trends and disruptions. Ultimately, narratives help us to understand what is going on in society.

The analytical point of departure for any understanding of society should be people and the ways in which individuals experience social reality. The very essence of the concept "society" is the living together of people within a specific context. As sociologists, we seek to understand how people live together with other people. We also seek to reveal which elements in society constitute obstacles to living together—or even make it impossible. We have to acknowledge the presence of a multiplicity of relevances and meaning-structures, and to achieve

this we need to listen to various—often divergent—accounts. The stories of individuals often differ because their experiences, circumstances, and lifeworlds differ. Underlying our understanding of the meaning that people attribute to their lifeworld is the assumption that such meaning is accessible to others. The mutual accessibility of meaning provides a crucial starting point for understanding of narratives, and via narratives.

Our search to understand our social reality—as well as the social reality of others—coincides with the assumption that underneath the visible structures of the human world there is a hidden, invisible structure of interests, forces, and trends waiting to be uncovered. We can be brought closer to viable interpretations and understandings of these factors via the narrative study of lives and via the everyday experiences revealed to us by our research participants. The methodological implications of such interpretations and understandings are that sociological concepts can never become models or representations of reality to which meaning is attributed from the outside. The constitution of meaning takes place by means of uncovering the typifications that are already inherent in the situation. The aim of our narrative sociological interpretation is to break open and to clarify, as plainly as possible, the meanings already present in situations and in experiences. To realize this aim, one needs to first identify the meanings and, thereafter, relate them to other meanings and meaning-structures. In this way, our narrative analysis can lead to the creation of a meaning framework.

Understanding through Qualitative Research

We already noted that as social researchers we direct our efforts towards one major aim: to understand the world in which we live. In order to do so, we must decipher the meanings, the motives, and intentions of people, as well as the effects of their actions on social life. In their introduction to *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2011:3-4), Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln elaborate on these issues. They point out that the aim of qualitative research is to increase our understanding of social reality through the use of materials—such as accounts of personal experience, introspection, the lifestory, interviews, artifacts, and texts—via which we can describe and understand routine, as well as exceptional moments and meanings in people's lives. John Creswell (2013:44) shares the desire to unwrap exceptional moments and meanings when he talks

about being "sensitive to the people and places under study," to generating "complex descriptions and interpretations of the problem," and to uncovering the "meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem." Most readers will agree that qualitative data should lead to rich descriptions, fruitful explanations, and new interpretations. We trust that this book will achieve these aspirations.

Understanding through Narratives

Few methods of data collection capture context, meaning, experience, subjectivity, the lifeworld, reflexivity, and action as effectively as narrative studies. When people tell coherent and meaningful stories embedded in a particular context, they reveal to us insights into our own, as well as other people's experiences. Narratives provide accounts of how particular phenomena came to be what they are, how those phenomena take on different meanings in different contexts, and how individuals do/perform/constitute social life.

> A narrative captures the importance of context, the meaningfulness of human experience, thought and speech within time and place; it provides opportunity to understand implicit, as well as explicit rationales for action within a holistic framework…the narrative approach is seeking comprehensiveness of understanding within the individual case. [Bazeley 2013:342]

In *The Narrative Study of Lives* program—from which most chapters in this book originate—we mostly analyze narratives from several participants in order to access multiple meanings attached to a particular issue. Gathering stories from several people about the same phenomenon is in keeping with the notion that "narrative understanding is a dynamic process, and narrative meaning accrues by degrees" (Popova 2015:n.p.). The unfolding of perspectives and events is usually constructed by our narrators over multiple interviews. Multiple narrative sessions create a mosaic in which individual elements can be pieced together to reconstruct singular scenarios, as well as to constitute a whole picture. Seldom is it possible to assemble a picture of the "full reality" in one session. Sometimes our hermeneutic journey towards understanding—our reconstructions of other people's constructions—involves fewer narrators, but in most of the chapters in this book, we explore the lifeworlds of several narrators. It is only in the case of Chapter 2, *Deconstructing My Library, Unwrapping My Lifeworld* and Chapter 5,

The Everyday in a Time of Transformation that the focus is autobiographical and on the lifeworld of a single narrator.

The very essence of lifestory research—especially in as far as narrative inquiry, life history, and oral history are concerned—is that it provides an epistemological key to a wide scope of knowledge of everyday reality, of local and indigenous knowledges, of cultural transmission and community engagement. Lifestory data can, however, never simply be accepted as "unmediated representations of social realities," as Atkinson and Delamont (2009:316) caution. For this reason, all the chapters in this book attempt to execute a double reading in which research participants' narratives are read against the background of the empirical reality in which they are embedded. Like all researchers, those in the program of *The Narrative Study of Lives* always engage in a reflexive process to question how narrative realities relate to historical truths, and how they are logically consistent with other understandings of social reality. Ken Plummer (2001:2) agrees with this view when he contextualizes the use of narratives as:

> … getting close to living human beings, accurately yet imaginatively picking up the way they express their understandings of the world around them, perhaps providing an analysis of such expressions, presenting them in interesting ways and being self-critically aware of the immense difficulties such tasks bring.

John Spradley's (1979:34) classic statement on why narrative research offers such great potential to understanding the lifeworld of people echoes our aim for this book:

> I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them.

Narrating the Everyday

The emphasis on understanding, meaningful interpretation, lived experience, and the constitution of the lifeworld inevitably positions the narrative study of lives as a micro-sociological perspective with a strong focus on the micro-processes composing social reality. What do *individuals* say, do, and think in the

everyday sequences of events and experiences? And how do their perspectives and actions coincide with the wider interactions and expressions of meaning underlying social reality? In this regard, we find an important guideline in Randall Collins's (in Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel 1981:83) remark that empirical reality must be regarded as residing in direct experience. Collins regards "the encounter" as the basic micro-unit of analysis: it is a "shared conversational reality" at the basis of all social interaction, negotiation, and exchange.

Narrating the everyday implies that such an empirical and objective reality exists. But, this objective reality, as exemplified by empirical, describable, and sometimes visible phenomena, cannot only be analyzed as structural facts. To illustrate: the objective reality of urbanization, for instance, is far more than a statistical construct or "hard fact." Urbanization embodies an endless chain of personal experiences—"ritual interaction chains" as Collins (1981:985) terms them—as well as forms of interaction, bargaining agreements, resistance, and compliance. Urbanization also exists as a collective noun for individual action, individual constitution of meaning, and individual experience. The rich nuances of this can only be captured by means of a series of coding and hermeneutic procedures.

We understand something of urbanization if we ground this phenomenon in its constituent micro-elements. The narrative study of urbanization allows for such a micro-sociological translation strategy. By listening to the accounts of individuals, we focus on their everyday reality and the contextual situatedness of their experience. Recurrent accounts, repeated symbolic expressions, and shared meanings can tell us about the context within which interaction takes place. All chapters in this book are similarly situated in the sociology of everyday life and point to the ritual interaction chains linking personal experiences to larger social phenomena.

Challenges of Narratives

It is clear that if we are interested in revealing human meanings and motives, interpretive, qualitative methodology provides the key to understanding how people perceive and experience their lifeworlds. But, our very point of departure—to comprehend the world in which we live—constitutes an epistemological problem: people are endowed with consciousness and they see,

interpret, experience, and act in the world in terms of a vast range of subjectively and intersubjectively constituted meanings. When people actively construct and co-construct their own social reality, fluid and multiple perspectives of the world emerge: there is no single truth. This compels us to (re)assess and (re)interpret our sociological enterprise. So, it is through continuous oscillation between hypothesis formulation and revision that we move towards understanding.

As inductive researchers, we focus in an interpretive-constructivist way on the specific details of what people tell us, and then we use these specifics as a basis for building our understanding of their lifeworlds. We depend on the openness of the research participants and their willingness and ability to articulate experiences, recount events, and offer explanations and opinions. Experience shows that no matter how well researchers set up the in-depth interview and create a conversational partnership in which the interviewee participates fully and can talk openly, the very nature of memory poses a hermeneutical challenge.

Memory is a person's capacity to recall or summon up information stored in his or her mind. Remembering is a mental act of "thinking of things in their absence" (Warnock in Misztal 2003:9). All chapters in this book focus on mental recall; in addition, some focus on *embodied* aspects of remembering. There is a strong emphasis on the content of memory. However, we are equally interested in processes of re-membering, in other words, in the memory experience. To remember information, events, and experiences is a complex—and notoriously fallible—process. This is partly because memory is not an exclusively individual and objective act. Even the most personal accounts and memories transcend our subjective experience of them and are shared and mediated by others around us (Zerubavel 1997:81). As Barbara Misztal (2003:6) remarks, our memory is always "of an intersubjective past, of a past time lived in relation to other people." Thus, memory is almost always "intersubjectively constituted": an idea on which we focused and published more specifically elsewhere (cf. Coetzee and Rau 2009).

Memory is by definition "the leap across time from the then of happening to the now of recall" (Frisch 1990:22). This implies a triangulation between the experiences of the past, the set of circumstances within which these experiences occur, and the way in which the individual reflects on these experiences. The latter includes the influence of the narrator's present circumstances. Although

memories become adapted in these processes, there will always be a nucleus of aspects that remain the same. As Paul Connerton (1989:23) points out, the habitual aspect of recall serves to entrench ways of reflecting on and narrating personal societal experiences, and ensures—to some extent—a containment, coherence, and continuity of meaning.

From this it follows that the way in which we and our research participants remember experiences from the past will depend on the nature of these experiences. For instance, several narratives in this book originate from lifestory research projects that explore trauma narratives. Traumatic experiences leave a negative memory. Whether it is sustained exposure to trauma—such as long-term experience of physical disability or a life lived with HIV—or whether we are exposed to a brief moment of numbing shock, the effects are likely to be similar: a negative disturbance in the way we think back to that part of our past. Another issue needs to be kept in mind when we analyze memory. According to Kai Erikson (1994:231), instances of shared experiences can create a community: "trauma shared can serve as a source of community in the same way that the common languages and common cultural backgrounds can. There is a spiritual kinship there, a sense of identity." He concludes: "Indeed, it can happen that otherwise unconnected persons who share a traumatic experience seek one another out and develop a form of fellowship on the strength of that common tie" (Erikson 1994:232). So, Erikson shifts the notion of trauma experience from an individualized context towards a collective one. But the shift from an individualized context towards a collective one is not necessarily restricted to the experience and recall of trauma. All shared experiences—also pleasant ones—can transcend the individual to become collective experiences. The result of this is that personal memory often obtains collective or cultural dimensions. And when individual experiences become part of a collective consciousness—they become institutionalized (see: Alexander 2004:8). While individuals do the remembering, their remembering often arises out of shared social contexts and motifs.

The halo effect is a bias that arises when research participants "give socially approved responses as an interaction strategy characterized by responding in normatively correct and conformist ways and generally trying to present a good face" (Ross and Mirowsky 1983:529-530). We do not deny that, to some extent, this form of bias occurred in data collection for the various projects featured in

this book, but we are of the opinion that the narratives presented are not unduly influenced by it. In the case of all the projects featured here, researchers took great care to establish, over time, a high level of trust and rapport with their participants. One of the key emphases during the various and many seminars, debriefings, and supervision feedback sessions in which all researchers partook was to reiterate and remind one another of the importance of establishing an optimum environment for meaningful encounters with research participants.

Understanding the South African Context through the Narrative Study of Lives

It is now a quarter of a century since South Africa transformed itself from being an apartheid prison and arch-pariah to a widely acclaimed example of the potential for a "new humanity." Few countries were as reviled by the international community as the apartheid state formed by the National Party of South Africa when it came into power in 1948. Institutionalized and legally enshrined racism enforced a culture of separation and isolation. A person's race determined where he/she could live, who he/she could marry, and what education, medical care, occupation, social services, legal protection, and property rights he/she would be entitled to. In the wider context of the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 and the approach of the end of the Cold War, South Africa negotiated a new dispensation under the leadership of Nelson Mandela and F. W. de Klerk. In April 1994, our first democratic elections took place and South Africa was finally free.

Although technically free and democratically constituted, the remnants and shadows of South Africa's past did not miraculously disappear with the dawn of the new dispensation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a body similar to a court of law where testimony could be heard, was set up shortly after the end of apartheid in 1994. Anybody who felt themselves to have been a victim of the violence perpetrated during the apartheid years could come forward, tell their stories, and be heard at the TRC. Perpetrators of apartheid's violence and crimes could also give testimony and apply for amnesty from prosecution. The formal hearings of this Commission began on April 15, 1996 (South African History Online 2017).

The TRC was an important part of the transition to full democracy in South Africa. It was also a major turning point in the South African awareness of the power of narratives to establish parameters for the living together of people and for striving towards a better society. The TRC was set up in terms of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No. 34 of 1995. The number of cases brought in front of the TRC gives an indication of the scope of the narratives heard by the Commission. Out of 7112 petitions, as many as 5392 people were formally refused amnesty, whereas 849 were granted amnesty. Several applications were withdrawn. Many of the hearings of the TRC were aired on public television channels and most newspapers covered the events extensively.

In many ways the work of the TRC can be seen as groundbreaking in terms of providing an official forum for victims, as well as perpetrators to have their stories heard. Many witnesses who gave testimony about secret and immoral acts committed by the apartheid government of South Africa would not have come out into the open if it was not for the protection provided by the laws governing this process. In turn, many of the crimes committed by liberation forces would also have stayed undisclosed.

South Africa is now a country with a constitution lauded as one of the most enlightened in the world. Yet it remains a country marred by inequality and inequity. This book on the narrative study of lives features many stories from Central South Africa that illustrate inequalities and inequities that persist in the country's post-democratic era. In her introduction to the comprehensive coverage on lifestory research in the SAGE publication, "*Benchmarks in Social Research Methods*," Barbara Harrison (2009:XXIII-XXIX) points out a number of factors that heralded a growth in narrative research. These include an awareness of the role that oral history and narrative accounts can play in contributing towards a democratization of knowledge: How do we remember and experience the past? How are injustices of the past still part of our lives in the present? How do we deal with transition and trauma? How do we experience, and celebrate, cultural diversity and everyday aspects of our identities? Some of the narratives in this book address these questions directly.

Documents of life from our pre-democratic dispensation rarely incorporated the voices of the majority of South Africa's people. The apartheid regime suppressed their voices by relegating entire racial groups to the economic and cultural margins of society. Through political exclusion their experiences were hidden from most

historical accounts and their views seldom played a role in representations and reconstructions of reality. In step with new horizons and freedoms, everyday discourses on issues that reflect everyday life as explored by us in the program *The Narrative Study of Lives* contribute to greater inclusivity and provide more opportunities for political and cultural participation and self-expression.

One cannot engage with the increased political democratization in South Africa following the regime transition of 1994, and the growth of the awareness of the power of public testimonies during the sessions of the TRC, without referring to the influence of feminist thinking in South Africa. Feminist scholarship at South African universities and research bodies played a major role in sensitizing society to take action against hegemonic, male-dominated practices and ways of thinking. Contributions in this book such as Chapters 6, 7, and 8 on narratives of cosmetic surgery and beauty, and Chapters 14 to 17 on the experiences of poverty, health, and physical disability emphasize gender issues.

Life histories allow us to learn about people and the way that they live (Rubin and Rubin 2005:8). We pass on our stories—our histories—from one generation to another. And in this process, we add to our ever-growing narrative repertoire: our reflections of, and on, the overall reality in which we live. The contributions in this book provide broad brushstrokes of life in Central South Africa. The voices and the stories in the chapters reach into and open out deeper levels in the experience of "ordinary people." In doing so, the chapters uncover new understandings of our histories and our evolving social world.

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Deconstructing My Library, Unwrapping My Lifeworld[1]

ABSTRACT | *One of the most frequent ways of narrating everyday life in developed countries has been via the printed book. The invention of printing allowed for an ever-increasing mass production of documents of life that systematically established an era of communication and a political economy that had profound implications for the structure of living together. This chapter departs from the context of my own lifeworld: a lifeworld closely related to printed books.*

When attempting to explore and understand the overt and covert meanings embedded in the historical development of our social lives and the objects around us, we can turn for assistance to an analysis of the books on our shelves, books that have been constant companions for long periods of our lives. In this chapter I propose that any valid interpretation, understanding, and depiction of social reality needs to be, in essence, autobiographical. The autobiographical account I present includes how my personal life trajectory led me to the books that surround me. And how, in turn, these books become a reflection on myself and my roots.

Telling Stories

In today's world, there are strong indications of an increasing interest in narratives. One example of this interest is the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2015 to the oral historian Svetlana Alexievich for her work in the literature genre of narratives (Alexievich 1992; 2006; 2016; 2017). This comes in the wake of our need to better understand human experience, human motivations, and the ways in which we impact our social and natural world. Narratives imply memory. In his ground-breaking work, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Paul Ricoeur (2004) reminds us that any phenomenological analysis of memory needs to include two essential questions: "Of *what* are the

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memories? *Whose* memory is it?" Our narratives center on our appropriation of memory, our capability for self-reflection. To understand how memory works, one must realize that *to be reminded of something is at the same time to remember who you are*. Memory is a complex system of storing information, an experience and a dialogue with the past. But, in the end, memory is an engagement with, and thinking of, the events, the people, the experiences, the beliefs, the truths/ lies that we came across or were told about. My attempt at understanding the social reality in which I find myself is related to my autobiography. But, even though it is autobiographical, my memory is not free from collective, social, and institutionalized influences. My memory is an individual mental act, but it is also socially organized and mediated.

From the beginning, humans have found themselves in storytelling societies. We tell our stories; we listen to others' stories; we story our lives. We are the only creatures to have this capability: to tell and record stories and then pass them on from one generation to another, from one culture to another. And our stories have consequences. They work their way into all aspects of how we live together with other people. Storytelling is a meaning-making activity. It is important in our search to make sense of our lives. Our stories tell of happenings and experiences. They also tell of visions and of dreams. They speak of reality and of imagination, of politics, and of religion. Our stories and our ability to verbalize our lifeworld already at an early stage of our development opened the door to imaginary worlds and to the realms of the spiritual. And, gradually, our ability to make intellectual and emotional connections started to infuse our lives beyond the basic instinct to survive. From images drawn by early humans on the walls of caves it is clear that these were people who could think symbolically, and who could make visual representations of things they remembered and imagined. Not only is ancient art a marker of these shifts in cognitive activity, it also reminds us that the sophisticated ability to think abstractly has not been restricted to one part of the world as we know it today. Whether on the walls of caves in Europe or in artifacts found across Africa, the Americas, and Asia, examples of our unique capacity for imaginative expression and for symbolism are found all over our world.

One can even argue that stories are of such importance that had nobody ever spoken to us from the outside, we might only have had silence within ourselves. It is only by listening to others' stories that we start to develop the capacity to

tell our own stories. By internalizing others' voices, we come to discover who we are and to discover our fellow humans. We are shaped by the stories preserved in our society. We are molded in such a way by our shared stories that we appear similar to others around us, and for this reason, we can be recognized by people from "inside" and from "outside" as members who belong together in a unique collective: a society. But, no child is merely accepting society's stories. We have the ability to resist the stories, we can participate in them, and we can collaborate in the stories. Quite literally, even as a young child we can start to talk back.

Writing Stories

The use of systems of symbols to capture and to convey meaning is very old. Long before writing as we know it was developed, several traces can be found of encoded utterances that made it possible for others to accurately reconstruct a written message. Although obviously connected, the development of writing and the development of well thought out, coherent texts are not the same. Early on in humankind's history we started to experiment with recording our stories. The moment when the first people started to think and plan for the future, and to remember and learn from the past, they displayed a higher order consciousness. This higher order consciousness gave humans a huge advantage and it helped us to cooperate, to survive in harsh environments, and even to conquer and to colonize. And all along, we have been using our ability for storytelling to record, to pass on, and to add to the narrative. Although the first traces of writing go back to Egypt more than 3,000 years BCE (The British Museum 2017), and many forms of proto-writing can be found on surfaces such as stones, tablets, tortoise shells, scrolls of leather, papyrus, clay vessels, and parchments, it was only by 1450 that the printing press and moveable type were invented (Childress 2008:42). Various political, industrial, and cultural revolutions ignited enlightenment and lead to a slow replacement of ignorance by the light of knowledge.

The predecessors of what we call "books" were cumbersome, expensive, hugely exclusive volumes or codices, handwritten and illustrated—the reserve of the rich and the powerful. And even after the introduction of the printing press in Western and Eastern Europe noticeable changes towards rational and democratic knowledge were slow. Books remained the exclusive property of the powerful for centuries—a scarce item in many homes well into the 20th

century. But, although books were scarce in most ordinary homes of workers and other less literate groups, the gradual increase of literacy brought about by the Reformation, and later the political and industrial revolutions in Europe, slowly led to changes in every aspect of the daily life of Europeans. And as a descendant from Europe, the roots of my life—from my distant past to my not-so-distant everyday reality—were also touched. Telling stories increasingly moved to writing stories, and as an adult in the 21st century my life is mainly influenced by *documents of life*. I use the concept *documents of life* as a collective noun for materials that have been written or printed or reproduced in any way— materials that have an objective and independent existence. In this chapter, the term *documents of life* refers to books that were printed or a manuscript that represents a book meant to be printed. I exclude verbally conveyed biographies, narratives, oral histories, subjectively constructed summaries/testimonies, accounts or tales from this use of the concept *documents of life*.

This project of analyzing a serendipitously selected collection of *documents of life*—printed and published books—constitutes a way of making my own life, as well as life in general, intelligible to myself and to others. I want to understand my own life and the society in which I live by focusing on a selection of printed documents that I have come across over almost 3 decades. These documents— all of them books—deal with many issues. Some deal with the abstract and imaginary world of the spiritual and/or religious, whereas others deal with concrete issues related to the experience of everyday reality. Given the position of religion and the institutionalized churches in the predominantly Christian part of Europe where my roots lie, it is to be understood that a large percentage of the oldest texts containing a documentation of my roots are related to Christian religion. In addition to religion, other important themes that run through my own life history are the themes of colonialism, imperialism, racism, language, identity, and time.

The Texts on My Shelves

The books in the collection on my shelves—books that I group together and refer to by the collective noun as the *documents of life* that I came across over many years during my travels in Central and Western Europe—have all been added to my collection based on their physical appearance. They are all old texts and

they have considerable aesthetic appeal. Some date from the 16th century; the oldest one is from 1567—printed almost 100 years before the Dutch sent Jan van Riebeeck on the mission to colonize the Cape as a refreshment station for their fleets *en route* to the East. Although these *documents of life* are all old, they were all written, created, and presented in the format that we still associate with a book. At no point do I attempt to deconstruct the material book object. Their deeply instilled customary forms as objects and as vehicles for conveying their messages via text are left unchanged.

The words inside the texts in my collection—as well as the bound pages of these books—originated from and bear witness to the intentions, motivations, hopes, and sometimes even the fears and sufferings of human beings. They tell us something about the everyday lifeworld; they narrate a message or a story. But, in the context of them being a collection of documents, their ability to narrate is undermined: many of the texts in this collection are written in old, inaccessible languages and within opaque narrative structures. So, I cannot merely present these texts; I need to re-narrate, deconstruct, and even subvert narrative conventions. And this happens by presenting the texts in a way that evokes new stories in my mind as "reader" or that prompts my re-membering of old stories in new ways.

Let us for a moment not try to open these texts and not try to translate the languages of these texts—the inaccessible Latin, the High German or Dutch, and the old Czech, Slovak, or Hungarian—or to get a feel for the ancient English of 200-300 years ago. Let us rather accept that these books come from the past and that they contain content that is somewhat closed or obscured to us. These books now require improvization—a new interaction and experience—in order to be "read." Let us critically inquire into the aims, objectives, context, and content of the books in this collection of *documents of life*. We can start this inquiry by systematically reading the title pages of the texts; only the title pages. Without opening the rest of the texts and without converting the original print on the inside pages to meaning and message, let us try to constitute a text for ourselves; re-membering the old stories. In this way, we bring the old texts in this collection of *documents of life* into a dialogue with each other. By gathering them together in one area on the bookshelves the books have already attained a different character and the whole collection starts telling us more than what an individual book can do. The collection of *documents of life* brings us into a

dialogue with the wider context of time and history. If I choose to engage, then I am obliged to reflect—to look back on and weigh up the motivations, intentions, successes, and sufferings implied by the different title pages, and presumably described on the pages of the different texts. I am also obliged to engage with the wider range of historical and philosophical preconditions they offer for understanding our social reality and its making.

The books in this collection on my shelves tell of things real and imagined, factual and fictional. Each book speaks about the doings, the plots, the characters, and story lines of a particular era and sometimes of a particular moment. And as any serendipitous collection will do, the collection constitutes *documents of life* of only some segments of reality. Some of the texts resonate in a way with the personal, subjective, and autobiographical dimensions of my life. Others belong more to group ideas, to the social world, to a collective—in this case, a collective that I can empathize with because it constitutes my own roots. And yet another part of the texts belongs to the story of humankind, of nations and cultures. The narratives contained in this collection of texts bring the themes individual, the group, and the larger social reality together in an intertextual dialogue. The narratives contained in the different texts and the themes raised by them shape and influence each other. In addition, my own biography influences how I "read" each text, as well as how I "read" each text in relation to the others in this collection of *documents of life*. When visiting the Edvard Munch Museum in Oslo in May 2017, I was struck by a quote on the museum wall referring to the work of Munch, Norway's most important visual artist: "Munch was preoccupied with how one picture could alter another picture when placed beside it, how the relationship and context created something greater than the individual works, a resonance, as he called it. And that is how it is with people too. Together we are more than separate individuals…" This notion is also true for books. When bringing a collection of books together in one place, the books start taking on a different character; the collection starts telling us more than what the individual books can do. In the same way as a small private library in an ordinary present-day family home can reflect something about the family, the collection of texts in this project on *documents of life* reflects something of my lifeworld as it resonates with wider social, cultural, and historical refrains.

The *documents of life* in my collection contain many topics—ambitious and wide-ranging moralistic guidelines, histories, rules and regulations, sermons

and speeches, diaries and journals, textbooks, dictionaries and encyclopedias, Holy Scriptures, philosophical utterances, commentaries and exegeses, novels, and volumes of poetry. The books range widely in their physical size and shape, and, as I mentioned before, the oldest texts predate the first settlement of Europeans on southern African soil. All these *documents of life* have something in common with me and my journeys, and—I believe—with the construction and re-construction of my life and its roots, but not one of the texts is South African. The closest to a South African text is the translation into the Afrikaans language of two Bibles containing the Reformed Calvinist Christian canonical books of the original Hebrew Old Testament and the original Greek New Testament.

Although they seem to be unconnected, the set of more than 140 texts in my collection weave and interlink with each other with the result that they create a closely related intertextual panorama. Within this panorama, as author—and as the "reader" of these texts—I am positioned as a White, Afrikaans-speaking, South African male whose secondary schooling, as well as university training took place in Afrikaans-speaking apartheid institutions. My professional career as an academic started at a bilingual university and continued at an Afrikaans higher education institution. I worked at universities situated in the heartland of apartheid South Africa. In the middle of the various states of emergencies proclaimed by the apartheid government during the second half of the 1980s, I was given the opportunity to work for a quarter of a century as a professor and head of department in a cosmopolitan, highly critical, English-speaking segment of the South African academic world. For the first time in my life, I performed my role as academic within the broader parameters of critical rationality and not guided by the many constraints of an ideological political structure. This opportunity opened the door to almost three decades of academic contact with colleagues in, and regular visits to, the Visegrad Group of countries—The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia—and Western Europe. My first prolonged stay in the Visegrad cultural and political alliance took place shortly after this Group was established on February 15, 1991 (Visegrad Group 2017).

At that point—the early 1990s—there were high expectations that the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 could lead to a worldwide broadening of autonomy and liberation from the shackles of oppression. Several historical events took place in quick succession. The rapid disintegration of the Soviet Union coincided with a series of events in Poland that led to that country's

Communist Party losing its grip on power. For the first time in the post-World War II history of Europe, a Communist government—the one in Poland—handed authority to a non-Communist opposition (Wnuk 2000). Shortly after this ruling, the Hungarian Socialist Party decided that it will no longer be officially called "Communist" (Kort 2001:69), and Czechoslovakia had its Velvet Revolution (Kuklík 2015:217). On April 23, 1990 Czechoslovakia changed its name to the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic with Václav Havel, former political prisoner and leader of the Civic Forum, as its first President (Encyclopedia Britannica 2011).

On the other side of the globe, in South Africa, the process towards democratization was also pushed and smoothed by conditions and causes not entirely unrelated to what was happening in Central Europe. The international success of the Anti-Apartheid Struggle against the ruling South African regime contributed to increasing acceptance of the idea that the National Party's racist and restrictive domination must end (South African History Online 2012). Effective disinvestment campaigns, boycotts on cultural, sport, mercantile, and academic levels, and extended lobbying in international council chambers forced the minority government to negotiate on the political future of all South Africans (South African History Online 2012).

When the Cold War drew to a close in the early 1990s, many people experienced a feeling that the world was naturally moving towards democratization and to an opening up of previously closed political structures. Democracy seemed to champion a system of basic values built on the foundation of respect for human life and dignity. South Africa's democratization process contained these sentiments. Reflecting a similar shift in public views as the one when Václav Havel became president of the Czech and Slovak Republic in 1990, many saw South Africa as a world leader in the establishment of justice, reconciliation, equality, and peace when Nelson Mandela—like Havel, also a political prisoner—was inaugurated as its first democratically elected president in 1994.

Now, a quarter of a century later, there are worldwide signs of growing disillusionment and pessimism. The move towards democracy and greater well-being for all is not as smooth or inevitable as previously thought. The world is not moving spontaneously towards democracy. Rather, many signs of democratic decay or anti-democratic reversal are visible. Some argue that in South Africa

democracy has become a shell of itself, associated less with aspirational humanistic ideals than with its mundane manifestations in free, fair, and regular elections. Once again the stories are about our world changing, fragmenting, and dispersing. The stories change because the forms and structures of the living together of people change. On the other hand: sometimes the stories change, but the underlying forms and structures remain defiantly unchanged.

Sociologists widely agree that the concept *social structure* refers to the way in which society is organized to meet the basic needs of its members. The social structure entails all the ways of doing things that have developed over time; it implies a widely accepted way of life, a broadly agreed definition of reality, and a shared view of the overall reality within which we live. Social structure is shaped by dominant norms, but also by their contestation. Layer upon layer of the social structure becomes set and sedimented over years, but also gets eroded. Our stories—contained in *documents of life* such as the collection on my shelves—help us to understand how we construct and reconstruct our lifeworld. Our stories contain and harbor our memories; they reflect the themes of our lives and of our social structure.

The Themes from the Texts in My Collection

Reflecting on the memories and stories in my small library of *documents of life*, four groupings of themes stand out—Religion; Colonialism, imperialism, and racism; Language and identity; and Time. These themes are not separate from each other or loose-standing. Political decision-making is often related to religious beliefs and motivations. A well-developed language often facilitates political sophistication and religious acumen. All the themes above combine to illustrate the underlying principles of social change and of Western modernization—a process deeply ingrained in the notion of progress and one that is dominating my own Western mind (Nisbet 1980). The texts in my collection confirm a widely held assumption (Van Nieuwenhuijze 1982), namely, that the characteristics of modern people have always been related to their abilities to attain sustenance, comfort, peace of mind, material benefits, the optimization of progress, ascendancy, and maximum control. The collection of texts on my shelves—some old and others not so old—tells this well-known story of Western progress, prosperity, control, and wealth. One of the aims of this chapter is to

search for deeply rooted principles of my own development history, as well as of the development history of the broader cultural tradition of Western Europe—from where I originate. Some of these deeply rooted principles might be:

- The acceptance of a single, linear time frame, within which it is possible to improve the quality of life.

- The possibility of social reform that is based on a historical foundation that can impact the present.

- The inevitability of the future, combined with hope and expectations of prosperity.

- The controllability of welfare, stability, equality, freedom, peace, and justice.

- A reciprocal relationship between rationalism and idealism.

- Confidence in the autonomous contribution of future generations.

Most of the *documents of life* on my shelves echo in one way or another the idea that the individual should constantly strive towards cultivation and learning; they praise rationality and a scientific approach. In contrast to the traditional society's restricted capacity to solve problems and to control the physical environment, the books in this collection proclaim that a modern society must strive to control not only the present but also anticipate and eliminate future pressures. These general threads running through the texts on my shelves lead us to focus more specifically on four broad themes.

Religion

Most of the oldest texts in my collection of *documents of life* are religious books, written mainly by members of religious orders. They deal with all kinds of sacred issues, morality, directives for everyday practices, as well as with guidelines for specific religious festivities. These old religious texts narrate in no uncertain terms how influential and powerful religion and the religious elite were: the texts even tell the religious believers how they should meditate and what the content of their prayers should be.

The religious texts in my collection of *documents of life* contain ideas, on the one hand, on beliefs—the coherent whole of convictions or opinions regarding the transcendent or supernatural—and, on the other hand, on specific practices or actions. These religious texts point out that people who shared convictions,

particular forms of faith, and a specific kind of religious awareness organized themselves together and willfully attempted to experience their everyday lives in terms of their faiths and convictions. This grouping together lead to the establishment of structures, prescriptions for behavior, and a spectrum of practices. These structures—often in the form of Christian churches—had an effect on the broader reality of society and had a specific impact on the political, the economic, the educational, and the social levels of societies in the past. And these religious organizations had a strong effect on my own society.

The relationship between religion and society is clear in the collection of texts on my shelves. This relationship is also clear in the history of my country, South Africa. The majority of South Africans describe their religious affiliation as "Christian." Within this general grouping of Christians, a range of opinions and positions exists regarding the role of religion in society. For many years, the Dutch Reformed Church tradition has been the most influential conventional Western church grouping in this country. Within the broader Christian tradition in pre-democratic South Africa, there was little consensus about the roles and responsibilities of the church and of religion to eliminate discrimination and inequality in society, to care for the suppressed in all population groups, and to take a stand against the violation of all people's rights and human dignity.

From early on in the history of South Africa, up until democratization in 1994, White South Africans determined the content of human rights and the distribution of wealth in the country. During this entire period religion was connected to particular group interests. Since its formal institution, the Dutch Reformed Church supported apartheid. This church was even expelled from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 1982 because of its role as church of the state. Its congregations were racially segregated and the White segment of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa—the mother church—was constantly in conflict with the members of the daughter churches—the sections for Colored (the Dutch Reformed Mission Church), Black African (the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa), and Indian (the Reformed Church in Africa) members— who all endorsed the World Alliance of Reformed Churches' exclusion of their mother church.

The role of the Dutch Reformed mother church in setting up, sanctioning, and practicing racial segregation—apartheid—is clear for all to see. Even before the

National Party came into power in 1948, the church proclaimed and mixed into her teachings ideas on racial purity and White superiority. And as the policy of apartheid gradually became more and more institutionalized with the proclamation of the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act in 1950, the Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and its amended version the Immorality Amendment Act of 1950, the separate Amenities Act of 1953 and various other discriminatory laws, the Dutch Reformed Church often provided biblical support for the government in order to carry out its policy of "separate development."

Many of the books in the collection on my shelves have to do with the importance of religion. Religion and church constitute an institutional structure that will guide church members' actions and practices. And these manifestations of religion ultimately have an effect on the political, the economic, and the broader cultural spheres of society. The collection of texts on my shelves tells me that, although religion is about the supernatural, about righteousness, and about striving for a better world, religion all over the world—and also in my country—often contributed to hatred, injustice, domination, and exploitation. Many of the evils of this world were conducted in the name of a god and of religion. When looking at these old religious texts, I can only wonder about their role in establishing my society—a deeply divided society.

Colonialism, Imperialism, and Racism

My collection of *documents of life* contains several books on history, geography, and civil rights from the period referred to by Harry Magdoff (1982) as "old imperialism." This period started in the 15th century with European mercantilism in terms of which countries such as Spain and Portugal spearheaded the entry of European commerce onto the world stage—a stage that included the previously unknown continents of the Americas and Africa. One of the texts in my collection, Johannes Mariana's *Historiae de Rebus Hispaniae* of 1605, reflects on *The History of Spain* and on the discovery of new continents. With the blessing of the Catholic Church, the armadas set out to satisfy and expand the early appetite for industrial capital and for conquering the largest possible economic territory. The mission of priests accompanying the armadas was to expand religious conversion and conquer the territory of the soul. So, material and religious expansion went hand in hand.

Other texts in my collection of *documents of life* summarize wide-ranging ordonnances, resolutions, orders, and proclamations. They signify the—then new—order of European imperialism and of organized domination and control, of appropriation, and exploitation (Cohen 1973). And if you are a world player in the field of expansionism, accumulation—and almost inevitably—dispossession, you need a well-organized judicial system, reflecting the rational philosophy of age-old Roman-Dutch concepts of justice. In this way, the desire for political and economic dominance can be packaged as a "civilizing mission" and as part of the development of a rational economy. The texts from this genre in my collection of *documents of life* remind me that the beginning of the South African nation was closely connected to international quests for markets and the desire for growing profits of those times. And underlying this was a disregard for the rights of indigenous peoples, their values, traditional laws, and cosmologies. History is written by the victor, and in many cases, by the oppressor. The collection of books in this project are all from Europe—the oral histories of South Africa's colonized peoples are silent.

Closely related to colonialism and exploitation are the slave trade and forced labor. Trading in African slaves began with Portuguese—and some Spanish—traders taking African slaves to their new-found American colonies. British pirates joined in and the British were later given the right to sell slaves in the Spanish Empire after the Treaty of Utrecht (BBC. KS3 Bitesize History 2007) in 1714. By that time this roaring and pernicious trade was well underway.

The Dutch also participated in the slave trade. In Indonesia, the Dutch enslaved entire populations and it was therefore not difficult to extend slavery to the Cape Colony, a process that began soon after the 1652 arrival of Jan van Riebeeck, the founder of the Dutch East India Company's refreshment station. Van Riebeeck's efforts (South African History Online 2016) to get labor from the indigenous population through negotiation broke down. In 1658, the first slaves were imported—captured from a Portuguese slave trader. This group of slaves came mainly from Angola. Later that same year a group from Ghana arrived. A constant supply of slaves appeared to flow from the Dutch East India Company's returning fleets from Batavia. The slaves were not allowed entry to Holland—ironically, slavery in the motherland was illegal—so many officials sold their slaves at the Cape before returning to Holland. Throughout the Dutch control over the Cape—until 1795 when the Cape Colony became

British property—slavery was well-integrated into the everyday lifeworld (South African History Online 2011). This situation continued under the British rule of the Cape Colony and until the abolition of slavery in 1834.

At the basis of slavery is racism. Slaves are defined as property; one human being is the legal belonging of another human. They could be sold, bequeathed, or used as security for loans. Laws governed the rights of owners and secured the subordinate position of slaves. The owners were allowed to dish out harsh punishment, to withhold food, to chain, and even to kill a slave—in case of a slave allegedly threatening the owner's safety. All of these were institutionalized in the social structure of the time. Out of slavery grows a culture of domination, control, and subordination. No doubt the early history of master and slave, of Christian believer and infidel, of rich and poor, of White and Black played an important part in setting up the intergroup relations of our present-day world, including South Africa. The *documents of life* on my shelves remind us that we live in a world that throughout history clearly had the potential to be a better place, but societies did not create conditions for the actualization of each individual's full potential or personhood. Rather, the books remind us of the pro-active role religion and social practices played in the creation and maintenance of institutionalized and unequal lifeworlds. They remind us that the capacity to live a good life goes hand in hand with access to the most basic needs of social justice, humanity, and respect (Coetzee and Rau 2017).

Language and Identity

The *documents of life* on my shelves tell a further story, of the hegemonic power of language. From the early history of the printed book as we know it, Latin played a major role in providing a linguistic framework for and basis of control in as far as the exercise of power was concerned. A significant number of the printed manuscripts of the 17th and 18th centuries are in Latin—and a large proportion of these were written by members of religious orders such as the Society of Jesus, whose members are known as Jesuits and who carried large influence in the areas from where the texts in my collection originate.

History has taught us that the ruling class often uses language to manipulate the values and norms of society. Imperial dominance goes hand in hand with language: the stronger state dictates the way in which the internal politics and the societal character of the subordinate state play out. Antonio Gramsci (1994;

2011), the Italian social theorist, sociologist, and linguist, is best known for the theory of cultural hegemony. This theory describes how the state, the ruling class, and elite members of society use cultural institutions to maintain power. Through a hegemonic culture they use ideology rather than violence, economic force, or coercion. The hegemonic culture propagates and reinforces its own values and norms, which then become entrenched as the common sense values of everyday life. In this way, the generally accepted conceptions of what is desirable coincide with the maintenance of the ideas as expressed by those holding power. And the fact that the vast majority of people living during the times the old texts were written could not read and could not understand a language such as Latin made it easier for the dominant classes to read their own meanings into the texts and then translate their interpretations into directives for living the everyday life. Thus, language was the vehicle to spread ideology and to maintain cultural dominance.

In order to consolidate dominant ideas and spread them into and across different languages, the compilation of dictionaries played an important role. The practice of compiling bilingual wordlists began as far back as the production of the first manuscripts containing text. The development of printing made it possible and practical to compile glossaries with equivalents for Latin words in some of the major medieval European languages. The dictionaries in the collection on my shelves signify the evolution of language processing: the ability to use language in order to determine meaning, to control culture, and to preserve identity.

Most of the texts in this collection of texts on my shelves are old. The books are visibly old, and the languages in which they were composed are much older. The texts not only reflect the exhaustion that accompanies time, the engagement with ancient languages brings its own exhaustion. My personal biography led me to engage with the classics—with Latin, Greek, and Hebrew—and I experienced this exhaustion first-hand. Very little of my proficiency in these languages survived my resolution to move to a career in sociology, instead of the church. What does endure is an almost intuitive interest in how the underlying rationalities and ideologies embedded in classic Western languages endure and continue to shape current realities. All the "book works" in my project *Books & Bones & Other Things* (Coetzee 2018) reflect aspects of aging, of endurance and exhaustion, resolution and dissolution.

Time

In Western thinking, time is mostly seen as linear: a succession of existences or events from the past, through the present, and into the future. The idea of change occupies a prominent position in the way most people interpret their world (Nisbet 1980). Change and the modernist focus on the possibility— indeed desirability—of progress are closely interwoven with a number of other concepts: liberation, peace, justice, equality, and communality. These concepts resound with the ambition to move away from a primitive state towards one of wisdom. And so, the future becomes synonymous with our desire to eliminate or to reduce problems and shortcomings related to our physical, social, personal, and emotional environment. This thread runs through most of the texts in this collection on my shelves—a thread that runs deep in the psyche of modern Westerners.

The less benevolent underbelly of this idea of progress and its altruistic aims is the ambition towards greater control. Our perception of change is founded in our view of the past and of the past's contribution to the present. But, it is the idea of the future—and the hopes and expectations regarding the future—that drives us to control our welfare, our stability, our freedom, and our peace of mind. But, as history shows, greater control often heralded much darker versions of the future than envisaged or desired.

In Conclusion

My deconstructing of the collection of old texts on the shelves of my library represents a qualitative attempt to explore and to understand the meanings embedded in the historical development of my social life, our present-day lifeworld, and the objects around us. We constantly participate in establishing our ever-changing social reality and part of this process should involve reflecting on what brought us to where we are. To reconstruct everyday reality and to reflect on how it has come about can never be an objective or value-free exercise. That is why I emphasized at the outset that my interpretations, understandings, and depictions of aspects of social reality—contained in the texts on my shelves—are largely autobiographical. As indicated in the section *Colonialism, Imperialism, and Racism*, the texts in this collection are all from Europe. The voices of indigenous peoples are silent and their values, laws, and cosmologies

largely disregarded. This silence and disregard are not deliberate: it is entirely to be ascribed to the nature of this project. My deconstructing of the texts in my library is an autobiographical encounter with texts that I came across during decades of engagement with Western and Central Europe. These texts were all authored and printed in Western and Central Europe. The unwrapping of these *documents of life* coincides with how my personal life trajectory led me to the texts in this collection—texts that contain elements of the broad historical context of my own lifeworld and that thus reflect and shape the way I make sense of them. The texts on my shelves become, to a large extent, installations that are my creations—in the same way as the books in these installations are the creations of the respective authors or scriptors who originally put pen to paper. I do not engage with the actual content of these books. I simply aim to take note of my collection's content and to situate this content within the context of my knowledge of my social reality and its historical roots. This exercise reveals how deeply my social reality at the southern point of Africa is embedded in religious beliefs and practices, imperialist and colonialist policies, racist perceptions, cultures of domination and control, and values and norms that were incubated and nurtured in Europe centuries ago.

Living as a sociologist in a highly segmented South Africa sensitizes me to the ever-present danger of ethnocentrism—a major reason why people are divided and polarized. In a deeply divided society, conceptions of superiority and inferiority are based on and shaped by race, social status, religion, and language. I was born a member of a specific race that regarded itself as more powerful than any other and that, for a large part of my life, exercised domination and control over other races. I was born into a mother tongue whose speakers wielded political power in an unequal social system where full participation was bestowed only on members of the White race. The church I was brought up and confirmed in is a church that openly declared its support for the unjust political domination by the racial and cultural minority into which I was born. Race, language, and religion clearly determined large parts of my life.

An autobiographical attempt to reconstruct some of the main parameters for understanding who I am and where I came from carries an important proviso—it is an intrinsically subjective exercise. Nonetheless, the books in my collection do not reflect only the roots of deeply personal experiences. They are artifacts of a shared history, a shared society. They are also testimony to

our common humanity: the fear and fallibility that walks hand in hand with our remarkable ability to construct and to unwrap. Although the world in which we live continues to divide us in terms of different racial classifications, we are intrinsically the same—we are all of the human race. There is also no intrinsic difference between the speakers of different languages. Just as there is no intrinsic difference between and within the many different religions and other cosmologies. We are all human. And as a human being I am endowed with the abilities to reflect critically, to encounter dialectically, and to strive towards understanding through inquisitive praxis. These all guide my epistemological journey towards unwrapping and breaking open the often neglected, subliminal meaning of my everyday lifeworld.

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Emotions and Belonging[1]

Constructing Individual Experience and Organizational Functioning in the Context of an Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Program

ABSTRACT | *The analytical approach of this chapter is inspired by C. Wright Mills's (1959) notion of 'the sociological imagination'. Individual experience is viewed through the lens of the wider social context, particularly that of the organization. The socio-organizational context is then viewed through the lens of individual experience. The aim of this bi-directional gaze is to explore the relationship between individual experience and wider society. And in doing so, to identify and reveal the shared motifs—the significant, recurrent themes and patterns—that link and construct personal experience and social world.*

The aims, findings, and research processes of the original study are rooted in the instrumental epistemology of program evaluation. Specifically, a mixed-method implementation-evaluation of a local non-governmental organization's Orphans and Vulnerable Children program. The aim of this chapter is to take the analyses and findings of that evaluation beyond its epistemic roots. Qualitative data were disentangled from the confines of thematic analysis and freed into their original narrative form. This allowed for a deeply reflexive 'second reading', which brings whole narratives into a dialogue with original findings, contextual factors, and sociological discourse.

Key conceptual anchors are located in Vanessa May's ideas on the self and belonging, and in Margaret Wetherell's writings on affect and emotion. These are important aspects of working with children, particularly orphans and vulnerable children in South Africa, where many fall through the cracks of government's social services. A second, deeper, qualitative reading of the narratives of children, their parents/caregivers, and the organization's staff, explores three key pathways of individual and group experience that are inextricably linked to emotions and belonging, and which co-construct the social functioning of the organization itself.

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1   This chapter was originally published in *Qualitative Sociology Review* XIV (4), 2018.

South African Children and Their Familial Caregivers

South Africa is unique in the regional and global contexts regarding the extent to which biological parents are absent from children's daily lives (Jamieson, Berry, and Lake 2017:101). As is the case with most social inequalities in the country, this circumstance is highly racialized (Stats SA 2017). Of the estimated 18.6 million children[2] in the country, Black-African children are by far in the majority,[3] and less than one quarter of them live with a biological parent (Wilcox and DeRose 2017:26). Instead, most stay with family, friends, and even neighbors—a way of life that is largely accepted and which originates in factors such as labor migration, poverty, the (un)availability of housing, and educational opportunities. "Many children experience a sequence of different caregivers, are raised without fathers, or live in different households from their biological siblings. Parental absence does not necessarily mean parental abandonment. Many parents continue to support and see their children regularly even if they have to live elsewhere" (Jamieson et al. 2017:101). For some children there is no prospect of being reunited with their parents: 17% of South Africa's children are orphaned (Stats SA 2017), most often due to HIV/AIDS.

Orphanhood, or living in a household without at least one biological parent, are conditions that *may*, but do not *necessarily* lead to child vulnerability—which is a much more complex, intersectional issue. Poverty and unemployment are key contributors to vulnerability. Locally, in the Free State, approximately one third of all children live in households without an employed adult (Jamieson et al. 2017:107). And 14.5% live in households where there is reported child hunger (Stats SA 2017). Income poverty constrains children's access to basic human rights such as healthcare and education; it also compels children and their caregivers to live in physical environments that are unsafe (Jamieson et al. 2017:105). On the issue of personal safety, South Africa has alarming levels of violence against children, including sexual abuse (Burton et al. 2016). These are some of the main factors implied in the definition of a vulnerable child as, "a child whose survival, care, protection, or development may be compromised due to a particular condition, situation, or circumstance that prevents fulfillment of his or her rights" (DSD 2005:5).

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2   Children are defined as those under the age of 18.

3   Approx. 75% of all children in South Africa are non-White (Stats SA 2017).

The Organization as Caregiver

Many vulnerable children fall through the cracks of government-based programming, social services, and social welfare. As in other areas of South African life, civil society—particularly in the form of non-profit, non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—steps in to bridge the gaps. A longitudinal evaluation of South African community-based organizational support found that community-based NGOs have a positive effect on vulnerable children, particularly HIV-affected children, by improving their behaviors, their mental health, and reducing their exposure to violence and abuse (Sherr et al. 2016).

One such community-based organization is the local Free State Province NGO featured in this paper. It reaches approximately 650 orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) via a program with four main components: OVC support groups; home visits; child rights and protection interventions; and household economic strengthening activities.

The organization has nine childcare workers operating at ground level. Each childcare worker is assigned to one of nine geographical clusters/areas, usually the cluster closest to her home. I use "her" deliberately: the childcare workers are women.[4] Top and middle managers are also all women.

Theoretical Lenses

Ontologically this "second reading" of data and initial findings is rooted in phenomenology. Participants' direct experiences of the world—of phenomena and events, even those in the less concrete realm of perceptions and emotions—are taken as "real" and are understood as having real consequences for participants in relation to self, other, and lifeworld. Importantly, perhaps unusually, my second reading regards "the organization" as a *living entity* made by people, for people, with an identity, and *capable of experiencing*, as well as interpreting and adapting via interactions with people and the wider social domain (Senge et al. 1994; Wheatley 1999). Regarding epistemology, phenomenology focuses on the relevance of understanding and interpretation in everyday life (Phillips 1990).

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4   At the time of the research the OVC program had only one man at ground level; he was not available for data collection and left the organization soon after.

This second reading also draws on critical-constructivist ontology: on the view that (social) reality is constructed via language, and manifested in rules and norms. Epistemologically the focus is on understanding how the social construction of society links to the construction of the self (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Rau, Elliker, and Coetzee 2018). This involves excavating and exposing commonly held assumptions concealing the dynamics and structures of power in written, spoken, and visual texts (Foucault 1988). Researchers' reflexion is key to this process, not only because we wield a lot of power over our research and must be mindful of the assumptions we bring to it, but less obviously, because the thinking processes and pathways of reflexion *itself* are socially constructed and therefore not value free. As Foucault (1988:38) asks: "How is the reflexivity of the subject and the discourse of truth linked?"

Belonging and emotion were submerged in the original evaluation in as far as their influence on program implementation and the organization itself was not measured, nor closely scrutinized. At the level of substantive theory, insights on belonging and emotion from the work of two academics help to shape my second reading.

Briefly, this chapter draws on Vanessa May's (2011) notion of belonging as related to identity and reflected in the sociology of the everyday. Everyday life is characterized by intersubjectivity and involves, for instance, roles, status, and attachments to institutions, groups, cultures.

Margaret Wetherell's (2012) writings provide conceptual anchors for analyzing affect and emotion. Schools of thought in the sociology of emotion include evolutionary, symbolic interactionist, psychoanalytic, psychobiological, interaction ritual, stratification, and exchange theories (Turner 2009). Wetherell deftly sidesteps their many jostling, and often rigid, classifications to offer a pragmatic, holistic "way in" to studying emotion. She starts by defining it as a "relational pattern involving interaction, intersubjectivity, and 'ongoingness' which are embedded in *situated practice*" (Wetherell 2012:3). She elaborates:

> Practice draws attention to both a transpersonal "ready-made" we confront and slip into, as well as to active and creative figuring. Routines do in some sense "land on" people and "subject" them. And "forms of encounter" or social relationships arrive with the affective slots for actors already sketched…It is an organic complex in which all the parts relationally constitute each other. [Wetherell 2012:125]

Wetherell's (2012:4) formulation encompasses pattern and order, form and function, process and consequence. It posits that affect and emotion can be understood as *embodied meaning-making*. It is hospitable to complexities and allows for analyses that are not "boxed in" by rigid theoretical borders but open to the exercise of sociological imagination.

Analytical Processes

The analytical approach of this chapter derives from C. Wright Mills's (1959) injunction to exercise "sociological imagination." Analyses seek out significant motifs—shared recurrent themes and patterns—that link individual experience to the wider social context, particularly the organization as social context. The aim is to reveal how the individual and the social context interact, and to explore if and how they co-construct one another.

Importantly, the analyses in this chapter go beyond those of the original research project, which generated the primary data and initial findings. The aim of the original research, its analyses, and findings served a very pragmatic goal—to evaluate the implementation of an OVC program and to generate recommendations for improving it. The aim of *this* chapter is distinctly different: to extend and deepen the original analyses by bringing them into a dialogue with sociology as discipline and discourse. As such, the insights presented here percolated slowly through layers of critical reflexion on the research as a whole—on its primary data, on findings, and field notes, on clues in the data and signals in the context. The second reading also derives from my personal experience and professional re-appraisal of the entire project and its processes. New interpretations emerge from my shift in gaze from pragmatic evaluator to reflexive sociologist. And this calls attention to the mutually transformative relationship between researchers, their subject matter, and their participants (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Of note for a book featuring narrative methodology: qualitative data were originally analyzed thematically. I reversed this approach in the analyses for this chapter, returning to the whole narratives, to the full stories as participants told them. Thematic analysis can have the effect of dislocating data from their immediate textual context, from their position in the natural flow from one statement to another, from one paragraph to the next—from the often untidy

sequencing and intrusions of thought and speech to the neat categories of themes. There is a severance of meaning, or at least a disturbance of it, that can happen with thematic analysis. Narrative analysis allowed me to hear the voices again, to pay attention to the cadences, the sequences and timings, the slow hesitations and quick exclamations. Therein lay many clues to help re-member the texts and discover new meanings and connections.

Research Design

Primary data were gathered via a realist, mixed-method, assessment-oriented implementation evaluation (Pawson and Tilley 1997; Chen 2005) of a local OVC program (Rau et al. 2014).

Ethics: Formal ethical clearance was obtained from the ethics committee of the University of the Free State's Faculty of Education (Clearance no.: UFS-EDU-2013-043, dd. July 30, 2013). Researchers were very mindful of the comfort and rights of participants and great care was taken to do no harm. To this end a project psychologist was appointed to facilitate group-work with the children, childcare workers, and the children's parents/caregivers. She also supported the research team members.

Participant sampling/selection and data collection: Data were gathered by teams of two: one researcher and the psychologist. Throughout the process team members recorded their reflections, insights, and questions. These texts were useful in shaping and sharpening our focus during the evaluation; they also contributed to the initial findings, and their secondary analyses for this chapter.

- *Children (OVC)*: Random sampling avoided risk of selection bias. The total population of 608 OVC was stratified by sex, cluster, and age. Random processes identified 32 OVC to approach, and a list of replacements should any decline to participate. Children were reached in contact sessions lasting three hours per day for three consecutive days—so we opted for a more in-depth approach. Sessions were held in a mix of Sesotho-Tswana, the children's home languages. Methods were participatory and used drawings, decoupage, writing, and storytelling.

- *OVC parents/caregivers*: Caregivers of each of the randomly sampled 32 OVC were invited to participate. They were reached in focus group discussions that generally lasted 1 hour, were led by guidelines, audio-recorded, and also conducted in Sesotho-Tswana.

- *NGO staff*: All childcare workers (9) and all program managers/leaders (3) participated in informal talks, meetings, focus groups, and one-on-one audio-recorded interviews held in English.

Data processing: In preparation for analysis, audio-recordings, OVC writings, and field notes were transcribed, translated if necessary, and names were replaced with pseudonyms. The data were then exported to NVivo (qualitative data management software).

Insights and Findings

This second reading traces cycles in the social construction of individual and organizational experience and functioning in the context of serving in, and being served by, a local OVC program. Clues to detecting the cycles lay in the emotive content of participants' narratives. And how *intersubjectively constituted* (Coetzee and Rau 2009) dimensions of emotion interface with belonging—that sense of connectedness between self, other, and society as manifested and experienced in everyday life (May 2011).

Circulating Conflict—Interrupting Fear

Narratives of children indicate that they most often express caring via discourses of "sisterhood" and "brotherhood." One interchange between two boys during a child-contact session illustrates this. Both were pushing boundaries during the session—one through rebellious behavior and the other through non-participatory behavior. Clearly these two were friends, but what characterized their exchanges is that the boy with a "rebellious" attitude was overprotective of his "self-isolating" friend and would come quite fiercely to his aid whenever he felt that his friend was threatened or uncomfortable. It was like a brotherly bond of protecting the weak: he shielded his friend from being laughed at, from being mocked for his inability to express himself, or write, or even draw. But, in a strange turn of loyalty, *he* would then tease his friend—in essence, it was not fine for others to tease his friend, but it is fine for him to do so. Our project psychologist pointed out that the interchange was an interesting representation of the children's home and wider social environments—protecting and needing protection—yet (unconsciously) taking advantage of these roles, and the situation, to re-enact patterns of interaction that maintain a status quo. These patterns, and their well-worn emotional slots, are what Wetherell and Potter

(1988 as cited in Wetherell 2012:12) refer to as "interpretative repertoires… threads of sense-making that work through familiar tropes, metaphors, and formulations." The repertoires of these two boys function to maintain identities that are divergent and contradictory, yet each is indispensable to the existence of the other, like poles of a magnet (strong one-weak one; bully-bullied; feeling brave-feeling fearful). Importantly, these repertoires (Wetherell and Potter 1988 as cited in Wetherell 2012:12) work to maintain configurations of power, and to maintain roles of belonging (May 2011) that both boys tacitly accept and which, therefore, become repeated and reinforced.

What is intriguing in this interchange is the synchronous co-presence of two very different expressions of power: defending and violating. And this is not an isolated occurrence, the interaction pattern circulates more widely amongst children in the program. In a poignant narrative, delivered like a little soldier standing bolt upright, with eyes fixed straight ahead, one girl, aged nine, confessed her perplexity in the face of a significant moral dilemma:

> I don't like it when other people are fighting, I don't like it when people are being laugh at, when we tease one another and make fun of other children. When they laugh and tease me and push me down on the ground, I told the teacher here. Then she told them, "No" and why. But…but…me, I am also teasing. I know it's wrong, but it just comes. I am heartbroken and I…I try to make right. I want stop hurting. I am not a thug.

Her narrative suggests that teasing does not only present as a dilemma, it involves complex and sometimes conflicting emotions, which in turn are situated in conflicting practices (bullying and then trying to "make right" with her victim). It is clear from other children's narratives that these emotions and practices reach well into schools and other wider community-level contexts. The space of the organization's support groups offers some succor, as another child observes:

> I like [this place]. It protects us when it's raining, it makes sure the thugs are not beating us up.

Again, the word *thug*—it comes up repeatedly in the narratives. This is because crime and its perpetrators are part of everyday life in the communities where participants live and work. Crime and violence reach children in schools (Zuze et al. 2016), on the streets, and in their homes. The child support and prevention component of this organization's OVC program is designed to mitigate the

negative effects of different forms of violence on the children. Some advantages of attending the after-school support-group sessions are that children are kept off the streets, occupied, under the eye of childcare workers, and being taught about child rights and life skills such as knowing their own worth, how to say "No!," and how to get help. Two children comment:

> I learned that when you are abused at home, you should write a letter and put it in the box there. If you cannot tell the lady who teaches at the support group, you write a letter and put it in there, but if you can tell her, then you can call her to the side and tell her.

> There are a lot of things I learned from [this organization]—like one has to have a bright future and not be attracted by gangsters. Because once you end up being a gangster, your name will be ruined; then when you're older and want to find work, you'll find difficulty because you have a lot of things that have made you lose sense of yourself, making it hard for you to get a job.

Childcare workers do not only teach children, they actively come to their assistance. One child attests:

> If something has happened to anyone from us on the street, Sister [childcare worker] will say they should tell what has happened so that she can go call the police or go to the social workers.

Sometimes attacks on children on the street result from their belonging to the organization's OVC program. Their parents/caregivers also speak about being stigmatized and discriminated against in their communities because they belong to a program that others associate with being poor and HIV-infected. Program staff do good and sensible work to interrupt this by making children aware that bullying undermines a person's sense of acceptance and belonging in their support groups:

> They have to be taught that bullying is wrong, bullying is the same as discriminating, and they are discriminating one another. The children must be taught right here [in this organization] that they have to learn how to treat one another. Facilitators have to go and see how the children sit in each and every group and ask: "How are they coping towards one another?"

So, childcare workers do well to interrupt aggression among children in support groups. Nonetheless, there is a gap in the organization's understanding: program staff do not connect bullying in the OVC program itself with societal-level

violence. The program's support group meetings are intended as a safe space for the children, physically and emotionally. Bullying violates this. Like a seed of aggression, bullying grows, and it matures into the myriad other forms of fully-fledged violence that have reached alarming levels in South African society (Burton et al. 2016). From the narrow context of the support group, to the wider communities in which the children live and in which the organization operates, this "ongoingness" (Wetherell 2012:3) of violence and aggression propagates emotions of fear and deep anxiety. In turn, these emotions structure patterns of interaction that have negative consequences for children (Carthy et al. 2010) and for the adult societies that they will come to shape.

Circulating Belonging—Interrupting Neglect

Several children's drawings, and the stories they told about their drawings, pointed to crises of belonging, even when they are cared for by family or extended family. Three children have the following to say:

> I am not seen in the house. There are their own children. It hurts one's feelings.
>
> I do not like my family because they treat me like a dog.
>
> It hurts when there is family members who do not like or love you.

There are also differing degrees of personal neglect. The experience of one childcare worker illustrates what she and her co-workers witness on home visits:

> Sometimes you get into the house you will find that there is no table, there is no TV, it's just an open space. Even the blankets are not looking well. Even the child when comes at the support group is wearing clothes that you will feel sad when you look them. Some their shoes don't sole, and the socks as well, and the dress don't have zip. So, you will see by those things. Not to say the parent is careless, but is just that she is getting these things from people who notice that the parent have needs.

The organization receives donations of food, clothing, and blankets and distributes these from time to time. They prioritize those most in need. While understandable, the strategy has a most unfortunate effect: some children and their parents/caregivers feel unnoticed, as if they do not belong. This reinforces and re-circulates feelings of need and neglect. One parent says:

> If people get food parcels from [the organization,] it would be only those who are poor-poor. It can't be like that—other children get hurt.

Emotions tied up with giving and receiving are complex and charity can have unexpected negative outcomes, especially when there is not enough to go round. I recall a refrain repeating itself in my mind whenever I returned from the contact sessions: *Running on empty; Running on empty*. I remember feeling hollow. I understood exactly why childcare workers try to compensate for gaps that simply cannot be filled by available resources. Many overcompensate, for instance, with their energy and time: children and parents' needs or calls for help do not always coincide with working hours. One childcare worker speaks for many when she says:

> You will find that you don't get rest. Even on the weekend you have to work.

The lack of boundaries between work-time and personal-time has serious repercussions for childcare workers; they become physically and emotionally burned out. And they cannot access psychological care. The organization cannot afford to pay for counseling, and the welfare system cannot supply it either because it is already overburdened—the ratio of social workers in direct formal welfare service to the general population in the Free State Province is estimated at 1 to 9,000 (Hall, Meintjes, and Sambu 2015). Two childcare workers have the following to say:

> After some time, you know, maybe if we had two to three cases that are very painful, you will find yourself depressed and then when we come on Monday's meetings, we talk about issues…We comfort each other as staff.

In a statement broadly representative of childcare workers' attitudes and actions, the following shows how socially and emotionally constructed injunctions to duty and compassion override her longer-term mental health needs:

> It makes me sad because you would be so heartbroken and see that you are damaging your mind emotionally and feeling like leaving the job. But, tomorrow, when you get to the support group and see the children, you feel you want to help them.

It is quite common to have a "stampede" on resources in severely under-resourced settings. This is precisely what happens to childcare workers in relation to their

practical and emotional resources. They are not considered to be officially "at work" if they respond to calls for help after hours and on weekends. But, they are emotionally "hooked in" and more often than not, they do respond. In doing so, they find themselves using their own money for transport. Sometimes children simply arrive on their doorstep, and they cannot turn them away. As clearly demonstrated in the narratives of the children and their drawings of hearts containing the name of the organization, childcare workers are exceptionally kind and caring. But, they sometimes feel overwhelmed, and inevitably, cracks appear in their practical and emotional capacity to "contain"[5] themselves and the people they serve. This can lead to resentment and frustration, as a statement from one childcare worker suggests:

> There are those that are lazy; the ones who like to fight—they want everything while just sitting and doing nothing.

In the face of so much need, the organization itself also struggles to set appropriate boundaries. Instead of limiting its focus to a few specific areas of response, the organization develops "bleeding mandates" and tries to service too many children and too many varying needs. So, cracks begin to appear at the organizational level too. The OVC program was initiated specifically to address issues of inequity in relation to the children and their households, but what a second reading reveals is how these very same inequities manifest and operate within the organization itself. In an ominous cycle, crises in belonging and neglect experienced by the program's children also circulate amongst OVC program staff. Their stories point to experiences of "organizational neglect," particularly when they compare their conditions to staff who work in the organization's other programs. Uniforms are very important in the psyche of South African community-level workers: uniforms mark them out as important, as gainfully employed, and worthy of recognition and respect. Staff in the OVC program do not have a uniform and they feel this lack deeply; they interpret it as not being valued by the organization. One notes:

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5   "Containment" is a psychological concept. It refers to one person (usually a therapist, social worker, or "helper" of some kind) being able to receive, understand, and appropriately process the emotional communication of another without being overwhelmed.

> It's ten years that [this program] has been working, but we don't have
> uniform—other sections inside here, and other NGOs, when you look at them,
> you can see from where are they coming. People respect them.

They also have inferior working conditions compared to their counterparts in the organization's HIV testing program and HIV treatment literacy program. Because their work is concentrated on the poorest of the poor, and those hit hardest by the HIV epidemic, OVC staff also experience stigma-by-association, which manifests as being regarded with suspicion by some community members.

What becomes uncovered in the second reading, and its application of sociological theory and sociological imagination, are "affective-discursive loops" between the experiences and responses of the childcare workers and those of the children and their parents/caregivers. Significantly, their shared "rhetoric and narratives of unfairness, loss and infringement create and intensify the emotion[s]. Bile rises and this then reinforces the rhetorical and narrative trajectory. It goes round and round" (Wetherell 2012:7).

Circulating Power—Interrupting Dependency

Power operates via norms, values, and social rules, all of which are underpinned by assumptions. Sometimes we are aware of the assumptions that underlie how we see our world and shape how we live in it. Sometimes our assumptions are like shadows, indistinct and dimly understood. This section explores some of the assumptions underlying how the organization views itself and the children it serves. The emphasis is on how assumptions work to shape relations of power and to position the organization and its beneficiaries in relation to themselves, to one another, and to the wider socio-economic world. The exploration begins with parents/caregivers at the household level, then moves to the children, the childcare workers, and finally to relations of power between the organization and key factors in the funding environment. In keeping with C. Wright Mills's (1959) "sociological imagination," the analysis tracks links in the social construction of reality from the level of the individuals, through the level of the organization, and into the wider societal level.

At the household level the program delivers training and support to OVC parents/caregivers to establish and run voluntary savings groups, and household economic strengthening activities such as home gardens and bread making

businesses. During 2012, 59 voluntary savings groups with over 550 members had been established, and between them they amassed R1,146,974 in that year, which is a significant sum by South African standards, especially in poor communities. Householders are supported with very practical skills-training in establishing governance structures to manage members and their contributions, in banking know-how, and keeping good records. So exceptional work is done by the organization to extend the self-sufficiency of OVC households and caregivers, and this is achieved in ways that foster interdependency rather than dependency; this balances relations of power between the householders and the organization. Ultimately, this benefits the organization, which has good hard evidence showing the success of its efforts. And without a doubt the householders are empowered. One speaks for many when she attests:

> VSL [Voluntary Savings Groups]—they work very well. We share in December, everybody save what they afford, we do it for ourselves and we were trained before we start our society…Whenever we have a problem, we call one of them [OVC program staff] to please come and then they explain to us…We are satisfied about it.

Regarding the children themselves, as the previous section clearly shows, some are seriously disempowered by their life circumstances. In a touching testimony to his sense of agency and self-in-the-world, one boy concludes:

> I don't know how to talk.

An effect of daily conditioning—of witnessing children, households, and communities locked into hardship—is that childcare workers in the OVC program develop a prevalent view of the orphans and vulnerable children as being needy, passive, and lacking real power. As discussed earlier, childcare workers get so *emotionally* hooked into this view that they help to the extent of overtaxing their own physical and emotional capacities. It is not only childcare workers in constant contact with the children who develop a predominant view of them as being needy and powerless. This view of orphans and vulnerable children circulates so widely throughout the world that it has become a stereotype—a taken-for-granted construct that is so entrenched in collective understanding that we rarely question the assumptions on which it is based. An effect of this for the organization and its OVC program is that childcare workers and managers can

miss (at worst) or underestimate (at best) the very real strengths and capabilities of the children.

When asked about what they liked and disliked about support group meetings, some of the older children in the program mentioned being bored with repetitive activities and topics. Some alternatives they suggested are quite creative and could be viable for the children, as well as the organization. For instance, they felt that they could be more involved in fundraising activities and that some support group meetings could be used to brainstorm ideas, learn how to select the best ideas based on their viability, and then learn how to plan and implement them. Even small and simple ideas could provide a platform for the children to improve their self-efficacy and resilience, both of which are key to surviving and thriving in the context of their difficult life circumstances. From the narratives of a group of older children it is clear that they already mobilize group participation to find solutions to problems. One older child states:

> A thing I love is that when we are here, we can all sit down and share ideas with each other, and even if the idea you present is not so satisfactory, it can be discussed in the group. And you can be free to express your feelings—it's not where you keep your feelings bottled up. When it's time to go home, you feel that you are satisfied. Even if you have a problem and you feel you can't tell your parents, it's possible to sit down and find a solution in the group.

The organization delivers a range of interventions to children, including psycho-social interventions that teach them about self-worth, assertiveness, and the importance of giving and deserving respect. But, how they apply their learning is not easy to monitor. The organization could take one small leap to incorporate activities that allow self-sufficiency to be *practically* experimented with. Engaging children in designing and running their own programs transfers power into their hands and opens the door to them becoming more pro-active in solving everyday problems and dilemmas (Feinstein and O'Kane 2005; Save The Children 2005). As Wetherell (2012:125) points out: "Practice draws attention to both a transpersonal 'ready-made' we confront and slip into, as well as to active and creative figuring." A greater sense of personal power is a hospitable space for "active and creative figuring" (Wetherell 2012:125) to occur. It opens up new positions to adopt, new energies to try out, and new feelings to emerge. From the local level to wider communal and societal contexts, shifts such as these

can interrupt dominant discourses and stereotypes of orphans and vulnerable children as being passive, helpless, and sad.

At another level of experience, and power, the narratives of some of the organization's childcare workers point to a demoralizing instrumentality in the workplace, and emotions that arise out of this. Rather than feeling like creative human resources, they feel undervalued and resentful because within the OVC program they are implementers only. They have little say in mid- and higher-level planning such as target-setting, in practical aspects of organizational functioning, or in OVC program design. Their practical and emotive "felt" reality arises out of cycles of cause and effect. As discussed earlier, childcare workers do not set appropriate boundaries between their personal-private lives and their communal-work lives. This repeats at the next level: the organization also cannot seem to say no to any call for help. Instead of focusing steadfastly on demarcated areas and quotients of response, the organization develops "bleeding mandates" and tries to service too many of the various needs of the community it *belongs to and feels for*. In doing so, physical and human resources are spread ever more thinly. Three childcare workers explain:

> We started with orphans and HIV-positive children. So, we started with small groups. But, children are children, they tell each other—so we found ourselves going from 30 children [each childcare worker] up and up to 60. And now, even more. But, not all came because of needs: some children are just coming because other children are coming though they don't have major needs in their households. So, we must look more at children's needs.

> If we add more children, then we should know that we are not going to do the best job, there will be children that I'm going to visit only once in a year and maybe some not even once in a year because I'm not working with children only, I work on gardens, groups of society, people of IGA [Income Generating Activities], chickens, gardens, bread ovens.

> It is difficult because the time that we get it's not enough that is needed for all the jobs and the monthly targets. Sometimes it feels impossible…Our work is too much—we must work during weekends if we want our report to be good. We have to push and pressurize ourselves.

As a result of mounting pressure, and in a troubling mirror image of conditions in the communities it serves, the organization finds itself in a constant state of crisis management. Meetings are not regularly attended by top-level managers,

who are hard pressed to meet donor demands, report writing, and relentless rounds of fundraising. Childcare workers also have very heavy workloads. In all this rush, little space is left for real engagement with challenges, for important strategic work, or for formulating new approaches to programing—in effect, the inputs, and the very voices of program staff are silenced.

Open communication between people *at all levels* within an organization facilitates feedback and the exchange of ideas. This allows for new voices to be heard and for leaders and managers to take up ideas that have their genesis in the needs and experiences of co-workers as they engage on a daily basis with the realities of the workplace. This empowers all concerned to create their organizational realities (Wheatley 1999:37). It challenges outmoded structures and stimulates the innovation so vital to survive and to thrive. As Wheatley (1999:67) comments: "an organization rich with many interpretations develops a wiser sense of what is going on and what needs to be done. Such organizations become more intelligent." They also become much more resilient in the face of wider social pressures such as donor funding.

No analysis of NGOs serving vulnerable children, and households made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS, can ignore the influence of funding on organizational survival and success. Accordingly, in this final segment of my second reading, I view organizational belonging and identity through a much wider socio-economic lens: its funding environment.

In the first large scale inflows of international HIV/AIDS funding, beginning around 2000, it was a fairly straightforward business for civil society organizations to access donor and bilateral funding directly (Kelly and Birdsall 2010). Then, in 2005, "The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness…called for greater national ownership and control over development assistance and better harmonization of donor activity at country level" (Birdsall and Kelly 2007:1). This meant that the bulk of HIV funding would be channeled to recipients via large scale international and national NGOs and national government sub-granting mechanisms. In the process, funding flows became less easy to navigate and did not reach many small local organizations trying to serve their communities (Birdsall and Kelly 2007:2). Birdsall and Kelly's fascinating research on the dynamics of civil society and AIDS funding in Southern Africa showed how these changes in funding flows altered the face and functioning of civil society

organizations over time. Their research traced three phases of change: from Pioneers to Partners to Providers. Small local organizations developed organic, often innovative, responses to on-the-ground needs (they were Pioneers). Following the Paris Declaration, they partnered with national level NGOs and government departments to harmonize responses and access funding (they became Partners). In time, their independence and their responses, which were deeply rooted in local needs, gave way to a commercial model wherein they were contracted to roll out standardized programs which they did not devise (they became Providers).

On reflection, I came to realize that this is exactly what happened to the organization and its OVC program. What resulted is an organization that moulds its agenda to fit the priorities of funders. The organization staff told of many instances where interventions based in on-the-ground needs had to give way to interventions that better suited national and global agendas. Local funding via corporate responsibility programs were also not sustainable in the longer term. Of note is that not one of the organization's funders support the costs of key managerial and planning processes such as formal evaluation, and key personnel needs such as counseling for childcare workers. Ultimately, this small organization has little room to move and little space to formulate a unique, solid, and enduring sense of organizational identity. As Wheatley (1999:39) observes:

> There is an essential role for organizational intent and identity. Without a clear sense of who they are, and what they are trying to accomplish, organizations [and people] get tossed and turned by shifts in the environment. No person or organization can be an effective co-creator with [this] environment without clarity about who [they] are intending to become.

An effect reaching from the individual through to the organizational level pivots on intersubjectively constituted understandings of the self as "subject," not agent. The narratives of organizational managers and coordinators speak of their sense of powerlessness in the face of systems that they cannot change. This plays out at all levels in emotions of panic, anger, and frustration. Wetherell (2012:12) observes:

> The interrelated patterning of affective practice can be held inter-subjectively across a few or many participants. It can thread across a scene, a site or an institution and is spatialized, too, in complex ways. Intriguingly, an affective practice can be "held" in a particular place. Further solidification comes into

view when we consider the affective practices of entire social categories and historical periods.

The experience of belonging (or not-belonging) arises out of dominant discourses with their underlying assumptions, their overt and covert rules and norms, and attendant affective practices. Individuals have power and can exercise it in many ways. By "individuals" I also mean "the organization"—which in this second reading is regarded as a living entity made by people, for people, with an identity, and capable of experiencing, as well as interpreting and adapting via interactions with people and the wider social domain (Senge et al. 1994; Wheatley 1999). But, as the data and my second reading show, individuals and the small non-governmental organization that they constitute are more often the recipients or "subjects" of power than "vehicles of power" (Foucault 1988:98) in so far as they are contained in, and constrained by, the whole and intricate architecture of our global-local, or, as it is called nowadays, our *glocal* world.

In Conclusion

Social cycles are complex and spherical. They also intersect. I started by "pulling on threads" (Wetherell 2012:12) in a second reading of individual and organizational narratives. The aim was to see how experiences of belonging, and their accompanying emotions, influence and perhaps even co-construct individual and organizational realities. I found structural knots of top-down and bottom-up power, and looser, more circular relational strings of power, all working together in the construction of individual and organizational identity and functioning.

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Between Enslavement and Liberation[1]

Narratives of Belonging from Two Farm Workers

ABSTRACT | *More than two decades after the genesis of South Africa's aspirational democracy in 1994, deep-seated forms of inequality still exist. These are explored in the narratives of two farm workers who tell of events and experiences in their everyday lives. In probing the everyday, we turn the spotlight on phenomena, events, and experiences that are simultaneously familiar yet perplexing, taken-for-granted yet questionable, tangible yet elusive. As a backdrop to the sociology of the everyday, key ideas from three social theorists—Randall Collins, Jeffrey Alexander, and Vanessa May— guide our interpretation of excerpts from the farm workers' narratives. We distilled a few dimensions related to belonging—identity, place and space, religion, experience of suppression, and existential suffering—and present the narratives of the two participants. These two farm workers' stories are also juxtaposed with reflections on the socio-political, economic, and emotional contexts of slavery and serfdom.*

The Everyday as a Window on Social Reality

In the surge of transformation following the iconic leadership of Nelson Mandela, South Africans reached eagerly for the freedoms of a long-awaited democracy. But, many were left behind, trapped in old, solidified structures of inequality. This phenomenon is uncovered in the narratives of two farm workers who have never moved from the farms where they were born and where they spent their lives in one rural district in the Eastern Cape Province. We turn our gaze towards the small-scale issues of the everyday and use as a point of departure: "the level of the everyday life of people amongst other people, together with them, side by side with them, in cooperation, competition, conflict, or struggle with them, in love or hatred, but never alone, in isolation" (Sztompka 2008:24).

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The everyday is a sphere of natural, spontaneous experience. It is best interpreted in terms of continual creations where reality is constituted by individuals who actively contribute to the establishment of their social structures. We propose that the everyday is one of the best starting points for understanding the relationship between self and society—between individual experience and broader social reality. By focusing on the close, personal, familiar of the everyday, we aim to unwrap the structure and effect of society in its larger formations.

We also aim to access deeper nuances of the experience of *belonging* by focusing on personal reflections of individuals on their everyday experience. Following Yuval-Davis (2006), we draw a distinction between belonging as a discursive resource that is, on the one hand, closely related to identity, claims of social inclusion, and a political experience—and on the other hand, place-belongingness.

Three Theories for Engaging with the Everyday

Key ideas of three social theorists—Randall Collins, Jeffrey Alexander, and Vanessa May—guide our interpretive sociology of the everyday. Each of them offers distinct ways of thinking about and analyzing the everyday experience of ordinary people living ordinary lives.

Randall Collins and Microsociology

Randall Collins (2004) refers to his work as radical microsociology. A prominent aspect of radical microsociology is that it takes cognizance of and departs from the only directly observable reality in the constitution of social reality, namely, the individual. For Collins, any macro-phenomenon such as society only exists in as far as it emerges from a composite series of micro-experiences. The basic micro-unit of analysis is the encounter, which is a shared conversational reality revolving around negotiation and exchange of resources. Collins proposes the concept of *ritual interaction chains* to capture how empirical reality is shaped through and embodies an endless chain of personal experiences, forms of interaction, bargaining, agreement, or/and resistance. From this standpoint the individual experience of reality is a pivotal point for analyzing the social.

Jeffrey Alexander and the Construction of Cultural Trauma

In his book, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (2012), Jeffrey Alexander investigates social suffering by addressing exploitation, violence, war, massacres, and ethnic and racial strife. What makes his approach different is that, whilst remaining sensitive to the materiality and pragmatics of social suffering, he rejects materialist and pragmatic approaches for one that is situated in a cultural sociology. He connects personal-symbolic-emotional representations—such as belonging—to collective processes that center on meaning-making. Alexander acknowledges that individual suffering, rejection, othering, and marginalization are of great human, moral, and intellectual importance and that the cultural construction of a collective trauma, such as the experience of apartheid, is fuelled by individual experiences. His focus is, however, on the threat of suffering on the collective identity rather than on the individual identity. Traumas become collective if and when they are conceived as wounds to the social identity. The important question is not *Who did this to me?*, but *What group did this to us?* The construction of shared cultural trauma does not happen automatically, it depends on collective processes of cultural interpretation. One of these processes (apart from rituals, commemorations, and meetings) is storytelling.

Vanessa May and the Sociology of Personal Life

Vanessa May, in her edited volume *Sociology of Personal Life* (2011a), emphasizes the relationship between the self (the fluid personal sphere of the present, including factors such as family life and home, going to work, taking part in financial transactions, engaging in friendships, and experiencing power) and society (the more fixed social structures of the past). Our sense of self is relational because we construct it in relationship with others and in relation to others. Thus, the self and society are mutually constitutive. May (2011b:368) sees belonging as crucial aspect of being a person and defines it as "a sense of ease with oneself and one's surroundings." Belonging implies that one has created a sense of identification with one's social, relational, and material surroundings (Miller 2003).

On the epistemological level these three ways of looking at the everyday contribute three discernible elements to our analysis. Randall Collins contributes the notion of ritual interaction chains, which are formed through personal experience and embedded in negotiation, exchange of resources, and shared conversational

reality. Jeffrey Alexander links personal-symbolic-emotional representations, such as belonging, to collective processes of meaning-making. He focuses on how suffering and trauma impact on collective identity rather than individual identity. Like Collins and Alexander, Vanessa May also recognizes the mutually constitutive relationship between self and society. May's particular focus is on the fluid personal sphere of the present in relationship to the more fixed social structures of the past. She sees belonging as a sense of ease between a person and his or her world.

The South African Social Structure: The Context for the Two Lifestories

Our proposal that the meaning, nature, and impact of the everyday are revealed through individual experience of and reflection on belonging leads us to participants—Abraham Wessels and Henry Jooste.[2] To interpret their narratives, we need to contextualize them in a brief overview of South African social structure.

The two research participants come from the complex reality of post-democratic South Africa. It is two decades since South Africa transformed itself from an internationally labeled arch-pariah to a political "miracle" (Waldmeir 1997) of the late 20th century. This was, of course, the transformation from the universally condemned apartheid state to the triumphant victory of democracy; from brutal oppression and grave injustices to worldwide optimism about the prospect of a "new humanity" (see: Cornell and Panfilio 2010).

But, the euphoria surrounding the transformative revolution and the elimination of inequality gradually gave way to the realization that the gap between rich and poor in South Africa is widening. A report published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs (Leibbrandt et al. 2010) says that income inequality in South Africa gradually increased between 1993 (the year before the country's widely acclaimed dawn of democracy) and 2008.[3] Nowadays the income inequality

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2   Pseudonyms.

3   The report uses national survey data from 1993, 2000, and 2008.

levels in the country are among the highest in the world.[4] The correlation between race and poverty remains strong and wealth remains distributed along racial lines: Africans are poorer than Coloreds, who are poorer than Indians, who are poorer than Whites (Leibbrandt et al. 2010).

The ANC came to power with a radical agenda and an overwhelming mandate to redress historical inequities. But, shortly after coming into power, the new ANC government was accused of opting for policy of little initial change with the promise of cautious acceleration at some time in the future. This was partly due to a cautious, lawyerly belief in reconciliation and partly due to a significant chorus from an influential White press propagating the need to retain business confidence. When workers claimed higher wages and threatened with strike action, the fear was expressed—even by the then newly elected President Nelson Mandela—that investors' confidence would be damaged. Due to this caution the pressing land issue was dealt with by a cumbersome system of tribunals. And the budget failed to allocate enough to do justice to the ANC's ambitious Reconstruction and Development Program.

Following shortly after the brave, successful resistance to apartheid, there appeared to be a fear that any error could lead to a path of collapse so often found in the rest of Africa. Already in the first year of democracy this attitude towards governance and restitution, action and caution, revolution and order led to the use of the phrase "slave mentality" among critics of the ANC. In an article in *The Guardian*, Jonathan Steele (1994:18) calls this "an inordinate desire to be accepted and legitimized by showing the movement can conform to the old establishment's rules." In essence, this view concurs with Frantz Fanon's argument in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1968) that White racism damaged the Black person's pride to such an extent that the victim's only unquantifiable aspiration was to be accepted by the White society. The phrase "slave mentality" provides an important connection to the broad context within which the narratives of belonging of Abraham Wessels and Henry Jooste are situated.

Many analysts agree that in contemporary South Africa the political victory of the ending of apartheid corresponds to Black political empowerment. The reality is, however, that although at the ballot box an African nationalist organization (the ANC) was elected, the mass of Black South Africans remain

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4   The RSA is regarded as currently having the highest pre-tax Gini coefficient in the world.

disenfranchised in the broader sense of the word. Nigel Gibson (2011:114) calls it "the inadequacies of political emancipation." He connects this situation with a quotation from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963):

> Now it must be said that the masses show themselves totally incapable of appreciating the long way they have come. The peasant who goes on scratching out a living from the soil, and the unemployed man who never finds employment do not manage, in spite of public holidays and flags, new and brightly-coloured though they may be, to convince themselves that anything has really changed in their lives. [p. 136]

Not only did Black political empowerment not spread to the masses in the sense of an all-encompassing emancipation, it is also true that post-apartheid South Africa failed to address economic inequality. Much of the talk about structural change in the economy has been limited to espousing the merits of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). This was subsequently changed to Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) (Andreasson 2010:219) when government recognized that only a small Black capitalist class benefitted from BEE. Sadly this is also true for the newer BBBEE. The new economic trend among many leaders of the erstwhile liberation movement was to buy into national and multinational corporate capitalism. Because "the quality of life of the poorer 50 percent deteriorated considerably in the post-apartheid period" (Terreblanche 2003:28) this "co-option" led to them being seen as working hand-in-glove with an exploitative capitalist force of domination.

Decades ago Frantz Fanon (1968:165) criticizes the nationalist project and national liberation when he proclaims that "the single party is the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie." Although he said this a quarter of a century before the ANC came into power, it is remarkably applicable to the ANC. The dominance of a neoliberal paradigm shortly before the ANC came into power and a gradual move away from the Freedom Charter were "ethical shift[s] away from ideas of the social and public good" (Gibson 2011:77).

Forms of Enslavement and Institutionalized Oppression

Slavery is the most explicit form of unfreedom: a slave is the property of another. In the 21st century, there is general condemnation of slavery and the

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has, since its inception in 1956, been fighting to uphold and maintain the universal abolition of slavery, the prevention of any new slave trade, as well as the recurrence of any practices or embedded institutions that smack of or seem similar to slavery (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights n.d.). Though it is widely assumed that in most Western countries there is very little left of the dark past of institutionalized slave trade and labor, the modern world gets occasionally reminded of its existence and practice.

Forced labor can also be regarded as enslavement. On December 16, 2013 the United Kingdom Home Secretary, Theresa May, promised to get tougher on the slave drivers responsible for forcing thousands into servitude in the UK. She estimated the number of slaves to be more than 10,000 and proclaimed: "most people think slavery finished years and years ago, but sadly so many people in our country are slaves" (May 2013). The African continent, next to Asia and the Pacific, is particularly tarnished by large numbers of slaves and forced laborers. The organization Anti-Slavery (n.d.) defines forced labor as "any work or services which people are forced to do against their will under the threat of some form of punishment" and estimates that 3.7 million people in Africa are subjected to slavery, forced labor, or debt bondage. The presence of forced labor in the global economy implicates a huge proportion of the world's population by their purchases or consumption.

Another widely occurring practice, bordering on slavery, is *debt bondage*. Debt bondage occurs when someone works for a lender to pay off a debt. The person pledges his/her personal services (or those of someone under his/her control, such as a child) as security for a debt, but these services are often not well-defined or delineated. Debt bondage is similar to slavery because the debt is often indefinite and permanent and sometimes even handed down as debt slavery to following generations (cf. *bonded labor* [Anti-Slavery n.d.]).

The line becomes finer in those cases where *individuals are given to others*, without the right to refuse. Where a woman is given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or livestock or in kind to her parents (or other guardians), similar dimensions of exchange are found to cases of debt bondage. The effects of the indebtedness result sometimes even in the right to transfer a

wife to another person or to exploit a child or a youth in as far as using this child or youth as a source of labor (Woolman and Bishop 2007:596-597).

One of the commonly occurring forms of bondage in existence at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries is the condition of *serfdom*. This specific (and often subtle) form of unfreedom is tightly woven into the lifestories of Abraham Wessels and Henry Jooste and into their experience of belonging. Serfdom refers back to feudal times when agricultural workers were tied to working on a particular estate. Serfdom comes into being and becomes institutionalized over an extended period of time. The resultant condition, custom, or agreement emerges from processes of "intersubjective sedimentation" (Berger and Luckmann 1967:85-86), a concept that captures the gradual geographical processes of the layering of the earth's crust. These gradual processes occur via normative systems that are built up through communal experiences and consciousness around work, life, dependency, responsibility, and freedom. Through observations, words, and deeds—in other words, through routine and repetitive everyday processes—serfdom takes on an objective reality. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1967:85-86) phrase "objectivated and objectified sedimentations" are applicable to the process and to the embodiment of serfdom.

An elementary definition of a slave reads: "a person who is the legal property of another and is forced to obey them" (OUP 2002). Although a serf is not the legal property of another, he/she finds him/herself bound by law, custom, agreement, or lack of viable alternatives to live and labor on land belonging to the other person. In the erstwhile apartheid dispensation, another factor contributed to this immobility: apartheid legislation (particularly the Group Areas Act) allocated the right to live in a particular geographical area to members of a particular racial group and designed measures to control influx and arrest the free movement of people. Even before this, in the early days of colonization, the situation of living and laboring on someone else's land has become a part of the lifeworld of large numbers of South Africans—both master and servant. The extended period during which social position, bargaining power, privileges, and duties were objectified and sedimented lead to clearly crystallized social patterns and sanctioned behaviors. The result is that both master and servant became structurally bound by the practices associated with serfdom. The serf may appear to be free to change her/his status, thus her/his labor seems to be

performed voluntarily: it may even appear as if an acceptable exchange for the labor was negotiated. But, the structural reality of serfs renders them powerless because they occupy a social position that does not allow them to change their conditions. The serf's lived experiences are often severely constrained by the social conventions that result from deeply ingrained social patterns, practices, and accepted behaviors. But, the possibilities to break out of the bondage and often abject conditions are limited by social structures in South Africa, particularly those formed in the period after World War II.

Almost 60 years ago, in 1956, The United Nations Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and the Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery proclaimed in Article 1: "The parties commit to abolish and abandon debt bondage, serfdom, servile marriage and child servitude" (see: http://treaties.un.org). South Africa has not formally ratified this convention, but in Articles 232 and 233 of this country's constitution it is stated that South Africa's process of constitutional interpretation will be informed by the international community's accepted guidelines:

> Art. 232. Customary international law is law in the Republic unless it is inconsistent with the Constitution or an act of Parliament.

> Art. 233. When interpreting any legislation, every court must prefer any reasonable interpretation of the legislation that is consistent with international law over any alternative interpretation that is inconsistent with international law. [Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 2009:139-140]

So emphatic is *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* about the principle of freedom, integrity, and security of the individual that no sooner than setting out the Founding Provisions of the state, its constitution, citizenship, relational symbols, and languages it moves to the *Bill of Rights*. This section spells out the equality of everyone before the law, human dignity, and that everyone has the right to live. Article 13 clearly and unequivocally reads:

> No one may be subjected to slavery, servitude or forced labour. [Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 2009:8].

By allocating this issue such a prominent position high up on the list of a total of 243 Articles (some with multiple sub-sections) that make up *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, the legislators clearly expressed their intention

to consolidate and affirm the democratic values of human freedom, equality, and dignity. There is no doubt about the condemnation of practices of slavery, servitude, or forced labor, but there is less clarity on what the law can do to root them out.

The Narrators

In a similar fashion as Charles van Onselen (1996) reflects on the apartheid era in South Africa by looking at the lifestory of a single Black patriarch in his book *The Seed is Mine*, this chapter aims to illustrate the experiences of two individuals and show how they look back on a life of inclusion and exclusion, freedom and oppression, exploitation and equality, power and powerlessness. The spotlight is on Abraham Wessels and Henry Jooste, two participants who have much in common. They are formally classified as "Colored"[5] and their home language is Afrikaans. Both had very little formal schooling yet are well-respected in their community. Both are very active members of their church; Abraham often participates in sermons. Both men lost their wives a number of years prior to our conversations. Significantly, from their childhood both men are still living on the same farms where they grew up and gradually became drawn into the world of work as farm laborers. At the time of the interviews Abraham Wessels was 68 years old, and Henry Jooste was 70. Compared to many other South Africans, Abraham is not very poor. With the assistance of his employer—whose father employed Abraham initially—he obtained a *Reconstruction and Development Program* (RDP) house in the nearby town. These houses are given to historically disadvantaged South Africans who qualify for them through a means-based test. Abraham rents the house out and earns an additional income from that. He also owns a small truck (in South Africa referred to as a *bakkie*). Henry, on the other hand, does not own any fixed property and appears to be less financially secure. Abraham and Henry live on neighboring farms in the Graaff Reinet district, a rural area in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.

Our lengthy discussions with Abraham and Henry were conducted respectively during 2004/2005 (ten years after South Africa's democracy) and 2014 (twenty years thereafter). They were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Key issues of interest for the researchers are: What light does Abraham and Henry's

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5   An official category for people of mixed race.

stories shed on participation within their social lifeworld, on their perceptions regarding their right to live in a world that is meaningful to them as individuals? What do their narratives tell us about their aspirations, visions of transformation, and their capacity to move in a direction that they define as desirable? What do their stories tell us about belonging? Belonging is multidimensional (Antonsich 2010:664-669). Accordingly, the discussions with Abraham and Henry touched on many elements associated with belonging. By telling us about their *everyday* experiences, they revealed perceptions on and experiences of their status in their community, their emotional attachments, and their affiliation with place, groups, and culture.

Dimensions of Belonging

Several themes or dimensions of belonging were distilled from the series of conversations with the two farm workers. To illustrate these, we selected and present quotes that emerge repeatedly in the narratives and are thus representative of—rather than an exception to—the lives that Abraham and Henry live and narrate.

Identity

During our interview sessions we asked Abraham and Henry to tell us what they would say if somebody asked them: *Who is Abraham Wessels?* or *Who is Henry Jooste?* We expected that they would quite easily elaborate on themselves as individuals—on their expectations, their existential positions, their personal trajectories, and on what they regard as their personal qualities. But, neither of them reveals much in terms of a personal, intimate assessment of themselves. They also do not express sentiments or views on their personalities, nor any deeply individual preferences and convictions. Although both are members of South African society, they reveal very little that indicates a deep-seated sense of belonging or identity at this wider relational level. In both cases, their responses reveal a strong correlation between their views of themselves and their ability to live in peace with other people.

Abraham Wessels

It is essential, in Abraham's worldview, to be closely connected to others:

> I am…and my attitude towards every other human, Colored, and also Bantu, and also White man…is to live in peace. One cannot live on one's own, you have to have a family.

For Abraham, intersubjective emotional bonds are formed through talking, and this shared conversational reality (Collins 2004) builds and shapes the central values of his world—loving relationships and an embodiment of peace:

> Because I'll…even if we can't, we have to make a family. When you talk, you'll be building yourself a family. Even if somebody comes here and I don't know him, we have to talk to each other to make a family. When you talk, you are building for yourself a family. When you talk, there is life and there is love.

> As I say to you, Mister, I feel like living in peace with everyone. It is all that I feel to do. To remain like this. And there is no other way.

For Abraham, essentially a serf, his whole working life has been spent as a farm worker on one farm; there has clearly not been room for much choice in the more mundane sense of the word. Choices that are within his power have to do with his attitude and the choices he makes in this regard create a space for the peace he so desires:

> It depends on how you organize your life. It is just, I always say so, you need to let your love shine. Your humility must shine. Your patience must shine like a light.

Love, humility, and patience—all injunctions of Christianity—are engaged by Abraham to situate himself in relationship to his world. His belief that these qualities will attract others to him and form a community around him illustrates what May (2011a) means when she says that a sense of self is relational—it is constructed in relationship with others and in relation to others. The bonds so formed create community and thus also shape social structures in Abraham's everyday life:

> I will tell you, Mister, it is just as I said: only humility and patience, and also love. Because if I am like this, I draw others to me. And they will create a community with me. Yes, I will draw him closer.

Abraham's narrative points to a complex and intricate interweaving of his choice of love, humility, and patience as right ways to be in the world—and his

understanding that these qualities will guarantee almost endless reciprocity of goodwill from his employer, to the extent that it will be extended to Abraham's children even after his death. His very assumption that his children will *need* such reciprocity points to the repetitive, intergenerational aspects of serfdom. Or, to follow Berger and Luckmann (1967:85-86), to the "intersubjective sedimentation" of a social condition via normative systems built up over long periods of time through shared experiences and consciousness around work, life, dependency, responsibility, and freedom:

> Now, when I'm no longer there, and my children would come [to his current employer] to, say, ask for a piece of bread, then the master will say: "Yes, your dad was patient, he was humble and he was somebody who always continued. Come, let me give you a piece of bread."

Many aspects of Abraham's sense of belonging have to do with conforming and the resultant "sense of ease with oneself and one's surroundings" (May 2011b:368). His experience also reflects something of Alexander's (2012) idea that personal-symbolic-emotional representations, such as belonging, shape relationships at the collective level. We argue that fitting in is key to survival in communities of serfdom:

> I mean, you don't know where you fit and where you will be happy. Because each group has its own politics. Now you need to try to fit in, in order to be a happy man.

Particularly for Abraham, who wants to live in peace and be happy, interrupting the *status quo* is not an option. The act of fitting in appears to be even more important to him, perhaps, than the actualities of what he has to fit into. This resonates with the idea of being enslaved, of having no real choice but to accept, so that the greatest merit is to be had in accepting graciously. And the next link in this ritual interaction chain (Collins 1981:985; Coetzee 2001:129) is to be accepted in turn:

> At each end, when I arrive, then I will feel completely happy. There's nothing wrong. Then it feels as if…shall I say to remain in the stream. I need to stay close to the stream. Now, to neglect or to turn off, will be to no avail. I need to stay inside.

In Henry's narratives, one can also see the workings of ritual interaction chains (Collins 2004), formed through personal experience and embedded in negotiation, exchange of resources, and a shared conversational reality. Like Abraham, Henry also speaks of the importance of extending love to others, but this love is more focused on, and manifests in, material help. His good reputation and position in his community pivots on helping as a material manifestation of love:

> Yes, you have to love the other person, Mister.
>
> My character, yes, Mister. I have to love them and they have to talk well about me because I have to help them and they have to help me also. Yes, you need to help the other one. Yes, and one day when I'm no longer there, they must say: "The uncle who helped us so much is now gone."
>
> That is how I want to be remembered: that I helped others.

There is much in Henry's narratives to suggest that poverty overshadows his self-image. His identity is grounded, literally, in a consciousness and experience of immobility—the plight of the serf. He communicates a very poignant passivity, almost helplessness, in the face of poverty:

> Suffer, Mister, suffer… Pure suffering… That is how my life is.
>
> Yes, Mister, because I have nothing. Even now, I am only here, where I had always been.

Place and Space

A significant focus of our series of interviews was to establish Abraham and Henry's views on the respective places where they live. Do they experience a sense of belonging to the space where they have lived their whole life? Do these experiences play a role in how they define their identities?

Yuval-Davis (2006) draws a distinction between belonging as a discursive resource that is, on the one hand, closely related to identity, claims of social inclusion, and a political experience, and on the other hand—place-belongingness. In the previous section, we explored the more discursive aspects of Abraham and Henry's identity formation and showed how they regard their personal

qualities and ways of being in the world as leading to their social inclusion—their belonging. The latter concept—place-belongingness—refers to a sentiment of attachment to a particular physical place and of feeling at home there. In a phenomenological sense, "home" is a symbolic space of familiarity, emotional attachment, and security (hooks 2009:213). Abraham and Henry live in farm cottages which are small yet decent and functional. They seem to have little attachment to these places. And significantly, neither of them refers to the farm where he has spent a lifetime—where he grew up and labored his entire working life—as a place where he feels at home. If anything, both participants experience and portray feelings of strangeness, of not really being part of the place and space that they have occupied for so many years (Rumford 2013).

Abraham Wessels

A constant influence of Calvinistic dogma runs through Abraham's narratives, which is understandable given that he is very involved in his church. In the series of interviews, he emphasizes *earth* as being his temporary home. In effect, by assiduously deflecting any probes on his thoughts and feelings of being at home in his cottage and on the farm, he creates an eloquent silence around place-connectedness:

> Mister, I will say just as the Word says: you don't have a place on earth. Your place is in heaven or it is under the earth. That is how they've always made the saying. Your place is not on earth. Your place is under the earth or it is in heaven. Now, as long as we are still here, it is our place. On earth. But still, we need to be discharged from the earth. We need to depart. Yes, Mister, we will not stay here forever. Then I have to go to the last little house [the grave]. The last place where I have to go.

There is a sense of rootedness in Abraham's narratives, but it remains in the realm of relationships. People are his places and his sense of belonging resides in them:

> Now, as long as I can continue, Mister, I will continue. I feel now that I can continue. Yes, I also feel happy. Still happy with myself and with the master, and with the people around me. I simply continue.

Abraham has already spoken of the grave as a last home-on-earth. Even in this regard his connection to the land has to do with people. His forbearers are buried on the farm so his link to the land is ancestral:

> Mister, I always feel still happy. Where I am now, I still feel happy, otherwise I will not be able to. Because as the life is, we need to be happy where we are. And have to go with the flow. Here we grew up. Here they also died. My father and mother. And buried. Now I simply stay here.

Even though Abraham owns an RDP house in the township, he never speaks of it as a home: it is merely a resource for extra income. The idea of place-connectedness being related to ownership of land or property does not arise in his narratives: it is as if a lifetime of serfdom precludes this.

Henry Jooste

A means-test would no doubt qualify Henry for an RDP house, but he has never acquired one. As discussed in the earlier section on *The South African Social Structure*, the government's provision of housing for previously disadvantaged population groups has failed to reach a substantial proportion of the people who need homes. Unlike Abraham, Henry's words suggest that if he did have an RDP house, he would think of it as his home; as we interpret it, lack of ownership is clearly an issue that shapes Henry's perceptions and experience of place-connectedness:

> No, this is not my permanent home. See, your permanent home is in town. Then you have a claim to a house, your own house. But, this house I can't give to my children. Because that is how I meant it: I want to work for my children. If I pass on, I want my children to be under a roof. You do the same, don't you, Mister? You won't leave your child just like that, without anything. Your child needs a house—in town. Of this house I was merely told: "This is your place." But, it is not my place. It doesn't belong to me. My child can't stay here.

The fact that Henry's child cannot stay (meaning, live permanently) on the farm echoes old restrictions during apartheid when the movement and residence of people of color were restricted by law and enforced by policing. Ironically, such restrictions find renewal because of the land restitution policies of post-apartheid transformation—which has seen many farm workers claim rights to land because of living and laboring on it for decades. Nowadays some farmers move laborers off their farms rather than risk any claims being leveraged by farm workers because they are born on the farm or resided there for an extended period of time. The power still lies in the hands of those who own the land,

which are predominantly the Whites. In this regard, Henry is as powerless and dependent as any serf:

> Sometimes it works like that [living in the new South Africa], sometimes it doesn't. I'm still under the White man. If he says that I must go, then I must go. When he comes in here and says: "You need to pack up!," then I have to, I have no choice. I have to leave and go and board in Graaff-Reinet. Knock together a *blikhokkie* [literally: a small cage of corrugated iron in someone's backyard or in an informal settlement], and move in there.

Jeffrey Alexander (2012) reminds us that events in the history of South Africa, particularly the experience of apartheid, constitute an example of a collective trauma that supersedes individual experiences. It can be argued that the trauma of disenfranchisement and of second-class citizenship is reproduced and reinforced for a whole segment of South Africans who failed to share in the benefits that accompanied democracy, and following every election thereafter. Collective processes of cultural interpretation (Alexander 2012) among poor South Africans have resulted in a critical mass of people who doubt the point of voting and who are angry at being powerless to bring about positive change. Henry's narratives reflect these collective traumas. He remains sunk in poverty, perennially a serf without a place to call his own; worse, he anticipates that these conditions will continue relentlessly down through successive generations:

> I cannot leave my child just like that, empty. Now he has to struggle and he will ask: "Gee, old man! Check out how my dad worked with me." I don't have a house, I don't have a roof over my head. That isn't fair. I want my own house. Look how we voted here. For what are we voting? For nothing.

The meetings with both research participants took place on the farms where they grew up and lived their entire lives. They pointed out to us where they were from, where they moved to when the occasional relocation had to take place, and where important events took place. In all their narratives, the socio-spatial traits of exclusion are clearly described. It is also written in the landscape where the big homestead of the farmer owner contrasts clearly with the small cottages of the workers. One cannot but to realize that belonging is a phenomenological experience of attachment and rootedness. On the other hand, aspects of belonging can also be conferred. Belonging is established through processes of negotiation and can be rejected, even violated, in ongoing struggles between rival cultures, between "us" and "them."

Religion

Coinciding with his view that a person's true and ultimate place is not on earth, Abraham is of the opinion that religion constitutes a way in which the individual negotiates everyday reality and ameliorates suffering.

Abraham Wessels

With all respect to Abraham's dedication to Christian teachings, and the spiritual enlightenment shining in his narratives, it would be remiss if as researchers we did not point out that the Calvinistic principles, ethics, sanctioned behaviors, and even the promises of reward that underlie Abraham's narratives may perpetuate servitude:

> It is thus like this: if we become one, then there is an opportunity of grace for us. One family. Then there's again an opportunity of grace. And we see each other and we know each other and we move together. Only on Sunday, at church, did I say: "If we look at the bees, they work." They work. They work together. Then I told them [there at church]: "If we look at the bees, they work. The Lord wants us to work together. So that our deeds can be known." Yes, Mister, no, Mister! But, it can. If only we talk.

Once again, Abraham's narratives illustrate the potential of a shared conversational reality (Collins 2004) to bring about change: for Abraham, words become deeds, and the end reward of words-as-deeds is a gently negotiated reconciliation:

> Talking can heal everything. Talking heals everything. Talking is a success. Talking is something very good because it always leads to a solution. But, if one isn't talking, nothing will be solved. Now, if you spoke and you move a little to one side, then you see: no, it did change.

When asked *Should a Christian suffer?* Abraham offers a direct reply. His answer promotes the view that religion provides the most efficient medium to the individual to counter all forms of harm and injustice whether these are biological, personal, collective, or institutional in nature:

> Mister, no. Except if someone walks away from the Lord. But, if he has the Lord, he cannot [suffer]. Because the Lord adds. He gives to us. He helps us if, perhaps, we're in trouble. He does all for us. If I ask him in my prayers, then he solves everything.

Henry also abides by the belief in an omnipotent God:

> Religion is very important. If you believe the Lord, Mister, then the Lord will give you everything—and he gives you grace as well.

But, Henry is clearer than Abraham on the link between being a Christian and suffering:

> If you don't do the right thing, the Lord will make that you suffer. A person has to suffer.

This poses a dilemma: since Henry suffers, he must have done something wrong. But, Henry's suffering is an everyday reality in his life and it is very much connected to his state of poverty—it cannot be argued that he brings it on himself. On the one hand, Henry laments the structural inequalities he experiences, but on the other hand he accepts that "the Lord will make that you suffer" and that because of the institutional suppression there was no other way to go. This pernicious form of unfreedom brings us to the next theme in the narratives.

Experiencing Suppression

In keeping with their views on identity and place-belongingness, both participants experience a strong sense of a boundary between themselves and their employers. Deeply embedded discourses and practices separate them from the farm owners. Both Abraham and Henry refer to their employer as "master" and both have experienced a lifetime of being subordinates in the workplace, of belonging to a mixed (and sometimes referred to as an inferior) race ("Colored"), and of being members of a disenfranchised racial group. Not being part of "them" and not feeling a sense of ownership of place lead to the absence of a feeling of belonging, as well as to a sense of being inferior.

Abraham Wessels

When asked if he feels suppressed as a member of the Colored population group,[6] Abraham answers in the affirmative. He then quickly brings an age-old

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6   Historically the "Colored" population has been discriminated against for being neither Black nor White and thus not fitting in anywhere. To some readers this may seem a disrespectful or politically incorrect question. South Africans are more likely to openly

and religiously-based argument to justify his suppression. His argument is not unlike the one perpetuating the caste system in India, which sanctions—almost guarantees—the moral rightness of servitude:

> Yes, Mister, actually. But, as I look at my case, I see: we continue like this. If the Lord made us in such a way that we were all the same height, nobody would have wanted to work under someone else. And no one would have helped anyone else. Now the Lord has to change this matter in this way. So, if I can, I must now help. Now I have to help my master so that he can get ahead—like working with the sheep and those things. Now if we were all the same height, something like this wouldn't work. Now the Lord knew well, he had good knowledge.

We notice, also, the slippage of meaning between the phrases "work under someone else" and "helped anyone else." What is in fact work is reformulated by Abraham as giving help. It is an evocative revelation of his position as a serf that he accepts this role, and moreover accepts it as corresponding to a good moral order of life. It shows how the perpetuation of inequity and inequalities are constructed through intersubjective sedimentation (Berger and Luckmann 1967:85-86) of meanings and practices that slowly but surely shape a shared social reality.

Abraham accepts that his labor should result in his employer flourishing while he literally and figuratively "stays in the same place," to borrow from an earlier quote. It is almost as if he volunteers himself for suppression:

> There has to be [a system of] let me do the work. And I also say so: I agree one hundred percent. There has to be let me do the work. Then it can…then it works. Each one feels…I feel: it is good that the Lord made it available.

It is an indictment of post-apartheid South Africa that our multiracial society is still a racial one. And that wealth remains distributed along racial lines. In his statement below, Abraham's remark reflects something of the sentiment of many so-called "Colored" people regarding the relative positioning in society of one population group in relation to another, a hierarchy which is seen by some as being heralded in by the ANC:

> discuss racial tensions than to tread carefully around them. Perhaps this is a response to the often-enforced silence that apartheid brought about?

The Colored, Mister, it is like I said…And if you look, the Colored is still a little below. Then the Bantu are still a little above. If you look carefully, you will see: he saw to it. He saw to it that he is now a little above. He took care that he can be above.

Around the period when a formal and legal status was conferred on apartheid, Frantz Fanon (1968:61-81) wrote in his book published in French in 1952 under the title *Peau Noire, Masques Blanc* (*Black Skin, White Masks*) on the so-called dependency complex of colonized people. He launched an attack on a view of his time that feelings of inferiority among members of an oppressed part of society could be found even before colonization. For Fanon, a society is either racist or not racist. The racism coinciding with colonization is no different from any other form of racism. All forms of exploitation, irrespective if coinciding with colonization, are equally the same—and need to be rejected. Perhaps Fanon is correct when concluding that many people who find themselves in racist societies suffer from inferiority feelings. They suffer from these feelings because the societies in which they find themselves enhance these feelings of inferiority—not because they are inherently inferior (Fanon 1968:74).

Over the three long sessions during which we spoke to Abraham we see the workings of inferiority institutionalized in language. In the first session, he referred 40 times to his employer, the land owner, as "my master" (*My Baas* in the Afrikaans language) and no fewer than 172 further times did he address the first author of this chapter as "master" (*Baas*) even though no employment relationship existed between him and the first author. On a further 51 occasions he addressed the first author as "my great master" (*My Grootbaas*). At the end of this first session the first author put it to Abraham that his calling him "master / great master" caused embarrassment and he requested him kindly to refrain from doing so. Nine months later during our second session he consistently addressed the first author as "mister" (*Meneer*). Henry only addressed the first author as "mister" (*Meneer*), which reflects something of his more critical attitude towards old apartheid norms.

Henry Jooste

Like Abraham, Henry also conveys the impression that he accepts the inferior positioning and resultant subordination of one population group *vis-à-vis* another.

And again his narrative shows how the power that accompanies race and wealth is strongly reinforced through language:

> I still call [the boss] master and *Seur* [the boss's father and original boss] and *Miesies* [the boss's wife]. Yes, we did say master [*Baas*] and great master [*Grootbaas*] and small master [*Kleinbaas*]. That we heard from our parents. I think [we speak to them in this manner] because of the suffering. You had to call the White owner *Seur* because he was the highest. Then you had a foreman, master [*Baas*], a White foreman. I also had to say to him *Baas*, *Baas Sarel*. But, for the owner of the farm it was *Seur*.

Henry's narrative tells of more direct forms of suppression that are historically institutionalized through unfair treatment and exploitation:

> Yes, we did get paid. But, that time, how can I say, I almost don't know what we were paid. And if you asked about the pay, the *Seur* got angry. Then he would say: "No, why do you want to know?" Today workers know. My children know. But, my father went to "pay" for me [received payment]. When he died, that is when I went to "pay" for myself. But, no, it wasn't even worth the while.

One of the worst aspects of this for Henry is his sense of having colluded with this exploitation, although in reality there was little that he or his community could do. So again, the (misguided) idea emerges of being personally responsible for suffering and therefore deserving it. Drawing on Alexander (2012), we argue that practices and languages of oppression associated with serfdom became a threat to collective identity in as far as they damaged the psyche—the communal sense of self-worth—of whole communities of people who live and labor as serfs. According to Alexander (2012), collective trauma occurs when negative experiences inflicted by one group on another are conceived as wounds to social identity. From Henry's narrative it would seem that there is an alternative standpoint—one that links to Fanon's (1968:74, 61-81) insights—whereby the victims of collective trauma think: "We did this to ourselves":

> How can I say? We gave our life up, just like that. We went out and worked almost for nothing. Yes, you can say that we worked almost for nothing.

> We would complain, but not to the man [owner]. We complained amongst each other. We would not go to the man, we were afraid. The man can chase me away. Where will I find work? If the man chases you away, where are you to find work?

> Yes, we felt that we were going backwards and the man was going forward. But, you worked just for free. It did bother people. But, people were afraid. Where would you find a new master?

There is a symbolic collective closing of the ranks against the owner, but in fact the community is powerless in the absence of any viable alternatives. Their fear of retribution and of losing what security they have are very real threats to unskilled laborers in a country with such high unemployment levels. But, apart from this, Henry is also trapped in the mindset of serfdom: he does not conceive of a solution other than finding "a new master":

> If I went to another farm, that farmer would phone my previous master and would ask him: "What kind of a boy was he?" Then the previous master would say: "No, he was such a boy or he was such a boy." Then the farmer would come back and say: "No, man, I did look for a man, but I found one." Then you had to go and try to get another master. And you would go along until one day when you would maybe find a master.

Again the language use tells us a lot about race and belonging. To call a man a "boy" harks back to an old and racial practice among some Whites during the apartheid days; it is very insulting as it insinuates that the employee is not an adult. In Henry's narrative—his meaning-making of an imaginary scenario—the employer does not repeat this insult to the farm worker's face. Instead, the employer replaces the insulting diminutive "boy" with the word "man." His rendition of the imaginary conversation between the two White bosses reveals how Henry perceives the existence of an underhand, almost secret, form of racism.

Unlike Abraham, who is far more complacent in the face of having to labor for all his life without reaping much in the way of material rewards, Henry is more vehement about this injustice of his situation.

> Gee whiz, we couldn't keep animals, nothing. We didn't have an income; it was only the pay, those few Rands and then it was finished. You were only, how can I put it, you were only alive. You needed to live for your stomach and for your children.

> Yes, the Brown man [Colored] helped the White man. How many times did I have to help him with everything—looking after his cattle, everything.

> Yes, that time it was not living together. The White man stayed on his own. He was on his own, and you were only a helper, you could say. Yes, I was only a helper. Because if he wanted to send me up that mountain, then I had to go! I can't say no. Because if I say no, then I had to go to the road.

Notwithstanding the lack of freedom and the difficulties of his situation, Henry does not seem to be able to imagine a world where he is not accountable to another. Perhaps his fatalism functions as a form of reassurance for him?

> But, what can you do? You need to work. You can't simply sit. There will always be someone that will look over you.

The media is saturated with examples of unrest, riots, resistance, and protests of large numbers of the South African society. Similar to other parts of Africa and several Western countries, it is the younger generation that has a greater sense of equity and is more inclined to resist domination and deprivation. Abraham and Henry's stories reflect the disposition of a small group of South Africans who accept, or at least endure, a life of suffering and suppression. Nonetheless, their stories should not be ignored or moved to the background.

Existential Suffering

As we see from the largest parts of his narratives, Abraham does not see himself as an outright suppressed and exploited human who experiences existential suffering. He lives in peace with himself, his employer, and his fellow people. He also lives in peace with his concrete reality. Henry is more explicit when describing his life as a life of suffering.

Abraham Wessels

When looking back over his life, one period of existential suffering stands out for Abraham: the period of his substance (alcohol) addiction:

> Mister, that was when I was still in-the-world. At that point I still grabbed the world. I had to be in the world and it needed to be only good. But, it wasn't good for me. I came across dark days. I suffered a lot. That was when I still took the drink.

The abuse of alcohol became for Abraham a personal enslavement and, as we interpret it, a double dose of slavery in his everyday life. The abuse of alcohol among farm workers in South Africa is commonplace. It has serious implications

for other aspects of social life, such as violence in interpersonal relationships, and fetal alcohol syndrome (Gossage et al. 2014). Fortunately, Abraham gave up alcohol:

> Mister, that was what was with me: the drinking. And that was a bad time in life. It destroys you. But, further life was not so dark. But, the drinking. It creates something terrible. Yes, I stayed in the world. But, I had to come [out of it].

> Then me and my wife came to a decision. I then said: "Man, we can't continue. We can't. We'll have to decide to go off this road." Mister, I suffered a lot! I had dark days. I had difficult times. I was looking at the trap [mouth] of the bag.

By using the expression "I was looking at the trap [mouth] of the bag" Abraham refers to the abuse of cheap wine packaged in an aluminum foil bag inside a box. He perceives this incident that coincided mainly with his and his wife's act of volition as the lowest point of his life. The fact that he found himself for the largest part of his life as part of a social and political dispensation that ascribed to him and his family a range of fundamental restrictions seems to be of lesser importance.

Abraham's decision to quit drinking is a uniquely personal one, but, as May (2011a; 2011b) reminds us, the self and society are mutually constitutive. Progress towards a better society can be created by the continuous affirmation of meaning and by the decisions made by individuals to create a meaningful life (see the work of François Perroux 1983).

Henry Jooste

> I will describe my life as difficult. And it is even difficult until today.

> Yes, look at my children, I can give them nothing. I can't even tell them that when I am dead there will be a house. They have to suffer like a tortoise. When the small tortoise is hatched, he has to go his own way. When I look back at my life, it is a life of suffering.

Henry's metaphor holds another meaning pertinent to his lifeworld: a tortoise carries its home on its back. What he is born with is all that he has—his only inheritance.

Concluding Insights

At best Abraham and Henry's narratives reveal a small part of their deeper experiences and the selection presented here opens only a tiny window on their lives. As the narratives reveal, individual everyday experience often oscillates between solidarity and division, freedom and oppression, power and powerlessness, capital and poverty, exploitation and equality. They also show how belonging is constructed at the individual and societal levels.

Interpretation of the narratives connects to a basic assumption of critical theory: that a person can become more than what he/she is at a given moment. This issue of "increased humanness" (Coetzee 2001:122) is related to the emancipatory intention to aid the development of the communicative capacity in society (Habermas 1984; 1987). It is the duty of the social scientist to remind members of society continuously that they find themselves in a social reality that can become different/better than their present reality. Becoming a better society is described by Marc Olshan (1983:17) as: "the well-coordinated series of changes, sudden or gradual, whereby a given population and all of its components move from a phase of life perceived as less human to one perceived as more human."

A free society creates conditions for the actualization of each individual's full potential (personhood). In terms of this description, South Africa has not yet reached full freedom. Freedom implies a focus on the significance of individuals' capacities to achieve the kind of lives they have reason to value. It is not just a matter of subjective well-being and the means to a good life should not merely be available in theory. In this regard, Thomas Wells (n.d.) is correct when stating in his contribution to the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (on the issue of "Sen's Capabilities Approach"): "A person's capacity to live a good life is defined in terms of the set of valuable 'beings and doings' like being in good health or having loving relationships towards others to which they have real access." But, it goes further: the capacity to lead a good life also coincides with access to the most basic needs of social justice, humanity, and respect.

In the concluding remarks of his book on Frantz Fanon and how Fanon's work can influence the relationship between intellectuals and grassroots movements, Nigel Gibson (2011) draws a distinction between "pragmatic liberals" and "fundamentally anti-systemic dialecticians." He continues: "The former consider the poor as a sociological fact to be studied; the latter consider work

with a poor people's movement as a process and a praxis" (Gibson 2011:215). In terms of the latter perspective, the intellectual activity can (and should) play a role towards stimulating the reflexive capacity for producing consciousness of action (cf. Guibernau 2013:16). The research on which this chapter is based is not participatory action research that aims to accompany the participants in the research process towards active critical involvement and resistance against their situation. On the other hand, this research does not merely reflect an objective account of a phenomenon within the South African society. We trust that this research can assist in creating a deeper understanding with regards to inequality and inadequate participation in as far as some members of the South African society are concerned. Whatever the primary focus, research needs to continuously contribute to the decolonization of the mind—both of the researcher and of the researched.

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P. Conrad Kotze & Jan K. Coetzee

The Everyday in a Time of Transformation[1]

A Single South African Lifeworld 20 Years after Democracy

ABSTRACT | *Transformation has come to be a defining characteristic of contemporary societies, while it has rarely been studied in a way that gives acknowledgement to both its societal effects and the experience thereof by the individual. This chapter discusses a recent study that attempts to do just that. The everyday life of a South African is explored within the context of changes that can be linked, more or less directly, to those that have characterized South Africa as a state since the end of apartheid in 1994. The study strives to avoid the pitfalls associated with either an empirical or solely constructivist appreciation of this phenomenon, but rather represents an integral onto-epistemological framework for the practice of sociological research. The illustrated framework is argued to facilitate an analysis of social reality that encompasses all aspects thereof, from the objectively given to the intersubjectively constructed and subjectively constituted. While not requiring extensive development on the theoretical or methodological level, the possibility of carrying out such an integral study is highlighted as being comfortably within the capabilities of sociology as a discipline. While the chapter sheds light on the experience of transformation, it is also intended to contribute to the contemporary debate surrounding the current "ontological turn" within the social sciences.*

Introductory Remarks

The aim of this chapter is to integrally explore one South African lifeworld from within the context of the 20th anniversary of the country's first non-racial democratic elections. The specific case explores the everyday life of Hennie van der Merwe,[2] an Afrikaner[3] schoolteacher who has personally experienced the

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1   This chapter was originally published in *Qualitative Sociology Review* XIII(1), 2017.

2   All persons mentioned in the chapter are assigned pseudonyms.

3   For the purpose of this chapter, an Afrikaner is defined as a member of a specific contemporary White Afrikaans-speaking collectivity that actively seeks the cultural survival of the Afrikaner as existing up to the end of apartheid. Not all contemporary White Afrikaans speakers self-identify as Afrikaners. For a more comprehensive account

transformation that has come to characterize South African society at every level. Hennie's story is analyzed and interpreted in the section *The Case of Hennie van der Merwe*. Before his story is told, however, the chapter introduces certain ontological and epistemological premises that were foundational to the study, and illustrates the sociological theories and methods that were implemented during the data collection and analysis phases of the research project. The study was conceptualized to serve as an example of the application of an integral framework for sociological practice to the study of everyday life. As such there is the need not only for a holistic balance between theory and practice, but for an overarching account that reflexively touches on all the relevant issues that came into play from the moment the researchers first engaged the object of study to the final keyboard strike that culminated in the writing of this chapter. This is the rationale for the following section opening with the presentation of models of reality and consciousness. These models are foundational to the rest of this chapter and should be illustrated before turning to the data and conclusions.

## Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

We acknowledge from the start that reality is trans-empirical. This means that any model or framework that purports to scientifically clarify the dual stream of manifestation and interpretation underlying our everyday experience is, and always will be, inherently arbitrary and provisional. It is in this reflexive spirit that the rest of this section should be understood to represent models of reality and consciousness. These models are arbitrary by nature and under no circumstance are they meant to be dogmatically superimposed over the fundamentally irreducible holon[4] of manifestation that is experienced reality. Any phenomenon, however, needs to be abstracted to a certain degree before meaningful analysis thereof can take place, and the models illustrated in this section are argued to represent one of the simplest yet most comprehensive ways of doing so. Having made this disclaimer, the study's ontological and epistemological points of departure are grounded in an integral framework for sociological practice (cf. Kotze et al. 2015). According to this framework, reality manifests as an ever-present holon consisting of three irreducible ontic[5] dimensions:

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of contemporary White Afrikaans-speaking identity and the contextual meaning of the moniker "Afrikaner," see: Kotze et al. (2015).

4   The term "holon" refers to a whole that simultaneously transcends and includes its parts.

5   We consciously use the terms "ontic" and "epistemic" in place of the more commonly

Figure 1. The three ontic dimensions.
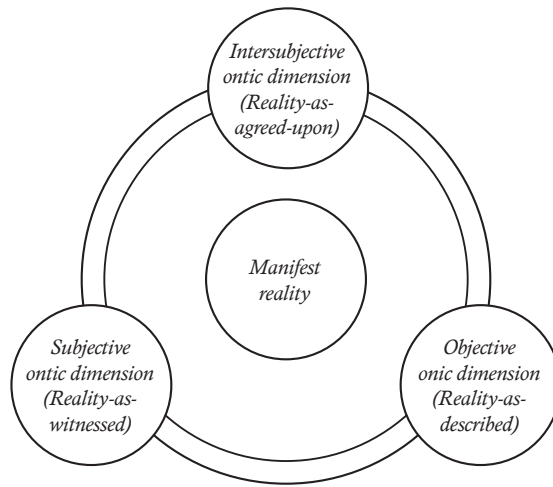
Source: Self-elaboration.

These dimensions, referred to as the subjective, intersubjective, and objective ontic dimensions respectively, represent undivorceably interconnected aspects of reality. This is the case because, when operating within the natural attitude of pre-scientific experience, any perceived object naturally confronts the perceiving subject with three clearly distinguishable but interrelated aspects of its being-in-the-world. Its objective ontic dimension renders an aspect of its existence that is ontologically rooted completely "outside" of the perceiving subject, at least where "everyday" states of consciousness are involved.[6] This objectively given dimension of a phenomenon lends itself most readily to empirical description, as it manifests itself relatively independently of both the subjectively constituted and intersubjectively constructed realms of meaningful interpretation that also exists in relation to any perceived object. In short, the objective ontic dimension of an

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used "ontological" and "epistemological" with reference to the subtle yet essential difference in meaning between the two. The former signifies that which is given, free from interpretation, while the latter refers to that which is the product of classification according to any given ontology. The ontic dimensions of reality are thus not theoretical constructs, but the very quanta of manifestation and experience that give rise to the possibility of multiple ontologies.

6   This qualification is made in line with an acknowledgement of the existence of various states of consciousness (or, more correctly, phenomenal fields [Rock and Krippner 2007]) that are readily accessible to human beings. The main focus of sociology is, however, on that state of consciousness which forms the foundation of the natural attitude; the pre-scientific and often pre-reflexive mode of perceiving "the reality which seems self-evident," or paramount reality (Schütz and Luckmann 1974:3).

object's manifestation represents those aspects thereof that are characterized by a certain measure of "independence and externality in relation to the subject" (Habermas 1972:33).

Two further ontic dimensions, namely, the subjective and intersubjective, naturally accompany this empirically describable dimension of reality. These dimensions are represented respectively by subjectively constituted intentionalities[7] and intersubjectively constructed meaning-frameworks oriented towards the object of perception. Through adding layers of socio-cultural meaning and existential significance to our perception of phenomena, these dimensions play a fundamental role in the constitution of paramount reality. Paramount reality refers to the phenomenal reality that is unquestioningly accepted as "real" by the individual experiencing his or her daily existence from within the natural attitude. This "world-as-witnessed" comprises "the foundational structures of what is pre-scientific" (Schütz and Luckmann 1974:3). In contrast to the abstracted world described by the natural sciences, paramount reality represents an intersubjectively constructed and maintained realm populated by socially related subjects who all have pragmatic interests in its existence and interpretation (Schütz 1962). Indeed, subjective interpretation and intersubjective agreement exert greater influence on the constitution of the interpretation of the kosmos[8] that is unquestioningly accepted as real by socially related people going about their daily lives in a pre-reflexive state of consciousness, than do the detached descriptions of reality generated by empirical research.

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7   The word intentionality is used here in Husserl's sense of denoting the character of consciousness as always being "of" something, and has nothing to do with "intention" as that word is commonly understood (McIntyre and Smith 1989). As Husserl, contrary to much popular speculation, strove to construct a rigorous science of phenomena that would pave the way to true objectivity, the alternative English rendering of his German term *Intentionalität* as "directedness" may provide us with a clearer understanding of its intended meaning. However, while the transcendental subject may perceive reality free from "everything that has overlaid the primordial surprise in the face of the world" (Evola 2003:143), certain judgments, opinions, and habits of thought and interaction are inherent in the intentionality of the embodied subject operating from within the natural attitude. These factors, by giving rise to a biographically-informed sense of obviousness and familiarity, constitute the unseen scaffolding of the individual habitus, which is explored in greater detail further in this book.

8   The word "kosmos" is used here in line with the philosophy of Ken Wilber (2007). The kosmos represents not only the empirically observable cosmos existing "out there," but also includes the "inner" realms of conscious experience and meaning (Visser 2003:197).

All human beings varyingly experience these fundamental ontic dimensions on a daily basis, pre-reflexively alternating between "reality-as-witnessed," "reality-as-agreed-upon," and "reality-as-described" without necessarily becoming aware of the ontic discontinuities underlying the stream of consciousness, which is normally experienced as unified. An important effect of incorporating such an integral framework into sociological research is that it gives the researcher access to aspects of reality that are beyond the reach, and often even the scope, of contemporary science. Alongside the generation of empirically verifiable "truth," an accompanying focus on the subjectively constituted and intersubjectively constructed dimensions of reality facilitates sensitivity to issues of social justice and individual sincerity when analyzing social reality. In a very real sense, this framework thus harks back to a current of thought that has been latent in Western philosophy since at least the time of Aristotle, whose "transcendentals," the good, the true, and the beautiful, come to the fore strongly when social reality is approached through the lens provided by this framework.

Correlating with the multidimensional nature of manifest reality is the multi-modal nature of human consciousness. Whenever consciousness is directed at a phenomenon (which may be a physical, mental, or supra-mental object), the interaction takes one (or more) of the following general forms: subjective witnessing, intersubjective agreement, or objective description.

Figure 2. The three epistemic modes.
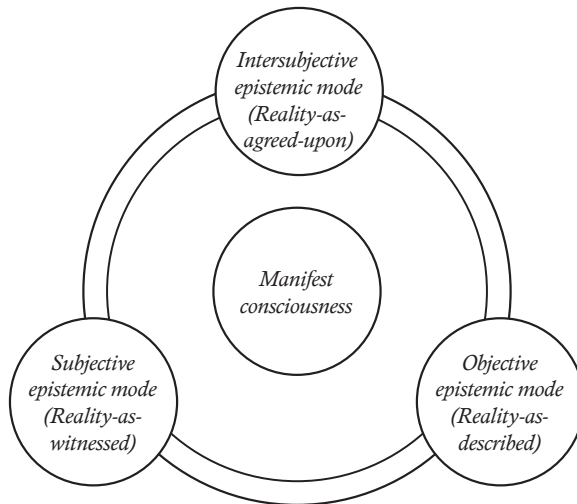
Source: Self-elaboration.

The correlation of these modes of perception with the ontic dimensions of manifestation seems to be an inherent characteristic of reality. Understanding this unitary relationship between consciousness and its objects in greater detail may pave the way for a post-Cartesian scientific endeavor that overcomes the crippling dualism of modern science, while also transcending the constitutional limitations of reactionary relativist and constructivist schools of thought.[9] As long as the current subject/object split, based on deeply embedded cultural assumptions regarding the definition of "self" and "not-self," is taken as characteristic of paramount reality, a detailed exposition of the entire experiential matrix encompassing both intersubjectively reified perceptual poles (that of subjectivity and objectivity) is necessary. The accompanying study was thus carried out with the intention of acknowledging all of the ontic dimensions and epistemic modes that comprise manifest reality and the conscious experience thereof that is currently prevalent among human beings. In this way, we attempt to avoid the various pitfalls associated with focusing on a single ontic dimension or making use of a single epistemic mode in isolation.

Generalized forms that these epistemological traps often take are relativism (overemphasis on the intersubjectively constructed aspects of reality), reductionism (seeking objective "facts" to the extent that the resulting description of reality is completely removed from lived experience, commonsense, and intuition), and the various degrees of unconfirmability and solipsism associated with the unavoidable foray into metaphysics that accompanies a one-sided focus on the individually unique contents of isolated subjectivity. Corresponding to the fact that a given phenomenon may be experienced varyingly in terms of its objective suchness, social fairness, and personal desirability, an integral deployment of all three epistemic modes makes possible the carrying out of research that emphasizes not only the enlargement of the empirical knowledge

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9   Though a variety of "monistic" frameworks have seen the light in recent years (cf. Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012), their proclaimed non-dualism almost universally rests on an unconscious fracturing of the holon of reality, which means that certain ontic modes are given precedence over others. Though absolute reality is non-dual, its realization is an experiential affair that is generated only by a most arduous and conscious self-transformation that leads to the emergence of a worldview that is quite simply not typical of contemporary human experience. Thus, as long as the standard experience of reality is that of duality, our analytical frameworks should rest on a dual view of reality. Attempting otherwise will surely land us in a mire of existential conceit and pretence that may be even less relenting than the sinkhole of positivism.

base, but also a socially accountable assessment of the justness and utility of generated knowledge, as well as a strong contemplative engagement with aesthetic, moral, and transformative dimensions pertaining to the phenomenon under study and the application of generated knowledge. Thus, this framework generates a more human way of going about social scientific research by bringing the praxis of sociology in line with the full human experience of reality.

The following section deals with the theoretical considerations used to apply this framework practically. It is not necessary to construct novel theories in order to undertake integral sociological research. The various ontic dimensions have already been explored in great detail by existing schools of thought, albeit mostly in isolation from the other dimensions (as in the case of existentialism focusing on the subjective ontic dimension, ethnography on the intersubjective, etc.) and without explicit acknowledgement of the holon of manifest reality. All existing sociological theories more or less explicitly focus on a given ontic dimension and make use of certain epistemic modes. These underlying orientations are, however, mostly constituted unconsciously, embedded in powerful worldviews and paradigmatic assumptions, and as such are rarely reflected upon. This state of affairs has led to the seemingly irresolvable opposition of various contemporary sociological paradigms, an obstacle that persists even though all of these competing theoretical frameworks are internally coherent and each one provides us with useful partial truths about the nature of social reality. Thus, the following section explores some sociological theories which competently explore one or more of the ontological dimensions and seeks their practical unification into a theoretical framework for the integral study of social reality, as described up to this point.

Theoretical Foundation

Theoretically speaking, a conceptual framework acknowledging all the ontic dimensions and epistemic modes introduced in the previous section was needed in order for this study to attain its goal of integrally exploring social reality in the context of a single individual's meaningful life experience. Such a framework is possible when incorporating aspects of Alfred Schütz's phenomenology of the social world, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's ideas regarding the social construction of reality, and the reflexive sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. The

resultant theoretical framework, coupled with the researchers' own "utterly first-hand and direct presentation of the phenomena and the description and analyses proper to them" (Natanson 1978:189), represents the conceptual lens applied to the interpretation of Hennie's lifestory that is shared further in this chapter. As is to be expected, the theoretical framework constructed for the purposes of this study is compatible with the integral onto-epistemological framework outlined earlier. This specific amalgamation of theoretical streams acknowledges all the ontic dimensions of reality, facilitating the development of a methodological approach that makes use of all three epistemic modes, as is discussed in the next section.

The first theoretical stream included in the study is the phenomenologically informed school of thought that started with the work of Alfred Schütz and was developed further by various thinkers over the course of the second half of the previous century and the first years of our own. Of these successors, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann represent the most important thinkers in the context of this study. Though Schütz can be said to have developed a true phenomenology of the social world, most of the work that strove to build upon his ideas can be more aptly referred to as *phenomenologically informed sociology*. This designation is due to the fact that whereas Schütz contemplated the universal structures of consciousness that underlie the subjective, pre-communicative constitution of reality in a thoroughly Husserlian manner, the later "phenomenologists," as is most clearly evident in the case of the ethnomethodologists, focused rather on the *inter*subjective construction of social reality through communication, ritual, agreement, et cetera (cf. Dreher 2012). The very condensation of these streams of thought into codified, more or less uniformly applied theoretical and methodological systems sets them epistemologically apart from the "all-embracing self-investigation," the "first of all monadic" enterprise that is phenomenology proper (Husserl 1960:156). Thus, the various theories that today constitute "phenomenological sociology" are rather incorporated into this study because of their exceptional suitability to an analysis of the socially constructed aspects of reality. This suitability stems from the fact that these theories represent epistemological frameworks aimed at exploring the intersubjective ontic dimension, or the dimension of reality that is founded on mutual agreement and the resulting construction of socially shared meaning-frameworks.

This phenomenologically informed nexus of theories provides us with several relevant concepts. First and most foundational of these is the lifeworld. As we attempt to gain understanding of a given individual's experience of social reality, it is of the essence that the target of our analysis should be reality as experienced by the participant. Thus, the target of analysis is the world as experienced by Hennie van der Merwe, or his "naïve…immersion in the already-given world" (Husserl 1960:152). The emphasis of this analysis is on three closely related foundational structures of Hennie's experience, namely, his biographically determined situation, his stock of knowledge, and his narrative repertoire. An individual's biographically determined situation, his or her uniquely experienced position in and orientation towards the world, is constituted through a temporally directed dialectical relationship between internalized learning from past experience, expectations oriented towards the future, and present psychological, social, and physical conditions. This continuously evolving existential nexus solidifies into a given individual's momentary orientation to reality. It delineates individual subjects' perceptions of "not only [their] position in space, time, and society but also [their] experience that some of the elements of the world taken for granted are imposed upon [them], while others are either within [their] control or capable of being brought within [their] control" (Schütz 1962:76). Thus, the content of a given individual's biographically determined situation offers a glimpse into that person's momentary orientation towards the three ontic dimensions of reality, as well as the spatio-temporally, socio-culturally, and existentially contextualized contents of that individual's consciousness as mediated by the three epistemic modes.

Operating in an intricate dialectic with the biographically determined situation is a person's stock of knowledge and his or her narrative repertoire. Along with the biographically determined situation, both of these interpretational matrices provide the underlying impetus for certain acts and the justification for certain beliefs and interpretations of reality. Both are socially informed and underlie the construction of collective identities through their operation on the porous boundary between the subjective, intersubjective, and objective ontic dimensions of reality. Thus, the convergence of the subjectively constituted world-as-witnessed, the intersubjectively constructed world-as-agreed-upon, and the objectively given world-as-described into an unproblematically experienced paramount reality is facilitated by the interpretational nexus formed by these three foundational structures of consciousness (the biographically

determined situation, stock of knowledge, and narrative repertoire). Whereas the biographically determined situation is predominantly affective in nature, the stock of knowledge comprises the pragmatic "skills, useful knowledge [and] knowledge of recipes" (Schütz and Luckmann 1974:105) acquired by an individual during the course of his or her life. The narrative repertoire represents the socially shared and historically contextualized storehouse of narratives, characters, and plots drawn on by individuals during the interpretation of their own lives as a contextually meaningful story featuring themselves as the protagonist, a mode of self-analysis that seems to be geographically and temporally universal among human beings (McAdams 1993; 2012; Frank 2012). Considering the interplay between an individual's biographically determined situation, stock of knowledge, and narrative repertoire, all of which are socially and historically contextualized, thus allows for insight into the nexus of self-perception that orients a person's momentary interpretation of his or her place in society and history, along with the corresponding actions people execute during their participation in the ongoing construction and maintenance of their socially shared lifeworlds. Through investigating the contents and structure of, as well as the relationship between these three socially embedded matrices of self-experience, a deeper understanding of the socially constructed aspects of a given individual's experience of reality is made possible.

In close combination with this phenomenologically informed theoretical stream is the work of Pierre Bourdieu. To the extent that Bourdieu's sociology incorporates subjective experience, it can be seen as an offshoot of the phenomenological stream in sociology. What makes Bourdieu's "structural constructivism" unique, however, is its emphasis on what he refers to as "methodological relationalism" (cf. Bourdieu 1989; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Bourdieu's clarification of the "double life" of lifeworldly phenomena makes possible the acknowledgement of both the intersubjective and objective ontic dimensions and epistemological modes during the social scientific research process. This is the case because Bourdieu realizes that the structures of the universe exist simultaneously as objects of the first order, independent of interpretation, and as objects of the second order, as meaningfully interpreted and symbolized by conscious beings (Wacquant 1992). This double life necessitates a "double reading," or the complementary application of two divergent modes of analyzing social reality. The first, social physics, is characterized by the quantitative analysis of social structures, while the second, social phenomenology, entails a

qualitative exploration of the meaning-frameworks underlying the experience of the individuals constituting these social structures (Bourdieu 1990).

In this way, Bourdieu's sociology makes possible the acknowledgement of both the objective and intersubjective ontic dimensions during the analysis of social reality. By including an empirical collection of social facts in the analysis of an individual's lifeworld, access can be gained to the objectivated phenomena experienced as unproblematically given by the participant and which play a central role in the constitution of subjective experience and the construction of mutual understanding during everyday life. Incorporating this insight into sociological research allows for social reality to be understood neither as fundamentally driven by the actions of individuals nor as primarily predetermined by impersonal societal structures and processes, but as arising dialectically out of a continuous interaction between these two streams of agency. Taken into the realm of methodology, the praxis of the double reading facilitates a reflexive focus on the readily observable relationships existing between individual action and social structure. While understanding Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" as analogous to the nexus of self-experience comprising an individual's biographically determined situation, stock of knowledge, and narrative repertoire, meaningful social action can thus be seen as being the result of an ongoing "adjustment of habitus to the necessities and to the probabilities inscribed in the field" (Wacquant 1989:43). In this context, the field refers simply to the given situation in which the subject finds him- or herself at any particular moment, which is populated by encountered objects ranging in ontic status from personally experienced thoughts, through socially constructed meaning-frameworks, to concrete physical objects and other conscious beings. The inclusion of Bourdieu's sociological theory within an integral theoretical framework thus facilitates an acknowledgement of the role played by the interaction between the intersubjective and objective ontic dimensions during the constitution of subjectively experienced meaning and the carrying out of meaningful action in everyday life.

While the theoretical framework described up to this point has much to offer in terms of reflexively analyzing social reality as constructed by communicating subjects confronted with empirically given objects and embedded in socially shared meaning-frameworks, it does not touch upon the subjective ontic dimension, which is monadic in the strictest sense. Thus, though the intersubjectively

constructed and objectively given aspects of social reality are accounted for quite thoroughly, there is still a need to turn to that dimension of reality that is constituted by unmediated subjective experience, and as such is unique to each and every experiencing subject. In Husserlian terms, the previously constructed theoretical framework comprising phenomenologically informed sociology and the insights gained from Bourdieu's double reading still represents a scientific endeavor "lost in the world." What remains then is for the researcher to "lose the world by epoché, in order to regain it by a universal self-examination" (Husserl 1960:157). Practically speaking, this means that the researcher's unique first-person perspective on the mystery under investigation needs to be given more than a passing acknowledgement. This is the case because, no matter how reflexively defined the research process, when it comes to the final sifting and analysis of data, powerful assumptions on the part of the analyst come into play. Thus, when all is said and done, the role played by the unique constitution of the monadic perceiving subject needs to be made explicit.

Apart from the contents of the researchers' own individually specific nexus of subjectively constituted and intersubjectively constructed meaning-frameworks, an important factor to be explored is the ontological discontinuity that is generated by one subject entering the lifeworld of another, which is even more pronounced when the observing subject is engaged in reflexive analysis. This ontological discontinuity comes to the fore most powerfully in the realization that what is reality to the pre-reflexive subject going about his daily life is clearly seen to be appearance by the discerning sociologist, most dramatically so when it comes to socially shared interpretations of historical events. As socially reified interpretations of history are objectivated to the degree that they are internalized as representing objective "facts," these objectivated events can be treated as constituting, along with geographical, demographic, and other empirically measurable variables, the objective ontic dimension of social reality. While it is rather obvious that objectivated interpretations of social reality never solidify to the extent that they become objective in the classical sense, rather exhibiting an asymptotical relationship to objectivity as empirically defined, this fact is not generally apparent to the individual operating pre-reflexively from within a given socio-cultural milieu. These objectivated interpretations, often taking on the form of a normative imperative within a given social context, constitute a foundational part of the field of everyday experience and, as such, their excavation allows

for greater insight into the larger socio-cultural context underlying individual patterns of thought and behavior.

Thus, by integrally focusing on the objectivated deposits of reified history and culture, along with the socially shared meaning-frameworks constructed by contemporary collectivities and the subjectively constituted experience of everyday life, a theoretical framework is generated that meets the requirements of an integral framework introduced in the previous section. The next section demonstrates how these theoretical streams can be put into practice at the methodological level.

Methodological Approach

At this stage it should be restated that the focus of this study is on the participant's experience of his lifeworld. This means that the reality under investigation is the world as experienced daily by Hennie van der Merwe and, as such, the "reality interpreted by…and subjectively meaningful to" this particular human being (Berger and Luckmann 1967:33). This does not mean that we researched some ontologically isolated sphere of subjective fantasy, but that we are explicit in pointing out the windows through which we are to peer into the ever-present flux of subjectively constituted experience, intersubjectively constructed meaning, and objectively given data that constitute manifest reality. Thus, the world was not reduced to the stream of consciousness "in Hennie's head," but life in all its manifold complexity was rendered as seen "through Hennie's eyes." Such an endeavor, if it is to be integral in the sense defined throughout previous sections, necessitates a three-way engagement with the participant's lifestory. During this process an interpretive spiral between Hennie's presented narrative, the larger socio-historical context within which his story plays out, and the investigators' own interpretation of the encountered "mystery" comes into being.

The object of study in this case is referred to as a mystery because of the fact that it does not simply represent an objectively solvable problem, but a trans-empirical phenomenon that is not merely to be empirically described, but hermeneutically understood and phenomenologically interpreted, as well (Alvesson and Kärreman 2011). As the navigation of mystery reveals, "relationships…that had not been previously expected [and that] change actions and perspectives" (Weick 1989:524), such an approach generates more than impersonal objective

data. The researchers' own entanglement in the mystery, brought about by lieu of their existential engagement with the phenomenon, ensures that understanding of the given mystery is always correlated with "growth in inner awareness," as "everything understanding mediates is mediated along with ourselves" (Gadamer 1990:110). Through engaging with Hennie's story in the way a philologist would with a fragment of text, such an approach allows for the unraveling of mystery by constructing socially and temporally contextualized understanding out of the meaningful interaction between ontologically discrete subjects, along with the historical and social context within which this interaction takes place. In short, Hennie's story may be more readily understood by a person who is familiar with the society, culture, and history within which Hennie himself is existentially embedded. At the very least, such a familiarity facilitates the uncovering of certain quanta and qualia that simply do not exist in the perception of an "outsider."

A larger view that includes social, historical, political, and other contexts is thus fundamental to understanding encountered interpretations that, from the standpoint of the researcher, may seem incongruous or absurd as isolated things-in-themselves. Only by making explicit the historical and social contexts of the participant's interpretations of reality, as well as the temporal and relational conditions in which the understanding thereof by the researcher takes place (which are further informed by the contextualized interpretations of the researcher him-/herself), can the socio-historically situated interpretation of the contents of one subjectivity by another be meaningfully expressed in a way that makes it accessible to any third party (Gadamer 2013). A practical method of generating such a larger view of the socio-historical background in relation to which a given individual's lifestory plays out is to excavate a reflexively informed meta-narrative to serve as a contextualizing backdrop to the stories shared by an individual participant. The term excavation is used here instead of construction for the simple reason that, as discussed in the previous section, the events of Hennie's past, as well as those more general archetypes shared by the collectivities to which he belongs, confront him as reified objects during everyday life. Mapping out the objectivated social and historical terrain navigated by Hennie during his day to day life grants us access to the "objective" world as witnessed by him. The first methodological step in this study was thus the excavation of the most solidified aspects of Hennie's lifeworld, namely, those objectivated meaning-frameworks inherited from the natural and historical past. This meta-narrative was generated by means of a review of the history of the small rural town in which he lives

and works, as well as the larger history informing his own biography and that of the collectivities to which he claims membership and with which he comes into contact on a daily basis.

With this meta-narrative on the table, the focus could be shifted to Hennie's contemporary experience of everyday life. The first step in this process was a certain degree of ethnographic participation in Hennie's lifeworld which lasted from 2011 to 2014. We separately spent time in the village, naturally interacting not only with Hennie himself and his immediate family, but with locals of all backgrounds, from schoolchildren to the elderly, farm laborers to the well-off individuals who own the many extensive farms surrounding the settlement. This was done as we were aware of the fact that sociologists can successfully "enter into dialogue with people's stories only if [they have] sufficient proximate experience of the everyday circumstances in which people learn and tell their stories" (Frank 2012:39). This phase marked the starting point of our investigation of the intersubjective ontic dimension of Hennie's lifeworld, whereas the almost positivistic collection of historical and social facts engaged in during the reconstruction of the preceding meta-narrative represented an exploration of its objective ontic dimension. Placing ourselves squarely within Hennie's world-as-witnessed made possible a degree of understanding which is simply not possible otherwise, as we came to know his world "with our bodies," temporarily becoming co-constructors of this lifeworld by means of our communicative presence (Wacquant 2004:viii). This participation in Hennie's lifeworld, alongside the previously excavated map of the objective ontic dimension of this lifeworld, allows for a more integral view of the human being under consideration by completing the "double reading" advocated by Bourdieu. The broader view generated by this approach allows us to reflexively deal with two significant problems often encountered in qualitative research focusing solely on interviews. These problems are referred to by some as the "transparent self problem" and the "transparent account problem" respectively (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). The former refers to the taken-for-granted notion that the participant knows him- or herself fully and the latter to the common assumption that the participant is willing to share this knowledge with a stranger. Collecting other perspectives on the participant in the ways mentioned up to now allows us to align the data collection process more closely with our commonsense knowledge of everyday human interaction, in which an expectation of confused and sometimes contradictory relationships

between people and their stories about themselves is fundamental to people's understanding of each other.

Apart from this "passive" participation, encompassing informal communication both with Hennie and others within the community, we included Hennie in six involved conversations, which ranged from completely open-ended in the beginning to semi-structured as the research went on and analytic themes emerged. These conversations, not referred to as interviews due to various negative associations having attached themselves to that term over the last few decades, lasted anything from an hour to two hours and allowed us a deep insight into Hennie's subjective experience of reality, as well as the intersubjectively constructed meaning-frameworks according to which his pre-reflexive perception of reality is oriented. These conversations are characterized by their open-endedness and the fact that they play out in terms of symbols that are put on the table by the participant himself, thus diminishing the risk of entrapping the participant in the researcher's own meaning-frameworks (Roulston 2012). In this way, rich descriptive accounts of Hennie's past and everyday experiences were generated, instead of a generalized account aimed merely at explaining superficial patterns of behavior, as is too often the case with interviews. The final step in implementing an integral methodological approach is a phenomenological analysis of all the data on the table. Navigating the border between the natural and reflexive attitudes, a first-person interpretation of Hennie's lifeworld and existential situation (from the researchers' point of view) was generated. The resulting account, taking into consideration all the ontic dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation and all the epistemic modes utilized in its exploration, is presented in the next section. In the spirit of interpretive research, these data are not presented as the final word, but rather represent a plausible and transparently perspectival interpretation of the mystery at hand that is always open to debate and further analysis.

The Case of Hennie van der Merwe

This section is presented in the form of a collective first-person account of the researchers' interactions with Hennie, and is divided into three subsections outlining the intricately linked development of three themes that have played an existential role in Hennie's life, as gleaned from our conversations with him.

These themes are Hennie's bodily and familial history, his religious faith, and his tendency towards existential involvement with people from other social, racial, and cultural backgrounds. These themes are interwoven with a contextually situated[10] first-hand account of the researchers' time with Hennie and the community in which he lives.

The Burden of Circumstance

After driving a long way through the Karoo, possibly one of the world's most mesmerizing landscapes, one finally sees a sign welcoming one to the small farming village in South Africa's rural Eastern Cape Province—the home of Hennie van der Merwe. The welcome is written in three languages: English, Afrikaans, and Xhosa, an indicator of the wonderfully complex heritage that characterizes this part of the South African countryside. Here Boer, Brit, and Bantu have been living side by side, sometimes amicably, sometimes violently, for almost two centuries. Just after the welcome signpost one is met by two of the most easily recognizable flags in the world today, proudly waving from the entrance gate to an old farmyard. The flag of post-apartheid South Africa and the rainbow flag of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer (LGBTIQ) community signify that this quaint hamlet has not been left behind by the tide of transformation that has swept over the country since the first free democratic elections in 1994. Naive enthusiasm is soon tempered by reality, though, as one enters the town and sees the disenchanting signs of debilitating poverty everywhere around. Along with political freedom, the people of South Africa unfortunately also inherited one of the most unequal economic systems in the world, and especially rural areas have seen great suffering over the last two decades due to a general lack of economic opportunities, depopulation caused by urbanization, a lack of consistency in basic service delivery, and skyrocketing rates of HIV-AIDS infection (Habib 2013).

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10   This context is presented in the form of a meta-narrative, excavated empirically out of the larger, objectified historical and social situation against which Hennie's life plays out. This meta-narrative represents the objective ontic dimension of Hennie's everyday reality (as discussed previously), in so far as socially shared perspectives on history and social reality come to congeal into reified phenomena according to which subjective intentionalities and intersubjective meaning-frameworks are oriented (Kotze 2013; Kotze et al. 2015).

Like most visitors to this quaint hamlet, one is seduced into driving slowly through the few streets before checking into one's guesthouse. Although small, this place has a rich history dating back to the mid-19*th* century. Founded by Andries Stockenström, a man both praised and criticized for his liberal approach to race relations during a protracted period of conflict known as the Cape Frontier Wars (1779-1879),[11] the town is marked by all the graces of a British colonial settlement. As we approach the beautiful buildings of the school, where Hennie is a senior staff member, we cannot help but notice the demography of the learners. The institution was founded in the British boarding school tradition almost a century and a half ago and has long been associated with some of the most well-known British settler families, yet we do not see a single White kid. Upon raising the topic, various staff tell us that there are "two or three" White children in the school, while most of the pupils are not aware of the existence of these elusive specimens. The case, as we would later find out, is that the school has seen an exodus of White learners, whose parents have been systematically moving them to other schools since the racial integration and declining standards of South Africa's education system. Indeed, a private school has since opened its doors in town, and most of the wealthy farmers' children now receive their primary education there. Sitting in Hennie's office later that morning, talking about this and other happenings in the region's recent past, we get a feel for the immense task of being a teacher in South Africa today:

> I'm one of those people who never see something as being black or white.
> Maybe it's a part of my profession and what it means to be a teacher nowadays.
> A teacher is expected to be a judge, a president, a doctor, and an advocate.
> Nothing can ever be said to be black or white.

Public education is a contentious issue in South Africa, with corruption, lack of funding, data manipulation, and delays in service delivery fuelling heated debates about the current state of affairs in public schools (Nkosi 2013; Pretorius 2013; Van Zyl 2014; Washkansky 2014). In the Eastern Cape Province, 67 936

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11   The nine wars that erupted between European settlers and Xhosa tribes between 1779 and 1879 represent the longest running military action in African colonial history (Peires 1982). Fought along the volatile Northeastern border of the then Cape Colony, these wars were sparked by underlying tensions between various Xhosa tribes, independent groups of Boer frontiersmen, and the British Empire. They were largely the result of disputes about territory, European meddling in local politics, and back-and-forth cattle raids (Giliomee 2009).

teachers are tasked with educating almost two million learners (Department of Basic Education 2014), which means that, theoretically, there are roughly 29 learners per teacher. In practice, the ration is substantially worse. This, along with a general increase in youth criminality and incidents of violence at public schools (Mncube and Harber 2013; Davids 2014), has made teaching one of the most unenviable occupations in the country today. Far from being mere lip-service to political correctness, however, Hennie's inspired attitude comes to the fore throughout his personal and social history, which is as riveting an account of transformation as one would be able to find anywhere in South Africa today. Born in a small Free State farming town in the early nineteen fifties, his life was marked by fate at an early age:

> When I was about nine months old, something bad happened to me. I rolled off the bed while my mother was in the kitchen. I fell and hit my head against the cot, causing the right side of my body to become paralyzed. Though the paralysis wasn't permanent, the right side of my body always lagged behind the left developmentally.

This accident, which Hennie was later told about by his parents, was to shape the rest of his life. Doctors initially said that he had a fifty percent chance of walking, and the fact that he eventually recovered was, for him, one of the first signs of a divine presence in his life, something that he views as the foundation of his earthly existence. His health was, however, permanently affected by this event. When he was four years old a similar thing happened, and he has since been subject to sporadic epileptic seizures and organ difficulties because of the discrepancy in growth between the two sides of his body. This, his affliction, has been an existential pivot to his experience of life:

> The problems I have today, various symptoms of sickness, can all be traced back to that. And yes, it has had a lot to do with my development as a person. It naturally had an impact on my whole being, my entire existence. You're always aware, it's always in the back of your head that you're not as fast, as good, as flexible as the rest.

Because of this injury Hennie has had to undergo several operations and was not allowed to participate in sports, which is one of his passions, from a very young age. During these early years of isolation he found solace in Christianity. His faith was to prove a pillar upon which he would lean for the rest of his life, and he personally feels his lifestory to be guided by a divine power which has allowed

him to overcome all the challenges that life has thrown at him. Apart from this physical condition, Hennie also inherited a peculiar social circumstance; that of being born a White Afrikaans-speaker during the height of apartheid. This condition, which was every bit as involuntary as his injury, caused the young Hennie quite some confusion. As a child he was always acutely aware of the dissonance between his own deep friendships with the local Black African[12] children, on the one hand, and the distant, paternalistic attitude of his stern parents and grandparents, on the other:

> I remember how my best friend and I used to eat out of the same plate with our hands on Sundays. We were so fond of each other that we used to share everything. Naturally, it wasn't always something that the older generation understood, but, for me, it was an absolutely natural unfolding of the person that I am. I've always had a very good relationship with people from different cultural backgrounds than my own.

> In my grandfather's time, in my father's time, they were only workers. When driving around the farm, the Black man would sit on the back of the truck, while the dog would sit in front with the farmer. I wanted to socialize with them, I wanted to learn from them.

Despite all his yearning for reconciliation Hennie remained a staunch nationalist politically, and his Afrikaner heritage has always been something that he has held in the highest regard:

> Equality means that we all have access to the same rights and privileges, but not that I should give up my identity. I remain what I am. I believe that the Xhosa[13] child should be just as proud of his traditions, his history, his language, and his customs as I am of mine, but that we should create a space in which we can converse, so that he can learn from me and me from him.

This simultaneous pride in his heritage and openness to the experience of other ways of life, along with the physical implications of his childhood injury, gave rise to a marked amplification of a tension that is universal to the human condition. This tension is between continuity, on the one hand, and transformation, on the other. Physically he would experience the ramifications of his injury up until the present day and most likely for the rest of his life, while

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12   Hennie grew up in a part of South Africa where mostly Sesotho-speaking Black Africans reside.

13   Hennie currently serves as a senior teacher among Xhosa-speaking learners.

the psychosocial struggle would run a course through diverse experiences, and finally to a cathartic denouement that would have been unforeseeable to all but Hennie's omniscient God.

The Hope of Redemption

From about the age of six, Hennie started acting on this discrepancy between the separatist reality of mid-20th century South Africa and his own acutely felt need for communion with those whom he had grown up with, but had been taught to keep at a distance. The outlet that came most naturally to the religious-minded boy, and that was least likely to raise the ire of his elders, was to take the gospel into the nearby Black township:

> As a young lad, I remember the mandatory naps on a Sunday afternoon. After church, after the Sunday lunch, everyone had to take a nap. This was the most unendurable punishment my young mind could think of. So, I would always manage to sneak out of the house without my parents noticing. I would take my bicycle and ride into the nearby Black township. There I just conversed with the people, I testified to them in my simplicity, so to speak. Even many years later, when I meet some of those people, we would still have a wonderful dialogue.

This spontaneous communion with the Sotho people of his home town grew into a desire to carry the Christian message into the mountainous land of Lesotho, something that he eventually decided to do when, at eighteen years of age, his physical condition once again impacted his life in a remarkable way:

> In my matric year, when the draft was still in place, the doctor strongly advised that there was no way that I could be exposed to that kind of activity and, interestingly, the government accepted his recommendation and I never joined the army. This was another major setback for me as a person because I couldn't fight for my country like all of my friends were doing. Looking back, it was then that I really started focusing on things that truly matter to me. While I was studying, I joined the missionary association on campus and we did a lot of outreach and construction work in Lesotho. I felt that I could live out my beliefs and make a contribution; that my deficiencies wouldn't matter there.

Thus, Hennie's circumstances allowed him to escape the draft that was in place between 1966 and 1989, when the apartheid state was engaged in a bloody and

controversial war over the territory of present-day Namibia.[14] This allowed him to live out both his hopes of fostering understanding between Black and White and his lifelong dream to share the message of hope that Christianity had impressed on him personally, two endeavors that he combined during missionary work in Lesotho. Though this landlocked country is encircled by South African territory, its mountainous terrain makes it a challenge to traverse, and many of its inhabitants have little exposure to the ways of modern Western culture. It was on one of these "outreaches" that Hennie met his wife, a person who would become the second pillar around which his life would revolve:

> When I was in university, I became Vice Chair of the Missionary Fellowship, and we built churches in Lesotho. For the first four years of my tertiary studies we would drive two Land Rovers into Lesotho, the inhospitable Lesotho. It was like the ox wagon journeys of old; sometimes the students had to secure the vehicle with rope just to be able to navigate the angled mountain tracks. That is where I met my wife. One specific June month in 1973 she was also a crewmember in one of these outreach programs. There we met each other, and the Lord gave us to each other.

This sincere effort to reach out to his fellow South Africans as a young man, along with his deep-rooted faith and the unwavering love and support of his wife, gave Hennie the strength of conviction to face two very testing events that fate would mete out later in his life:

> I think the fact that I actively interacted with people from other cultures, with other habits and traditions from a young age gave me the capacity to positively encounter whatever life could throw at me. At this stage the really big challenges of my life were actually still far in the future. Here my wife and I were molded and prepared for the choices we would have to make later in our lives.

These challenges arose as a result of the unique existential nexus manifested by the person of Hennie in the time and place in which he lived his life. Looking

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14   The South African Border War, also referred to as the Angolan Bush War, was closely intertwined with the Namibian War of Independence and the Angolan Civil War. Playing out against the larger background of the Cold War, South Africa disputed the rights towards Namibian independence claimed by the South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO). The territory of Namibia (then known as South-West Africa) had been governed as a *de facto* fifth province of South Africa since the close of World War II, when South Africa invaded German South-West Africa as a member of the Allied Forces (Shillington 2012).

back, one can almost see a direct line of causation running through these themes. Nonetheless, the shock of the events, as they happened, was such that it tested Hennie's resiliency and his familial relationships to the maximum. Though Hennie sincerely and actively sought to enrich the lives of poor rural Black people, he was eventually faced with two dilemmas that tested his moral fiber to the extreme and pushed the boundaries of his solidarity with both other Afrikaners and Black South Africans. The first of these was the adoption of a Xhosa boy who was born with severe fetal alcohol syndrome:

> Thembani's story is an exceptional one. My wife, Hanna, was the matron of the hostel and one of her duties was that, if one of the children was in hospital, she had to report back to his or her parents. So it happened that she had to go and visit a child one day. Hanna has an amazing love for children, indescribable. When she goes to the hospital, she never passes the ward where the very small children are cared for. On that day she visited the young ones as usual and saw a little boy standing in his cot with a swollen tummy, and he was extremely cross-eyed. She immediately felt a connection to the boy and, believe it or not, as she approached him, he opened his arms to let her pick him up. The nurse told her Thembani's story: A few days earlier a man had brought in a twin brother and sister, saying that he couldn't feed or house them. The girl later died because of malnutrition. She put him down and turned around to leave, but the encounter wouldn't stop haunting her.

A while later the boy was released from hospital and Hennie's wife bumped into his father outside. He said that he still could not feed the child. Hanna took him to the local supermarket and bought two weeks' worth of milk powder, saying that she would talk to a social worker about the possibility of providing food for the family. Their concern was, however, not abated as their householder, who knew the local Xhosa community well, told them that things were not going well in the household of Thukile, Thembani's father. One day a pupil came running into Hennie's office and told him that Thukile was passed out drunk in the street. What was worse, Thembani was running around in the traffic. Hennie immediately got in his car, picked up the boy, and took him home:

> When Thukile eventually came by and started looking for his son, he naturally came to us and asked us to help him search for the boy. I told him that he didn't have to look any further because he's right here. And here he is up to this day.

After a long legal struggle, Hennie and Hanna eventually adopted Thembani, who is currently thriving. Despite having severe fetal alcohol syndrome, he has surpassed all the doctors' expectations and is currently enrolled in Grade 8, which is the freshman stage of high school in the South African education system. His biological father is also employed as a gardener by the van der Merwes, which has had a positive effect on both his financial situation and peace of mind, as he gets to see his son thrive on a daily basis. Hennie's story would, however, not end here. Despite certain more conservative family members initially shunning Thembani's adoption, everyone eventually accepted his presence in the family. However, Hennie's personal commitment to reconciliation was to be tested again. His younger daughter, Elsa, had befriended a Black African man, with whom she came to be romantically involved. After hiding the budding relationship from her father for a while, the truth eventually came out. Elsa was planning to attend her partner's father's funeral in another part of the country, and when asked about her travels, she divulged everything:

> Then she told me with tears in her eyes that she had a Black partner and their relationship was growing, and that this was the man that she was going to marry. She told me that he was everything that I ever taught her a good man should be; he just wasn't White.

This revelation tested the steel of a man who had devoted his life to equality and transformation, but his own acceptance of the situation was only the first obstacle he would face.

The Grace of Acceptance

Hennie explains that, even in Thembani's case, the line between "us" and "them" was always clearly demarcated. Though he would often cross the line and share a few hours of his life with those on the other side, having this trusted and taken-for-granted threshold pulled out from under his feet triggered a trying period of introspection:

> It's easy to knock on a door, to enter, and be able to leave again after a while. The experience I had with Thembani was completely different than the situation with Wandile. Interestingly, my initial reaction to the situation was that it was completely unacceptable. There was a period of about six months during which I was the cause of a schism between myself and Elsa, and we used to have such a special bond. I struggled with this thing because I'm the

one who's been reaching out all my life, but when it grabbed at me from the inside, I have to confess it wasn't easy. Hanna and I would drive to Elsa, various times, and ask her if she couldn't consider ending the relationship. Her answer to me was: "Daddy, this is the man I love, this is the man you taught me to look for because he has all the characteristics that you said a good man must have. You must get to know him because I'm not leaving him." Those were six months of tremendous introspection for me.

Apart from his own struggle with acceptance, Hennie, his wife, and his daughter faced the judgment of close family. Despite Hennie and Hanna's acceptance of, and eventual rejoicing in, the marriage of Elsa to Wandile, many of those nearest to Hennie refused to accept the situation. His son-in-law, André, refused to allow both Thembani and Wandile in his home, causing Hennie to lose regular contact with his elder daughter and his grandson. Other relationships also suffered. For example, while his father accepted the situation reluctantly, his mother, after whom Elsa was named, never made peace with it:

> My mother always held me responsible for this marriage. That was her way of coping. On various occasions she told me that if I hadn't raised my daughter in a certain way, to make room for all people in life and to treat everyone equally, this never would have happened. Many times she asked, "When are you going to place Thembani in foster care?" It was hard for her to accept that he was here to stay, like my daughters, and that I loved him just as much.

Hennie's mother removed all photographs of them from her house, and their relationship remains strained, though things are slowly but surely improving. André is also starting to change his hard-line attitude, conscious of the pain his wife feels at being estranged from her parents and sister. Whatever the situation may be, Hennie is optimistic that all of these struggles are obstacles necessary to the development of a more sincere level of humanity and understanding for all involved, and that he has been fortunate to see one of the more hopeful possibilities of South Africa's future play out on a micro scale within his own lifeworld. He is adamant that he has been guided up to this point by a higher hand, and that, whatever the consequences may be, he will continue trusting in the path he feels that he has been set upon by destiny:

> I see the workings of the Higher Hand in all of this. Why did He make me the way I am? So that I, an Afrikaner from the Free State, have always felt differently and acted differently towards my Black friends? Why did He send

me to the missionary field? I've come to the conclusion that He has been preparing me from birth for that which lay ahead. Because the Bible says that God will never test you beyond your limits, in other words, He believed that it was within my abilities to struggle through this challenge and arrive on the other side with His support. And I am on the other side now. My daughter is happily married and Wandile is my son, just like Thembani is my son. And where we initially stood alone, just me, Hanna, and Elsa, I can now happily see how far we've come on the road to reconciliation as a family.

Hennie's story offers a remarkable account of humanity in a rapidly transforming society, which is often a chaotic and frightening place. The fact that Hennie and his family drew on love, faith, and hope to overcome a situation that would have been deemed apocalyptic a generation earlier indicates the extent to which certain South Africans have embraced their newfound humanity and expanded identity. The fact that these deep-seated values are universal is what has made possible the understanding between and indeed union of superficially different cultural groups that makes this story stand out as a message of hope towards a future of acceptance and cooperation. Although situations differ and people have varied ideas regarding the way forward in a multicultural country like South Africa, the fact remains that we are all bound by the law of Ubuntu. This predominantly African idea states that a person is a person through other people and that our daily interactions with each other mold the eventual character of humanity. Hennie's story serves as inspiration towards living out this ideal through accepting the choices and lifestyles of others and reminding us that we are not that different after all.

Conclusion

This chapter argued for the development of an integral approach to sociological practice that takes into consideration the various subjectively constituted, intersubjectively constructed, and objectively given dimensions that characterize our experience of everyday life in general and social reality in particular. Section *Ontological and Epistemological Considerations* introduces an integral ontological and epistemological framework suited to this task, while sections *Theoretical Foundation* and *Methodological Approach* respectively outline theoretical and methodological matrices that are compatible with this framework as implemented during a recent study of a single individual's experience of transformation

in his private and professional life. The strength of the integral framework is argued to lie in the fact that no major new developments on the theoretical and methodological levels are needed to put it into practice. As a science, sociology already possesses a corpus that is diverse enough to be implemented integrally, with only slight modifications needed to synthesize a context-specific theoretical and methodological matrix that fulfills the meta-theoretical requirements set out in section *Ontological and Epistemological Considerations*. Section *The Case of Hennie van der Merwe* illustrates a recent application of the integral framework during a study of the everyday life of an Afrikaner schoolteacher in post-apartheid South Africa. By crafting an integral theoretical framework out of the social phenomenology of Alfred Schütz and the work of Pierre Bourdieu, coupled with a contextualizing historicist approach and the first-hand experience of the researchers, a multi-dimensional account is generated of this man's everyday experience of life within a transforming social milieu. Apart from the data, which is of interest within the context of any multicultural contemporary society, the chapter mainly represents an attempt at moving towards a solution to the various paradigmatic conflicts within contemporary sociology. It does so by providing a possible alternative to the standoff between constructivism and positivism, or subjectivity and objectivity, which faces social scientists today. Finally, going about the activity of sociological research in the way advocated by this chapter allows for the interconnected nature of all facets of social reality to come to the fore. By not limiting the investigatory focus to either individual agency, collective tendencies, or social structure, it becomes possible to see more clearly how individual experience both underlies and draws on socially constructed understandings, while simultaneously reciprocally interacting with the material environment, which simultaneously serves as the ground of embodied reality, as well as the repository of its consequences. We hope that further developing such an integral framework for sociological practice may empower both sociologists and the people they study. This can come about through ensuring that research is not carried out blindly in the hopes of strengthening the researcher's favored theoretical dogma, while people's lives are treated with the respect they deserve, as well as the ongoing consciousness that what is being investigated is not some empirical fact isolated from experience and consequence, but the very essence of what it means to be human and what it may come to mean in the future.

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Reflecting on Female Beauty[1]

Cosmetic Surgery and (Dis)Empowerment

ABSTRACT | *This project aims to unwrap some of the complexities related to female beauty and the body. It reflects on the second wave radical feminist view that beautifying the female body serves to attract male approval via the male gaze, both of which are deeply entrenched in patriarchal power. This perspective positions cosmetic surgery as a disempowering act for women. In riposte, we turn to third wave liberal feminist ideas to engage with the narratives of ten participants who tell of their personal experiences of, and motivations for, undergoing a cosmetic intervention. We undertake an in-depth exploration of these lifeworld experiences and the interplay of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in the women's encounters. Findings suggest that a cosmetic intervention is often obtained for the self as opposed to satisfying the 'other'. Importantly, cosmetic interventions allow a process to occur in which an individual's physical body becomes better aligned to her sense of self. From this liberal feminist perspective, cosmetic surgery is positioned as an empowering act.*

Introduction

Plastic surgery can be a life changing medical intervention. Having the ability to reshape a birth defect or the physical scars of a traumatic incident is socially accepted. The individual is normally supported in his/her decision to change the flawed/damaged body via a surgical intervention in order to present a more refined and perhaps socially constructed ideal of "normal." By permanently correcting the disfigured body, the individual has the opportunity to live a fuller, more ordinary everyday life—physically fitting into his/her lifeworld and everyday social encounters. However, cosmetically reshaping the healthy/undamaged female body for beauty purposes often incurs a different and somewhat negative understanding—particularly from a radical feminist perspective.

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Cosmetic surgery in the context of feminist thinking has received much attention and discussion in recent years. Beauty is a socially constructed concept. Early first wave feminist literature traditionally explores the disempowering effects of gender norms on female beautification and body work. Traditional second wave radical feminist frameworks often view women who beautify the body as submitting to patriarchal norms and ideals. These women are subsequently regarded as being vain, superficial, and frivolous.

This chapter argues for re-negotiating this radical feminist outlook by exploring an individual's subjective and intersubjective encounters and understandings of her experiences, perceptions, motivations, and desire for employing aesthetic surgery. The chapter explores the interpretive nature of participants' everyday experiences by focusing on each individual's "action and choice" in relation to how her reshaped body influences her lifeworld and sense of self—from her feminine embodiment to her self-empowerment.

Theoretical Positioning of the Research

Philosophically, the study is positioned in the theoretical frameworks of Alfred Schütz's (1967; 1970; Schütz and Luckmann 1973) phenomenology, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1991) social construction of reality, John Creswell's (2014) interpretivist methodology, as well as Kathy Davis's (1995) and Iris Marion Young's (2005) feminist literature. This theoretical structure enables us to unwrap and explore the complexities related to an individual's subjective perceptions and experiences of her everyday lifeworld. The focus falls on the interpretive nature of a lived experience.

From a phenomenological perspective, attention is given to the essence and uniqueness of lived experience. Emphasis is placed on an individual's subjective understanding in relation to socially sanctioned cultural norms and ideals of what is considered desirable or not, as viewed along a continuum of interventions from temporary beautification tactics, such as wearing make-up, to the more permanent strategy of aesthetic surgery. To achieve a deeper appreciation of the phenomenon of cosmetic surgery and female embodiment, the study engages Alfred Schütz's phenomenological themes of the "lifeworld," "stock of knowledge and consciousness," "subjectivity and intersubjectivity," "embodiment," as well as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's "social

construction of reality." These thematic approaches provide the research a structured context for unwrapping unique moments and understandings within the lived experience—particularly in as far as self-perceptions, emotions, and meaningfulness are concerned.

As meanings are socially constructed, we try to understand the interaction between self, other, and society as manifested in the reasons why a woman opted for a surgical intervention and how this cosmetic "action and choice" influences her self-perception—and more specifically, how it constructs her personal identity, femininity, gendered embodiment, and (dis)empowerment. The cosmetic encounter is subjectively experienced. However, due to processes of social dialectics,[2] intersubjectivity plays a vital role in how the individual views herself, interacts with and understands others, and how she acts to be socially correct. These lifeworld experiences influence how an individual perceives and (re)constructs her sense of self—emotionally and personally. Clandinin (2007:186 and 294) agrees: "Individuals construct their identities through their own and other's stories…People can control the meanings that others hear in their stories through 'positioning' themselves in socially acceptable ways *vis-à-vis* their narratives." To present a reflexive methodological account and analysis of the narratives, we apply Bamberg's (2012:101) "narrative practice perspective" and Creswell's (2014:197) "six step model" to structure and guide the data processing, analysis, and presentation process.

In keeping with its focus on female experiences, we approach the research from a feminist perspective, notably the third wave liberal feminist ideas of Kathy Davis and Iris Marion Young. Davis (1995; 2003) sees women as conscious and self-determined members of society. To understand why a woman obtains a cosmetic procedure, it is important to explore her narrative in relation to themes of "identity," "agency," and "morality" (Davis 1995:11). *Identity* deals with how an individual engages her subjective sense of self, including how she perceives herself in relation to her appearance, and the perceived flawed body part (Davis 1995:11). *Agency* is concerned with how an individual understands her sense of self in relation to her social reality—how she gives shape to her lifeworld

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2   Social dialectics is the mediation of "taken for granted knowledge…This is the knowledge that is learned in the course of socialization and that mediates the internalization within individual consciousness of the objectivated structures of the social world" (Berger and Luckmann 1991:83). In other words, social dialectics represent the subject's internalization of "socially agreed norms, values, and beliefs" (Heggenstaller 2018:15).

within everyday social constraints and interactions (Davis 1995:11). *Morality* is generally perceived as a concept dealing with right or wrong. However, in Davis's study, "morality" focuses on a woman's "action and choice," which signifies that a cosmetic intervention can be motivated as a legitimate solution to overcome or renegotiate emotional suffering and pain (Davis 1995:11).

Young (2005:35), on the other hand, views women as limited by their gendered body—in bodily movement, gesture, and posture. She uses the term *feminine motility* to refer to a woman's potential for undertaking certain movements which are not, perhaps, associated with normative notions of "femininity." To unwrap the complexities of feminine motility and gendered embodiment, she proposes a deeper appreciation of three key processes: "inhibited intentionality," "ambiguous transcendence," and "discontinuous unity" (Young 2005:36-38). The first modality, *inhibited intentionality*, explores a woman's emotional insecurity with her own body in so far as how the gendered body "reaches toward a projected end with an 'I can' [attitude, but] withholds its fully bodily commitment to a self-imposed 'I cannot' [attitude]" (Young 2005:36). The second modality, *ambiguous transcendence*, is concerned with how an individual perceives her embodied sense of self while engaging with her social world. This implies that a woman "often lives her body as a burden, which must be dragged and prodded along and at the same time protected" (Young 2005:36). The last modality, *discontinuous unity*, points to how the female body expresses a sense of disunity between aims and actions. This disunity results in a woman continuously trying to realign her self-perceptions with her everyday lifeworld (Young 2005:38). Therefore, "discontinuous unity" explores the female body as a "thing that exists [to be] looked at and acted upon" (Young 2005:39).

By incorporating the feminist frameworks of Davis and Young, the study analyzes both the *emotional*, as well as the *physical* consequences/limitations experienced by the individual. In other words, the study aims to bring new understandings of how body dissatisfaction and its associated emotional pain motivates a woman to permanently change or reshape her perceived body flaw or shortcoming by employing cosmetic surgery.

What Is Beauty?

There are a myriad of positions in relation to the long-debated notion of what is beautiful and what constitutes beauty. The challenge is often encapsulated in the saying: "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" (Margaret Wolfe Hungerford 1878 as cited in Kendall-Tackett and Klest 2013:63). If this is so, then beauty is constructed, negotiated, positioned, and experienced, for the most part, subjectively. Anna Rocco (2015:1) agrees:

> Beauty is not objective; there are many definitions. It is the way that one expresses their passions, or the way that someone can smile or laugh and light up an entire room…This is what true beauty looks like, and this is how we are supposed to redefine beauty, by bringing it back to the true form, which is open for every single person's individual beauty.

From a radical feminist perspective, beauty is seen as "a cultural practice and one that is damaging to women" (Jeffreys 2005:6). This cultural practice sees a woman adapting to and incorporating various beauty regiments into her everyday lifeworld. According to Bromley (2012:79), such practices "are prescribed by patriarchy [and include but are not limited to]…dieting, wearing makeup, hair styling, plastic surgeries, and shaving various body parts." Second wave radical feminists argue that such practices are symptomatic of women as "cultural dopes" (Garfinkel 1967:68). They maintain that a woman often thinks that she actively participates in her lifeworld and social reality, (falsely) believing that she has a sense of freedom via her "choices." However, these "choices" are a myth and, more ominously, a construction mobilized by the patriarchal system to control and oppress women. Jeffreys (2005:1-2) confirms this position:

> beauty practices are not about women's individual choice or a "discursive space" for women's creative expression, but, as other radical feminist theorists have argued before me, a most important aspect of women's oppression… beauty [is] identified as oppressive to women.

In our study, this radical point of view is renegotiated by considering an individual's unique lifeworld encounters, her agency, identity, and voicing of subjective moments and motivations. Liberal feminism aims to understand the emotional consequences of an experience and does not practice a "one size fits all" approach where "men are the enemy" (Bartlett 2004:105; Jeffreys 2005:26; hooks 2015:78). Rather, third wave feminist thinking probes and

unearths thoughts, feelings, meanings, as well as emotions that influence how an individual perceives her sense of self. From a liberal perspective, female "beauty" lies in and is emphasized via an individual's experience and sense of her "identity," "agency," and "morality" (Davis 1995:11). Therefore, feminine "beauty" is unique and reflects an individual's inner qualities and essence. Thus, the pursuit of beauty may not be predominantly about the suppression of women, but rather an expression of their own free will and liberation. It is from this perspective that the chapter develops and advances.

Feminist Thinking and Cosmetic Surgery

Since the 1830s the feminist movement has gained momentum and popularity. This is due to their success in re-negotiating patriarchal gender norms and advancing their feminine struggle, particularly for the political vote. The significance of obtaining the vote challenged conventional gender roles that were reinforced in common law, as well as in marriage vows. Up until then a woman was considered to be largely the property of her husband and her main duties were to serve and please him. Thus, for women, the right to vote was the first step to gendered empowerment in the form of social equality. It was within this context that *first wave* feminism was born.

Due to the persistence of deep-seated and socially sanctioned gender inequalities, the feminist movement grew into the *second wave* struggle of the 1960s. This saw progressive women protesting outside parliaments and redefining traditional gender norms by shaving their heads. It was also this outspoken class of women that drew the gender-based battle lines, positioning men as the cause and catalyst of inequality, and thus the enemy.

> For feminists, the obvious and quite legitimate ideological "other" and enemy has been the quintessential dominant class itself—men. [Schacht and Ewing 2004:5]

Second wave radical feminists understand feminine beautification and cosmetic reshaping of the body as forms of patriarchal oppression. Women change their physical appearance—temporarily or permanently—to meet socially constructed ideals of beauty mainly to satisfy patriarchal norms and the male gaze. This perspective implies that aesthetically inclined women are nothing more than

subservient individuals. It is this kind of female subservience Ira Levin (1972) had in mind when coining the term the "Stepford Wife"[3] and what is further elaborated on in Harold Garfinkel's (1967:68) notion of the "cultural dope." Cosmetic surgery is, therefore, overwhelmingly perceived as a demeaning and disempowering act, to the individual herself and to society as a whole.

Liberal—or *third wave*—feminists challenge this stigmatized view by redirecting the focus towards understanding change in the everyday lives of women. This change engages notions related to gender equality and liberation over traditional patriarchal ideals (hooks 2000:44 and 47). The underlying aim of feminism is to empower women who are sexually exploited, oppressed, and deserving of equal rights. The philosophy within the liberal feminist movement is focused on gender equality and emancipation in order to move away from male oppression. Liberal feminists recognize that men too can have a feminist orientation and play an important role in bringing about gender equality. The following quotes illustrate that Kathy Davis and Iris Marion Young are not alone in their liberal views. Other feminist thinkers have also challenged the radical perspective:

> Those feminist activists who refuse to accept men as comrades in struggle— who harbor irrational fears that if men benefit in any way from feminist politics, women lose—have misguidedly helped the public view feminism with suspicion and disdain…it is urgent that men take up the banner of feminism and challenge patriarchy. The safety and continuation of life on the planet requires feminist conversion of men. [hooks 2000:115-116]

> …we do not want you to mimic us, to become the same as us; we don't want your pathos or your guilt; and we don't even want your admiration…what we want, I would even say what we need, is your work. We need you to get down to serious work. And like all serious work, that involves struggle and pain…you see, you have all of your work before you, not behind you. We as feminists need your work…we need you as traveling companions into the twenty-first century. [Jardine and Smith 2013:60]

This inclusive and hospitable re-positioning of feminism not only offers men liberation from the imposition of the one-dimensional role of "oppressor," it also re-positions women in relation to their own choices and actions, recognizing

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3   Stepford Wife—refers to "a married woman who submits to her husband's will and is preoccupied by domestic concerns and her own personal appearance" (see: http://www.dictionary.com/browse/stepford. Retrieved October 11, 2016).

that they are not mere puppets, but *self*-actualizing beings. It is within this liberal view that we situate our analysis of participants' experiences. This is in line with Davis's (2003:110) notion that "cosmetic surgery [is] a way [for women] to take control over their circumstances over which they previously had no control."

Liberal feminists such as bell hooks, Kathy Davis, Debra Gimlin, and Victoria Pitts-Taylor (2007) have opened our eyes to an alternative and renewed understanding of women's rights. They have focused on issues such as body dissatisfaction, cosmetic surgery, identity re-negotiation, media icons, images, and the embodied experience (Snyder 2008). Kathy Davis sought to understand why women undergo a medical intervention for a purely cosmetic purpose. In her findings—not accepted by all feminists—she argues that women who rely on cosmetic surgery often do so to mirror their "true" sense of self or identity. The body becomes a conduit and means of reflecting positive aspects of how the individual sees and feels about herself.

> Cosmetic surgery is not the expression of the cultural constraints of femininity, nor is it a straightforward expression of women's oppression or of the normalization of the female body through the beauty system… cosmetic surgery does, however, allow the individual woman to renegotiate her relationship to her body and, in so doing, construct a different sense of self. [Davis 2003:84-85]

Third wave liberal feminist thinking looks at an individual's subjective experiences and emotionality. Accordingly, we examine the emotional incongruence, and even emotional pain, that is experienced when the physical body is not experienced as a true reflection of how the individual constructs her sense of self.

The Male Gaze

The objectification of women has long been of concern to feminists, one of which was Laura Mulvey (1975:4) who coined the phrase "the male gaze"—a "sexual imbalance" in how men view women. It also denotes the patriarchal dominance that pressurizes women to conform to physical appearances that please the male understanding of beauty. Mulvey (1975:4) elaborates:

> In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leit-motif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to striptease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire.

From this perspective, the male gaze implies that the natural female body is inferior and in need of modification—an idea which is firmly established in "propagating patriarchic values" (Wegenstein 2012:152). Furthermore, by remodeling the body, cosmetic surgery and bodily interventions are seen predominantly as "facilitators" to the male fantasy and desire (Wegenstein 2012:160).

The male gaze does not take into consideration a woman's "identity" or own idea of herself. Rather, it typifies a simplistic physical sensibility which is aimed at pleasing the male senses (Mulvey 1975; Levine 2005; Kosut 2012). In short, she becomes a sexual object. Wegenstein (2012:152) suggests that through the idolization of celebrities and the insatiable need for fame, "the cosmetic gaze" became an offshoot of "the male gaze" and that this further exemplifies "disarticulated bodies" that are "sutured" together and presented, as well as "experienced as beautiful." Cindy Davis and Melanie Katzman (1999:58) comment:

> In Western cultures, girls are influenced by unrealistic "Barbie-doll" body shape and constantly told that this is beautiful, whereas boys are influenced by muscular images and told that they should be big and strong. Television, movies, and magazines provide constant messages about the ideal standard of beauty and how one should look and behave.

The message endorsed and reinforced by a plethora of media platforms is that a woman's identity is linked to, and defined by, that of her male counterpart, who is the main protagonist of his, as well as her lifeworld (Kosut 2012:195). This very one-sided perspective is challenged by Zeisler (2008:7) who notes that it is crucial to reform women's understandings of popular culture by integrating a strong feminist position into all media messages. Virginia Blum (2003:61) expands this point:

> It is the image itself with which we are infatuated…the beauty of images symbolizes what is now experienced as their essential lure, and plastic surgery is the cultural allegory of transforming the body into an image, an allegory that is deeply linked to the effects of celebrity culture.

We agree that with a more noticeable feminist presence in the media, women who do not meet dominant norms of beauty can be motivated to view themselves more positively. This can build greater solidarity amongst women, promoting stronger satisfaction, as well as acceptance of the natural form. Furthermore, a stronger feminist point of departure may also emphasize that beauty is in the "eye of the beholder" and not a replica of a consumer image where women aim to reshape themselves to reflect a generic sameness (Kendall-Tackett and Klest 2013:63). Each individual is unique unto herself, in looks and character. What is deemed beautiful should not be dictated by a celebrity culture and the mediatization of thin, tanned models who enhance their sexual appeal to capture the male gaze. Women should rather strive to accept beauty as an outer manifestation of inner health and happiness.

Unfortunately for many women, this remains a utopian ideal. When the individual feels that her body does not accurately represent her sense of self, she may experience emotions of shame, anxiety, and disembodiment. Appearance plays a big role in how women are perceived, judged, and accepted. George Eliot's injunction: "don't judge a book by its cover,[4]" alerts us to the power, yet superficiality, of appearance in shaping everyday encounters.

A different dynamic can occur when an individual strives to obtain a cosmetic procedure under her own volition. According to Featherstone (Gimlin 2002:60), "the body does indicate selfhood, but the link between self and body can be renegotiated through work on the body." When an individual decides to have a particular body part reshaped, via cosmetic surgery, the intervention is used to "approximate an 'ideal' in a reflexive identity project" (Southerton 2011:367). For such an undertaking to have a positive outcome on an individual's lifeworld, it must be done purely for herself and her own self-esteem (Peacock 2013:1). If the cosmetic intervention is obtained to satisfy or please a significant other, the individual may experience an incongruence between her physical appearance and her true sense of self. This incongruence can fracture the bond between body

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4   See: http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/444526-don-t-judge-a-book-by-its-cover. Retrieved November 08, 2016.

and identity resulting in trauma, or worse, an identity crisis. A most interesting notion in terms of obtaining such congruence is that for some women the overall goal of cosmetic surgery may not be to become a beauty, but to become "like everybody else" (Davis 2003:77).

Methodological Notes

The study follows a qualitative design and aims to interpretively explore the lived experiences of women who undertook cosmetic surgery for beauty purposes. More specifically, the research follows a narrative approach. Michael Bamberg's (2012:101) "narrative practice perspective" was incorporated to structure, guide, and situate the data collection and analytical processes. Narrative methodology is ideal for gathering data for this particular topic because the approach allows participants to tell their stories sequentially over time—with each story having a beginning, a middle, and an end. A narrative approach provides participants with a platform to tell their lifestories. For us, narratives were an entry point for in-depth insight into how participants perceive and interpret their lifeworld, their personal identity, and social reality. Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews, led by the interview schedule. The schedule was designed to probe particular experiences and thoughts and to reveal the various subjective and intersubjective positions embraced by the research participants as revealed in their personal and shared emotional meanings, verbal explanations, and word choices.

Interviews were audio recorded (with participants' consent). The raw data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed in accordance to Creswell's (2014:197) "six step model," that is, "organizing and preparing data for analysis," "reading through all data," "coding the data," "themes/description," "interrelating themes/description," and "interpreting the meaning of themes/descriptions." Both Bamberg's (2012:101) "narrative practice perspective" and Creswell's (2014:197) "six step model" contributed to ensure the value, validity, and trustworthiness of the study—in data collection, data analysis, and presentation of the findings. The study obtained ethical clearance from the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Free State (UFS-HUM-2014-70).

The research participants are women from a middle-to-upper class White demographic, between the ages of 25 to 67, from the Free State Province, South

Africa. This privileged socio-economic status gave the participants access to private medical care, and it was through a registered cosmetic surgeon that they were purposefully selected. Selection criteria were based on participants' undergoing an elective aesthetic intervention in either abdominoplasty, lipoplasty, blepharoplasty, breast augmentation, and/or breast lift. Interviews were conducted with ten women.

Presenting the Findings

The following discussion explores how the research participants negotiated (consciously, emotionally, and physically) their cosmetic intervention. We incorporate direct quotes, using the participant's voice, to illuminate why she opted for cosmetic surgery, and how she renegotiated her feminine sense of self. Moreover, this enabled us to establish if and how her aesthetic encounter submitted to, or disrupted, notions of patriarchal obedience and the male gaze.

Why Rely on Cosmetic Surgery?

Given the negative connotations often associated with cosmetic surgery, a main focus of the study was to understand why women rely on a surgical intervention to reshape a perceived flaw or shortcoming. As second wave radical feminist thinking is positioned in the understanding that women are pressured, mainly by men and society, to meet certain beauty ideals—where cosmetic surgery is seen as an acceptable method to gain social approval and appease the male gaze. However, as argued by theorists such as Kathy Davis, this is a demeaning way to look at how beauty is perceived by the women who rely on various modes of beautification to achieve the look they want. So, to explore this, we engaged the research participants directly to hear first-hand why they decided to obtain cosmetic surgery. In a comment broadly representative of all participants, Eleanor says:

> You see, everybody has their own battle with their body…You are going to find a problem with something. And cosmetic surgery has made it possible to adapt and change the stuff that you do not like. [Eleanor—breast augmentation]

When a simplistic view of cosmetic surgery is used, women are often seen as "cultural dopes" (Garfinkel 1967:68) when they change the way they look in pursuit of meeting socially constructed beauty ideals. When probing further, our

participants revealed that cosmetic surgery was used predominantly to correct a body part that could not be reshaped/minimized/enlarged through exercise, diet, or dermatological products. They saw their surgical interventions as a last resort, despite the associated dangers of a medical procedure and the inevitability of social stigma, potentially positioning them as vain, unnatural, and fake:

> I was struggling to get to the point where I realized that something had to be done…For me, it was a personal thing to get over this plastic surgery thing in my mind. Um…to do it not for the outside but for the inside, for me. [Georgia—blepharoplasty]

> I just fixed something. I didn't change something, because I was not happy. I fix something, because it wasn't supposed to look like that. [Bridget—rhinoplasty and lipoplasty]

> After the children it was the sagging breasts and the floppy tummy. They really stretched me like, till my limit…For 9 years it bothered me. So, now I am exactly the same…I am just maintaining. [Abby—breast augmentation, abdominoplasty, and lipoplasty]

> I couldn't see anymore. The [eyelid] skin that's hanging here, I always looked as if I had some liquor in. [Hailey—blepharoplasty]

These extracts reveal that some participants rely on cosmetic surgery for health-related reasons (for instance, sagging eyelids impairing vision), while for others it is about achieving a body more in line with what they once had (reshaping the body after pregnancy) or to feel better about themselves (self-image). None of the participants' aesthetic motivations were about attracting a new relationship or *saving* an existing marriage/relationship, although some participants did mention a more positive sexual charge in their marriage after their interventions. Diane says:

> My husband told me the other day: "Some men are boob men and other men are bum men," and he's a boob guy. He likes boobs. So, he loved it from the beginning. Since I've done this, the second procedure, he can't stop giving me compliments. He says it every day…So, every day is like [makes romantic sounds]. [Diane—breast lift and breast augmentation]

The data show that there are many nuances and subtleties involved in women opting for a cosmetic intervention; they should not simply be labeled "cultural dopes" who strive for social desirability and acceptance within the patriarchal

system embodied by the male gaze (Garfinkel 1967:68). In relation to participants who did speak of their partners' approval of their intervention, and the new sexual charge in their relationship, we ask: would it not be better to think of sexual partnership and sexual desire as being *mutually* constructed and not just a function of the male gaze and male sexual drive? We argue that participants are self-determined individuals who actively sought to change a perceived body flaw/shortcoming with the aim of experiencing a more embodied and congruent sense of self. Embodiment reveals how an individual perceives and engages her gender identity in so far as her sense of femaleness[5] and femininity is concerned. Simone de Beauvoir (1956:65) summarizes, "a woman is a female to the extent that she feels herself as such."

Feeling Like a Woman

Having motivated why cosmetic surgery was a justifiable solution to reshaping their bodies, the research participants revealed how they renegotiated their emotional sense of self. According to Robinson and Eid (2017:99), when cosmetic surgery is perceived as a surgical success, women are more likely to experience an increased sense of emotional "well-being, life satisfaction, and body image satisfaction." This emotional re-negotiation further reflects how the individual experiences her femaleness and femininity. This is particularly evident when probing the physical changes of pregnancy:

> I think it is very unfair for us, we have babies. Our belly grows 100 times from what it was and then after the babies we have to try get back into shape…After the children, my body went down and my breasts got saggy. I felt used! After the breast augmentation, I feel feminine again. So, cosmetic surgery does have everything to do with how you feel about yourself and your femininity. [Kim—breast augmentation and breast lift]

Feelings related to femininity play a vital role in how a woman perceives her sense of self and how she engages her everyday lifeworld. When the body is experienced as incongruent and not an accurate reflection of the self, the individual refrains from using her physical body—in movement, gesture, and posture—to its full potential (Young 2005:35). The body then becomes a burden

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5   Femaleness "is defined by the apparent outward shape of the sex organs" (Tyler 2008:90).

and this influences how the individual experiences her identity as a woman, mother, and lover. Joanne says:

> After children, you don't feel pretty. You don't have breasts and you don't feel like a woman…I didn't want to have sex because my breasts were hanging…I did my breasts, suddenly I feel pretty again and I feel I want to have sex…You feel sexy. I feel like a woman again, I have breasts. [Joanne—breast augmentation]

It seems that the mentioning of "hanging skin" often has a negative association *vis-à-vis* femininity. Hailey expands on this when describing her facial appearance:

> I was always too shy to take my glasses off…It looks as if I was always drunk, really! [Hailey—blepharoplasty]

When a woman comes to the realization that her body displays a shortcoming or flaw, either with drooping breasts or sagging skin, she starts moving to a re-negotiation of her self-understanding in terms of beauty and femininity. This re-negotiation promotes the cosmetic intervention as a plausible and justifiable "action and choice" that could lead to rediscovering congruent gendered embodiment/femininity (Davis 1995:11).

> After breast feeding, everything is sagging. You are just one big blob. You feel like this worn out person. You feel old. You're a mom now, you're a wife, and you really feel washed out. And after the surgery…I feel younger...It feels like I am finding myself again piece by piece. [Diane—breast augmentation and breast lift]

The study reveals that the inner quality of "self-confidence" is a key characteristic to unlocking a woman's sense of feminine embodiment.

> What makes a woman beautiful is confidence! And with confidence you have confidence in your own body. I would say that if you are confident in your own skin, then the confidence comes out and that's what makes a woman beautiful. [Eleanor—breast augmentation]

Are beauty ideals socially constructed and promoted for patriarchal approval as exemplified by the male gaze or is the need to feel beautiful a subjective desire that influences how a woman expresses herself physically and emotionally? We should be hospitable to the possibility that when a woman *feels* good about her looks, it may also influence *the eye of the beholder*, which, after all, is receptive

to more than mere outer beauty. If beauty and femininity are subjective, then it may be altogether plausible that beautification becomes a form of self-empowerment. We continue this discussion by exploring how the research participants experienced patriarchal oppression and how their reshaped bodies influenced their gendered perceptions, understandings, as well as daily actions and interactions.

Re-Negotiating Patriarchal Ideals

From a second wave radical feminist perspective, reshaping or beautifying the female body is seen as complying with the male gaze and with male supremacy as embedded in patriarchal ideals. In this view, women are seen as part of an oppressed class. Any form of beautification—from applying cosmetic/dermatological products to the enlarging/minimizing/reshaping of the female body—is done to enhance, and even benefit, men's lives. Thus, from this feminist framework, "men are the enemy." This point is reaffirmed by Redstockings (1969: point III), "all men receive economic, sexual, and psychological benefits from male supremacy. All men have oppressed women…We identify the agents of our oppression as men." However, third wave liberal feminist ideas were used to guide and structure this research undertaking. According to Heywood and Drake (1997:2-3), third wave liberal feminism is "a movement that contains elements of second wave critique of beauty culture, sexual abuse, and power structures while it also acknowledges and makes use of the pleasure, danger, and defining power of those structures."

The study finds that sentiments, as expressed in the second wave radical feminist outlook, are not experienced by the research participants. Rather, these women emphasize a more open and equality-based relationship with their male partners. No participant reveals that her partner/lover used verbal intimidation, force, or violence to motivate her to cosmetically change her appearance.

> I did this for nobody else. Not at all. [Abby—abdominoplasty and lipoplasty]

The participants are aware of the stigma attached to cosmetic surgery and how reshaping the body is commonly associated with a male partner's desire or even will. However, it was made clear that the cosmetic "action and choice" was a subjective and personal decision.

My husband just thought: "Why do you want to do it? You are still beautiful!" And I said: "I WANT TO DO IT!"…I decided for this a long time ago. You can't say: "No!" Because I am paying for it myself. I am not asking for your money. I didn't even ask his permission. [Cate—breast augmentation and breast lift]

He was like: "If you want to change it, then change it." But, it took him a while to get used to the idea of this. [Isabel—abdominoplasty]

In one of the cases, a participant went against her husband's will and support when deciding to surgically change her physical appearance.

My husband wasn't very supportive. From the beginning he said: "No, it wasn't necessary"…I wanted the breast augmentation, but he said he didn't think it was necessary! Why do I want to go for it? He thinks I'm fine like I am! He loves me like I am! [Kim—breast augmentation and breast lift]

When one of the participants decided to reshape a perceived flaw or shortcoming, her significant other/husband jokingly requested she *also* consider a breast augmentation. This can rightfully be interpreted as a negative judgment arising out of the male gaze. What a narrow second wave feminist view of women-as-object does not account for is the potential of women to resist such construction by disrupting male-domination and owning of their own power:

My husband said: "Okay, next thing, boobs!" I asked him: "What's wrong with my boobs?" There is absolutely nothing wrong with them! They are 48 years old. Even if my husband said he will pay for my boobs to be done, I will not do it…I decide what I do. [Bridget—lipoplasty]

This reveals that some men are aware of and, to certain degrees, are influenced by the stereotypical ideas commonly associated with the male gaze where beauty is directly linked to a generic notion of sexuality as "sameness." This verbalizing of his subjective desire is an acceptable part of the marriage relationship. Nonetheless, it is also coercive and as such confirms that second wave feminist claims of male superiority and female oppression co-exist in complex interplay with more liberal manifestations of women's freedom to choose for herself. Given this complex interchange of old and new, of the ever-changing balancing act of gender power and (in)equality, it is important that cosmetic surgery is a topic that is openly discussed in a relationship, but that the ultimate decision to

reshape/change the body is made by the woman herself. Georgia emphasizes this principle:

> When your husband loves you or you have a boyfriend and he is true of heart, he won't ask you to do this. [Georgia—blepharoplasty]

Cosmetic surgery undertaken for the self brings a sense of self-empowerment to a woman's actions and choices. She actively pursues her own desires, sometimes overlooking her husband/partner's wishes, to experience a renewed sense of femininity and embodiment. The middle-to-upper class White South African women who participated in our research indicated that they renegotiated the stereotypical notion of the mindless "cultural dope" who presents herself as the proverbial "Stepford Wife" (Garfinkel 1967; Levin 1972). By following their own wants and desires, the research participants renegotiated their feminine position/status in a predominantly patriarchal South African system—as independent and empowered women.

The Journey to Empowerment

Key points associated with self-empowerment are: "choice," "subjectivity," and "motive." Depending on how participants managed their emotional incongruence and pain, a cosmetic procedure can be, and in most cases was, undertaken as a "last resort." Other temporary techniques were pursued, but with little to no success in changing negative perceptions of the body image and the self. In this context, a permanent solution is desirable.

> I was exercising very hard. I was very confident in myself. Because I had everything that bothered me fixed by myself…The one problem, after doing a lot of exercise and losing a lot of weight, if I lie on my side, I had this budge moving around with me and when I bent over, it feels like my tummy is just falling out…The tummy tuck. It's after the children, it's a change in appearance that you couldn't have stopped beforehand. Now I'm just reversing it…not changing it. [Isabel—abdominoplasty]

When the cosmetic intervention was approached as a "last resort," the participants knowingly or unknowingly started a journey towards self-empowerment. They began with the "research phase," actively seeking additional knowledge on and insight into their desired procedure—by sourcing information from Google, family members, friends and mentors, a general medical practitioner, and/or a

registered cosmetic surgeon. This process was termed "doing your homework" and revealed that the acquired information empowered the participants in "action and choice."

> Doing your homework actually makes you feel more comfortable and strengthened. [Georgia—blepharoplasty]

This led to the next phase "finding a cosmetic surgeon." The participants continued to do their homework by finding a certified and registered plastic surgeon who they felt comfortable within terms of personal appeal and surgical skill. The last phase saw the participants "find the courage" to actively obtain the aesthetic intervention. The process entails: re-negotiating her emotional insecurities in order to experience her femininity and lifeworld with a more congruent sense of embodiment.

When a research participant decides to have her body cosmetically reshaped, social perceptions traditionally favor the understanding that the body work was done for or because of the input of a male counterpart. This view is commonly accepted by second wave radical feminists. However, by personally engaging women who experienced a cosmetic journey—and who perceived their aesthetic journeys as a success—an alternative perspective comes to the fore. Once the participants had decided to employ cosmetic surgery, they *informed* their husband/significant other of their "action and choice."

> I told him it was for myself…He said he didn't think it was necessary! Why do I want to go for it? He thinks I'm fine like I am…So, I went through this alone. He never watched or never helped or anything. [Kim—breast augmentation and breast lift]

> "[Cosmetic surgery] is not for you, it's for me!" I couldn't care less if it bothered my husband, I would do it anyway...It is for me! [Cate—breast augmentation and breast lift]

What we see from these narratives is that negative notions related to body dissatisfaction prompt a disruption in an individual's sense of self and lifeworld. However, in each of the narrative accounts above, a unified and overwhelmingly positive experience emerges in relation to cosmetic surgery. These participants regard their aesthetic interventions as signs of courage and self-empowerment.

> It [cosmetic surgery] empowered my mind and feelings. My procedure empowered me to be a woman again. [Joanne—breast augmentation]

These narratives illustrate that cosmetic surgery and self-empowerment are not one-dimensional but rather multi-faceted experiences that encourage a renewed sense of positive female embodiment, self-worth, and confidence. This challenges radical feminist frameworks that proclaim disempowering notions and effects of aesthetic surgery, and instead, brings evidence to show that cosmetic surgery can be an important way to discover and celebrate the self.

Conclusion

We find that when a woman decides to employ cosmetic surgery for herself (with or without her significant partner's approval), she empowered herself and challenged radical feminist perceptions associated with notions of an all-powerful male control. Confidence is the most prominent change in the participants' self-perceptions and forms the basis for all other "inner" re-negotiations and transformations. With a renewed sense of confidence, other qualities were transformed: qualities such as femininity, self-worth, self-assurance, gendered embodiment, and self-empowerment. Each of these inner qualities is vital to how participants perceive themselves. In turn, these qualities influence how they experience—physically and emotionally—their lifeworld and social reality.

Participants reported that their cosmetic procedure was a "last resort," and by following through with it they managed to overcome emotional incongruence in so far as renewing their sense of confidence. It also allowed them to experience themselves as "true"—enjoying an enhanced sense of gendered embodiment (femininity) and self-empowerment (self-confidence). This positions beautification via an elective cosmetic procedure as a *solution*—albeit potentially risky—to reshaping the rejected body. Undergoing a cosmetic procedure is not experienced as an oppressive act that strengthens ideals based on patriarchal views. On the contrary, participants' narratives showed that by undergoing their cosmetic procedures, they felt empowered to "action their choice." Irrespective of the surgical risks and complications, each of the research participants claims that she made the right decision to undergo a surgical intervention to change a part of her body that she disliked and rejected. Thus, this research makes a contribution by exposing the simplistic and stereotypical interpretations of the

deep-seated motivations for undergoing a cosmetic procedure as being limited and limiting. A third wave feminist view assists in avoiding "othering" of women who regard cosmetic surgery as an entirely acceptable alternative to enduring an unwanted physical feature that results in them experiencing an incongruent sense of self. Participants in the study demonstrate that cosmetic interventions are not just about the physical self—they are also, and perhaps even mainly, about an individual renewing her sense of femininity, confidence, embodiment, and empowerment as a woman, a mother, and a wife.

Second wave feminist literature suggests that women disempower themselves by physically altering their bodies to meet socially defined—and often male directed—perspectives of beauty. This feminist perspective is situated in opposition to patriarchal powers, where men are regarded as superior and women as inferior. However, when considering this phenomenon from a *third* wave feminist perspective, focus is concentrated on the person-centered and subjective nature of the cosmetic experience. This makes it possible to appreciate cosmetic surgery as an "action and choice" that empowers a woman and aids her to renegotiate her sense of self: to purposefully change her emotional experiences— her self-confidence, self-worth, and femininity. From this perspective, a cosmetic procedure is re-positioned as a means to renegotiate gendered embodiment and nurture self-empowerment.

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Beauty and the Cosmetic Secret[1]

ABSTRACT | *Cosmetic surgery is often linked to the perception that women who resist to cosmetic interventions to alter their physical appearance are vain, superficial, and narcissistic. Few investigations have acknowledged and explored the individual's personal motivations and experiences of her action and choice with regards to aesthetic surgery. By focusing on subjective experience, alternative insights can be gained on the cosmetic procedure/s and to how their reshaped body influences an individual's lifeworld experience. The chapter explores the perceived benefits and consequences of reshaping, enhancing, and/or reducing a perceived flaw or shortcoming of the body. From this exploration the focus moves to the individual's subjective and intersubjective perceptions: how she motivates and justifies her physical transformation whilst keeping private, and at times hiding, her surgical intervention. Drawing on narratives from several women, we attempt to understand how they experience cosmetic surgery in terms of their personal sense of self and their everyday social reality.*

Introductory Notes

Feminine enhancements and female beautifications are taken for granted in today's world. Many modern women go out of their way to emphasize their looks and sense of femininity. Improving and accentuating the feminine appearance includes styling hair, applying make-up, and wearing designer or specially shaped clothes. These everyday routines, seen and accepted as desirable daily practices, constantly reflect current trends in the beauty context. Fashions and fads are socially constructed and underpinned by social constraints, norms, and ideals—continuously reaffirmed by the mass media. Media platforms convey constant reminders that beauty and attractiveness are commodities; they are projected as

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portals to a glamorous lifestyle, to success, and even to romantic love. Beauty and the groomed presentation of the body have become deeply integrated into the everyday woman's lifeworld. The neglect of physical appearance can lead to an individual being considered unattractive and even ugly. And this can influence how she performs in her occupation, her lifeworld, and even on her perceived level of sexuality.

Beauty has become an important matter for women in the socially defined route to success. Most women judge their looks against socially constructed norms and if they perceive themselves to be flawed, or even to be lacking in some way, they project negative feelings and emotions onto themselves. This often results in a woman experiencing herself as ageing disagreeably, as unattractive, undesirable, or even ugly. When negative self-judgments are experienced as true, they get integrated into the individual's lifeworld. At this point an individual may start to consider actions and procedures to address this negative self-concept by altering her body to meet what she perceives as socially approved criteria.

Cosmetic surgery implies an elective medical procedure—or procedures—that permanently reshapes and beautifies a body part that is perceived as flawed. Social beliefs and understandings harbored in society often view women who consider and obtain a cosmetic procedure as vain, superficial, narcissistic, fake, and resorting to the "unnatural." As women interpret and react to their sense of self in relation to their emotional encounters and experiences, most rely on temporary techniques and methods to enhance their sense of embodiment, femininity, and self-worth. But, when temporary changes and enhancement to the body do not work or no longer prove satisfactory, a woman may consider cosmetic surgery to permanently reshape, enhance, or refine her perceived flaw or shortcoming. The surgical intervention is pursued and ultimately obtained with the hope of experiencing a renewed sense of balance in her self-perception, her emotions, and her lifeworld.

Feminists have long debated the social, emotional, and physical effects of electively reshaping the female form and questioned the influence that the surgical experience may have on a woman's sense of self and her role in society. Second wave radical feminist thinking[2] views women who are inclined to

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2   See section *Feminist Thinking and Cosmetic Surgery* in chapter 6 "Reflecting on Female Beauty."

resort to cosmetic surgery as fitting into and projecting a passive and dope-like mentality. This category of women relates her sense of agency to social ideals, celebrity culture, and male-directed desirability. The female body becomes a receptor of social meaning—revealing an individual's socio-economic class, as well as her cultural association—and thus a "symbol of society" (Douglas as cited in Shilling 2012:76). Third wave liberal feminism[3] challenges this submissive stereotype and proposes women as active agents in their lifeworld. The emphasis is on a woman's sense of self—her experiences, motivations, actions, as well as choices—in relation to the experience of her body and her decisions *vis-à-vis* her elective cosmetic surgery. Although large steps towards an open, accommodating, and gender sensitive society have been made, it is often the radical feminist perspective that dominates when discussing cosmetic surgery and women who opt for these interventions.

This chapter aims to explore and unwrap the complexities associated with cosmetic surgery and the influence of everyday social opinions. Emphasis is given to social perceptions, ideals, and stigmas; and how these influence the research participants' sense of the feminine self. Findings are illustrated with direct quotes from the narratives of ten women who talk about their aesthetic procedures. The interventions are blepharoplasty, abdominoplasty, lipoplasty, breast augmentation, and breast lift.

Theoretical and Methodological Underpinning

In terms of the study's epistemological points of departure, focus is given to the theoretical frameworks of Alfred Schütz (1967; 1970; Schütz and Luckmann 1973), Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1991), and John Creswell (2013; 2014). Integrating these authors' ideas allows us to employ phenomenological, social constructivist, and interpretivist lenses to understand female beauty, embodiment, gendered empowerment, and self-acceptance. Furthermore, against the backdrop of these theoretical frameworks we are able to explore gender related theories, particularly the *third wave* feminist perspectives of Kathy Davis (1995; 2003) and Iris Marion Young (2005). This kind of theoretical integration is encouraged by Uwe Flick (2009:17) who states that "qualitative

3   See section *Feminist Thinking and Cosmetic Surgery* in chapter 6 "Reflecting on Female Beauty."

research is not based on a unified theoretical and methodological concept. Various theoretical approaches and their methods characterize the discussions and the research practice." These theoretical frameworks are, therefore, brought together to guide and structure how the experiences of participants, and the way they give meaning to these experiences, are gathered, analyzed, and interpreted.

The philosophical assumptions of epistemology not only enable us to unpack what knowledge is. These assumptions also guide our understanding of how an individual's stock of knowledge is influenced by social interactions, and how selected methodological approaches may influence findings. Ontologically, the study tries to unwrap the realities in the lifeworlds of participants by exploring the social construction of knowledge (intersubjectivity), subjective memories and recall, and the cultural restraints of voicing particular experiences and standpoints that differ from socially sanctioned master or dominant narratives. As an individual's lifeworld relates to experiences, particular events can impact a woman's self-perception and self-understanding, and, in turn, these events serve to re-construct how she perceives and interacts with her social reality. It is within the context of this ever-perpetuating cycle in the re-construction of knowledge, memories, and perceptions that experiences come to be reframed and where new narratives emerge.

The study explores narratives of the embodied experience of cosmetic surgery and of the medicalization of female beauty in order to reveal new understandings of these phenomena. The objective is to understand what motivates an individual to decide to undergo an aesthetic medical procedure to correct a perceived bodily flaw or shortcoming. We relied on a qualitative research design to collect narrative data through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The data are analyzed within the thematic structures proposed by Kathy Davis (1995) and Iris Marion Young (2005). These two analytical frameworks are applied to ideas about an individual's *emotional* sense of self—her "identity," "agency," and "morality" (Davis 1995:11). At the same time, we take into consideration feminine motility, namely, *bodily movement*, as reflected in the concepts of "inhibited intentionality," "ambiguous transcendence," and "discontinuous unity" (Young 2005:35). Both Davis's (1995) and Young's (2005) frameworks are presented and critically discussed in the preceding chapter in this book, *Reflecting on Female Beauty: Cosmetic Surgery and (Dis)Empowerment* (cf. section *Theoretical Positioning of the Research*).

This study expands on existing knowledge and common perceptions of *beauty* by revealing the subjective voice of ten South African women speaking about their cosmetic experiences. Insights are gained on self-empowerment and embodiment, and how these concepts interface with each research participant's perception of herself, her femininity, and her sense of self-worth. Emphasis is also given to how thoughts, feelings, and emotions—before and after the cosmetic interventions—impact their everyday lifeworld and the (re)construction of their proximate social reality.

Ethical clearance was granted by the ethics committee of the Faculty of the Humanities at the University of the Free State (Reference number: UFS-HUM-2014-70). The ten research participants come from the middle-to-upper socio-economic group. Because of their demographic profile, they all accessed and experienced the private healthcare system. The research participants all obtained their cosmetic procedure from a professionally certified and registered plastic surgeon in Bloemfontein. Criteria for participation included women undergoing specifically the cosmetic procedures of blepharoplasty, lipoplasty, abdominoplasty, breast augmentation, and breast lift. Narrative data were collected in semi-structured, one-on-one, in-depth interviews, guided by an interview schedule. The narrative approach allowed participants to expand on their lived experiences, subjective thoughts, intersubjective encounters, as well as their feelings and emotions. Interviews were audio recorded (with participants' consent) and transcribed verbatim. The narratives were thematically analyzed and mined to unearth the depth and richness of the participants' cosmetic experience.

The Socialized Body

People are social beings who rely on intersubjective relationships to maintain acceptance within the context of their everyday social encounters. From a social constructivist understanding the body is "shaped, constrained, and even invented by society" (Shilling 2012:72). Social constructivists see the body as central to an individual's life, and the value that the individual places on her physical self as predominantly determined by "social or cultural structures" thereby rendering the body a "symbol of society" (Shilling 2012:72).

When looking at the body as a *symbol of society*, particular physical attributes of an individual lead others to evaluate her as either attractive or unattractive.

How an individual presents herself to others can also reflect other social indicators such as her socio-economic class and her cultural associations. From these indicators the observer can evaluate where a particular individual fits into society and its structures. Gardner and colleagues (as cited in Fiske, Gilbert, and Lindzey 2010:876) term this the "sociometer." People possess a social monitoring system that is triggered specifically by instances in which people become particularly concerned with their acceptance or belonging (Fiske, Gilbert, and Lindzey 2010:879). As social actors, we often rely on forms of classification and stereotypes to see if the individual fits the parameters of our particular social group.

Fitting socially constructed ideals and norms features strongly in our current digital age. Gadgets such as mobile phones, laptops, and tablets open countless apps and links that allow immediate notifications, updates, and responses to a desired group, theme, as well as socially approved ideals and understandings. These devices have made communication convenient and effortless. But, with rapid media updates—from breaking news to beauty trends—an individual is often left overwhelmed. With daily advancements of technology and the ease of access to media coverage, women are bombarded by socially sanctioned norms and can quite easily become dependent on meeting them, which can result in social, as well as personal insecurity. According to Roberts (2013:1):

> Media can contribute to low self-esteem, even when we are not conscious of it…when we see perfected, altered images, it leads to anxiety and low self-esteem. It can even play a role in many mental health disorders, as it sets up an unrealistic ideal and creates feelings of "I'm not good enough."

This positions the media as an avenue that portrays unrealistic and even dangerous standards of feminine beauty: thinness is one example. Women are expected to adapt to these socially constructed ideals and norms to be considered attractive and beautiful (Serdar 2014). However, what media enterprises conceal from the public is that the images that are placed in an issue of a magazine, on a billboard, or integrated into a televised advertisement aim to project an image of perfection in order to create a reaction of desire—for the toned body, the latest fashion, or perfectly manicured hair and nails. Thus, women are encouraged by society to become more attractive through reshaping their physical bodies. This process can lead some women to turn to cosmetic surgery in the hope of

attaining societal acceptance. As Shilling (2012:135) puts it, women mobilize their bodies as "physical capital."

The concept of *physical capital* views the body as a form of "social equity" that shapes and determines how an individual understands, interacts, and experiences her everyday lifeworld (Shilling 2012:136). By *social equity* Shilling (2012:135) is referring to the unequal

> social class-based opportunities people have for producing symbolically valued bodily forms and converting them into other resources…Power, status and distinctive symbolic forms that…are recognized in social fields.

To achieve a sense of social acceptance and status, an individual relies on civilizing the body through a more "mannered, structured pattern of bodily conduct" (Howson 2013:87). The civilized body reflects a sense of feminine compliance to meeting socially constructed beauty ideals and, thus, reflects self-worth and even perceived bodily value—namely, physical capital and social equity (Shilling 2012:135).

Identity and Appearance

How an individual experiences her everyday life influences how she views and understands herself. Women are continuously exposed to various media images and ideals, which generally portray an overwhelmingly American and European perception of beauty. Women who are particularly self-conscious and sensitized about their appearance are more inclined to incorporate beautifying ideals and fashion trends in their everyday lifeworlds.

According to Lewis (1971) and Skeggs (1997), if a woman has a poor emotional self-understanding, she is more likely to experience feelings of shame when not meeting socially acceptable standards of beauty (Northrop 2013:211). These feelings of not fitting socially accepted parameters of beauty may result in an individual fracturing her sense of self (identity) from her self-perception (appearance). Women, thus, renegotiate themselves by accessorizing their bodies with designer clothing, jewellery, and make-up to experience a desired level of emotional acknowledgement or social approval. When these emotional or social cues are not experienced, the individual may turn to more extreme measures such as cosmetic surgery. The Nuffield Council on Bioethics (2017:6) expands:

People have modified their bodies and shaped the image they present to others through their clothing, make-up, and hairstyles, as well as through more permanent techniques such as tattoos, piercings, and surgery. This modification of the body and presentation of the physical self is an intrinsic element of life as a social being: it makes identities visible, marks boundaries between different groups and classes of people, and expresses personal senses of dignity and pride.

When an individual renegotiates her sense of self via a cosmetic intervention, she indirectly reshapes her self-image. Pitts-Taylor (2007:89) observes that cosmetic interventions "fix broken relationships between the body and self, where the 'real' self came through by correcting the body…Cosmetic surgery is seen as a form of empowerment." Thus, when the body is reshaped or enhanced through beautification techniques, the individual renegotiates her attitude towards her body and, by association, her identity.

Surgical Interventions

The search for beauty has created an industry of consumption. This is fuelled by the constant reminders on media platforms that beauty and social position are linked; and that they are important commodities. Through marketing strategies, trends are established. These trends promote a desired "look" according to which women renegotiate their understanding of beauty and the body.

Cosmetic surgery is, therefore, presented as either tearing down the social morale and cultural values of the 21st century, or, alternatively, as a self-actualizing and liberating intervention that enables an individual to reshape her body in order to reflect her inner self-perception and identity (Frentzen 2008). Cosmetic surgery and beauty ideals are often attributed to vanity and superficiality. But, by casting aside these generalizations and by more deeply enquiring into why a cosmetic intervention is sought, Davis (2003:98) believes that we can reach a more empathic and enlightened view:

The problem with defining cosmetic surgery exclusively in terms of beauty is that recipients are easily cast as frivolous, star struck, or ideologically manipulated. In contrast, by treating cosmetic surgery as an intervention in identity, it becomes easier to take their experiences with their bodies seriously, acknowledge the gravity of their suffering, and understand why—in the face of all its drawbacks—cosmetic surgery might seem like their best course of action under the circumstances.

According to Dowling and colleagues (2013:7), by employing a cosmetic procedure to correct a perceived body flaw/shortcoming, an individual may improve her self-understanding and psychological well-being. This is supported by Castle and colleagues (2002); Honigman and colleagues (2004); Sadick (2008); and Fisher (2014), who agree that women who undergo a cosmetic procedure to enhance beauty can reveal an improved state of mind in relation to their bodies and social environments. Thus, to "maintain a positive identity" a cosmetic procedure can be justified (Gimlin 2002:50).

Presenting the Findings

The findings reflect some of the main issues raised in the narratives. We incorporate direct quotes to ensure that interpretation and discussion are grounded in the narrated segments and the research participants' experiences.

Body as an Indicator of Economic Status

According to Adams (2007:7-9), Nash and colleagues (2006:495), Hua (2013:110), and Laine Talley (2014:3), the middle-to-upper class female body often reveals signs of beautification, self-maintenance, and modification—temporary or permanent. By reshaping and emphasizing the female form in relation to "social and cultural constraints" (norms, trends, ideals), additional value and worth is accorded the feminine body (Shilling 2012:72). This points to the relationship between social class (symbol of society; physical capital; social equity) and body appearance (Shilling 2012:72, 135). Adams (2007:8) summarizes the issue: "Class can be encoded on the body." Beauty enhancement is often a "stratifying practice" by which an individual recreates her body to emphasize her status (Adams 2007:8-9). For the average middle-to-upper class woman, a high level of bodily maintenance is regarded as normal practice. Abby reflects this when talking about the mothers at her children's school:

> You can sit in your car at school and you can look at the parents, at the mothers and you can see…They have got the money, so they gonna do it, cosmetic surgery. They show it off to everybody, so they become a form of capital. [Abby—abdominoplasty]

Economic status is emphasized by the adornments of jewellery and designer clothing, using expensive dermatological products and make-up, and being

able to surgically change undesirable physical features. Jeffreys (2014:174) is of the opinion that the middle-to-upper class women accept these enhancements and alterations as part of their daily beauty maintenance. Beautification and cosmetic surgery are not seen as stigmatized acts, but rather as symbols of wealth and social class.

> Cosmetic surgery is not something that is very expensive. In today's day and age, you go for Botox or whatever…it is like a monthly thing, like going for a wax or going for your gel nails. [It] just becomes part of the regimen. And it is definitely an economic status…So, I think it has become a symbol. [Eleanor—breast augmentation]

Foo (2010), Balitaan (2011), Sepúlveda and Calado (2012), and Veldhuis (2014) agree that mass media do play a role in how beauty is perceived and negotiated. Social platforms have an impact on how an individual understands beauty norms and status. However, when probing this matter with the research participants, many emphasized that their cosmetic surgery was not an intervention to increase their physical value or popularity. Rather, most participants' cosmetic procedures related to their identity and self-understanding—experiencing their sense of self as represented through their physical appearance. The physical value commonly associated with the cosmetically reshaped body does not seem to be predominantly related to vanity or narcissism, but rather reflects a re-engagement with the lifeworld, as a self-assured and embodied individual.

We found that the research participants seem to employ cosmetic surgery to reverse the negative effects of pregnancy and breastfeeding or ageing. This reveals that notions related to female beautification—to reshape the body to resemble something different—were often not their primary concern. Rather, the research participants pursued their cosmetic interventions to reverse and restore their body back to its perceived natural form, particularly after the negative consequences of child bearing. Isabel elaborates:

> Like with the tummy tuck, it's after the children. It's a change in appearance you couldn't have stopped. I think if it [cosmetic surgery] betters your life, I agree you must go ahead and do it. [Isabel—abdominoplasty and lipoplasty]

Isabel's elective procedure was pursued to change her body back to her original, pre-childbearing, appearance. She did not use cosmetic surgery to redesign her body to meet a trend or fashionable shape. Rather, she had her cosmetic intervention

to reshape her abdominal region back to its pre-pregnancy appearance. Other narratives reveal that most of the research participants who obtained a cosmetic procedure in abdominoplasty or breast lift wanted to reshape their bodies after perceived negative consequences of pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Temporary Methods for Re-Negotiating the Body

Often the participants state that before their surgical intervention they employed various temporary techniques to redirect attention away from their perceived body flaw/shortcoming. These include padded brassieres, gel inserts, breast enhancing tablets and creams in an attempt to alter the appearance of the chest; elastic pants, loose fitting clothing, and micro-needling[4] to hide the excess fat or reduce the appearance of stretch marks on the stomach; and shaded spectacles and hair styling to conceal sagging skin around the eyes, as well as aging facial skin. These techniques appear to give the participants a temporary sense of being satisfied and/or emotionally aligned with their bodies. When an individual attempts to improve her appearance by applying an enhancing/ defining technique, she aims to temporarily renegotiate her physical appearance in terms of her self-concept. But, when a temporary technique is not perceived as successful, the individual may experience an emotional fracture between her perceived physical appearance and self-concept. This emotional disruption and incongruence can result in the individual experiencing feelings of shame and embarrassment that compromise her embodied sense of self.

Attempts at body shaping and appearance enhancement is no new/recent/ foreign concept to the modern woman (Pearson 2008). A review of literature reveals a great number of journals and books dedicated to the subject. The search term "temporary enhancements to breast appearance," when entered into the World Wide Web, returned 11 million results (Google 2016). These include sites featuring specialized boutiques for lingerie, self-help journals, blogs, magazine articles, electro-acupuncture, Eastern massaging techniques, and herbal remedies

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4   Micro-needling—also known as collagen induction therapy—"stimulates the body's own production of collagen, which is a connective tissue that gives skin its firmness and resilience. The procedure involves puncturing the skin multiple times with tiny needles to create a 'wound site' in the dermis layer which triggers the body's natural healing process. When the body perceives damage in the dermis, it generates new collagen which is then used to heal the original tear in the dermis that caused a stretch mark to appear" (Thérapie Clinic 2016).

in the form of pills and creams. When exploring the concept of temporary breast enhancements with the research participants, they seem to be well-informed of popular trends. Diane begins by mentioning external ointments that she had come across in health stores and pharmacies:

> There is, like, a cream that you can put on and it plumps it up. I know there are also pills that you can drink. You can buy it at Clicks or Dis-Chem…I don't know how long it has been on the market. I don't think it lasts. I think you need to keep on drinking the pills to have that effect that your boobs are fuller…but I never used it. [Diane—breast augmentation and breast lift]

Diane's hesitation regarding the success of these creams and pills is understandable, due to the continued need to ingest or apply the product to experience a temporary form of change and enhancement. However, for Joanne and some of her friends, trying the tablets gave them a sense of temporary empowerment:

> There was a certain pill on the market that you can drink and it will enlarge you. We went and we drank it, but it was not for long. We were desperately wanting a cleavage…But, the only thing that can help you with that [is] push up bras. [Joanne—breast augmentation]

Kim also tried an over-the-counter cream to enhance her breasts and restore an element of vitality to her chest and neck. But, with no visible change, she discontinued using it. This prompted her to revert to traditional brassieres, until she acquired additional knowledge about a more permanent solution:

> The neck and bust cream, um…I used that, but it doesn't do anything…I used to wear the lift bra [traditional padded and contouring brassieres] and the Wonder Bra, but I only used the bras to overcome the problem. [Kim—breast augmentation and breast lift]

After she researched online literature, she went for her first cosmetic consultation to discuss her dissatisfaction with a cosmetic surgeon:

> I told him: "I just don't want droopy boobs. I'm finished with droopy boobs [laughs]. I want the round boobs. I don't want to go too big because we are very active and I am just doing it for the lift." [Kim—breast augmentation and breast lift]

Cate and Eleanor never tried creams or tablets. They relied on other methods to get the desired effect. Brassieres were used as the main means of getting bigger, fuller, or firmer looking breasts. For Cate, the Wonder Bra was her way to enhance her appearance:

> Most of these bras have that little insert. I would take all my other bras' inserts [gel pads] out and put it in the one bra. So, it could push it up better. So, the breasts you have are sitting here [indicating high, firm, and in position]. [Cate—breast augmentation and breast lift]

Eleanor's candidness allowed us to probe her experiences easily, and at depth. Speaking about a time before her cosmetic intervention, a particular memory recurs, namely, how certain family members jokingly focused on her small sagging breasts, calling her:

> The one with *koei tieties* [Afrikaans for cow breasts]. [Eleanor—breast augmentation]

This experience impacted her negatively; she recalls the various attempts to rectify her perceived flaw:

> [I would put] socks in my bra [laughs]. I also bought those chicken fillets [stick on gel pads]. I had those on and two bras at a time. I even considered getting that one [brassiere] from VeriMark. That one you pump up with air. But, I didn't get it because I was scared it would burst in a conversation or something like that…Tissues! Bandages! Duct tape! You name it, I did it. But, socks were the ones that I used most. Nice secret socks, you roll that into a ball and you put it this side [corner under the breast] and this side [corner under the breast]. [Eleanor—breast augmentation]

Each of these research participants exhibits emotions related to shame, embarrassment, and emotional pain. These emotions influence how an individual understands and experiences gendered embodiment, as breasts are seen to characterize femininity (Rome 2000; Dubriwny 2012; MacKenna 2013). Therefore, if a woman perceives her body as not being represented accurately or beautifully, her feminine ideals feel compromised:

> You don't feel pretty…you don't feel like a woman. [Joanne—breast augmentation]

Some of the techniques that Isabel researched and used to reduce the appearance of her stomach were to incorporate a healthy diet and exercise into her daily routines. Her dedication resulted in weight loss, but her overall goal to reduce her tummy to its original form remained unsuccessful. This prompted her to use other techniques. One procedure was micro-needling. This procedure is undertaken by a dermatologist who inserts/derma-rolls needles into the skin, somewhat like the practice of acupuncture. In Isabel's experience, this procedure was painful and resulted in bleeding:

> I went for the micro-needling with the extended needles…but the blood was so bad that I actually smelt the *yster* [iron in the blood]. You know that smell? And I'm not very fussy about anything, but I actually got this sick feeling. It was quite bad. [Isabel—abdominoplasty and lipoplasty]

Even as she continued the procedure in hope of reducing her stomach fat and reducing her stretch marks, there were no visible improvements:

> It didn't change it that much. It [the stretch marks] appeared less, so it was a bit lighter. But, not hardly enough to be satisfied with the results. [Isabel—abdominoplasty and lipoplasty]

Isabel's decision to employ a cosmetic procedure is presented, by her, as a last resort. She went for her first cosmetic consultation and considered the information for a full year before deciding this step would be her only option to obtain what she desired. In this time of self-reflection, she continued her exercise regime and healthy eating and relied on body-contouring tights or loose-fitting t-shirts to hide her tummy.

Other research participants also saw cosmetic surgery as the only way to change the body part that was otherwise unfixable or regarded to be problematic. Bridget did not change her lifestyle to try to lose weight around her stomach:

> I'm too lazy to do a diet. [Bridget—lipoplasty]

She did try specifically designed body shorts/tights to reduce the appearance of her tummy. Bridget believes that her cosmetic intervention would give her the results she sought without having to change her lifestyle:

> I wore those panties that stretch up to here [to under her breasts], but it's just too uncomfortable…I will rather go for an operation and feel comfortable for

years afterwards than for years wearing uncomfortable garments. I want a permanent fix for something like this. [Bridget—lipoplasty]

Bridget's outlook is shared by others. Abby agrees that excess stomach fat/skin should be dealt with through the radical intervention of cosmetic surgery:

I would rather go for the surgery than go to the gym, and that's me. I would rather do the surgery and get over with it. [Abby—abdominoplasty and lipoplasty]

For Hailey and Georgia, their cosmetic intervention, blepharoplasty, was employed to correct some loss of sight due to the skin above their eyes losing its elasticity and impairing their eyesight. Hailey sought medical advice from her son (a general medical practitioner) who urged his mother to see a cosmetic surgeon. This course of action was also the one taken by Georgia, who was familiar with the signs and consequences of ptosis.[5] She knew that her eyesight would inevitably be compromised. Her main desire was to prevent this condition from progressing:

My only thoughts were: How are we going to prevent this condition and become blind. [Georgia—blepharoplasty]

From these narratives, it seems that the participants take two contrasting courses of action when re-negotiating their self-perception. The first course of action sees women embarking on a variety of methods or techniques to temporarily transform their body to project a congruent sense of self. The second course of action is to have fixed, through a cosmetic surgical intervention, what is undesired. However, in each of these courses, the participants kept private how they renegotiated their temporary body enhancements and reshaped appearance.

The Cosmetic Secret

Additional understanding can be reached on the topic of cosmetic surgery by exploring notions related to the *cosmetic secret*.[6] In this enquiry, we want to see

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5   Ptosis refers to the "drooping of the eyelid" (Maharana, Sharma, and Kumar 2017:15).

6   The word "secret" generally implies to something that is "kept hidden or separate from the knowledge of others" (Collins Dictionary 2001:1360). To *keep hidden* is to purposefully conceal a thought, understanding, or physical change. However, as we are granted personal access to the research participants' cosmetic experience and lifeworld, in one-on-one contact sessions, the term *secret* is here used to describe how

if an individual's sense of empowerment is influenced by revealing or keeping private her surgical intervention. We begin by unwrapping an individual's subjective understandings and views by asking: "Why is cosmetic surgery kept a secret?" By focusing on this, we try to obtain insight associated with subjective and intersubjective notions, as well as perceptions of cosmetic surgery.

Some of the research participants decided to keep their aesthetic alterations secret. This secrecy was not attributed to shame or embarrassment, but rather to wanting to keep their cosmetic journey private. This decision was sometimes taken as a result of the presence of perceived stigmas associated with cosmetic surgery, for instance, that it reflects vanity and narcissism:

> It should be kept a secret because it is vain…it's for yourself. [Abby— abdominoplasty and lipoplasty]

Abby's secrecy does not extend to everyone; she clearly appreciated the support of her family and of a close friend. But, as Abby wanted to keep her surgical intervention quiet from others, she refrained from telling her son about it. Her 11-year-old son, being open and approachable, could have told people—even outsiders—of his mother's cosmetic intervention:

> I have one friend, she knew about everything. She was in the hospital all the time with my husband and my children…I only told my daughter the truth because my son is a big speaker…He will tell the cleaner at school…He will tell every single body he speaks to…He will tell the world about it. [Abby— abdominoplasty and lipoplasty]

Another participant—Isabel—also believes that society's negative perception of cosmetic surgery projects a label of narcissism onto those who opt for it. For this reason, she prefers to keep her surgical intervention private. During our initial discussions she revealed that only her husband and her mother knew about her cosmetic surgery. However, as we gained additional depth and trust during our interviews, she disclosed that she did confide in a friend:

the participants engage and reveal their cosmetic experience and reshaped body to "other" select people. The term "other" refers primarily to family members (husband, children, mother), close friends, and the researcher.

> [Cosmetic surgery] goes along with a lot of judgment. So, depending on that, I think maybe you should keep it a secret…I told no one! I told one friend! [Isabel—abdominoplasty]

After our talks with Kim, we get to understand why she wanted to keep her procedure quiet. She contracted a staph infection that resulted in a year-long battle to regain her health. Kim's initial breast augmentation, breast lift, and mini face-lift were intended to restore her sense of femininity and beauty. Her aesthetic intervention was, for her, not only employed to meet socially defined beauty ideals but to experience graceful aging. Her need to keep her procedures private was not because of the stigma and shame attached to cosmetic surgery, but the pity she would encounter from her family and friends. Initially, only her husband and daughters knew about her cosmetic intervention. However, after Kim contracted a staph infection in the aftermath of her cosmetic surgery, her health deteriorated dramatically and that resulted in numerous courses of antibiotics. In the end, Kim had to seek help and support from her mother, who was unaware of her daughter's surgical experiences:

> [After the infection] the only one that knew was my mom. I told her because I got very, very sick and I had to go through antibiotics, um, a lot of courses. If I can count it was about 5 courses. It was really very, very bad. So, I told her and she came through, because my husband wasn't very supportive. Because, from the beginning, he said: "No, it wasn't necessary." So, he [only] took me with the kids to the center where they did my procedure. [Kim—breast augmentation, breast lift, and mini face-lift]

Throughout her ordeal, Kim was determined to recover from her procedure without risking being stigmatized for her decisions or having to worry about consoling others.

> My sister, she's just older than me, you know! She's got boys and they are always very rude with people who did something in plastic surgery. They always used to say mean things about women who do their breasts and so on. And then they will laugh at everything. That's why I didn't want to tell them and I didn't want them to know. [So] I haven't told my sister that I had this breast thing. I kept it to myself. [Kim—breast augmentation, breast lift, and mini face-lift]

What is evident in these revelations is the underlying stigma associated with cosmetic surgery. According to Foy and colleagues (2014:312), stigma is a

process in which "external attributions are internalized." This means that what is experienced and perceived within one's social reality can influence how an individual identifies with and accepts her sense of self. An emotional fear of judgement often accompanies the decision to undergo a cosmetic procedure. Tam and colleagues (2012:474) affirm this by stating that "a stigma is still attached to cosmetic surgery patients" due to perceived preconceived judgments related to vanity and lack of naturalness.

For the research participants, a cosmetic intervention is largely employed to alleviate feelings associated with emotional pain and to realign the body to the perceived self-concept. However, it is very much a *Catch-22* situation: to avoid cosmetic surgery and find a way to accept incongruencies between the perceived self and the physical self, or to obtain a cosmetic procedure and be stigmatized and categorized as acting in an unnatural, artificial, vain, narcissistic, frivolous, and fake way. All the research participants feel that some degree of secrecy is the best course of action to avoid being the victims of negative or emotionally harmful comments and actions. However, in contrast to these attitudes and actions, some research participants presented different perspectives on how they approached the secretive nature of cosmetic surgery. They believed that openness and self-confidence aided them to renegotiate their self-perception and sense of embodiment, and to engage with their social reality. Hailey illustrates this position:

> I had a cosmetic operation! I am proud! Oh, look at my eyes! Have you seen my eyes? [Hailey—blepharoplasty]

Hailey's reaction also resonates with other participants' views in as far as a renewed sense of self-awareness is achieved, which prompts these women to embody a more open, congruent, and self-assured demeanor. This is reflected on by Diane:

> I think if you are open about it, then people won't *skinner* [Afrikaans for gossip]. Don't hide it from everybody, because people will see if you had plastic surgery or not. People aren't dumb. [Diane—breast augmentation and breast lift]

Joanne expands on this by stating that by approaching one's cosmetic decision openly, one can contribute to changing societal norms:

I'm not shy about it. People are going to see, they are going to notice it. [Because] it must look different, otherwise you won't do cosmetic surgery. So, why keep it a secret?! Maybe if more people are open about their cosmetic surgery, then people will see it differently. Society will see it differently. [Joanne—breast augmentation]

Bridget shares this view. She avoided potential gossip in her workplace by openly telling people that she is going for rhinoplasty to correct her nasal airways and to have her facial appearance readjusted. Bridget underwent a surgical procedure of rhinoplasty to correct a childhood injury when she fell and broke her nose. The medical practitioner treated her injuries, but never correctly realigned her nasal bridge, which resulted in a crooked appearance. Furthermore, this misalignment impacted her breathing, thus, prompting her to seek cosmetic surgery. By revealing her procedure to her work colleagues, she also emphasizes her self-empowerment over her perceived flawed appearance, negative self-perception, and resultant unhappiness:

I don't think it should be kept a secret. Like my eyes were blue for two weeks and there was no way I could keep it a secret. And I didn't keep that a secret, I told everyone at work that I was going: "When you see me again, I am going to have blue eyes, but I am going to have a straight nose." [Bridget—rhinoplasty]

This form of self-confidence can help women re-engage their lifeworld, but many still keep their aesthetic enhancements secret. Beauty therapist, Cate, believes this is due to the fear of appearing unnatural:

I listen to a lot of ladies, especially if they have had it done. They would say: "Don't tell anyone!" But, it's because they think they are going to fail in looking natural by themselves. It's similar to a diet. [Cate—breast augmentation and breast lift]

Cate takes position against this secretive stance by approaching her own cosmetic experience with transparency:

I don't care if they know…I encourage every lady [to better herself]. [Cate—breast augmentation and breast lift]

Irrespective of how open and liberal these expressions are, Eleanor tables an important point. She feels that women should be cautious of the ease of access

to cosmetic surgery and be aware that cosmetic procedures are not a quick fix solution to body dissatisfaction and to meeting social trends. Rather, when relying on an elective procedure, care should be exercised and rational, personal reasons should direct it.

> I don't think cosmetic surgery should be kept a secret, but it should be handled with care. I would recommend it any day. But, it mustn't be made cheap or the availability mustn't be like going to the garage and buying a chocolate over the counter. Because that is where the danger comes in. Money in today's day and age is not a problem; rich daddies and all. So, there still has to be careful handling to cosmetic surgery. [Eleanor—breast augmentation]

All of the research participants were aware of possible stigmas associated with body augmentations: judgments of being vain; narcissist behavior; and working towards a fake appearance. Such labels can and do prompt women to keep their surgical interventions confidential and private. When drawing together the concepts of self-empowerment and surgical disclosure, the focus is on the research participants' subjective understandings. All agree that a cosmetic intervention promotes a sense of empowerment, but that there is a dividing line when revealing the cosmetic act itself. Secrecy can be attributed to the avoidance of social judgment or a fear of common misconceptions and stigmas that position aesthetically inclined women as superficial and vain. For some of the research participants, revealing their cosmetic experience brought about a feeling of being negatively judged. It is for these reasons that the cosmetic journey is often kept quiet, even secret.

Concluding Remarks

As the study aimed to understand the lived experiences of ten South African women who obtained a cosmetic intervention, the analytical concepts of Kathy Davis's (1995:11) "identity," "agency," and "morality" and Iris Marion Young's (2005:35) "feminine motility" were well-suited to analyze notions related to subjectivity and intersubjectivity—particularly how the research participants perceived, negotiated, and expressed their cosmetic experience. Based on the narratives, it is evident that the women in the study did not view their aesthetic procedures as a means to mobilize physical capital so as to gain social equity (cf. Shilling 2012:135) or to emphasize their socio-economic status (see: Adams

2007:8). These women's well-informed decisions to pursue cosmetic interventions were not a mere vain attempt at female beautification; instead, their motivation was to rectify a perceived flaw and/or regain their pre-childbearing bodies. Far from exhibiting a poor emotional self-understanding (cf. Skeggs 1997), the women in the study showed agency in the way they renegotiated their sense of self through cosmetic intervention—seeing it as a form of empowerment (Pitts-Taylor 2007:89).

By exploring the research participants' personal perceptions and experiences of cosmetic surgery, additional insight was gained to why some women keep their aesthetic interventions private. Some of the research participants indicated that social opinions do influence how the cosmetic intervention is perceived. This results in the cosmetic encounter being experienced as an action that is not always socially accepted.

The study found that the concept of cosmetic secrecy was not related to shame. Rather, by keeping the cosmetic encounter private, the research participants protected their sense of self (feelings and emotions) against possible negative comments, generalizations, and comparisons. Thus, stigmas and labels do influence how an individual perceives and even reacts to others' perception of the cosmetic act. However, the everyday experience of emotional incongruence and pain outweighs negative social censure—justifying the cosmetic encounter. Socially constructed perceptions are consciously explored and overcome by keeping the cosmetic experiences private in so far as only telling a select and trusted few (family and close friends) about their motivations and surgical journey. This conscious decision if and to whom they would disclose information about the aesthetic procedure speaks, once more, to the women's agency.

As most of the research participants obtained their cosmetic procedure from Dr. Anderson (pseudonym) which resulted in surgical success, perspectives reflect a somewhat one-sided point of view. This points to a limitation of the research: due to the sensitive nature of the research and thus patient accessibility, this study mainly explores success stories. A need for further research is to include more women who had negative or unsatisfactory experiences of cosmetic surgery. This would allow for a more nuanced analysis of the secretive nature of the cosmetic act, as associated with feelings of shame, embarrassment, and even failure. Another possibility for research is to collect and explore narratives from less affluent socio-economic spheres of society, and from other ethnic groups.

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Hair Discourses[1]

African Black Women

ABSTRACT | *Hair for African Black people has always had meaning. In the past, elaborate hairstyles communicated their status, identity, and place within the larger society. In present day society, hair continues to be a significant part of being an African Black person. Especially for women, who attach a number of different meanings to hair. This study casts more light on young African Black women's everyday perceptions of hair and uncovers the meanings they attach to hair and beauty. This is done by looking at how the intersections of race, gender, and class impact on their everyday perceptions and experiences of hair. The literature indicates that the hair preferences and choices of Black African women tend to emulate Western notions of beauty. This is due to a great extent to the historical link between Black hair and bad hair associated with old slave days. But, the narratives of participants contradict this normative discourse in many ways and provide new insights on hair—insights that reflect and motivate antiracist aesthetics.*

Introductory Remarks

Hair, as organic matter and part of the human body, has been subjected to manipulation and styling throughout history (Mercer 1989:34). It has always carried social meanings—for instance, as a symbol of status or as a fashion statement. As in the rest of the world, hair plays a vital role in the lives of African people, and South Africans are no exception when it comes to a preoccupation with hair (Erasmus 1997:12). The importance of hair in African communities is first seen in the curiosity surrounding the hair of a newborn baby (Mercer 1987:35; Erasmus 1997:12). This interest in hair continues throughout life and is associated with individual and social issues of identity and beauty (White 2010:19). This attentiveness to, almost fixation with, hair can be observed

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through the everyday efforts of African Black women to groom and style their hair (Mercer 1987:34). We analyze everyday discourses on hair as these intersect with race, gender, and class (Erasmus 1997:12).

The awareness that hair can be racialized is essential in opening up dialogues about, and meanings of, "good" and "bad" hair among African Black people. In the light of this, everyday hair discourses by African Black women can only be understood when historically and racially embedded (White 2010:19). The idea that discourses on hair are linked to the politics of skin color reaches as far back as the old times of slavery, when greater monetary value was attached to light-skinned Black women with straight hair (Russel, Wilson, and Hall 1992; hooks 1994; White 2010:19). This generalized and stereotypical valuation of hair and skin color still exists to some extent—irrespective of the fact that hairstyles can be relatively easily styled to match personal preferences (Gibson 1995; Collins 2000; hooks 2001; White 2010:19). When it comes to hair and hairstyling over the centuries, African women have been very creative in manipulating African hair. Even as early as the fifteenth century we find evidence of the various meanings and symbols attached to hair—as can be seen in depictions of the Wolf, the Mende, the Mandingo, and the Yoruba people from Africa (Patton 2006:27). In African communities, hairstyling practices were about more than an individual wanting to look good or make a statement—they also served as bonding sessions and united the community, particularly the women. Hair was perceived as being more than just aesthetic, it formed part of people's sense of identity (Patton 2006:28). However, after slavery brought these communities in touch with the Western world, African people started to adopt new styles and ways to carry and maintain their African tresses.

One of the reasons for this change in hair practices was that African hair developed negative meanings. African women started to seek straighter, silky hair in order to fit into Western society and to acquire social mobility (White and White 1995:56). These attempts at using hair to signal class issues such as improved social standing were also influenced by the perception that a combination of African and White European genetic composition led to mixed race offspring whose physical features were regarded as more desirable than the kinky, coarse hair and dark skin of their African forebears (Badillo 2001; Montalvo 2004; Robinson 2011:361). These physical differences among African slaves created a social hierarchy based on skin color and hair texture (Lara 2010).

Slaves with features closer to the European norm (lighter skin and straighter hair) also became more valuable in monetary terms. This even extended to special privileges being awarded to slaves of mixed race. This social construction of a caste system based on color tends to put African Black women at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts. This is because African Black women, more than men, find themselves at the intersection of gender, race, and beauty (Wolf 1999; Arogundade 2000; Badillo 2001; Robinson 2011:363).

Against the background of these factors, we gathered discourses of hair among young African Black women in Bloemfontein, South Africa. We are interested in the meanings that African Black women attach to their hair, the significance of hair in their everyday lives, including its everyday care and maintenance. We also discuss hair as a marker for identity and as a symbol of beauty.

Hair as Beauty

Beauty has to do with personal likes and desires. It is difficult to be detached, clinical, or objective when talking about beauty. When reflecting on beauty, we inevitably enter the intersection of race and culture and gender. Various standards and meanings of beauty are also time- and gender-bound.

The advent of colonialism and the accompanying increase in contact between different racial groups greatly impacted on everyday perceptions of beauty in Africa, particularly among women (Erasmus 1997:12). People started to make comparisons with regards to beauty, comparisons that were largely linked to the physical features of the different races. Apart from the obvious difference in skin color, hair has always been one of the main areas of comparison. The literature indicates that, historically, negative meanings were attached to Black hair (Mercer 1989:36) and this shaped perceptions of "good" and "bad" hair in African Black communities (cf. Thompson 2009:834). On the one hand, everyday dialogues about "good" hair were understood as referring to straight hair. On the other hand, dialogues about "bad" hair usually referred to kinky or "woolly" hair (Mercer 1987:35; White and White 1995:56). This distinction would bring about an obsession among generation upon generation of African women, who would spend countless hours and large amounts of money to straighten their hair in pursuit of "good" hair. The legacy of slavery and colonialism is therefore not only restricted to oppression and exploitation in political and economic sense. It

also lead to beauty standards that reject and exclude distinguishing features of African Black women (Robinson 2011:358). It put an enormous burden on them in terms of the cost of attaining what was then seen to be the ideal.

There is a need to revisit the historical link between Black hair and "bad" hair. We need to find new discourses on hair that reflect and motivate antiracist aesthetics. To this end we investigate the connection between Black female beauty and Eurocentric standards of beauty, including hair and skin color. Racist beauty aesthetics always promote features of the dominant groups at the expense of minority groups (Craig 2006:159). It is why Black women often regard themselves at being the bottom of the beauty pile, and how some come to accept racist beauty aesthetics as normal (Gaskins 1997; Taylor 1999; Arogundade 2000; Robison 2011:359-360). There is little doubt that the racialization of beauty and hair has an impact on African Black women's identity and that many go to a great deal of trouble to comply with Eurocentric standards (Robinson 2011:360). But, despite their efforts, Black women sometimes *still* do not fit into the Eurocentric standard of beauty—and, ironically, this can reinforce their internalization of, and desire to meet, Eurocentric standards.

African Hair

Finding themselves within a predominantly Western-centric popular culture, the traditional connection between African people and their hair was, for a long time, largely severed. As noted earlier, this began in the slave trade era in the nineteenth century. The end of the slave era meant new beginnings for most Africans—including opportunities for new ways to think afresh about their physical features (Rooks 1996 as cited in Thompson 2009:834). For women such as Madam C. J. Walker (1867-1919)—an African-American entrepreneur, philanthropist, and social activist who became one of the wealthiest African-American women in the U.S. from a line of African-American hair care products she invented in 1905—this new trend in beauty care was also an opportunity to enter the financial bracket of the middle classes. She opened up the market for products such as hair softener and hair-straightening combs that would enable African-American women to obtain the straight, silky hair favored since the early 20th century.

The *politics* of African hair evolved from interrogating this obsession with straight hair (Thompson 2009:837). These arguments range from issues of self-hate and self-love, to the freedom to express personal choice (Thompson 2009:837-838). Hair politics within the African community usually leads to debates about natural hair versus fake/manipulated hair (Nyamnjoh and Fuh 2014:57). In turn, these lead to the notion of "good" versus "bad" hair. And, repeating the old stereotypes, "bad" hair gets related to natural and unprocessed hair, and "good" hair to chemically straightened hair.

In South Africa, these discourses on hair are explicitly promoted in the corporate and mass media worlds where there is a great deal of money to be made on weave extensions and hair manipulation. But, there has also been a number of television programs that debate the norms that the market has created in relation to African hair (Nyamnjoh and Fuh 2014:58). Also in the U.S. debates on hair among African-American women have been covered in shows hosted by celebrities such as Tyra Banks. Chris Rock's 2009 documentary *Good Hair*, directed by Jeff Stilson, explores the perception among many people of African descent that curly hair was not "good." The documentary delves into the hugely lucrative Black hair industry and explores popular approaches to styling, chemical straighteners, and people's experiences of their own hair.

One example of the coverage of discourses on hair in South Africa was in the TV program—now discontinued—*3rd Degree* by Debora Patta, which was aired on South African television channels *e.tv* and *eNCA* in June 2012. Called *It's Just Hair Isn't It?* Debora Patta's attempt to provoke debates on the "otherness" of African hair was widely criticized and even condemned as badly researched and sensationalist. Patta's show attempts to highlight the importance that hair has on the everyday lives of South African Black women. She also tackled the notion that identity becomes attached to hair (Nyamnjoh and Fuh 2014:58):

> Hair is such an important part of our identity. We spend an inordinate amount of time and money on it. And it is not just about looking good. It says something about us. Whether we color it or straighten it, or make it curly. It is intimately connected to our self-image. For Black women, it is an even more complex issue. Natural hair versus weave may sound frivolous, but that frivolity belies an even deeper issue. It is about race, about Western versus African ideals. And what exactly defines beauty. It can potentially make you stand out in a crowd.

One of our most notable features. Billions spent on it every year. But, it is just hair, isn't it?

The Chris Rock documentary and the television shows hosted by Tyra Banks in the U.S. and Patta in South Africa all mention the high incidence of chemically straightened hair, point out that the fashion thrives despite a widespread awareness of the dangerous toxins contained in chemical relaxers. Erasmus (1997:11-16) argues that such an obsession, which flies in the face of the dangers and consequences of many hair treatments, points to South Africa's long history of racial division, which altered African Black women's relationship with their hair.

From the above it is clear that everyday discourses on hair are more than simply about hair. Hair can serve to define a person, and the juxtaposition of African hair and African beauty against Western hair and Western beauty indicates not only beauty standards: it also points to an internalization of racism via those beauty standards (Nyamnjoh and Fuh 2014:59). It can be argued that fake hair such as weaves are an emulation of Western beauty standards and therefore, to a certain extent, a denial of one's African identity. It is also possible to argue that it is entirely a matter of individual choice. Eusebius McKaiser (2012:24), however, warns that in present-day South Africa, individual choices also need to be analyzed as they are often the result of an internalization of the country's long and troubled history.

Theoretical and Methodological Notes

This study relies on a number of theoretical frameworks to contextualize our understanding of African Black women's everyday hair experiences. The most relevant frameworks are phenomenology, social constructivism, and feminist theories (particularly those dealing with intersectionality). Phenomenology is concerned with people's everyday perceptions and experiences of the social world (Overgaard and Zahavi 2009:98). In other words, it is concerned with how people experience, feel about, and perceive their social world (Inglis 2012:86). By working in a phenomenological way, we thus seek to understand the influence of discourses on hair, and the different hair practices of African Black women, through the lenses of their personal perceptions and everyday experiences. Social constructivism also aims at opening out understandings of how people

co-create their social world, and attach meanings to it (Creswell 2013:24). These meanings are assimilated during early childhood and communicated through social encounters (Harris 2008:232). In both phenomenological and social constructivist thought, the existence of an unchangeable objective reality is discarded in favor of understanding how actors actively (re)construct aspects of their everyday lives and how they come to view it as real (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Harris 2008:233). A dimension of feminist intersectionality also forms part of our theoretical bases, in step with the idea that African Black women's everyday lives are shaped by issues of race, gender, and class (Collins 2000:6), and that their everyday relationship with hair can be understood through analyzing an intersection of these factors.

Qualitative research attempts to make sense of how people experience aspects of their social reality by situating the individual's accounts within the broader social context (Brinkmann 2012:19; Creswell 2013:43). In this study, the narratives are collected in their natural setting and subsequently analyzed as lifestories (cf. Webster and Mertova 2007:13) This is done with the assumption that narration is the practice of constructing meaningful selves, identities, and realities (Chase 2011:422).

Eight young females between the ages 19 and 29 and from diverse ethnic groups were selected to participate. Although they are from diverse economic backgrounds, they are all university students and therefore, in the context of South Africa, can be considered as upwardly mobile. They were selected based on physical appearance—all clearly took great care of appearance and hairstyling. Selection was also based on recruiting participants from a wide spectrum of hairstyle choices: weave extensions, braid extensions, chemically straightened hair, afros, or short hair.

We used in-depth, face-to-face interviews (Braun and Clarke 2013:79), which are ideal for building a dialogical relationship between the researcher and the research participants (Riessman 2008:23). This dialogical relationship leads to the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and the research participant. Open-ended questions allowed participants to engage in-depth with the research topic. We also used a focus group interview to augment the individual interviews (Flick 2009:195) and gain further understanding. The

focus group interview also served as a way to validate the opinions and attitudes expressed by the participants in the individual interviews.

All individual and focus group interviews were audio recorded. They were then transcribed verbatim. Verbatim transcription ensures that the full content and meaning expressed by participants are made available for analysis. Data were analyzed thematically (Riessman 2008:53). Special attention was paid to thick and rich descriptions given by the research participants.

The research received formal clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Free State (Ethical Clearance no: UFS-HUM-2013-27) and complies with best practices regarding informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to dignity. All names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

Narrating Hair

First Experiences

Participants were asked to recall their first-time experiences of having their hair done.

> I don't think I remember my very first time doing my hair. I do remember that I have had long hair for most of my life, but I do remember my very first time cutting my hair. That's my most profound memory. I think I was ten or eleven years old and I went to the salon, and I said to my mom that I wanted to cut my hair. And then I remember I wanted to cut Rebecca Malope's hairstyle [South African female gospel artist]. I don't know, but, for me, it was like the best hairstyle ever. It was very short on the sides and very big in the middle [German haircut]. So I loved that hairstyle and I was with my mom and brother. And I remember that it was a guy doing my hair. He cut my hair and he did it beautifully. I mean, you know [emphasizing]! But, at that time it wasn't accepted. I got to school and people were like: "Why did you cut your hair? You had such good hair!" And the guys were laughing at me. But, I never really cared. And it's my most profound memory of doing my hair. I cut it when I was ten. [Nthabiseng]

> I can't remember that one, hey! [the first hairdo]. Because I have been going to the salon...from a very young age. So I was used to people doing whatever they liked with my hair. But, I remember when I first cut my hair. I looked into

the mirror and I was like: "Wow!" Because it was very long. Then I noticed that I actually looked prettier with short hair than with long hair, although people tried to convince me otherwise—that all hairstyles suit you. They were even persuading me to do dreadlocks. But, I am content with short hair. So when I first cut my hair, I noticed that I look more beautiful with short hair than with any other hairstyle. [Palesa]

Even though the two participants do not remember the first time they ever did their hair, they do remember their first experiences of *cutting* their hair. And these experiences were mainly positive. For Palesa, it was a point at which she realized that she looks beautiful with short hair. For Nthabiseng, her first haircut was the best hairstyle that she ever had. For both, the choice to cut hair coincides with a point of independence in their lives: a decision to wear and to cut their hair as they desired and an experience of freedom from the shackles of other people's opinions.

However, for Nonzuzo, her first experiences of doing her hair is associated with negative emotions as she recalls how painful the whole process was. She decides that the pain associated with doing hair is not worth it, even if it means she might look beautiful afterwards.

My cousin did my hair at the time. There was something called popcorn [plaits]. Do you know it? It's like braiding [braid extension], but with your own hair. Small braiding and then you just roll round it, roll it around. It was so painful! Some people do it with pantyhose, but my cousin never used pantyhose because I had long hair. So she would just wrap it around and it would stick *hantle* [nicely]. Yoh! When you sleep, the following day I woke up and I just undid it, like yoh! I unplaited it. Everything *nje* [just]. That's how I felt: *gore* [that]. I cannot! I cannot do this! It's just torture! So that's when I noticed that some things you don't need to do…to feel some pain in order to be beautiful. If you feel good, it's fine. [Nonzuzo]

Her last statements show that her negative experience has a positive spin—it makes her independent from a fashion norm.

"Good" and "Bad" Hair

Participants agree that there is "good" and "bad" hair. But, they show different understandings of what makes hair "good" or "bad."

Mm, *ya*, there is "bad" hair, there is "bad" hair! Depending on how you carry your hair, how you treat it. It can be "bad" *wabona* [you see]. But, also sometimes you need to understand your hair texture as well. Then you know you can just enhance it…many people they don't understand their hair texture. And then something just goes deliberately like wrong. Because they don't know what to use and what not to use. They dye and then *moriri watswa* [they dye and then the hair starts breaking off], you know! Because their hair is softer, you know. You need to understand your hair. Hence, it becomes bad at some point. [Nonzuzo]

Even though Nonzuzo admits that there is "good" and "bad" hair, she says it all depends on how familiar one is with one's natural hair type and texture and how to work with that. She observes that people end up having "bad" hair because they do not have the knowledge of how to properly care for it. Notably, when she talks about "good" and "bad" hair, she does not attach any notions of beauty to it or associate "good" hair with a specific hair type. She also does not associate "bad" hair with a certain hair texture. Nthabiseng, for her part, believes that one inherits "good" hair and to keep it good just takes the right maintenance.

First of all, I sincerely believe that it's inherited: that's the first thing. "Good" hair is actually inherited. But, the second thing is maintenance, of course. When people started noticing that not all hair is "good" hair…then people started coming with products to maintain the "bad" hair. That's why there are products to maintain the "bad" hairs [hair] [everyone laughing]. I do sincerely think that "good" hair is inherited. But, you can also work towards "good" hair by certain products: boJabu Stone [Jabu Stone is a local hair product for natural hair such as dreadlocks and afros in South Africa]. [Nthabiseng]

In general, there seems to be consensus on the notion of "good" and "bad" hair by the participants. And contrary to literature discussed earlier, dialogues of "good" and "bad" hair among research participants do not directly associate Black African hair with "bad" hair.

Hair and Identity

It is clear that hair plays an important part in the everyday lives of the female participants. They consider it an essential aspect of a woman's being and explain why they think so.

Yes, as much as the India Arie's song says: "I'm not my hair"…I don't think it's true. Women feel confident and more alive when they feel good about their

hair. You might look good in what you wear, like with what you dress like. But then when your hair is not good, I think it impacts. It impacts on your confidence as well. You know that: Okay, my hair does not look that good, you know. I mean, when people look at you, they look at your face, and then the minute the head…it's your hair. So when people communicate with you, they look at you in your face. So your hair plays a very, not a very important role, it plays a vital role in feeling confident and being free. It can be anything—it can be dreadlocks, it can be an afro, it can be braids, it can be whatever. But, if you're confident with your hairstyle, you feel good. [Karabo]

Well, there is a saying that: "*Botle ba mme botloho*" [a woman's beauty is in her hair]. Right? I think a weave defines who you are as an individual. What do you stand for? Because you with your dreadlocks: it means you are original, African woman and all of that. But, for someone who would stand between me and you. They will see you as more African than me because I...I am…I don't know. And then there are people who are bold and they are still African with their boldness. Okay as long as someone's head is neat. That's all that's important. [Lerato]

Not only does hair carry meaning, to Lerato, hair also signifies something about identity and serves as an indication of Africanism. However, this linking of hair with an African identity is rejected by some participants during the focus group interview. They were asked if they agree with the legendary South African jazz musician Hugh Masekela's opinion that weaves and hair extensions are betrayals of the African identity. Hugh Masekela caused a stir a few months prior to the data collection for this project when he refused to have his picture taken at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, with female students donning weaves or hair extensions. Masekela was awarded an honorary doctorate from Rhodes University in April 2015, and he delivered the graduation address at the ceremony. He was given a standing ovation when expressing his disdain for the dwindling sense of heritage among young South Africans. After the graduation ceremony he confirmed his aversion to weaves and hair extensions at press conferences. For the participants in the focus group interview, Africanism and an African identity are more about a sense of humanity than having natural hair.

It's about you. I'm very traditional. You heard me, right! But, if I decide to put on a weave [extension], I have my own reasons. It doesn't mean that I am betraying the ethnic blah, blah, blah, you know. For instance, I've got natural hair [now], but at some point I braid it, I do weaves [extensions], but not for a long time. Because why? He [Masekela] does not understand the reasons.

I don't want to comb. I'm trying to save time. I'm attending classes, you know. He does not understand the concepts of putting a weave [extension] at some point. So, he will never relate. [Nonzuzo]

Ya, Africanism is about how friendly we are, about *Ubuntu* [a spirit of giving]. [Nthabiseng]

It is clear that the choice to wear weaves or extensions is a personal choice for the participants rather than a matter of betraying their African identity.

Okay, I am a natural girl as you can see. Mm, I love my hair natural. When I was growing up, my mom would put all these artificial hairs on my head. But now, now that I am a woman, I've had this short hair about eight years now. I've never grown my hair up to more than 5 centimeters [long]. So I just love being natural. [Palesa]

For the participants, hair is perceived as being important for communicating messages about themselves to others. Hair is also considered significant in building people's confidence regardless of the style. They attach various meanings to hair and conceive of hair as forming an essential part of a woman's everyday experiences in her lifeworld.

Hair and Grooming

An important aspect of hair is that it serves as an indicator of how well people look after themselves in their everyday life.

As much as maybe I may not like certain hairstyles on certain people, I do feel, like your hair is an expression of a part of you. It's also a look, it also forms part of a look you have. It also says how much you take care of yourself. So it's also hygienic, it's also fashionable. But, it's also natural. You know, you should take care of your hair. You should make it part of who you are… It is important to do your hair every day. It should form part of your everyday life. [Nthabiseng]

Hair and Gender

Hair also appears to be a form of symbolic capital, stratifying people according to different genders. Short hair often tends to be associated with boys. So hair length distinguishes girls from boys and strengthens the preference for longer hair among girls. It also seems that social conventions require girls to put extra effort into caring and maintaining their hair.

In my culture [Pedi culture], short hair is preferred, but there is no law. But, I have heard my uncles. My uncles are very old-fashioned. My mom's uncles [Sotho culture], as well, are very old-fashioned men. When children relax their hair [chemically straighten their hair] *ya*, *ya* [yes, yes], they say: "You look like a girl now." And when you don't have your hair combed: "No! Girls are not supposed to look like that!"

Exactly, *le nna* [even with me]. They say that all the time about my hair. They always say: "Aah, you! I think you're trying to look like a boy. Why you want to look like a boy?" And I don't wear earrings as well. I just, I don't think I need to wear earrings. Then: "Girls wear earrings!" No, I…I don't have to wear earrings. [Nthabiseng]

The association of short hair with males is also evident in Karabo's story:

Yes [giggles], yes! I cut my hair…my mom tricked me into cutting my hair. It was the shortest hair…it was like almost brush cut, you know. And then my head was very small. And they said I looked like a boy. And, you know, they teased me the whole time until my hair grew [giggles again]…It made me feel less of a girl because they said I looked like a boy [giggles]. It did hurt, but then, as I said, as time goes on, you just get used to it at the end of the day. [Karabo]

The decision to go for short hair for Nthabiseng is primarily based on her intention to show people that short hair can also be beautiful. She regards it as important for people to know that female beauty does not necessarily coincide with long hair.

Well, I have a cut [female hair cut] on my head now [laughs]. But, aah, I choose this hairstyle because I was tired of having long hair. I grew up with long hair and for some other reason it seemed like when you are a girl, you were supposed to have long hair. So I never understood that. I never understood why, you know. But, I never did anything about it. My parents were also like: why not? You just have long hair. So I was like: okay, fine, I will keep the long hair. Then I got to varsity and I saw everybody, you know, doing what they want. But, what was very consistent was extensions and bondings [weaves], and this and that. So I was like: no, I don't want this. I don't want people to say I am beautiful because of my hair. So I decided to cut my hair. I change the hairstyles now even if my hair is short: I will have lines here and dye it like this, and I will have curls *ning ning* [now and then]. But, I do feel strongly about having short hair. Uhm, but I don't think it's because of some sort of statement that I am trying to make. It's just that I prefer it. And I think

I am trying to maybe say that there is a different way of being beautiful. And it's not just long hair or extensions or this. There's a different way, and people compliment me all the time. So I think it is working. People like it—whatever their reason may be. I love my hair! [Nthabiseng]

Hair and Beauty

Many of the participants clearly connected hair, beauty, and confidence. But, as Nonzuzo observes, there should also be acknowledgement that beauty does not just lie in outward appearances.

> I think it's an important thing…Like: it's like you're important…'Cause if your hair is clean, first of all you feel good. And you see yourself *hore* [like that]: I am beautiful also. But, beauty is not about the hair. It's about you, the inner beauty. How do you see yourself? Have you accepted yourself? So the hair is just there to enhance who you are. But, if your hair is clean and you keep changing styles, you feel good as well. And you're going…according to your mood. If I feel like it's hot now, and my mood tells me that I should just cut all of it—I should just shave it. Then it's fine. [Nonzuzo]

Clearly, participants think that their hair contributes to how they feel about themselves, how they experience female beauty, and indicates something of their self-appreciation. These meanings are socially created, historically embedded, and shared and communicated through social encounters with others. In turn, these social encounters are subjectively reinterpreted by the participants as individuals, and in their everyday lives. It is via these overlapping cycles of influence that they co-construct their reality.

For Palesa and Thembeka, the decision to have short hair is mainly the result of how beautiful they think they look with short hair compared to other hairstyles. Their narratives reflect an appreciation for their natural physical attributes, which they seek to enhance rather than reject. Again, we find evidence against the idea that Black African hair and features are considered less desirable than Western ones; perhaps the idea itself has become out of step with the freedom young women feel and with the eclectic notions of beauty in current times?

> I looked at my face. I saw that I have a round face. And I noticed that when I have a weave on or braidings, or whatever artificial hair, I looked more round. So I noticed that short hair makes me look normal. Yes, I have a round face,

but I looked better with short hair than long weaves or braids, or with long hair in general. [Palesa]

It's like…it goes so well with my skin color and my complexion…it's my hair with my natural color. [Thembeka]

But, as a further comment from Thembeka shows, hair and beauty is not just about appreciating your natural looks. It is also about keeping up with the latest trends, and clearly these are plentiful and move fast:

[Indicating her hair] Black, soft, dread. Back in December, you know, everyone is like: "Okay, you're coming to Cape Town! Here's money to do your hair!" This is actually my cousin's hair piece. She went for a German cut [the fade] and then she's like: "You can have my hair piece." Because she won't be having [long] hair anytime soon. So that's how I got it. But, *eish*, my hairstylist wants me to do this brown, blonde, box braid...that's what I want to do soon, *eish*.

Hair and Convenience

Many of the narratives have already demonstrated that convenience and practicality are important when choosing hairstyles. Arguments about convenience, particularly the time that must be spent on maintaining a hairstyle, are mainly raised by participants with short hair.

Aah, what I love about my hair [thinking]? Aah, it's convenient, it's very convenient. I don't know why people don't think that natural hair [ethnic hair] is convenient. But, short hair is convenient. It's cheap and it looks good on me. I mean, I haven't seen anything that suits me like this in a very long time. If I had an opportunity to change my hair, would I? I wouldn't change my hairstyle, but I would change the texture of my hair. I just wish it was more hard and natural, you know. So that I can cut it in all different ways, but with a natural look to it. So I would change the texture just to make it a little more natural. I just have fluffy hair, fluffy hair. [Nthabiseng]

What is interesting in Nthabiseng's narrative is that she wishes her hair was *more* "natural," meaning *more* African; again, the narratives contradict the idea that young African women seek to emulate Western looks.

Relaxing [hair takes] less than an hour. So I like the fact that you don't sit for hours doing your hair. And it's much cheaper…I think it's plus or minus two

hundred rand [R200] in a month. Because afterwards you will be just, [be] washing it and putting in some treatment. That's it. [Nonzuzo]

So finances are also important factors in the types of hairstyle chosen by the participants and costs influence how often they do their hair or renew their hairstyles.

Whatever hairstyle a girl wants to do, she has to either buy a hairpiece and then pay someone to do her hair, or rather go to a salon where everything will be provided. But, you'll just settle the amount they want you to pay. So, basically it [money] does play an important role which style you want. Because the amount of hairstyles vary. It's not the same for each and every hairstyle; they are different. [Nonzuzo]

The last hairstyle I had was short hair; cut hair and I dyed it and there was a bit of S-curl, I think. I have changed from that because I wanted to grow my hair. And the reason I put on an extension braid is because…okay, it's been trending. I have been seeing it a lot and I'm like: "That is nice. It is very nice!" And the fact that I am trying to grow my hair makes it easier to maintain as well. Because hair that doesn't have extensions is very hard to maintain and stuff. [Karabo]

Concluding Remarks

Using an interpretivist approach, we aim to reveal young African women's everyday experiences in relation to hair, including their everyday practices in caring and maintaining it. We are also interested in the meanings that they attach to hair in their dialogues and their practices. It is clear from the narratives that for young African Black women, hair is more than just hair: it impacts on their everyday evaluations of themselves—how they perceive and feel about themselves. It is also about how they are perceived by others: they believe that hair says a lot about a person and, as a result, most go out of their way to maintain their hair and take pride in it.

Black women attach various social meanings to hair, including a sense of identity. Historically, hair symbolized for Africans who they were and where they came from. But, with the advent of slavery and colonization, the natural relationship of Africans to their hair became challenged. Especially for African Black women, the relationship since then has been like a roller coaster ride— lunging between positive and negative emotions as they move between trying,

on the one hand, to obtain straight hair in order to fit into Western societies' assessment of beauty, and, on the other hand, trying to appreciate their natural hair. Whereas historical, as well as current discourses link hair to race and promote the idea that the desired norm for Africans is the straight silky hair associated with Western looks, the narratives of young Black African women participants in this study show that there is also a return to, and appreciation of, natural African Black hair. Their ideas about "good" and "bad" hair are not, as the literature suggests, arranged along racial or cultural divides; it is, more simply and *a*-culturally, about the genetics of having healthy hair versus weak hair. So there is less evidence in our narratives indicating that the normative notion of Western beauty is as strong as suggested in the literature reviewed for this chapter. Rather, notions of beauty are quite eclectic and both African and Western forms of beauty are appreciated.

Hair is undoubtedly intertwined with conceptions of beauty—we think this is likely to be true for all women, not just African women. African Black women spend large amounts of money caring for and maintaining hair, and so do White women. Some of this time and money is spent by young women participants on weave extensions, braid extensions, and the use of chemical hair relaxers— all of which indicate that straight hair remains an important choice for some young women. But, our research indicates that this is more a matter of personal choice, and that young women move between more traditional African styles and Western styles as they wish. They are free, they follow a wide variety of fashions, and they opt for styles that make them look more beautiful. This does not fit with the idea that, via the hair-related discourses and practices, African Black women emulate Whiteness and express symbolic self-hate. For participants in this research, hairstyle choices and practices do *not* signal a betrayal of their African roots.

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The Creative Process[1]

A Case for Meaning-Making

ABSTRACT | *Since the beginning of time art-making has been a tool to express, preserve and challenge the extant knowledge in society. Artists do this by finding or creatively constructing new understandings in society. An artist is able to do this through the medium he/she uses to relay the message of the artwork. The medium that an artist uses to express his/her artistic concept has an impact on the character that the artwork will take. The medium of expression forms but one of the many considerations that go through an artist's mind when creating art. In the process of art-making, an artist seeks to create new meanings or re-imagine old ones by organizing materials and concepts. In so doing, he/she discovers novel ways to get ideas across, and thereby creates new interpretations of social phenomena. In this chapter, attention is given to meaning-making as a conscious and iterative component of creating art. From a series of in-depth interviews, the authors analyze the inward processes that occur within six artists' creative praxes and how these lead their construction of meaning. Attention is also paid to how the artists manipulate concepts and how they construct and deconstruct their understandings of these concepts in the course of their creative endeavors.*

Introductory Remarks

Art-making is an important form of self-expression. In our social world, people convey messages and share their experiences through the medium of language. As a means of communicating information, and a way of making meaning of experiences, language varies in its utilization and interpretation. The most ubiquitous application of language by human beings is verbal communication. Verbal communication is one way that people externalize their internalized modes of experience. The communication that occurs between people, whether it

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be two individuals or within a group, engenders an intersubjective and collective understanding of human experience in social reality.

Art is a particular kind of language used expressly by artists, and sometimes by crafters, in the service of advancing their ideas and those of humankind. The purpose of art-making to an artist is twofold. Firstly, an artist engages in art-making to satiate his or her own desire to bring something (new) into existence. This desire is evident in the scores of artists who make art as an end in itself (e.g., art for art's sake). A large number of art-makers find themselves within this category of artists who put sheer art-making before profit-making. To these persons, creating art is akin to a spiritual endeavor, which is necessary for them to perform in order for their existence to be valued and validated. Secondly, artists partake in art-making to raise the consciousness of the people around them and of those in society. This is a more altruistic reason to create art and is one that is of vital importance to the collective consciousness.

Visual art is a sub-category of art and is the central focus of this chapter. Artists who engage in visual art-making produce observable signs and symbols that act as a repository for people's subjective interpretations. Signs and symbols are fundamental to how a visual artist communicates meaning through his or her artwork. The use of signs and symbols enables the artist to transcend boundaries imposed on him or her by time, space, and other forces within his or her lived experiences. Signs and symbols are a significant part of the vocabulary of our stock of knowledge as human beings. That signs and symbols allow people to express their lived experiences in diverse ways (Dreher 2003:141-143) is especially true of visual art-making. The purpose of this chapter is to understand the role of meaning and meaning-making in the creative process of a visual artist. Another aim is to understand the connection that the artist makes between his/her subjective and objective experiences in formulating his/her personal interpretations of reality in art-making.

Towards an Understanding of Meaning

Meaning-making is essential to how people achieve understanding in, and of, their social realm. For meaning to be considered authentic, it has to emanate from some kind of social agreement between the parties involved. This social agreement is known in the social realm as mutual understanding. People

foster understanding with one another when they share common experiences. Therefore, understanding can be seen as dependent on the intersubjective experiences and encounters that a subject has with others. There is a connection between an individual's meanings and another person's meanings. This connection is a pivotal one because it is how people fundamentally make sense of social phenomena and of each other in their social reality (Koppl 2010:221).

The meaning that people make in society does not occur arbitrarily, it goes through a complex and iterative process that social constructionists refer to as "negotiation of meaning" (Berger and Luckmann 1966). This perspective argues that meaning is negotiated consciously and unconsciously during intersubjective interactions. An individual takes his or her subjective lived experiences and externalizes them—primarily through interchanging them with others' subjective lived experiences. From this exchange of information, meaning is negotiated and social understanding is reinforced or challenged. The sedimentation of the meanings that people make over time leads to an accumulation of stocks of knowledge. These stocks of knowledge are transmitted from one generation to another and are, therefore, available to the individual in his/her everyday life (Berger and Luckmann 1966:56). People use stocks of knowledge to make sense of their emergent experiences and of phenomena that take place in social reality.

The intersubjective generation of meaning in society relies on typificatory schemes that underlie all human thoughts and actions. Everyday social life is composed of typifications that make it possible for people to apprehend and deal with face-to-face encounters (Berger and Luckmann 1966:45). Such is the consequence of typificatory schemes that they stimulate reciprocity of interaction between members of society who are in communication with another. As stated earlier, language is an important means by which people share ideas and meanings—within the body of language are rules that govern the use thereof. These rules that govern the use of language operate around a set of typificatory schemes that individuals must comply with if they want to be understood. How people create meaning in society is influenced by the typifications that are unique to, and are over time crafted by, the members of that society. Meaning is constructed iteratively in the on-going encounters that people have with one another; encounters that have objective conditions such as typifications as their framework.

Meaning-Making in Art

The making of meaning is a decisively integral component of art-making. Meaning-making in relation to the creation of art serves a symbolic and a practical purpose. On a symbolic level, the essence of meaning-making is highlighted when we encounter works of art that are of an abstract nature. In these works of art, the artist uses unrelated concepts and arranges them in such a way that a story can be constructed, emerging from the composition of these elements. The story that the artist is telling is a symbolic one in that he/she creates a representational space for the audience to decipher the meaning of the artwork. The artist methodically positions the meaning within the artwork and leaves it to the viewers to derive their own understandings from it. It sometimes happens that the audience concurs with what the artist is saying in his or her artwork. In such circumstances, viewers of the artwork are endorsing the relevance of the artist's voice and its expression *vis-à-vis* his/her artwork.

A more utilitarian expression of meaning in art-making can be seen when artists give titles to their artworks and write motivations for their pieces. It is sometimes necessary for the artist to do these two things in order to orient or direct viewers of the artwork. The artist makes the viewers' experience of his/her art less intimidating and encourages the viewers to engage with and respond to the artwork. A viewer's perception of an artwork is shaped by the signs and symbols the creator assigns to the artwork, and that give the artwork its import. This is a starting point for the conversation that occurs between creators and viewers of art. The viewer's role in this conversation is predominantly passive. However, the degree of a viewer's passivity in this dialogue depends on the imprint the artwork makes on him/her, and on the degree to which the viewer engages with the work when he/she internalizes and then subjectively (re)interprets the meanings being conveyed in the artwork.

The meaning that lies at the core of an artwork precedes what is ultimately art and artists' *raisons d'être*. Art and art-making's bearing on social life can be linked to humankind's primordial fascination with storytelling. Stories have not only been vital to our survival as a species, they also underpin our urge to create—"to reshape the world as we wish it to be for our own purposes" (Rand 1957:7). Christopher Vogler (1998:299-300) in his book, *The Writer's Journey*, asserts that stories "can help us deal with difficult emotional situations by giving

us examples of human behavior, perhaps similar in some way to the struggles we are going through at some stage of life, and which might inspire us to try a different strategy for living." Storytelling is a big part of art-making because stories provide space for meaning to be constructed and deconstructed, lived and re-lived. Abstract concepts are converted into realizable experiences when they undergo storification.

Operational Account

The aim of this chapter is to arrive at an interpretive understanding of the lived experiences of visual artists during their creative process. To facilitate this, a narrative approach is applied as the guiding methodology for data collection and analysis. The widespread idea held by narrativists is that every individual, family, organization, and group possess their own narrative (Spector-Mersel 2010:205). The narrative approach is an optimal way of representing and understanding the experiences of people because people understand their lifeworlds primarily through a narrative-based framework (Clandinin and Connelly 2000:17-18). Narratives have an enormous influence on how people conceive and shape their reality; they are instrumental to how people chronicle their individual lives, their lifestories, and the way in which they represent their past and future (Spector-Mersel 2010:208).

Although multiple authors were involved in shaping the research and this chapter, the main (male) author was primary investigator and the only one involved directly in data collection. It was important for a researcher of creativity to approach his own work in a reflexive way, similarly to how visual artists approach their artworks. This is because the researcher participates in a creative project or venture of his own and must critically examine not only the nature of the research but also his role in the research processes. The role of the researcher's reflexive thinking and practice is intricately interwoven into the fabric of narrative inquiry (Hickson 2016:381). With a reflexive understanding of his actions, as well as the actions of others, the researcher must then organize events into a meaningful whole and more clearly interpret the consequences of events and actions over time (Chase 2005 as cited in White and Hede 2008:24).

Uwe Flick (2009:283) stresses that the narrative approach is similar to the creative process in that it is a *Gestalt* in its own right—an organized whole that

is more than the sum of its parts, and therefore loaded with more than a series of statements or recorded facts. Thus, inside the stories that an individual tells lie all the meanings that are necessary to understand that particular individual's lifeworld. Narrative inquiry is dynamic and in a perpetual state of development; this compels the narrative inquirer to be constantly wakeful and reflexive (Clandinin and Connelly 2000:184). Another reason why narrative methodology was chosen is because the relational context of storytelling creates a hospitable environment for the stories of ordinary people to be heard and retold.

Drawing an appropriate sample is crucial in fulfilling the aims of the research. In this study, the target population is young Black (African) South African visual artists between the ages of 25 and 35. Initially, we set out to get a total of six participants for this study, three male and three female. However, due to difficulties locating female visual artists, we had to work with six male visual artists.

Two forms of non-probability sampling were used to identify participants: purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling allowed us to target and select specific artists who would form part of our study's core group. Snowball sampling—where we asked participants in our core group to refer us to one or two of their fellow visual artists (O'Leary 2004:110)—helped to overcome difficulties in locating additional participants. The participants were all based in and around Bloemfontein (Mangaung) at the time the fieldwork took place.

In the fieldwork stage of this study, the semi-structured interviews were used as the conduit through which the researcher explored how participants create meaning out of their experiences and interactions with the world (Hickson 2016:382). During the interviews, emphasis was placed on the dynamic between interviewer and interviewee. In the context of a conversational, narrative approach, the interviewees were free to divulge the full scope of their stories. An auxiliary research technique was the application of visual methodologies in the form of photo-elicitation and photo-documentation. These pertain to when a researcher "(a) takes a carefully planned series of photographs to document and analyze a particular visual phenomenon, and (b) asks research participants to take photographs which are then discussed in an interview with the researcher"

(Rose 2012:298). Utilizing both of these techniques yielded interesting insights into the artists' lifeworld experiences.

Participant observation, the ethnographic technique of extended fieldwork where the researcher shares the same experiences with his or her research participant(s), was the third research technique utilized during this study's data gathering processes. Carrying out participant observation proved fundamental to the research because it improved the main author/researcher's ability to combine subjective and objective interpretations that arose in the process of conducting fieldwork. The principal author/investigator also participated in an art-film by way of more directly experiencing the creative processes of one of the research participants of this study. The aim was to experience how an idea is taken from conception and elaborated on by the visual artist into a final product. In this process, the principal investigator used observation to understand how the artist goes about creating stories through the application of his visual medium, and what influences arose during this process.

Before starting the research, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of the Free State's Faculty of Humanities Ethics Committee (Ethical Clearance Number UFS-HSD2016/0345). No deception was used at any stage of the research to manipulate the participants. Written, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were assured that they were free to withdraw at any point in the study if for any reason they no longer felt comfortable participating.

Participants were reminded of their right to withdraw any statements that they made during our encounters. The permission of the research participant was sought at the onset of the research to use an audio-recording device during the interview, as well as to photograph his work-space (environment), artworks, and whatever else was deemed necessary to this study. The participants were ensured that their faces, and any other identifying information, would be handled with utmost care and confidentiality. They were offered the option of providing pseudonyms of their own choice, and these are used to represent them in this chapter. The polite gender form he/she is not appropriate to participants in this study, who are all men, so from here on mainly the masculine form is used in relation to quotes and experiences.

Creativity as a concept, and the creative process as an experience or action, are difficult to assess. Different research methods (in-depth interviews, visual methodologies, and participant observation) are, therefore, used to gather and triangulate the data, interpretations, and analyses. Personal reflexivity was a key method used by the primary investigator as an instrument to maintain his awareness of the effects that his presence may have had on the research and its findings. Each individual research method contributed constructively in eliciting in-depth, consistent responses from the research participants. The use of different kinds of methods helped the researchers towards better understanding of particular phenomena (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009:86). Analyses brought together the data gathered from the in-depth interviews, the photographs, and the observations.

Meaning-Making through Creative Storytelling

The findings presented in this chapter are illustrated by verbatim quotes from research participants. The purpose of the quotes is to provide the reader with a glimpse into the subjective and intersubjective sense-making processes that form part of the participants' experiences during the creative process of art-making. In addition, at the core of this chapter is an epistemological assumption that knowledge emerges from the active collaboration between researcher and research participants. It is for this reason that the primary investigator's reflexive interpretation and understanding of the narratives received from the research participants is acknowledged as a factor that shaped the study's findings. Lastly, as espoused by interpretive sociology, the presentation of this study's findings features "thick descriptions" that provide a rich account of the research participants' experiences.

One of the most fundamental aspects of the visual arts is to tell stories. Our creativity, as humans, and our ability to transpose our individual and collective experiences into meaningful stories have been vital to our human development and survival. The way we understand ourselves is enriched through storytelling, and art performs a critical role in the telling of stories that all human beings are able to identify and to connect with. Art-making is essentially about telling stories, communicating messages, and conveying meaning. Visual artists utilize visual platforms to express themselves, as well as to communicate and

convey meaningful experiences to others. Art-making is spawned from a love of storytelling and the yearning of society, at large, to hear and be told stories.

The way in which people interpret social experiences varies from person to person—this is also true of artists. The many ways in which visual artists express themselves are nuanced in terms of two dimensions: the medium that the artist works in (e.g., photography, painting, film) and the stories he wants to tell. Kaizer summarizes the essence of being an artist:

> I love stories, and especially I love short films. I love stories. I just love stories of people who are trying to: I don't know. People who are just trying to make it every day. [Kaizer]

Modalities such as the artistic medium and the interpretation of internal or external experiences are shaped by the typifications in the artist's social and personal world. Typifications refer to embedded practices or thoughts that are widely held in society. A person's thoughts and actions are influenced by his/her typifications and, as a result, we have multiple understandings of social experience. Visual artists base their creative works on their own intersubjectively formed typifications. Therefore, the stories that artists tell are intricately interwoven into their lifeworlds. Whether it is communicating a message or giving a phenomenological experience meaning, the artist performs these things most effectively when using a storytelling format. Kaizer acknowledges the central place of storytelling in art when he says:

> Not sympathy. Because just to tell a story, I feel like maybe as humans we are…[storytellers]. Stories are so central to our lives that we sometimes understand something if it is a story. That is why as children; it is like the fables we are told. These fables are told to us to try to guide us morally. Like stories are so central to us…It is like the story of Jesus's fables. Even Jesus told stories in fables. Like he would say in parables. It's like the parable of the…what's that guy? Who was…everyone passed and he was injured? The Good Samaritan! So, then it's like: who is the good neighbor? But, we had to tell that story so that when you think: "Oh, my God, like, yeah, man!" I feel like sometimes we make stories for us to actually connect to something. Actually, we do [it] to understand something or to see something. It's like you have, yeah, you see, whatever you have—something. Like something bothering you or something that you just felt. And you feel like: why isn't anyone seeing this? So, you feel like: maybe if I tell a story, maybe that is when people will realize this. [Kaizer]

Visual artists' penchant for storytelling comes from a desire to give form to their own interpretations of their lived experiences or from the stories and experiences of others from whom they derive inspiration. Artists formulate concepts or themes, which constitute the narrative(s) they seek to articulate through their work. Malik's work is inspired by people in his environment:

> It's always just best that as an artist, that your work has a body. Therefore, sometimes it derives from a theme. I play around with themes a lot. I really do just conceptualize most of the time in terms of my work. Sometimes themes are not executed the way they were envisioned. [Malik]

Malik took a series of portraits of street dwellers who he sees society as having little regard for. He embarked on this work to draw attention to the lives of these individuals who are often regarded as "undesirables" within their own communities. By documenting the individuals and the intersubjective lived experiences of these individuals, he constructs a theme or concept around their experiences and around his understanding or interpretation of them. In doing so, Malik gives his audience a glimpse into the lived experiences of these forgotten members of society. Through his art he strives to render them see-able, and to bridge the relational divide between the viewers and the street dwellers. For Malik, photography is a powerful medium to draw attention to socio-economic issues. He employs photography as his art medium because it reflects realism and engages the viewer in the process and manifestation of the story that he wishes to convey.

Malik's use of photography illustrates that the artist wants to depict meaning, and how he wants to do so depends on the choice of medium to express a particular story. Faceless, another participant, is a multimedia artist and he plays with the modalities of medium and concept:

> I will make a painting out of it. Where with the painting the colors become more expressive of what I am trying to say about you. So, yeah, my key medium is concept. The whole idea of conceptualizing. But, if I had to pick a medium, I would say photography. If I had to pick the traditional mediums, I would say photography because it's spontaneous. [Faceless]

Painters use specific techniques and tools to give varied expressions to the stories they want to tell through their artwork. Haile makes use of different creative

devices such as the different textures available to him, paint mediums (oil and acrylic), and how he employs the paintbrush when painting:

> Here I want to show the corporate world and what it does to kids. Because here it is sweet manufacturers. So here is the mould of the sweet. The guys are making the sweet and throwing it into the big pan where the sweets are going to be formed. Instead of putting sweets here, I have put kids. And this kid looks like a kid that is scared, but still it is not a normal kid. Because this kid was formed by a sweet and the end result of it is not finished yet. The kid is going to end up as a sweet. It is not going to be just a human being—to show that these capitalists are shaping the character of kids because they are getting disorders that are brought on by flavorants that are poured inside sweets. Because they are not healthy, but still they are alright for business. All those preservatives, they are not alright for us. So, that is why I have made these guys into sweets because they become what they eat. They get attention disorder and they cannot focus. They also get a temper that is not healthy for a child. So, my context is a nursery. So, you know that a nursery where plants are grown and kids are akin to plants? Because that whole thing of children is derived from Chi. Chi meaning tree. So, children [are] small trees: the shades and the dark areas. Yes, I actually wanted to find kids who are hyperactive. I wanted to show that this is a disorder. It is not a natural thing. [Haile]

So much of what we understand about ourselves collectively and as individuals is symbolically linked to stories we have been told:

> I think I connect because it is a story that my grandmother used to tell me. And because of my studies—in my studies, I talk about traditional narratives of South Africans and how nowadays traditional narratives are not being given any attention like before. And I searched why in South Africa do we have traditional narratives. And it is said that traditional narratives preserve norms and values of us as a Black people. Back in the day, Black people did not go to school. They were not…They did not know how to read and all those things. [Prince]

Prince is referring to an anecdote that was told to him as a young child by his grandmother. In South African and broader African culture, it is customary for children to be taught important lessons of morality and the value of Ubuntu[2] through allegorical narratives that pertain to social life. Prince grew up among

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2   "Ubuntu refers to behaving well towards others or acting in ways that benefit the community" (Thought Co. 2017).

such oral storytelling traditions, and presently in his artwork, he seeks to replicate and preserve these traditional narratives by means of visual art:

> When I was young, I was raised by my grandmother. My grandmother would always tell us the story of Mellita. Mellita is a child who was conceived by her own sibling. The story is about a mother who doesn't have daughters; she doesn't have girls, only boys. She then sent her one child to his uncle's house to ask for medicine, which is going to make it possible for her to bear a female baby. When the boy got to the uncle and got the medicine, on the way back he drank the medicine. You know how kids are when parents send them to do something, like buy something, like water or something; we would drink the water along the way. So, the boy drinks the medicine and eventually the boy gets pregnant. He then gives birth to a female child and he calls that child Mellita. I learnt that nowadays when our parents send us somewhere or tell us to [do] something, we do what we want to do. We do not do what our elders tell us to do. I think that is a metaphor there in the pregnancy of the boy. This is the mistake that we as the youth fall into. We don't listen to our elders; eventually, we fall into bad behaviors. When the story goes on, the mother of the boy supports the boy; she supports him. His friends told on him to his mother and his mother got angry. And also, when I thought about it, when I looked at how Mellita was loved by this boy. In this story, we see how the young boy, who doesn't have the power to care for Mellita, tries by all means to take care of Mellita. [Prince]

Artists compose stories that speak to different and various components of their lifeworlds. The artistic or creative concept is gradually crafted into a story by the artist who uses his skill to make it happen:

> People tell different stories about Soweto or the townships, to tell you the truth. They think it's all hunky dory. They send out the good side of the township and not showing the bad side of what's happening. And that's the type of things you see in social media. I don't know any artist—or, well, heard thus far—I haven't spoken to even one who takes pictures while walking around in the township and taking pictures. Because to them: that's kind of like a risk too. They feel like: "I am in a township. Someone might just take my camera and [I] get robbed." Sometimes I fear that too. But, I try to shoot without any fear, 'cause you know I was raised there and I feel like I can fight back too when I do get attacked. It's more like a self-defense type of thing. And, since I want to portray these stories, I might as well do it without any fear and just spread the message. But, the township is very…it's shaky in a very strong way. But, I am doing it to spread a message, because people don't really know anything about the hood [neighborhood or township]. [Natural]

It is commonplace for artists such as Natural—in the extract above—to turn the communities they grew up in, and the realities within these communities, into central themes of their artwork. In Natural's case, the motive is to give new interpretations of old understandings of social life and of social reality as a whole. The way to do this is to tell different stories from the ones that were told before. People's understandings of social reality are influenced by the stories they are told about phenomena, stories they accept as being true. Natural wishes to re-story reality, to influence the way people see the township and so to enlighten through his art.

An artist will take an experience, a memory, an emotion, or a thought and find the meaning that underpins his sense of self. To find meaning, the artist has to unwrap or excavate it from the experience or phenomena he interprets in the work. This process usually culminates in the artist producing his own interpretation of the phenomenon, which then becomes the story that the artist presents as his artwork. Haile elaborates on this:

> You see the way the woman's body has been created. Like the body shapes that you see: it's like the depictions you have seen especially of Black women. Like you see round shapes. Then you see straight lines and then it goes around again. Do you get it? Whereas, when it comes to males: you see that he is rigid. So, I love those variations and the softness. Because we need women; without women there is no life. We are the fruits of their hearts. It wouldn't be heavily conceptual because it obviously needs to reach people. I like things that can put the message across in a simplistic way; not too literal but at least have a lot of meanings behind it. When you speak about it, I find it interesting because I think I am a person who has [a] really strong memory. That is the thing that I would say God blessed me with. Even though I do not have words but the image I have. I can remember old things from as early as two years. [Haile]

Kaizer discusses a recent film project he was working on, in which storytelling draws attention to a societal issue:

> So, it is like a big reservoir where it's like these rivers of water are now being reserved in one place. And then the water is being sold to South Africa and it can also generate electricity. But, right now, we are selling water to South Africa. But, then the problem is that when you are trying to conserve that water into one space, then the water keeps piling up. But, where the water was, there used to be villages. So, they moved people from villages to make

those hydro dams. And some of these people were forcibly removed because we have to make this. This is for the good of the country. So, I was inspired by that…and I felt like, and I had a story, man, who…of a young boy and his mother who were moved, but their father's grave was in a village that now they were moved from. But, he keeps dreaming of his father. But, then he finds an old man who has a small hut by the water's edge and the old man says he refuses to leave. This is all he knows. But, the old man has a chicken and the old man is like: what's important was blood. Not cow's blood or whatever; any blood. And right now, if you give the young man the chicken and he is like: "The blood flows into the river, the river will carry the blood into the grave." So, he cuts the head of the chicken and then the blood spreads into the water and then that in a way satisfies his father's spirit. Ah yeah! So, that's the story. The struggles, the pains of people and just showing people, what other people are going through. This is real for me. [Kaizer]

Artists manage to construe seemingly mundane phenomena into meaningful stories. They do not create social reality anew; their artworks are second order and sometimes third order representations of social phenomena. In the act of creation, the artist merely provides his or her interpretation, inviting the viewer to view reality in a different light. Artists also wish to capture their lifestories and the lives of contemporaries in a historical moment of time. Faceless aptly sums this up:

My artwork is about history. It's about now…it's about now for tomorrow. For tomorrow's kids, for the next generation. I am hoping that future artists or future society will look back at my work and read into it what was happening now. That, okay, a student could live the way I live; also reflecting on other students, also reflecting on relationships that people have. In a way, it tries to also draw comparisons to relationships, previously in generations that have passed. And hoping that whoever is going to look at the art is gonna draw comparisons from the present time to the time in the future. So that's why I am trying to make art that can last a hundred years. The type of mediums that I use, the type of paper that I use, the pencils that I use, photography, how I preserve my work—are put in a way that even when I am dead. Hopefully, it will be easier for someone to just crack the code, okay. Because I file things a lot—I will make a file. That file maybe will be today. So, with me doing: that is me trying to keep record. Recording everything: just keep on recording. So, my art is for the future. [Faceless]

Malik sees his duty as an artist in similar light:

> They have a major role to play. We record history. We record history and we record it somewhat in the purest form. We know it through your art and we see it. And it lived. Here it is, you know what I mean? And I just think with photography—it's even more detailed. Because I capture moments in time, man. And these moments possibly last forever. [Malik]

Meaning-making and storytelling are inseparable and integral components of art-making and the creative processes that go into it. Artists base their art-making around these two fundamental pillars of human understanding. To create artwork that is driven by these two concepts requires the artist to have an epistemological grasp of meaning-making and of storytelling. The artist accumulates such an understanding of intersubjective, subjective, and objective phenomena through his own lived experiences and unique perspective of social reality.

In Conclusion

Meaning is the cornerstone of human understanding. The transfer of information, whether represented orally, in writing, or visually, relies on the existence of a foundational understanding of the meanings of, and from, the source. Artists are able to create new meanings and understandings from old, even archaic, and current social practices and ideologies. The new understandings that emerge from the art-making processes of an artist can create new ways of thinking, of perceiving oneself and the world around us. Artists skillfully re-imagine and capture social reality; their novel interpretations of past and present realities add to the social stock of knowledge. In so doing, artists are influencing society.

As creative thinkers, artists take ordinary social experiences and interpret them in a creative manner. The creative process is the process of interpretation and reinterpretation that the artist grapples with on his/her way to the final art-product. As illustrated in our findings, storytelling is a means whereby artists express their emotions, concepts, and opinions about social issues and worldviews. Expressing themselves through art-making requires artists to possess sensitivity, to perceive below and beyond the surface, and to articulate themselves in ways that are skillful, novel, and creative.

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Online Social Networking, Interactions, and Relations[1]

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ABSTRACT | *Online social networking (OSN) is an activity performed through social network sites (SNS) such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram. OSN has become a dominant interaction mechanism within contemporary society. Online platforms are woven inextricably into the fabric of individuals' everyday lives, especially those of young adults. We present a mixed-methods study—conducted at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein—that analyzes how students reflect on their everyday experiences of OSN. The key theoretical frameworks guiding this research are phenomenology, existentialism and reflexive sociology. These theoretical lenses collectively assist in broadening our understanding of the students' experiences that reveal the complexities associated with their interactions and social relations via social networking sites. From their narratives we learn how the students make sense of their engagements on SNS, how these engagements have an impact on their social interactions, and how OSN effects their self-presentation.*

Introduction

The end of the 20th century and the dawn of the 21st can be regarded as an important watershed in the history of the world. This period brought the heightened inventions of various technologies. Amongst the flood in contemporary technologies came an explosion of social media — a term used in this chapter to refer mainly to websites and Internet applications that allow users to create and share content through various online social networking (OSN) platforms. These online platforms enable people from all around the world

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to share their thoughts and ideas via the media of digital text, pictures, video recordings, and voice.

With the aid of modern small-scale, portable computers such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops, individuals have the ability to engage in online interactions through forms of social media known as social network sites (SNS). SNS refer to web-based "communities" that allow users to create profiles and virtually interact with other members (Henson, Reyns, and Fisher 2011:254). These online platforms have become the places and spaces where a large part of mundane socializing activities within present day society takes place. The absence of the time-space element of OSN makes it possible for high levels of interaction between individual users of SNS. OSN is used to refer to the processes of engaging with SNS such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The capacity of SNS to overcome the restrictions of time and space means that the interactions between individuals are no longer constrained within traditional geographic boundaries of neighborhoods, educational institutions, or recreational areas. OSN transpires beyond these physical parameters.

Tertiary education students have been identified by previous studies as a social group that is most particularly active in OSN. Previous studies (Thompson and Hickey 2005:126; McCuddy and Vogel 2015:169) found that students spend a large amount of time socializing with each other. This chapter aims to cast light on the impact of OSN on a group of tertiary education students' sense of self, their lifeworld experiences, and on social reality as the emergent product of interacting with others.

Theoretical Points of Departure

This study is positioned in the theoretical frameworks of interpretivist thinking. According to this school of thought, reality is the world as we perceive it and we understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience (Burrel and Morgan 1979:28). The key issue in an interpretivist approach is therefore to engage oneself in empathetic understanding to comprehend reality from the unique point of view of an individual. As such, a social scientist would strive for what Max Weber terms *Verstehen* (Babbie and Mouton 2001:31). To achieve *Verstehen*, we collect, analyze, and interpret narratives with the aim of discovering depth and meaning in as far as our

research participants' experiences of social reality. The process of interpretation of the narratives to achieve empathetic understanding is related to *hermeneutics* (Babbie and Mouton 2001:30-31; Neuman 2006:87). Hermeneutics focuses on the words, the intentions, and the actions of research participants to bring us to a better understanding.

The theoretical frameworks that provide context to this study consist mainly of ideas within phenomenology, existential sociology, and reflexive sociology. Phenomenology aims to understand the social world from the viewpoint of the actor and not of the social analyst (Overgaard 2007:21). Phenomenologically focused research is, therefore, oriented at the everyday lives of ordinary people who coexist within a given lifeworld—"the mundane, everyday world in which people operate" (Inglis 2012:90). People share aspects of the same culture, language, and a set of meaning-structures that allow them to negotiate their daily lives (Farganis 2014:245) and to construct reality within their lifeworlds. OSN represents the specific focus of people's lifeworld in this research and the aim is to determine how the research participants experience their everyday lives within the context of OSN.

In addition to these basic ideas of phenomenology, existential thinking explores the self, as well as the continuous conflict between the self and society. The self is regarded as a central point of all aspects of being, such as values, principles, and emotions (Kotarba 2009:149). An individual is an active social actor who endeavors to overcome and to conquer everyday dilemmas by seeking meanings and ways of action that help in dealing with the challenges that might be faced (Kotarba 2009:151). This theoretical perspective provides insight into how users of SNS assert their identities whilst operating within OSN.

As a third theoretical context, Pierre Bourdieu's reflexive sociology attempts to reconcile the seemingly contradictory dimensions of the objective and subjective aspects contained in social reality. Bourdieu argues for a bi-dimensional approach, combining *social physics*—a term used to refer to methods of observation used by structuralists to perform social inquiry—and *social phenomenology*—pointing to constructivists' inquiry based on meaning (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:7-9). In essence, reflexive sociology rejects any sociological paradigm that overemphasizes the importance of either the objective or subjective dimension of phenomena while the other dimension is

downplayed (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:10; Harrington 2005:221). Within the scope of this study, both the objective and subjective aspects of OSN were explored to broaden our understanding of the phenomenon under study. This was achieved by firstly analyzing available information found in literature on the usage of SNS globally and in South Africa. In addition to this aspect of the research, a survey consisting of closed-ended questionnaires was conducted amongst students of the University of the Free State (UFS) to generate statistical data. With regards to the social phenomenological and qualitative part of this study, in-depth interviews were conducted to establish a subjective dimension of the research participants' lifeworld experiences. A triangulation of these two different research approaches (qualitative and quantitative) positioned the study within the domain of mixed-methods research.

Online Social Networking and Social Network Sites

All people form part of social networks. A *social network* can be described as "a configuration of people connected to one another through interpersonal means, such as friendship, common interests, or ideas" (Jin 2015:503). Because of our social networks, we get to fulfil many of our social roles as social beings. In contemporary society, social networks consist of the relationships that exist both in physical contexts and environments, as well as in online platforms via electronic and digital media. Any member of society can have relationships with his/her consociates (family, friends), contemporaries (classmates, lecturers), and other people and groups with whom he/she chooses to have contact (Thompson and Hickey 2005:126; Jin 2015:502-503).

Those who are involved in OSN are part of an *online community*, which can be defined as "a group of people who may not meet one another face-to-face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks" (Rheingold 1994 as cited in Preece 2000:11). As members of online communities, individuals are capable of forming and maintaining their relations and interactions with their consociates, contemporaries, and other people via online platforms. For OSN activities to materialize, the individual has to join SNS—the "web-based 'communities' that allow users to create profiles and virtually interact with other members" (Henson et al. 2011:254). To gain access to SNS, the individual must create a public or semi-public profile within

a particular online platform. Once an individual has created his/her profile, he/she becomes a member of the selected online community and can begin networking with other members or *friends*.[2]

A study (Statusbrew 2017:1) found that Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp are popular SNS for South African Students. *Facebook* is an OSN platform that focuses on keeping people connected. Statistics show that, as of 2018, Facebook consists of more than 2 billion users worldwide. This OSN site had approximately 16 million active users in South Africa in 2016 (Hunter 2017:1). Already in 2014 Munienge Mbodila and colleagues (2014:117) estimated that between 85% and 99% of tertiary students use Facebook. This finding suggests that Facebook seems to be the most popular SNS for tertiary students by far.

Twitter is regarded to be more amenable to constant public dialogue than Facebook because it is mainly a micro blogging platform that enables users to share their ideas, thoughts, and information. Even as Twitter is positioned as an open online news portal—via interactive Tweets—it does allow the user to also communicate privately with others (Junco, Heiberger, and Loken 2010:3; Johnston, Chen, and Hauman 2013:202). It is estimated that in 2018, Twitter consists of 330 million monthly active users globally (Statusbrew 2017:1), with around 8 million users in South Africa (Hunter 2017:1). *Instagram* is predominantly used to capture and share digital photos and videos (Hu, Manikonda, and Kambhampati 2014:1). Users record videos and capture photos from their mobile devices to upload these materials onto their accounts. This SNS enables its users to connect and share their life moments with the broader online community (Herman 2014:1; Hu et al. 2014:1). By some accounts, Instagram has attracted already more than 800 million users globally—with an average of 95 million photos being uploaded daily (Statusbrew 2017:1). The number of Instagram users in South Africa purportedly amounts to 3.8 million users and, as is the case with other SNS, membership seems to continue to grow (Hunter 2017:1).

WhatsApp is a messaging application that can be downloaded onto any modern portable electronic mobile device such as a smartphone, iPad, or tablet to send instant messages to other users with compatible and Internet connected devices (Hedlund 2013:1). In contrast to traditional text messages sent using SMS or

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2   Friends: a list of one's contacts on a social networking website.

airtime, WhatsApp uses Internet connection to send text messages and media files. It is rated to be the most globally popular SNS application after Facebook with 1.3 billion active users in 2018 (Statusbrew 2017:1). According to Statista (2018:1), WhatsApp is the most popular application in the Android, Apple, and Windows applications stores and was used by 49% of South Africans in 2017.

Motives Behind Online Social Networking Activities

There are numerous reasons why people are involved in OSN. Previous studies show that individuals are driven by common social forces that motivate them to use SNS (Placencia and Lower 2013:617; Beneito-Montagut 2015:538). In physical contexts, individuals usually form and maintain social networks for functional reasons: among others, the advancement of their careers, social support, and the promotion of personal needs and interests (Thompson and Hickey 2005:126; McCuddy and Vogel 2015:169). In the same way as in offline contexts, OSN interactants build relationships by making friends, participating in social organizations, and engaging in some of the most trivial interactions and exchanges such as gossiping (Jin 2015:501; Tang et al. 2016:103).

Moreover, studies reveal that young adults often maintain interpersonal relationships with people that were already part of their social system prior to their online interactions (Sponcil and Gitimu 2013:4; McCuddy and Vogel 2015:171). SNS have become the platforms that most young adults and students use to keep in touch with their consociates in a convenient manner (Placencia and Lower 2013:617-618; Sponcil and Gitimu 2013:4). Staying in touch with pre-existing social contacts in offline contexts is not the only use of SNS. *Open SNS*[3] such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram allow users to meet strangers online whilst maintaining contact with their already known acquaintances and followers. Online platforms such as WhatsApp are mainly used to maintain pre-existing social networks. This platform is, therefore, positioned as a *closed SNS*[4] in so far as allowing the user to participate in a direct one-on-one conversation with another active user.

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3   *Open SNS* allow the interaction between multiple users to take place and access to the posted media files is public.

4   *Closed SNS* allow communication to take place between two or more users. Access to the posted media files is private and generally controlled by the user.

Digital Social Network Sites and the Sense of Reality

Small-scale mobile computers that are connected to the Internet have become increasingly ubiquitous, at least in settings such as the social environments of the students who were interviewed. In these lifeworlds, computer-mediated communication has not only come to shape social action and understandings profoundly, it has differentiated the actors' sense of "reality" in at least two interconnected ways: it has added another variation to what Schütz (1945:555) has called "worlds of phantasy" and it has changed the spatial organization of the everyday lifeworld (Schütz and Luckmann 1974:41).

Building on William James's analysis of how sub-universes are implicated in our sense of reality, Schütz distinguishes different types of reality: inter alia the reality of the everyday lifeworld, the worlds of phantasy, and the world of dreams. Each of these constitutes "finite provinces of meaning" (Schütz 1945:551), each characterized by a specific tension of consciousness, a specific époche (the suspension of doubt), and a specific form of experiencing the self (among other dimensions along which they differ). At any given moment, individuals perceive these dimensions as real "upon each of which we may bestow the accent of reality" (Schütz 1945:551). With reference to Kierkegaard, Schütz describes the switching between these realities not as a gradual process, but as a "leap." Of these manifold worlds, the everyday lifeworld is the paramount reality. As the reality that is socially shared and in which we interact and communicate with others, its reflection of reality is typically the strongest. Individuals return to this reality after "waking up" from the world of dreams or after putting aside a novel they were reading, having been immersed in the phantasy world of the narration.

Interconnected computers may simply add another world of phantasy. By accessing Internet services such as reading emails or websites, individuals leap into these realities as they would when reading a novel or watching TV. In contrast to conventional phantasy worlds, activities such as gaming, for example, immersing oneself in the "Fortnite" universe, or joining virtual worlds such as "Second Life," may generate an even stronger accent of reality, since they demand more active input from the user. To the extent, however, that these phantasy worlds are shared with other (interacting) users—and Internet services such as SNS belong to this category—they constitute technologically mediated extensions of the *everyday* lifeworld.

SNS enable establishing contact and communication between individuals, as well as a range of methods for individuals to represent themselves, their understandings, and their activities on the corresponding platforms. By allowing actors to engage in technologically mediated exchanges (in principle similar to writing letters, making telephone calls, showing photographs to others, etc.), they change the way in which actors are co-present. It is not only through the physical presence in a shared zone of manipulation or world of actual reach (Schütz and Luckmann 1974:42) that co-presence is established but computer-mediated communication technologies allow for real-time face-to-face interaction that effectively constitutes co-presence as an "endogenous" variable (Campos-Castillo and Hitlin 2013:168), albeit in a reduced form as various senses are not registered technologically. Thus, while interacting in the everyday lifeworld in non-mediated ways, students increasingly have the ability to constitute co-presence through their computer devices. Technically, switching between mediated and non-mediated communication may be regarded as a "leap," but increasingly, students are simultaneously co-present in both ways, incorporating the mediated communication into their non-mediated communication. The students who were interviewed in this project do, however, still aim to make a distinction between their bodily and materially experienced everyday lifeworld and the technologically enabled representation of themselves and others, as many experiential dimensions they consider "real" are not real or are inadequately "transposed" into the digital medium. When they speak of their "real self," they typically refer to the flow of experiences and processes of meaning-constitution within their corporeal boundaries. Not only do they speak of difficulties to convey their subjectivity in adequate ways but they typically adhere to an empirical notion of "reality" that is in line with Schütz's analysis: they still regard the non-mediated experience of the everyday reality and who they are within that reality (i.e., who they are able to convey to be) as "more real" than what they can convey in and through computer-mediated digital spaces.

SNS do constitute, however, phantasy realities in the sense that they are *not only* used to engage in communication with other individuals but as opportunities for entertainment, education, and playful interaction and representation. By acquiring specific knowledge of how to display themselves on these platforms, actors may not only take the liberty to represent themselves in ways they would not in their embodied everyday lifeworld. They may also be uncertain of whether or not another "figure" engaged in these SNS represents a "real" person or is a

"fictional" character and to what extent the online representation of this person corresponds to how they would perceive this individual—should this individual have been present in a non-mediated embodied form. This possibility does not take into account that some of these "figures" may in fact be "bots" (i.e., software agents) and thus may not relate to any specific human actor. Thus, while leaping into these technologically constituted realities by focusing their attention on the user interfaces of the corresponding devices, the boundary between the everyday lifeworld on the one hand and the world of phantasy becomes blurred; the experience of a leap between realities becomes much less distinct compared to the more conventional media. In their narrations, the students convey different ways of how they deal with the increasing blurring of boundaries between these realities. Although many students perceive the non-mediated reality as having the strongest accent of reality, the blurring of boundaries increasingly fosters both a sense of reality and a sense of the self that are not decisively lodged in only one of the manifold realities of the actor's lifeworld.

Social Interactions and Relations

SNS serve as the platforms through which a high level of *social interaction* and building of social relations take place. Social interaction, as defined by Panos Bardis (1979:148), refers to "the way in which personalities, groups or social systems act toward and mutually influence one another." SNS are channels in which online interactants realize their communication and interpersonal needs. Even traditional sociology—long before the advent of OSN and SNS—acknowledged five basic patterns of social interaction existing among groups, organizations, and societies, namely, exchange, cooperation, competition, conflict, and coercion (Gouldner 1960 as cited in Thompson and Hickey 2005:129).

Exchange is based on the norm of *reciprocity* in expectation of gifts, love, and other courtesies. These exchanges are generally taken for granted until people fail to meet others' expectations. Regarded as basic to human survival, *cooperation* is said to maintain social order. Without cooperation, life would be next to impossible. Thus, in this type of social interaction, individuals, groups, and societies work collectively to achieve common goals. Another pattern of social interaction is *competition*. As in the case with cooperation, individuals and social groups strive to achieve common goals when involved in competition. In competition, individuals or groups contest to achieve valued goals, acknowledging that benefits or rewards

that societies have to offer are limited. *Conflict* is characterized by disputes and disagreements among individuals or social groups. This pattern of interaction is common in open SNS such as Twitter and Facebook. These conflicts can be related to issues such as politics, religion, and racism. *Coercion* involves the realization of the threat or force that those with power usually use to achieve their ends. Although coercion is not usually present on SNS—since users are able to control who they want to interact with—instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp, where private chats between two users take place, can allow for coercion to occur.

From the brief introductions to these conventionally accepted patterns of real life social interactions it is clear that these interactions do contain similarities with the patterns of social interaction that take place in SNS. We refer to the conventionally accepted patterns of social interaction in real life, as well as in SNS, to emphasize that OSN displays resemblance with our mundane everyday social interactions and relations. Because of these similarities, OSN easily provides an alternative lifeworld and everyday reality.

Identification, Self-Understanding, and Online Social Networking

Identity is one of the central concepts in social sciences—including sociology. In this chapter, identity is thought of as "the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is" (Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith 2012:69).

SNS can be regarded as platforms where people—particularly young people—experiment with their identities. A study by Patti Valkenburg and colleagues (2008 as cited in Leung 2011:382) revealed that over half of adolescents and young adults pretend to be somebody else when interacting on instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp. Creating a false identity is not limited to instant messaging applications[5]; it can also be done on open SNS such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. This straightforward dichotomy in as far as the concept of identity is concerned—between "real" and "digital," or between "true" and

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5   Instant messaging applications refer to types of online chat that offer real-time text transmission over the SNS where messages are typically transmitted between two parties (or more).

"false"—cannot easily be upheld. For this reason, we differentiate between "false" identities" in those cases where online participants claim the authenticity of a non-existent person; "multiple identities" in those cases where an individual in a playful manner portrays different characters; and "concealed identities" in those cases where online participants use pseudonyms to protect themselves. In addition to the use of text and language, young people often spend considerable amounts of time posting photos, videos, and personal information on SNS (Ahn 2011:1438; Leung 2011:382). The progress made in terms of Internet technology makes it possible for OSN to have evolved to a point where it gives people the opportunity and ability to present different aspects of their identities. This is due to an individual having ample time to figure out and to socially construct, via virtual reality, how he/she wants to present him-/herself online (Leung 2011:382; Sponcil and Gitimu 2013:5-6).

Moreover, one's online identity formation is also molded by self-presentation on SNS. Self-presentation is "the process through which individuals communicate an image of themselves to others and is a central element in the construction of one's self and efforts to establish a reputation within a social context" (Yang and Brown 2016:402). It can also be seen as "a specific and more strategic form of self-disclosure" (Yang and Brown 2016:402). Young adults often disclose personal information—thereby revealing their identities and preferences—on their SNS profiles (Ahn 2011:1438). Their profiles contain the summaries of how these individuals see themselves and how they intend to be seen by others. In addition to presenting themselves in a particular way, SNS enable users to actively accept or reject friends or other members. They, therefore, emphasize purpose, power, and autonomy over the people they would like to associate with and would like to disclose their identities to (Ahn 2011:1438).

Methodological Notes

OSN as a contemporary social phenomenon can be studied quantitatively or qualitatively depending on the research questions and objectives of the researcher. It can also be studied utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches when the researcher's intention is to learn about more than one aspect of the phenomenon. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach—using quantitative data on students' OSN patterns to better understand their experiences of SNS. In the section *Theoretical Points of Departure*, we refer to

Pierre Bourdieu's attempts to reconcile the seemingly contradictory dimensions of the subjective and objective aspects contained in social reality. Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant (1992:7) assert that the world in which we live exists in the forms of objective and subjective dimensions of the lifeworld—commonly referred to as the "double life." In an endeavor to come to a better understanding of the effects of OSN dynamics on the research participants, both quantitative (objective) and qualitative (subjective) approaches are used to collect data and to structure and guide the study. Mixed-methods approaches often serve to achieve the following outcomes—triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion (Greene 2007:100; Combs and Onwuegbuzie 2010:2; 2011:4). For the purpose of this study—to understand how a group of university students reflect on their social interactions and relations—the principles of *complementarity* and *development* are foremost elements of our mixed-methods approach. In *complementarity*, we seek to elaborate, illustrate, enhance, deepen, and broaden the overall interpretations from one analytical strand (e.g., quantitative aspect) with the results from another analytical strand (e.g., qualitative aspect).

With *development*, the researcher's intention is to use the results or findings from one analytical strand to help inform another analytical strand. The rationale for adopting a mixed-methods approach is, therefore, to utilize quantitative data to contextualize the qualitative data. The collection of data was sequential—the first phase of data collection was quantitative, whereas the second phase was qualitative. The rationale for gathering quantitative data first (via the survey) was to identify suitable candidates for the one-on-one in-depth interviews (the qualitative data). Through an examination and scrutiny of the quantitative responses provided by the respondents, we were able to recruit the candidates with relevant exposure to and suitable experience of SNS. A mixed-methods approach in this study, therefore, means that the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted employing both quantitative and qualitative dimensions via a survey and one-on-one interviews. These data collection methods lead to a better understanding of the studied phenomenon—by uncovering its different facets within their context and in terms of meaningfulness.

The study uses two main ways of analyzing the data. Firstly, a few socio-demographic variables, as well as frequencies related to OSN and SNS usage—obtained during the survey phase of this project—are presented in quantitative format. Secondly—and more importantly—students' perceptions, experiences,

and feelings are expressed using their narratives. EvaSys (Education Survey Automation Suite)[6] was used to produce a few visual illustrations of the quantitative data obtained during the survey. For the qualitative part of the research, the research participants gave us their consent to voice record each interview session. These digital recordings were then transcribed into written format, thematically coded, and analyzed. Thematic analysis involves the process of identifying themes in the data that carry meaning and that are relevant to the research question (Willig 2014:147). In this sense, thematic analysis assisted us to identify patterns in the data.

The target population of the study was identified as the undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 30. The sample is inclusive of both the variables of gender and race. Non-probability *convenient sampling*[7] was used to recruit 100 students of which 97 questionnaires were captured. Three questionnaires were incomplete, therefore, not incorporated into the analysis. For the individual in-depth interviews, *quota sampling*[8] was used to select six participants from the 100 respondents who participated in the survey. We opted for this sampling to maintain a representation of variables such as sex and race. The six suitable candidates were systematically chosen to participate in the one-on-one interviews—a total of three males and three females.

The study was given ethical clearance by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Free State (UFS).[9] All research participants signed a consent form explaining the aim of the study, the applicable ethical considerations, the data collection process, and the measures to guarantee participant anonymity. The participants were assured that all information obtained from them would be used without revealing their identities and would be kept in a secure location.

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6   EvaSys is used by universities, colleges, and training providers to carry out all necessary steps of a survey which include questionnaire construction and data evaluation. One can reach a target population in various ways including a paper-based, online, or hybrid survey (which is both online and paper-based).

7   The primary criteria for "convenient sampling" are to select the cases that are conveniently and readily available (Neuman 2012:147).

8   "Quota sampling" is used when the researcher wants to gather a pre-set number of cases in each of several predetermined categories that will reflect the diversity of the population (Neuman 2000:197).

9   UFS ethical clearance number UFS-HSD2016/0324.

The Survey

SNS are forms of social structures that influence their users and mould their experiences. To embody this notion, the study describes a few objective facts concerning the participants and their online interactions.

Initially, a predetermined percentage (50%) for each gender category was set to ensure an equal number/ratio of respondents for both genders. Slightly more than half of 97 respondents who completed the questionnaires turned out to be males (50.5%). Almost two thirds (61.1%) of the questionnaire respondents are African, followed by White respondents consisting of 17.9%, and Colored respondents with 16.8% in total. A small percentage (4.5%) of the respondents are Indians. The proportions of respondents in terms of racial groups depict roughly the same demographic composition of the total student population at the UFS.

In addition to the demographic particulars mentioned above, the student profiles from the survey participants also indicate how much time the participants usually spend online and which SNS are perceived as more popular, accessible, and conducive to students' needs.

Figure 1. Social Network Sites which Provide Most Satisfaction.

Source: Self-elaboration.

Slightly more than half (53.8%) of the survey respondents obtain most satisfaction from WhatsApp. This figure is followed by their satisfaction with Facebook—where the level is 28%. Coming after Facebook is Instagram with 11.8% and Twitter with 4.3% as levels of satisfaction. Other SNS include Pinterest, Snapchat, Skype, Tumblr, Badoo, LinkedIn, BBM, and Mxit, but these sites appear to be providing low levels of satisfaction. Aspects of these

results are affirmed by the *South African Social Media Landscape 2016: Executive Summary Report* (Fuseware 2016:2), which states that WhatsApp is regarded as the most used SNS in Android, Apple, and Windows online application stores with Facebook as the runner up.

Figure 2. Time Spent on Social Network Sites by Respondents on a Normal Day.

Less than 30 minutes	3.1%
30 min -1 hour	14.6%
1 hour -2 hours	21.9%
2 hours - 3hours	13.5%
More than 3 hours	46.9%

Source: Self-elaboration.

The figure above reveals that almost half (46.9%) of the survey respondents indicate that they spend more than 3 hours a day engaging in OSN activities. Those respondents who indicate to be spending 2 to 3 hours a day on SNS make up a proportion of 13.5% of the sample. This validates the findings of several studies which report that individuals who own modern Internet devices spend a large proportion of time on SNS (Tazghini and Siedlecki 2013:827; Tang et al. 2016:102).

Narrating OSN Activities: The Social Construction of Reality

The qualitative—and more important part of this study—entails the personal narratives of the research participants in relation to their experiences regarding online interactions. OSN has become part of the social reality in which members of the online community live. This is the social reality where these people live their daily lives and where they construe shared meanings created during the processes of relation formations and interactions. An important question is: "How do participants make sense of this constructed reality?" This question is partly answered by exploring the meanings participants attach to OSN:

> Ehm, I would say it [OSN] means everything because lately, like now, that's where we get our information, you know. Not all of us read newspapers because we're lazy to read newspapers. So, online social networking is the closest [source of information]. And technology has improved, as you know. So, it's better 'cause you go online and see stuff. It's much easier than reading a newspaper! And everywhere you go, social networking on your phone...You know. It's everywhere—it's accessible; in simple terms. [Pretty]

> What does it mean to me? It means, ehm...a chance to learn, a chance to engage with other people, a chance to ehm...to express what you feel. Like, you know, that sometimes it's sort of difficult to engage with people that you have in real life. That you're surrounded by and then, ehm...Yeah, for me, I've always took it as something...sort of ehm, a learning curve for me. [Lesego]

> Online social networking is everything 'cause most of the things we… everything. Like when I'm bored, it's online social networks. When I'm having fun, I have to go on social network sites to update my friends so that they too can do what I'm doing or get hooked on what I'm doing. So, it's like…it's…everything that's "trending" [popular activities or topics on SNS]...Whatever you do, it's trending. So, [online] social networks, yeah! I can't live without them! [Millions]

What is salient in participants' narratives is the importance of SNS in facilitating communication between themselves and other people. OSN as a form of dominant technology in the current era is seen as a reliable and accessible source of information. Equally important is the role of SNS as tools of self-expression, thereby facilitating sociability.

The research participants in this study belong to Generation Z—the generation cohort which was born in the mid-1990s to early 2000s (Tulgan 2013:1). They were born into the age of social media. The online environment as an intrinsic part of social reality is strongly integrated into their everyday lifeworld. Although they realize that the online world is not part of their natural world, they renegotiate it and often experience it as natural. To them SNS are a *paramount reality*—"the lifeworld seems like a completely unavoidable sphere in which one lives" (Inglis 2012:96). To emphasize this point, the research participants proclaim that, should they discontinue engaging with SNS, their lives would change dramatically:

> Drastically, I think. Honestly, us as students or as sort of teenagers or young adults, you know social media...like, we grew up with social media,

basically…From adolescence to early adulthood, we grew up with that. That is all we know, honestly. Life would change drastically, I think, yeah. It would almost be...I know it's weird to say this, but it would almost be impossible to live without social media. [Katlego]

How would my life change? I think I will be…There was a time a few years ago where my phone got broken and I couldn't use WhatsApp, I couldn't use Facebook, nothing. I was like in a…you know, that feeling when you get trapped!? That's a feeling I got when I think I can't use them anymore. That feeling of: "I want to communicate with these people, but I can't." And if online social networking can just stop for everybody, I think everybody will feel that something is missing. I can't explain it. It's just…you feel trapped. I feel trapped if I'm not using online social network sites and I feel like everybody is just "out there," but I can't get to them. [Wonder]

According to the participants, life without SNS is unimaginable. They view OSN as a phenomenon which is hard to escape. Some even make an analogy between stopping to engage on SNS and experiencing the withdrawal effects when an addict discontinues using a substance:

It was, like ehm…You know that feeling when…the people that got addicted to drugs and stuff and then they need to get over it. That feeling of needing to attack the addiction, but at the same time you need to fulfil it. That's the feeling you get when you stop using social network sites. [Wonder]

Within phenomenological thinking, it happens that individuals "create large-scale social forces" that are products of their own interactions, but which in turn seem to be beyond their own control (Inglis 2012:94). In this sense, humans create social reality. Online social networks are products of human creation and humans use these sites to pursue their interactions. However, SNS are experienced by the users as real and objective.

Narratives on Social Interactions and Relations

SNS serve to facilitate the interpersonal relations amongst members of the online community. Through OSN individuals get to develop and maintain a form of *social capital*[10] that acts as an important resource that complements their social

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10   Lin (as cited in Jin 2015:503) defines social capital as "an investment in social relations on the part of individuals through which they gain access to embedded resources to enhance expected returns on instrumental or expressive actions."

relations (Lu 2011:52). Because of the ubiquitous nature of SNS, users often have more extended online relations and interactions—something that is rarely the case in the physical environment (Julien 2015:365). This theme explores the extent to which OSN interactions and relations feel real and intimate. The concept of *tie-strength*—the amount of connection a user has with his or her online friends—captures this process. To determine the tie-strength between the participants and their online friends, we focus on the description of the type of people participants interact with. We also look at the motives behind including those types of people into their social circles:

> I'd say I interact with everyone because, you know, nowadays even family members are on online social networks. On WhatsApp, for example, I have family...I have my parents on WhatsApp. I have my friends on WhatsApp. I have lovers, classmates, and even strangers on Facebook. Yeah, I'd say I interact with everybody on these social media. [Katlego]

Even though Katlego interacts with a broader online community, he is dedicated to interacting with his consociates—partners and friends. Rasala, too, interacts mostly with people who he regards as close to him, but he also spends time interacting with other individuals—acquaintances and common associates—who are part of online chat rooms. He realizes that these online interactions allow him to experience a sense of belonging through an ongoing interaction with these people:

> Okay, online I interact with mostly my friends. The ones I went to high school with, those from around varsity, and my girlfriend. And others are just group-chats where I'm involved in. Some stuff like church stuff and the choir. That's the people I communicate with, on my online platforms…I feel like they are closer to me and the breakdown in communication with them will just draw us apart if we don't keep communicating; we just gonna go apart. And then with them, I have a sense of belonging. We can relate when we communicate to each other. We can relate. We could have something to talk about. [Rasala]

While interactions with consociates are valued and prioritized by most of the participants, some of the female research participants disapprove of interactions and communications with online strangers. This disapproval is connected to previous experiences:

> Everyone. But, on my side, I don't like talking to strangers. So, most of the time I talk to my friends and family…I'm avoiding trouble. Talking to a

stranger, you don't know the risks. Okay, we can say it's 50/50 because you don't know if this person means good or this person means bad. But, I try to avoid that all the time because I'm a sweet person. I would think this person means good, *kanti* [whereas] this person means bad, you know. So, I just don't want to talk to strangers because I don't wanna find myself in trouble… Strangers, I just ignore. [Pretty]

I interact with family members, friends, lovers, and...besides them...okay, classmates, ex-classmates...that's it. I don't interact with strangers. You're a stranger, I don't know you. I just...I don't entertain strangers because you never know what the intentions of that particular person are. So, if that person wants to talk to me, he/she would have [to] make some sort of efforts, sort of coming to me like face-to-face rather than on social media. So, strangers, I don't talk to them. [Lesego]

Ehm...my family, my friends and my fiancé—those are people I interact the most with. I don't trust strangers; I don't interact with them. Ehm...those are people who are closest to me. Like I said, I'm a social butterfly, at times. I want people who are closest to me to be in my life and online social networking provides that. [Wonder]

Even though Wonder does not reveal her experiences of interacting with online strangers, the following narrative reveals an experience that impacted her negatively. She indicates how some SNS such as WeChat and ToGo can create a platform for inappropriate and sometimes aggressive sexual advances:

In WeChat you can communicate with people around you, yeah! And that's crazy because WeChat, you don't control it. ToGo too. ToGo is also a social network site; you can communicate with strangers around you. And if this stranger, let's say he's 50 years old and I'm 22...Let's say he's a psychopath and everything, that is scary [shivering voice]. And I don't say all guys are like that. But, most guys, in my experience. They only want one thing on WeChat, on ToGo and everything. They want this..."sexual vixen." I'm not interested, I have a fiancé. I don't want that! [Wonder]

The narratives reveal that the research participants maintain strong ties with their partners, family members, and close friends. SNS are instrumental in fostering social cohesion and bonds with people who are already part of the research participants' lives, particularly in those cases where a connection/relationship was established outside the online spaces.

Narratives on Identity and Self-Presentation

OSN, according to Sponcil and Gitimu (2013:5-6), offers young people the opportunity to explore their identities in so far as how they want to express themselves. Thus, OSN provides them with ownership and agency over identity formation, contributing to how an individual wants to be perceived in the virtual spaces. In this sense, an individual's online interactants are similar to a mirror, reflecting back the created image. A sociological concept which captures this process of self-presentation is Charles Cooley's *looking-glass self*. According to this concept, people align their images with what they think other people see— they imagine how they must appear to others and resultantly act in terms of this assessment (Cooley 1902 as cited in OpenStax 2013:92). In this line of thought, self-presentation as performed by users of SNS can be seen as directly linked and influential to identity construction. The meaning of the concept "identity" as used by the participants can be classified into two distinct categories—identity as *self-understanding* and as a notion of *commonality*. Self-understanding refers to the way in which a person defines who he/she is (Fearon 1999:20), whereas commonality describes subjective, experienced, felt, and perceived sharing of (some) characteristics amongst members of the group (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Based on the complexities associated with the concept of identity, we probed how the research participants perceived and projected their online sense of self as opposed to their offline sense of self:

> When I'm not on social network sites, I think I'm more quiet...Yeah, I think I'm more quiet! I'm always alone. I don't talk that much [laughing] like when I'm on social network sites…Because offline, I'm more with myself. I talk to myself a lot. I feel like that's when I think a lot and that's when I get to go online and share all the stuff. But, when I'm offline, I don't really get to engage with people. I think I'm a bit emotional when I engage with people because people don't wanna accept your view and they want to force their viewpoint on you. That's why I just keep everything to myself [when engaging with people in real] and rather share it [online]. I won't be standing on the podium preaching or something. No! [Rasala]

Rasala describes himself as somewhat of an introvert when he is offline as opposed to resorting to projecting an extrovert self when online. Even though he seems to harbor two different identities, they complement each other—online platforms afford him an opportunity to externalize the thoughts and perceptions

that he feels constrained to communicate in his offline environment. SNS afford the user time to figure out how they want to articulate their sentiments, views, thoughts, and perceptions (Leung 2011:382; Sponcil and Gitimu 2013:5-6). While Rasala feels that SNS grant him an opportunity to express himself, Wonder believes that the disembodied nature of SNS makes it hard for her to express her true sense of self. The lack of face-to-face interactions and the inability to see and experience everyday micro-expressions are serious limitations of SNS:

> On social network sites I think I'm really constricted. Because if I talk to a person face-to-face, they know exactly what I'm thinking, they know exactly what I'm feeling. Online platforms are really constricting me into being...I'm more proper on social network sites than I am in my real life [pause] more like a "proper lady," I can say. I'm more proper on social network sites than I am in my real life. [Wonder]

> Oh, online? I'm all fake. Nah-nah, not all fake, a bit fake. Because some things, I fake them, you see. So, I lie a bit, twisting things around just to make myself look cool. Because I can't come second best all the time. It's just that sometimes you need to win, you know, stay winning. That's it. So, my personality is different from my actual self. I'm loud on Facebook, but all you see is typing. There's a line! Even if you can read it and you find it hilarious. But, if I say it to you in person, it's gonna be funnier. So, there's this thing that sets Facebook and my real personality apart. [Millions]

Millions renegotiates his sense of self and portrays an alternative (fake) identity online. This *loud self* is driven by the need to be socially acceptable and a desire to be competitive on online platforms. In the process of interaction, people find themselves in situations where they have to compete with one another (Thompson and Hickey 2005:129), and the presence of this competition is at the basis of the restrictive and determinist nature of OSN and SNS. However, this view is not accepted by all research participants—some feel that their offline identities are consistent with their online ones:

> What they see on social media, what I post on social media represents me; whether I like it or not. So, hence I'm saying: I don't post naughty things 'cause I'm not naughty. So, what they see on social media is what they see when I'm not on social media. [Pretty]

Upon being asked to describe his identity, Katlego says:

> [Laughs] Can I relate it to sort of my own online profile? For example, Facebook, they ask the same sort of question: Who are you? And based on who I am on Facebook and who I am in life in general...I actually wrote that I am the "African dream"…I shed light on a lot of problems that we have as Africans. I believe that we are still in a state of slavery; which is mental slavery, you know. So, I said to myself: that is the African dream. 'Cause I believe that our people can still be freed from these ideologies; from these thoughts that they have in their minds. [Katlego]

When talking about the question of: "Who I am?," Katlego describes himself as an "African dream" and it suggests a collective identity. Furthermore, he uses the "we" pronoun to polarize his identity or group membership from that of non-members. Katlego identifies himself with those who are similar to him and who share a common social reality with him.

Conclusion

The narratives suggest that OSN has become part of the everyday mundane activities of most of the research participants. As such, they find it hard to imagine a life outside these online platforms. OSN is an important part of the social reality in which the online interactants experience their mundane everyday lives. In these online spaces, individuals get to negotiate their daily lives and construe shared meanings created during the processes of forming relations and interactions. OSN provides easy access to general information and is also seen as a symbol of effective and efficient communication and interaction.

SNS hold value to the participants' daily experiences and lifeworlds—they renegotiate their *real* sense of self by projecting and engaging their online environment with an alternative, or even *alter ego*, identity. A recurring narrative that emerged is that online identities allow participants to exercise more autonomy and self-expression than real life settings. According to existential sociology, an individual constructs her/his *self* within the complexities of social and cultural contexts and is active in exercising her/his will and agency (Kotarba 2009:142-143). As such, online platforms are instrumental in assisting participants to exercise their agency. However, for some participants, OSN is restrictive in terms of expressing themselves. This is due to the disembodied

nature of SNS: these participants are unable to externalize their real selves. SNS appear to mould the manner in which these users express, as well as present themselves online.

Given that SNS appear to be intriguing and inviting to student participants, questions arise: "With whom do students interact and form relations?" and "Who is most valued in these interactions?" The findings reveal that the participants maintain and develop social capital in two different ways—by interacting with people they meet online and those who are already part of their lives. For the majority of the participants, maintaining interpersonal relations with significant others such as families, relatives, and friends makes their online interactions worth their while. Although the participants prefer to interact with their consociates, they also interact with people that they come across online—these people are usually strangers. *Open* SNS such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram make it possible for users to interact with anyone, including strangers. Although the idea of meeting new people online seems to be exciting and thrilling, some of the participants show disapproval of developing interactions with online strangers. This attitude towards online strangers often relates to undesirable experiences. Online strangers are often linked to traits that include dishonesty, discourtesy, and opportunism. On the whole, OSN, taken for granted as it is, can be seen as an everyday lived experience that is perpetuated through intersubjective interactions by members of the online community. As much as these online platforms are social spaces where participants continuously construct their reality, SNS influence and determine how the research participants experience this reality.

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Online Gamers, Lived Experiences, and Sense of Belonging[1]

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ABSTRACT | *Individuals who partake in video games are often regarded with prejudice. It is an activity that is perceived to be mainly related to senseless leisure and teenage entertainment. However, many diverse people make video games such an important part of their lives, that they become passionately engaged in it. Video games and online video gaming offer the player immersive experiences unlike any other form of media. A phenomenological and interpretive exploration is undertaken in order to gain a deeper understanding of the narratives of online gamers and their experiences of a sense of belonging to the associated online communities. Through the use of in-depth interviews, the chapter explores various aspects of the lifestories of a group of eight South African university students. It attempts to show how online gaming has become a part of their lifeworlds. Various aspects of the lifeworlds of online gamers are explored. Firstly, an exploration is undertaken to gain an understanding of what it means to be a gamer. It focuses on how a person can become involved with gaming and how it can evolve into something that a person is engaged with on a daily basis. Secondly, it explores how video games influence the perception of reality of gamers. Lastly, the chapter shifts attention towards how online video gamers experience online communities.*

Introductory Notes

Video games have grown into a worldwide phenomenon becoming part of international culture and entertainment. Initially, these games were perceived as a leisure activity for mainly male teenagers, but as the focus on video games

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increased incrementally over time, diverse individuals now partake in gaming. This activity is no longer considered a predominantly teenage male activity. The number of people playing video games increases every year, showing no signs of slowing down. One reason for its growth in popularity is the perception that a video game is a richly expressive and creative medium, offering individuals an immersive experience unlike most other forms of media. This chapter aims to understand how people become involved with online gaming and how it evolves into an important part of their everyday life.

We subscribe to the video game definition of Salen and Zimmerman (2004:94): "A game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome." Rules are used to provide structure in video gaming, while the quantifiable outcome proposes that games should have goals that can be reached—leading to winning or losing. Since there are goals resulting in an outcome, an element of conflict arises in a video game. However, because some of these goals require teamwork to complete the game, an element of co-operation may also arise. Therefore, these games achieve more than simply providing entertainment for players. Video games enable the fostering of a community and even allow friendships to be formed.

What sets video games apart from other forms of media is their ability to stimulate, in a convincingly real manner, interaction and bonding between players (Lundmark 2015:58). They offer creative ways for individuals to interact with other players and with the gaming environment by allowing these players to make unique choices that generate different outcomes in substantial ways (Salen and Zimmerman 2004). In addition to offering players opportunities to interact and make choices, video games combine functionality with aesthetics, art, and science to further their appeal (Borowiecki and Prieto-Rodriquez 2015:239). People from all walks of life seem to enjoy taking part in this action and it has become a part of their daily life, influencing their cultural interactions (Culig et al. 2013; Lorentz, Ferguson, and Schott 2015).

With these capabilities, video gaming has grown to become one of the most popular forms of media (Salen and Zimmerman 2004; Boulton and Cremin 2011; Clarke 2013). Millions of people play and interact with other players on the Internet (Badrinarayanan, Sierra, and Taute 2014:853) on various platforms and devices (Borowiecki and Prieto-Rodriquez 2015). Widespread online

gaming also occurs in South Africa. Estimates of the gaming industry in South Africa project that it earned 1.6 billion South African Rand in turnover from October 2007 to October 2008, out-performing other media such as movies and music during that period (Blyth 2009). However, even though gaming is a popular activity in South Africa, not all South Africans are exposed to it. Having access to gaming platforms is closely related to the income level of a household, and because of this, commentators suggest that online gaming is mostly found in White households in the higher income brackets (Walton and Pallitt 2012:348).

One of the aims of the research is to understand why people allow video games to become a big part of their lives. Several motivations seem to exist for people to partake in online gaming. On the surface, it appears that people become involved with gaming in order to relax and to escape reality (Billieux et al. 2013:108). However, often players become very passionate about gaming and more complex motivations influence their participation in online games. Main motivations to play relate to socializing with others, to gain a sense of achievement, and to be immersed in an alternate reality (Badrinarayanan, Sierra, and Martin 2015). Other motivations also exist, such as stimulating competitive needs, coping with stress, developing leadership and communication skills, as well as indulging in fantasy and recreation (Fuster et al. 2014).

In online communities, social contact and communication with other players often lead to the creation of friendships and interpersonal growth (Granic, Lobel, and Engels 2013; Badrinarayanan et al. 2014). Essentially, providing players with immersion influences the social construction of reality of players. Although interaction in the game may not be considered real and may not have consequences in the physical world, the actions in which players are involved engage parts of the human consciousness and, therefore, the choices and consequences are often experienced as real for the players (Berger and Luckmann 1991; Alvesson and Sköldberg 2012; Latorre 2015).

One of the end products of playing online games—combined with the immersion and constant social contact—is the development of a sense of belonging for players in online communities. Players strive to be part of a larger online community and they try to make an impact on these communities. Carpiano and Hystad (2011:606-607) offer four key components of a sense of belonging that can explain how players achieve this sense of belonging. The first component refers to membership of the community. This is a central component and relates

to the feeling of connectedness or feeling of a sense of personal relatedness. The second component is when a sense of belonging is fostered and the individuals feel their actions matter and can make a difference (Carpiano and Hystad 2011:606-607). The third component in experiencing a sense of belonging is integration and fulfillment of needs (Carpiano and Hystad 2011:607). In order for players to feel that they are part of the online community, they should be considered as valuable members of the team and should feel that the community fulfils their needs. This will lead to the player feeling a sense of personal relatedness towards the community. The last component of this sense of belonging is the sharing of emotional connections (Carpiano and Hystad 2011:607). This component relates to how members are committed to each other and believe that they share a history, common places, and similar experiences. Personality also often plays a role in how a person interacts with his/her environment. If the player is extroverted and open towards new experiences, he/she will most likely become more involved with online communities (Park and Lee 2012). With interconnectedness and involvement a form of culture is established over time. If the community is safe and inviting, and passes on valuable information to its members, the culture will thrive and more players will join the online community (Haigh, Russel, and Dutton 2015).

Theoretical and Methodological Context

Narrative research is always interpretive. The aim of this study is to gain insight into the world of online gamers and to indicate how these individuals experience their world on a day-to-day basis. "Narrative research…[therefore] strives to preserve the complexity of what it means to be human and to locate its observations of people and phenomena in society" (Josselson 2006:8). The stories of the gamers are interpreted in order to understand the meaning that they attribute to online gaming (Goodson and Gill 2011). People construct, reconstruct, and internalize their own realities through storytelling in order to make sense of their lives. However, how people interpret, digest, and recount their own experiences and the experiences of other people is subjective. In this project, the narrative approach is used by focusing on how participants construct their own stories. The aim is to break open the meaning contained in the perceptions and in the stories of the gamers and to attempt to reconstruct their views of reality (Packer and Addison 1989; Alvesson and Sköldberg 2012).

These realities are reconstructed and retold in order to help us to understand the narratives of online gamers.

Because of its interpretive nature, a qualitative research design is appropriate for this study, since the goal is to obtain thick descriptions of the lived experiences of online gamers and of how they achieve a sense of belonging in the virtual communities of the online world (Palinkas 2014). Qualitative research strives towards obtaining an understanding of existing perceptions. It also seeks to establish an interpretation of phenomena related to online gaming from the point of view of the individuals experiencing these phenomena in their lifeworld (Jacobsen 2009; Palinkas 2014). Therefore, the phenomena are studied in the context within which they take place (Silverman 2011). In other words, online gaming is investigated in the context of online gamers portraying their lifeworlds through their narratives. With this in mind, the research relies on the theoretical foundation of phenomenology to understand how individuals make sense of the perceptions they have of the world. In this regard, we accept that practical consciousness is the foundation for action and interaction (Burger 1977; Inglis and Thorpe 2012). The intention is, therefore, to pull online gamers out of their practical consciousness and natural attitudes in order to allow them to consciously contemplate their habits of online gaming. By allowing them to recreate their lived experiences through stories, they open up their lifeworlds in order for us to get a clearer picture of the phenomenon.

In order to identify research participants, the following criteria are set: a participant has to be active in personal computer (PC) gaming or must have been active at a certain point in his/her life. Additionally, participants must have engaged in some form of Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs). Participants of any race or gender are allowed to take part in the study, provided they are students at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Purposive and snowball sampling are employed to select research participants. Purposive sampling is an ideal method to find suitable candidates because the participants must be unique cases that contain specific informative criteria and that can offer in-depth information (Neuman 2000:198; Maxwell 2012:93). The first participant is recruited through purposive sampling, ensuring that he/she fits the criteria. After the recruitment of the first participant, a snowball method of non-probability sampling (using available participants to identify new participants that fit the criteria of online gamers) is used to find

other suitable candidates (Neuman 2000). All participants turned out to be White South Africans. Students of different races were approached to participate in the study; however, it was not possible to find Black African participants satisfying all the inclusion criteria. The composition of the sample confirms views in the literature that suggest that, due to the income inequality of South Africa, mostly members of households in higher income brackets are able to engage in online gaming—the profile of South African online gamers has been alluded to earlier (Walton and Pallitt 2012).

The data collection method for this study is in-depth interviews. It offers an opportunity to gain insight into the lived experience and subjectivity of a person's life (Seale et al. 2007:15). Data collected by in-depth interviews can identify meaningful themes in the lifeworld of research participants which relate to their online gaming experiences (Kvale 2007). During an interview, open-ended questions are used, providing the participants the opportunity to respond freely and to discuss their experiences in detail without inhibition (Royse 2008:183). The conversations are recorded verbatim and also transcribed verbatim (Caplovitz 1983:102). Follow-up questions allow the narratives to be expanded on in order to create a clearer picture.

Any form of research contains challenges that need to be considered and handled in accordance with existing ethical codes and standards (Neuman 2000; Seale et al. 2007). Ethical issues that are prominent in the study are consent, confidentiality, and trust (Neuman 2000; Seale et al. 2007). The study received ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities from the University of the Free State—UFS-HSD2016/0330.

Eight participants are recruited by means of purposive and snowball sampling methods. In-depth interviews are used for establishing a clear narrative of the experiences of online gamers. All research participants are young adults ranging from 18 to 25 years of age. At the time of the interviews, they were all enrolled as students at the University of the Free State. Participants study towards a range of degrees: industrial psychology, information technology, education, history, arts, and accounting. Each participant offers a unique perspective into the world of video gaming. Thematic analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) are employed (Riessman 2008; Pringlie et al. 2010; Grbich 2013). The findings of the study present a deeper understanding of what it is like to be

an online gamer in the associated online gaming communities. To protect the privacy and identity of the participants, pseudonyms are used.

The Online Gamer

All participants recall that they became involved with online gaming at a young age. In most cases, family members and friends introduced them to video games, particularly older siblings and cousins. Where no family members or friends provided the introduction, research participants were often lead by their own curiosity and interest, where exploring computers and video games lead to a more longstanding interest in video games.

Playing with other people is an often-occurring motivation to become involved with video gaming. Participants recall that initially they partook in LAN (Local Area Network) events. At these events, gamers brought their own computers and played together. However, over time, video games evolved and re-established themselves as predominantly part of the *online* community via the World Wide Web. The widespread availability of the Internet provides players with the option to connect and interact with each other online. In this way, video gaming is made easily accessible and increasing numbers of players shift towards online gaming (Boulton and Cremin 2011:341).

The research participants express that the shift towards online gaming initially was difficult, as a few years ago (in South Africa) Internet access was relatively unknown in most households. As a result, participants were, at first, "outsiders" from the online gaming experience. The idea of being an outsider in as far as the online gaming world was concerned was frustrating to participants who felt that they were missing out on the largest part of what gaming has to offer.

Upon gaining Internet access, participants narrate that they start to play video games more regularly, with gaming becoming a part of their everyday life and routine (Jacobsen 2009:97). Their narratives reveal how video gaming increased in importance in their lives. They feel a passion towards gaming, with one participant incorporating it into his career life. Stephen, an industrial psychology student, explains:

> I'm so passionate about this that I even started my own company because of online gaming. So, like now, other gamers also feel the joy of online gaming. [Stephen]

The passion people have for online gaming can lead to two types of behavior. They can either be obsessively passionate about gaming or have a harmonious passion (Fuster et al. 2014:293). Participants state that they have learned to maintain a balance between playing video games and actively participating in other parts of their life. While obsessively playing video games at some point in their lives, most participants realize the need for a healthy balance, particularly as it relates to their studies. Ben, who studies information technology, explains how he started to understand the importance of not becoming obsessed with video games.

> A few years back it was a very big part of my life, because it was my biggest hobby. It's like it was my sport…I was basically living online. Currently, I'm not so much playing games. I'm more just trying to sort my life out. Just getting all the building blocks together at the right place. Because I don't want to make a stupid mistake and then having lived my regret…There's always a space for it…I like having a diverse life. I love having different things and stuff. I don't want to go in my small box. I want to experience a lot of things. I think if this current semester is over, I will play a lot again [online], like when it's holiday. [Ben]

Passion is an essential dimension to the understanding of why video gaming is such an important part of a gamer's life. Likewise, exploration into what causes a person to become passionate about gaming is also necessary. Socializing with others and competitiveness stand out as the two main driving forces motivating a person to play online video games, becoming an online gamer.

Online games create an environment to participate in activities and to socialize with others without being in the same location (Badrinarayanan et al. 2015:1046). Some participants indicate that they would only play online games with friends they know in person. While socializing with friends can add to the satisfaction players experience in online gaming, most acknowledge that playing with strangers can also be an entertaining experience that can lead to establishing new connections. Eric, who studies education, maintains that the aspect of socializing with strangers can enrich the experience of playing online.

> It's definitely something that I enjoy—meeting new people—but on a different level than you usually do. You can really socialize a lot, learn a lot from other people. More than one would expect. And there was actually so many people you can meet online. And all of them have the same interests as you, because

they're also playing the same game as you're playing. So, I really enjoyed meeting people online, especially in games. [Eric]

Competition between players presents diverse experiences for participants. People want to achieve the best outcomes and win most of the games they play online. Social comparison presents one explanation of why people are competitive. Social comparison arises the moment a person observes others in domains related to achievements, interpersonal relationships, and health (Ozimek and Bierhoff 2016:272). In the case of online games, players compare themselves to others in so far as the domain of achieving the game's goals are concerned. Wanting to be as good, if not better, than your friends, or other players, motivates you to try to play better. Participants explain this as something in the human nature. Emily explains that—while competitiveness can enrich the gaming experience and allow a person to play passionately—too much of these competitive feelings can have a negative impact on your gaming experience and sense of self.

> That's sadly the thing. I don't become too competitive. And if I find myself becoming too competitive, I try to remove myself from it, for a while. Just to like cool my head. And then I go back. I would say because I don't like it. [Emily]

> I didn't use to be like this. I used to be much more competitive and angry. I used to break the controls and almost throw the remotes against the wall and kick stuff. I used to be: react in very bold and outrageous ways. But, then I realized that: this is not right. This isn't right to react like this. And like: if I'm going to become like this, I don't want to then play, because it takes the fun away. [Emily]

Constructing Reality

Video games offer an immersive experience that is distinct from other forms of engagement with media (Culig et al. 2013; Lorentz et al. 2015). Unlike books and films, games allow you to become the center of an interactive story. It is able to draw your focus towards another world and reality. In the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1991), the notion is brought forth that individuals construct their own realities by using human consciousness. Although video games provide a virtual reality for players, the stories produced by events within the games often are real stories to the players—becoming a part of their reality

(Alvesson and Sköldberg 2012). When players immerse themselves into a game, they allow virtual reality to become a part of their own realities. Consequently, when a person immerses himself/herself into a game, the game becomes a part of his/her narrative. For the participants, being immersed means you become the character that you are playing. You start to live in that moment of playing video games and it occupies your full attention. You play more intensely, become more competitive, and feel attached to the character. Research participants narrate that becoming immersed in a game allows for a more genuine (authentic) and enriching experience.

> I literally immerse myself with a character. Let's say my character is so hungry and I finally find a tin can of beans in a deserted house on the map…I would be actually happy because my character is surviving. Same goes [for when] there's a firefight. I would be stressed as hell. It's like real life, you don't [know] if someone's behind you or not. So, you would be so paranoid as hell and scared as hell. So…it would feel literally like real life. [Stephen]

Stephen illustrates how video games can have an effect on a person's emotions and thoughts. Players are able to put themselves in the place of their gaming characters and the realities of their characters—it becomes their reality. However, becoming too immersed in these games can contribute to gamers losing track of reality and, in some cases, causing them to turn towards gaming as a means to escape their everyday lifeworld.

When a player starts to prefer the game's reality over his/her own reality, it becomes a form of escaping reality with the aim of avoiding the demands of the real world (Clancy, Arvola, and Gjaerum 2015:8-9). During the interviews, most participants indicate that they feel a sense of immersion and safety in their video games. A few participants share their viewpoints on escaping reality and how it can become a part of life. In Zoey's—an accounting student— case, escaping her reality is not because of how these games pull her in but rather of how her home environment pushes her more towards immersing herself into video games.

> When I started playing, there was a lot of stuff happening in my house. My dad was having an affair and everything…And then, it was so easy: to just go and play games, and then everything is gone. And…then afterwards I would be so sad to return to this, this life. And…so, yeah, I think that's the main reason. Because there was bad stuff happening, and then I played and then I feel nice. And afterwards it's so…ugh!…So, then I started comparing [life] to

gaming…Because then I'd rather play the whole time and never return to life
that's so hard at that moment. [Zoey]

Zoey's narrative reveals how games are able to provide her with an escape from
her circumstances. In real life, she feels constrained and also realizes that being
able to do the things she wants to—such as travelling and seeing the world—
requires money and time. In games, people can do different things and go to
different places without money. Gamers are able to manipulate their virtual
world in order to receive the most benefit from it. This often contrasts with the
reality in which players find themselves—a reality that cannot easily be changed
or manipulated. When a person finds himself/herself in such a reality, he/she is
able to escape that reality through gaming (Martoncik and Loksa 2016:127-128).

Another aspect of video gaming that provides gamers an opportunity to
immerse themselves into another reality is decision-making. When players are
provided with freedom to decide, they feel more motivated to partake (Rapp et
al. 2017:113). In role-playing games, players are provided with many choices.
One of the choices players can make is the sex of their game character. Gender
swapping—being able to play the role of a different sex—opens opportunities
to encounter unique experiences (Song and Jung 2015:435). Female gamers
sometimes play as male characters—using male avatars to hide their female
identity from other people in the online game world (Isaksson 2012). Research
participants indicate that it offers a different experience and allows the player to
be placed in unique situations.

I don't think it's something bad, no, because it's interesting. It's interesting to
see how a man would react in a certain situation. If I think of a role-playing
game now, of an RPG, yeah. It's interesting because I have done it. I have
played a male character just to see how…I don't know, myself as a male
character [would] react…Yeah, I don't think it's bad. I just don't like it when…
like guys do it on purpose. Like they would then play a female character on
World of Warcraft and tell everyone they are a girl. I don't like that. But, if
you're just interested in, like…seeing…not seeing other people's reactions,
and also just experiencing that. I don't think there is anything wrong with it. I
think it's quite fun. I think it's a possibility that games have given us that we
didn't usually have. [Emily]

Experiencing Belonging

A sense of belonging can be conceptualized as a feeling of connectedness with the community (Carpiano and Hystad 2011:607) and feeling that the community is supportive towards its members (Le, LaCost, and Wismer 2016:126-127). The four key components of a sense of belonging are: membership, influence (members' contributions matter and their actions make a difference in the community), integration/fulfillment of needs (a member is considered as a valuable asset whose needs are important), and sharing of emotional connections (members are able to share history, common places, and similar experiences).

Feeling a part of the online gaming community is something that varies from player to player, according to participants of this study. For some players, it is possible to feel a sense of belonging when entering a "foreign" online community and they have little problem in becoming friends with strangers. Other participants explain that while they feel a sense of connection with the online community, this sense of connection is something different to what they share with their real life friends that they interact with face-to-face. If they play an online game on their own, they do not really feel a part of the online community without physically having their friends at their side. It is also possible for players to feel no sense of connection with the community at all. For some, it is only possible to feel a part of the group if the members of the group are your friends in real life.

David, an education student, expresses that it is easier for him to become part of gaming communities than it is to become part of social groups in real life. He says that he is able to make friends in gaming communities with ease and has made close friendships through his online games.

> Other than the friends I've already made, I'm still busy crafting new relationships on a day to day basis…I really enjoy meeting people. Obviously, I wouldn't go out on a limb, meeting a complete stranger on my own. [David]

David feels a sense of belonging, as described by Carpiano and Hystad (2011), by being able to make friends and have an emotional connection with them. Participants reflect a sense that even though you feel part of the gaming community, caution always has to prevail. David's comment above alludes to this and Emily's narrative explains this idea more fully:

It can be with strangers. I think it takes longer with strangers, but definitely it can be with strangers. Obviously, there's threats and people who lie. I see most of these people I've met online who said they're a girl are not—[or rather] that's just a guess. So, there wasn't a specific occurrence…I think a lot of people who play online games are guys pretending to be girls just to get stuff [laughs]. But, I did make a very good friend. A guy who lives in P.E. over World of Warcraft. And I think the big thing is, it takes longer because you are quite cautious. You don't want to just say your real name online and stuff like that. But, it takes longer, but then also there's a reward in it. You gain friends which you never would have met in real life. Which also has a certain fun quality…It's a good experience. [Emily]

Participants bring up the notion that games create an environment within which it is possible to become personally involved with someone. In online gaming, it is possible to become close friends or even become romantically involved with another player. Spending time playing games with friends leads to deepening friendships as in most cases participants describe gaming as an activity similar to any other pastime you perform with friends.

During the interviews, gaming is often associated with sport, where people spend time together doing something which requires communication and teamwork. Online gaming and sport create an environment for people to become friends, but playing online games does have certain benefits over sports. Gamers are able to play from the comfort of their homes (Fuster et al. 2014) and playing online is more convenient than having to make an effort to meet in person. Salen and Zimmerman (2004) point out that playing games can extend for longer periods of time without having the physical strain of playing sports. This results in more time spent together on playing games, developing friendships, and meeting new people. Players have stated, however, that they feel that friendships developed during gaming do so at the same pace as friendships formed through playing sport or other activities:

It's definitely something that is possible during online gaming because you meet people that you would probably never have met in real life. Because you meet people from all over the world. So, yes, definitely that, and it grows much more…Because you're playing the game together, and then you just build on top of that. It's not like you're meeting someone in a bar and you don't know if you have anything in common at all. You kind of know already: "Okay, this person is into games." So, this person plays and might play other games and might also be interested in Anime [a style of Japanese film and

television animation]. And…like you already, you know that person is already kind of part of this sub-community. [Emily]

Participants agree that an effort needs to be put into maintaining new friendships formed online. A person needs to keep playing with the new friend and sometimes needs to interact more than just playing games. Most participants confirm that gaming cannot be the only aspect of the friendship, and that it would not last if there are no other common interests. It is with this notion in mind that Peter, an information technology student, expresses that he does not find it worth his effort to befriend random online players. He explains that, if you only have that one game in common, it is not enough to make a lasting connection with someone. He continues by saying the chances of meeting the other player in person are very slim. Thus, Peter persists on developing his friendships with people he knows in person. For him, gaming is something that helps existing (face-to-face) relationships to grow.

> I can basically think of like, it's like at a book club. And then they talk about the book. What we do is we've all finished the game and then we talk about the game. I love doing that…like every second weekend we get together and *braai* [have a barbeque] and talk about game endings and how fun it was. [Peter]

In the players' narratives, different perspectives on how gaming influences friendships are given. For most gamers, it is possible to befriend a person online and become good friends. However, maintaining an online friendship through playing games is not sufficient. Participants express that people must have more than one interest in common, and that they prefer to also bond in person. Sharing the lived experiences of fellow online gamers can lead to the possibility of gamers experiencing a shared emotional connection with each other.

Most respondents state that sharing personal information and intimate details of their lives should be kept at a minimum. Stephen summarizes this view by expressing that he does feel an emotional connectedness with his friends by sharing his passions for gaming and for overcoming obstacles in games. However, he does not easily share something online with someone he does not know, and he keeps his gaming accounts private.

> I would only like to disclose this to people I would know for like years and stuff. I wouldn't give away private stuff within like seconds...With international gamers I would like say: "Hey! From which country are you? Oh, you're from Australia. I'm from South Africa," and stuff like that. But,

> I wouldn't go like personal stuff that could be to my detriment. I would only share stuff that would not invade my privacy. So, like I said, if I'm friends with the person, like a real friend. And I have him on Facebook, because of the gaming and stuff. I would then share a little bit more intimate details of my private life. [Stephen]

Only after adding them as friends and spending more time with them does Stephen begin to share personal details. But, the shared information remain mostly about where they live and what they do for a living. Only after he has met them in person, the friendship starts to grow. Aaron, a history student, builds on this viewpoint by explaining that he feels gaming is not a platform where a person can share personal details or deep emotions.

> I don't think gaming is a place to share personal feelings. It's just weird… When I play with my good friends online, we will ask like each other personal questions, but we know each other. But, I will say if we were not playing the games, we will still ask each other the same questions, like: "No, man, how's it going with that girl you like?" Or something like that. But, I don't believe like gaming is the platform, is the place to share more deep emotions. [Aaron]

He elaborates that you can talk with a personal friend about what is going on in your life, but you can do that at any location if it is a close friend. Aaron continues that he cannot see online gaming as a platform where a person meets another, they become close friends, and share such personal information. If it is to happen, it will take a long time.

> I can't see how when I play with someone, met someone randomly online, and we start [becoming] friends…It will take me at least like 6 months to, on my own, to opening up. [Aaron]

Concluding Thoughts

This study seeks to gain a perception of what video games and online gaming entail. A context of current insights into the phenomenon of online gaming is provided to move the focus towards understanding the everyday lifeworlds of online gamers. People can become gamers from an early age through introduction to gaming by family members or friends. What motivates them to continue playing are driving forces such as socializing with friends and strangers in an online environment, as well as feeling a sense of well-being and accomplishment

in a competitive environment. Passion also plays a role; having a passion for something can be an important motivator for a person to participate.

Existing literature on this topic agrees that online video games offer an immersive experience unlike many other forms of media. Players are provided opportunities to grow and to allow games to become a part of their identity. Immersing into one's own lifeworld and escaping reality are two dimensions of *The Social Construction of Reality* within video games. In the participants' narratives, they express these feelings. People project themselves onto the gaming characters that they encounter in video games. The realities of their characters coincide with their own.

From the narratives it is clear that online gaming is no longer only a recreational or passively executed leisure activity. Video and online games have become distinctive activities which require a substantial amount of agency. The chapter, therefore, explores the lifeworlds of online gamers and provides insight into why gaming becomes such a large part of their lives. Experiencing a sense of belonging to online gaming communities is an important reason why gaming becomes a part of participants' lives. For some players, it is possible to instantly feel a sense of belonging upon entering a random community, and they find it easy to become friends with strangers. On the other hand, some players may only feel a sense of connection with real life friends who play with them online. It is clear that through online gaming friendships and bonds can be forged. However, most participants express that they do not feel that video gaming is a platform where people are able to share intimate information with each other.

Future research can aim to explore the female gamers' experiences. Throughout the narratives of the participants, the stories told by the two female participants portrayed significantly different experiences than that of their male counterparts. Female participants voiced that they face more stigma and prejudice because of their gender—mainly from male gamers who feel that the world of online gaming is a male domain. Additionally, female gamers appear to face stigma and prejudice from other females who do not play video games. Future research can elaborate on gender equality in online gaming, and whether female gamers find gender equality a necessity. It can also explore the role of gender swapping in gaming. In the study, females find it easier to immerse themselves into the gaming reality and find it harder to separate themselves from their moral beliefs. Further research is required to investigate and understand these standpoints.

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Michael Kok, Jan K. Coetzee & Florian Elliker

Overcoming the Divide[1]

Young Black South Africans and Upward Mobility

ABSTRACT | *The institutionalized racism that once subjugated the Black majority during South Africa's apartheid years gave way after 1994 to legislature that aims to bring the country into a new era of egalitarianism. A striking result of this has been the steady flow of young Black people achieving upward mobility and making the transition into the middle- and upper-classes. The chapter acknowledges that the concept of identity plays a key role in exploring experiences of upward mobility. For this reason, we look at identity as an interpretive process as well as at class as a source of identification. The chapter explores perceptions of racial isolation among young African professionals. It also focusses on how these young professionals manage differential class identities, how they maintain tradition, and how they withhold behavioral traits that are perceived as "Black/African".*

This study's topic of interest is propelled by the striking history that continues to shape young Black South Africans' experiences of upward mobility. Contemporary South Africa, and the social reality of its people, has been marred by a tumultuous history of racial oppression which reached an apex during the apartheid era (1948-1994). As Jeremy Seekings (2008:2) states: "It would be astonishing if post-apartheid South African society was not shaped profoundly by the experience of apartheid, remaining distinctive in terms of the social, political or economic roles played by race." For the majority of South Africa's Black population, upward social mobility remains a dream, and many remain entrenched in appalling levels of inequality. Nonetheless, there is a glimmer of success mirrored in the accomplishments of a number of young Black South Africans who have been able to make use of the opportunities created by transformative policies and achieve upward mobility. It is the "Black Diamonds" and "Buppies" (Black upwardly mobile people belonging to South Africa's emerging middle- and upper-classes) whose narratives are explored in this chapter.

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Philosophical and Theoretical Points of Departure

The philosophical and theoretical frameworks adopted in this study depart from an ontological standpoint informed by the tenets of constructivist reasoning. As such, the study is firmly rooted in Max Weber's interpretive sociology and its associative duty to achieve what Weber terms *Verstehen*—a truly empathetic understanding of how people subjectively perceive various phenomena from their own unique perspectives. To achieve this, we were tasked with minimizing the "objective separateness" (Creswell 2007:18) between ourselves and research participants in order to give the readers a first-hand account of what it is like to be a young Black professional who is experiencing upward mobility in the central part of South Africa, namely, Bloemfontein. In epistemological terms, the findings presented in the study are thus considered the result of a collaborative effort between the researchers and the research participants (Guba and Lincoln 2013:40, 87).

In aid of garnering data that will lead to the *Verstehen* espoused in interpretive sociology, the study is informed by interpretive theoretical traditions, particularly phenomenology, existential sociology, and reflexive sociology. Of these three schools of thought phenomenology plays the most distinctive role in the overall conceptualization of the study. The onus of phenomenologically based research is to study the lifeworld, the mundane pre-scientific world of everyday life as it is perceived by individuals. This direct perception of the lifeworld is otherwise referred to as the lived experience (Crotty 1998:78). The study attempts to explore young Black South Africans' lived experiences of upward mobility by focusing predominantly on their subjective perceptions of instances where issues of race, class, and identity feature as part of their narrated experiences.

A second body of theoretical work, existential sociology, directs the researcher to pay attention to the importance of human free will and agency in the emergence of social reality (Kotarba 2009:140). At the forefront of this endeavor is the understanding that at the very core of human agency is the powerful driving force known as "brute being" (Douglas 1977:23). Existential sociology implores us to reconcile the profound power of human emotion with our experience of the lifeworld and the social reality that emerges from it (Kotarba 2009:146). The study thus acknowledges the idiosyncratic character of the participants' lived experiences as affected by the various emotions that they attribute to different

situations in their narratives. The relative importance of accounting for emotions in the study is reflected in the researchers' attempts to obtain thick descriptions, and an approach to data presentation often referred to as "impressionist tales" to convey the emotional tone that characterizes the stories as told by the research participants.

Pierre Bourdieu's reflexive sociology also contributes to the body of theoretical work that influences how the study is constructed. Reflexive sociology attempts to resolve what Bourdieu recognizes as "the debilitating reduction of sociology to either an objectivist physics of material structures or a constructivist phenomenology" (Wacquant 1992:5). Bourdieu describes social research as often being unjustifiably polarized into either structuralist inquiry, which applies quantitative measures of "social physics" to objective social structures, or constructivist inquiry, which probes micro-social phenomena by means of theoretical frameworks such as social phenomenology (Wacquant 1992:7). Bourdieu attempts to develop a "total science" of society that transcends the schism between these two seemingly irreconcilable approaches, and combines them to form a "social praxeology"—a singular approach that views social reality in two separate yet related "moments" (Wacquant 1992:7).

It was beyond the scope of this study to conduct both a quantitative and a qualitative approach to the lived experience of upward mobility and identity. Bourdieu's appeal to approach social research from two moments, however, remains an important feature in executing this research. Not to overlook the importance of society as existing in the objective order, the researchers compiled a literature review that made use of statistical information regarding significant aspects of South African society that affect upward mobility of young, Black professionals, such as levels of poverty and deprivation, socio-economic status, and the racial division of labor. This, mainly quantitative information included in the literature review, was consequently used as the foundation for identifying facets of the experience of upward mobility that could be explored as having an intersubjective presence in the participants' narratives.

Identity and Class

Identity as an Interpretive Process

The concept of identity plays a key role in exploring the participants' experiences of upward mobility. However, what soon became evident throughout the operationalization for the study is the confusion that reigns from the almost countless academic sources that attempt to touch upon the subject. It is therefore important that the conceptualization of identity that was adopted for the study be discussed. The researchers are concerned primarily with exploring how a meaningful social reality is constituted through mundane interpretive processes. In the case of this study, identity is considered part and parcel of these mundane social processes. From the interpretive process of identification, we are able to develop a cognitive map of sorts that provides us with the multidimensional knowledge of who we are in relation to other individuals and collectives; and who we are in relation to our positions in social space (Jenkins 2008:5). This interpretation emerges from the dialectic relation between internal subjective processes and external social interaction with others (Jenkins 2008:18).

We use the terms "identity" and "identification" interchangeably. Although these two terms may initially seem to convey two separate concepts, they are in fact rooted in the very same process. For Brubaker and Cooper (2000:14), the term identity implies something that is "real," an objective truth that is an unquestionable aspect of social reality. The use of "identity" as a noun (which risks reifying identities as essentialist objectivations) should thus be replaced with the term "identification," which presupposes active social processes (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:14). However, both "identity" and "identification" inevitably run the risk of reification. What matters is not "which" of the two terms we decide to use, but "how" we decide to use them (Jenkins 2008:14). With that being said, this chapter makes use of both "identity" and "identification" for semantic reasons. Although this maintains the use of identity as a noun, it should always be understood as accompanied and established through the active social process of identification.

Class as a Source of Identification

Exploring the lived experience of social mobility and identity requires adopting a theory of class which takes into account the importance of class as a significant

form of identification in everyday life. The study therefore makes use of Pierre Bourdieu's culturist definition of social class and stratification. Bourdieu describes society as a "three dimensional social space" where individuals, with similarities in their embodied lifestyles and cultural dispositions, are grouped together to form distinctive social classes (Bottero 2005:148). Rather than viewing social classes as divided by externally imposed objective boundaries, each class is separated from the next by an imaginary line which is best described as "a flame whose edges are in constant movement, oscillating around a line or surface" (Bourdieu 1987:13). In this sense, there are no distinct borders that distinguish one social class from the next. Instead, on either side of the imaginary line that separates social classes we find social positions that differ in terms of the density of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1987:13).

For the structural functionalists, Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore (2008), the hierarchical stratification of social classes creates stability in society by ordering occupational positions according to relative importance, and distributing economic and non-economic rewards, such as power and prestige, relative to the skill needed to fulfill the duties of each position. Bourdieu (1987:13) extends upon this structural functionalist position of social stratification and views one's occupational position as playing a prodigious role in serving as an identifiable trait in the eyes of others. According to Bourdieu, one's occupational position indicates two fundamental attributes to the rest of society. On the one hand, it classifies an individual as having the type of primary qualities deemed necessary to occupy a certain position in the division of labor, such as one's position relative to the means of production; one's life chances relative to the labor market; and the status that is associated with the combination of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital specific to certain social positions (Brubaker 2005:52). On the other hand, one's occupation also indicates the possession of secondary qualities that are determined by the mechanisms that govern access to certain occupations on the basis of criteria such as level of education, age, gender, and race (Brubaker 2005:52).

It is for this reason that occupational status is regarded as the most proficient category for identifying one's social position in contemporary Western society (Crompton 2008:51). Relating this interception of class and identity to the study, the goal became to understand how the research participants identify themselves now that they have achieved a higher social class relative to the peers they grew

up with, and how they experience being identified by those people on the basis of their newly achieved class positions. This was achieved by focusing on the participants' interpretations of situations where they may have interacted with others on the basis of their achieved class positions.

Towards a Class Schema for South Africa

The notion of occupation serving as a routine way of identifying one's social position is a crucial aspect in conceptualizing a class schema that is relevant to the South African context. In this respect, the study makes use of a class schema comprising of five South African class categories identified by Jeremy Seekings (2003:17). These categories are defined according to occupation and educational attainment:

- upper-class (UC): managers and professionals;
- semi-professional class (SPC): teachers and nurses;
- intermediate class (IC): routine white-collar, skilled and supervisory;
- core working class (CWC): semi-skilled and unskilled workers (except farm and domestic workers);
- marginal working class (MWC): farm and domestic workers.

According to Seekings (2003:17), what ultimately sets these classes apart is the level of qualification required for individuals to occupy them. Upper-class occupations, such as lawyers, physicians, and accountants, require at the least a university degree; occupations in the semi-professional class, such as teachers and nurses, usually require a diploma; and for the occupational classes below that, individuals tend to require a high school diploma or less (Seekings 2003:17). This chapter focuses exclusively on the experiences of young upper-class professionals who have acquired their positions through higher education, and whose parents or primary caregivers' occupations are found to be lower in the occupational class schema. It is argued here that by acquiring occupations that are higher in the class schema than the occupations of their parents those who participated in the study have in fact experienced upward social mobility.

Methodology and Operational Account

Methodology

Considering that the study's goal is an interpretive understanding of upward mobility and identity, a narrative approach to research is adopted as the primary methodology for data collection and analysis. Narratives customarily serve the purpose of preserving cultural values, and carrying these values forth in the plots of stories. Not only does this allow cultural values to endure, but individuals are able to relate their own values to culturally established ones. This provides the platform from which individuals can develop a meaningful sense of self relative to their connectedness with others and their positions in social space (Lawler 2008:249). When individuals tell stories, whether about themselves or about other people, they inevitably engage in identity practices that reveal aspects of who they are (Lawler 2008:249; Bamberg 2012:102).

The most prominent way in which identities emerge through narratives is when individuals order experienced events into episodes that constitute the plot of their lifestories. In doing so, individuals are able to interpret later events in life as linked to earlier ones. Narratives thus indicate a temporal movement of one's life that links the past to the present and the present to the potential future. Every narrated event is thus given purpose as leading to a natural conclusion in one's present situation (Lawler 2008:250). Narrative research attempts to understand how people define their identities by exploring this temporal space "in terms of what is viewed as changing and remaining the same" (Bamberg 2012:103). Achieving upward mobility through educational attainment is a lengthy process that sees individuals experiencing numerous changes to their lives over a period of time. The view of identity, as situated in narratives that occur over time, thus suits the study particularly well, as it forms the foundation upon which the researchers were able to explore how the participants' identities have emerged during the course of their transition through society's different class groupings.

Operational Account

Arguably the most crucial aspect to consider when undertaking social research is selecting a research sample that is relevant to meeting the needs of one's study. The study's target population is identified as young Black (African) South Africans between the ages of 18 and 30, who have achieved upward mobility

(i.e., acquired professional occupations higher than that of their parents) through educational attainment, and who reside in Central South Africa. The researchers use non-probability sampling in order to draw research participants from the desired target population (Babbie and Mouton 2010:166). More specifically, two forms of non-probability sampling were employed, namely, purposive sampling and snowball sampling.

The data collection phase of the research project involved the use of two methods of interviewing, namely, one-on-one phenomenologically based interviews and a focus group discussion. The purpose of using both methods is to generate in-depth data that are derived from the participants' own subjective experiences of upward mobility and identification. To achieve this aim, the researchers relied on an interview style aimed at generating an open dialogue that illuminates the interpretation, feelings, and understanding that participants attribute to their lived experiences. The aim was for each participant to determine the course of the dialogue while the researchers merely facilitated the topics of interest during the conversations with the aid of semi-structured interview schedules.

No deception was used at any stage of the research process. From the outset of the project, research participants were made aware of the aims of the study and the subject matter that was to be covered. Participants were also made aware that the interviews were to be audio recorded and that they were required to sign a letter of informed consent indicating their willing participation in the study. Participants were allowed to withdraw statements made during the interviews or remove their contribution from the study altogether. They were also free to exit the research at any time. The researchers took precautions to ensure that there is no identifiable information that could link the recordings, transcripts, and research findings to individual participants (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey 2011:71). All names presented in the research findings are pseudonyms.

As discussed above, the concept of identity adopted for the study views identity as an interpretive process that makes it possible to understand who we are relative to our positions in social space, social groups, and other individual selves. According to Jenkins (2008:39), our identities emerge within three interrelated "orders" of experience within the lifeworld, namely, the "interaction order" (our daily interaction with other social actors on the basis of putative roles), the "institutional order" (our interaction with institutions and objectivations such

as race, class, etc.), and the "individual" order (our idiosyncratic understanding of who we are). These orders, which typify the way we experience the world, are intersubjectively common to each individual. Therefore, although the participants' experiences within these orders may be unique, the intersubjective nature of these orders makes it possible to explore the participants' narratives by means of applying a common analytical framework.

Michael Bamberg's (2012:103) "narrative practice approach" provides invaluable directives with regard to exploring the participants' experiences of identification within Jenkins's (2008) three orders of experience. Rather than focusing solely on the content of participants' stories, the narrative practice approach turned the researchers' gaze to the interactive process of the interview setting (Bamberg 2012:102). What is of particular interest to researchers employing the narrative practice approach are the various discursive devices participants use to situate their sense of self while in the process of constructing their narratives. According to Bamberg (2012:103), discursive devices, specifically those which individuals use to make sense of their identities in narrative accounts, can be grouped into three analytic "dimensions," namely, "agency" (words describing the participant as an embodied agent of various roles); "sameness versus difference" (words describing the participants' relation to social groups); and "constancy and change across time" (words used by participants to situate their sense of self in moments that link the past to the present and the present to the possible future). By applying an analytical framework that combines Bamberg's (2012) three dimensions of identity navigation with Jenkins's (2008) three orders of experiencing the lifeworld, it is possible to identify a number of themes from the participants' narratives—themes that paint a rich interpretive picture of their experiences of upward mobility and self- and external identification.

Presenting the Findings

In order to come as close as possible to producing an empathetic understanding as espoused by interpretive sociology, our presentation of the study's findings features the use of "thick descriptions" to provide a rich account of the research participants' experiences. As argued above, this necessitates including important contextual information such as the social setting, cultural values, and emotional tones that underlie the participants' descriptions of various situations

(Ponterotto 2006:540-541). The findings presented here include verbatim quotes from the researchers' interactions with participants, which aim to provide the readers with a glimpse into the subjective sense-making processes that underlie the participants' experiences of upward mobility and identity.

Furthermore, as the epistemological position of the study views knowledge as emerging from a collaboration between researchers and participants, it is important to take into account the researchers' interpretation of narrated events. Making use of an ethnographic approach to research for "impressionist tales" (Van Maanen 1988), the findings also include reflexive notes from the researchers' perspective in an attempt to provide an understanding of how various spoken and unspoken cues inform their interpretation of the participants' narratives. The onus of this chapter rests on illuminating the often unspoken and lesser known challenges faced by the participants as shared in their conversations with the researchers.

Perceptions of Racial Isolation

Given South Africa's tumultuous history of racial oppression and continued racial inequality, one of the fundamental goals of the research project is to explore the attitudes and experiences of young and upwardly mobile Black South Africans with regard to racial categorization in everyday life. From the outset of posing the question of what it means to be labeled as a young Black professional, most of the participants expressed a certain degree of bitterness at being categorized as "Black." Ntombi's response, taken from the very early stages of data collection, reveals a sentiment shared by many of the participants in their response to the question of racial categorization:

> Can't I just be someone that's working towards a goal? Do I have to be a Black student that's upwardly mobile? [Ntombi]

The participants' antipathy towards having their race made salient may well be seen as an attempt to avoid the negative stereotypes that have historically been associated with being categorized as Black in South Africa (Mtose 2011:325-328). However, there is another aspect of racial categorization that emerged during the interviews that uncovers a form of stereotyping that runs much deeper than the superficial wounds caused by typical racist stereotypes. It is the idea that upwardly mobile Black people do not deserve to be regarded as holders

of the social positions they worked so hard to achieve. As we shall see, this perception does not necessarily hinge on experiences of explicit racial prejudice, but rather stems from implicit cues in events that could otherwise go unnoticed.

During the interviews a number of the participants frequently made the point of reminding the researchers that they see the world through color-blind eyes, and that they prefer not to classify themselves in racial terms. Keketso is especially adamant to drive this point home a number of times throughout her interviews. However, she also makes it very clear that even though she prefers not to make race a salient aspect of how she interacts with people, the risk of being seen as the "other" in an occupational position that is dominated by Whites remains all too real. Almost every page of the transcribed conversation with Keketso is littered with emotive notes that indicate the humorous outlook she has on life. Yet, when she relates the following story (her mother's warning about thinking too highly of herself), the tone stands out as uncharacteristically serious:

> This is what she said to me recently: "Don't forget you're a Black person. It doesn't matter how highly you think of yourself. It doesn't matter how good you are. Those people will still see you as a Black person. So keep that in mind." [Keketso]

Keketso's response is probed in order to understand whether she agrees with her mother's view. Her following response signals just how poignant a role her mother's words played in her perception of how she is viewed by White people in her achieved occupational position:

> It's the truth at the end of the day. You can't fight it, it's the truth. It's the reality of where we live. The fact that you're a Black person in the workspace will still come up because that's how you are seen to the rest of the world, you know what I mean?...I could be a workaholic and go crazy here, and be the best attorney in the world, but to everybody else I'll be the best Black attorney, you understand? [Keketso]

However, it is not only the pragmatic knowledge shared by her mother that shapes Keketso's interpretation of her racial identity among Whites, but also her first-hand experiences of what she termed "racist" events when she started working at a predominantly White Afrikaans-speaking law firm:

> I've had to adapt to going to these…what we…well, what we as Black people know as racist restaurants and things like that. Or places where you are the

only Black person [laughs]. Nowadays there's like a rule. They say you're going here and I say: "OK, how many other Black people are going? None? No, I'm not going." [Keketso]

Although Keketso did not mention anything explicitly racist happening at these "racist restaurants," the mere experience of being singled out on the basis of her race has led her to label and avoid all restaurants where there is the risk of a racist incident occurring as "racist restaurants." This narrative, of avoiding situations where one would be singled out in terms of race, is repeated during the conversation with Charles. The primary difference between Charles and Keketso's stories is that Charles did not experience racial isolation first-hand. Instead, his decision to not attend a similar "racist" function (as Keketso terms it) is based on the experiences of other Black people who have been in a similar situation:

> We're having our year end function now on the fifth of December and… We also have a department upstairs, [with] a few African people. And this morning I had to go around with a list of people who's going to attend the function. And all of the non-Whites said they're not going. And I asked them: "Why?! This is my first time I'm going to be with you guys. I don't know what's happening here." They said to me: "No, don't go because you will feel very uncomfortable. The White people mingle with the White people and the Black people mingle with the Black people." So I think at my place of employment I'm…I'm gonna have an incident I just as yet haven't…I'm just waiting for it to happen. [Charles]

As Keketso and Charles's experiences show, the perception of being seen as an outsider does not necessarily have to stem from explicit forms of racial prejudice. Although it may be considered a lingering symptom of decades of racial oppression, the mere discomfort expressed by Keketso and Charles's peers show how negatively something as mundane as the separation of racial groups at an event may be perceived. Importantly, a situation does not have to be perceived as isolating for the possible phenomenon of racial isolation to exist. Sizwe, for example, tells a story which, according to him, has become a private anecdote among him and his colleagues. The setting of Sizwe's story is a meeting in which their CEO introduced the measures their law firm will be taking to increase its BBBEE[2] exposure in the future:

2   BBBEE is the acronym for Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment, an official part

> So we're sitting in the boardroom. Then the CEO, our CEO, mister [X], mentions the fact that I'm the only Black associate…which I was totally oblivious of [laughs]…One of the key things that they're going to focus on in the new year is empowerment. After the meeting, Leon, one of the senior associates, says to me: "Sizwe, I didn't know you were Black" [laughs]. So I turn to him and I say: "Neither did I" [laughs]. [Sizwe]

The stories of racial categorization narrated under this theme differ somewhat in terms of the significance they have for the narrators. For some, being labeled as Black imposes negative stereotypes that are hard to shake off. For others, having their race made salient merely serves to drive home the idea that they will always be considered outsiders in a space that is still dominated by Whites. Even in an instance such as Sizwe's, where the experience is viewed in a light-hearted way, the fact that he is singled out on the basis of his race during a meeting indicates an exaggerated prevalence of racialism in the participants' everyday lives.

Managing Differential Class Identities

Because the research participants have achieved upward mobility, they are identified by others on the basis that they own a certain set of qualities that are required to occupy their achieved social positions (Bourdieu 1987:13). The aim is thus to explore the participants' perspectives of how upwardly mobile Black South Africans are categorized by other less fortunate Black South Africans. According to Amohelang, the acquisition of items associated with wealth, such as a luxury German car and a big house (i.e., a lifestyle that sharply contrasts with that of less fortunate Black people still living in poverty), is the underlying cause of the negative connotations associated with successful Black South Africans:

> The way things are happening: Everyone…they're living this life of German cars, the mansion, the lifestyle, the everything. And it's quite sad because some people actually…some people lose so much touch with themselves that some don't even go back home or some aren't even proud of who they are… or aren't proud of the homes that they come from. You'll find somebody living in Sandton in a mansion, but then their parents are still living in a small four room house or a shack or whatever. [Amohelang]

of the current South African government's policy to actively promote progress of Black business and industrial development.

However, Piwe's following response emphasizes that estrangement from less fortunate Black people cannot simply be explained by pointing to a difference in affluence. Instead, the schism between the two classes occurs because those individuals who have achieved upward mobility are seen to have changed in the eyes of those they have "left behind":

> I think there are people who portray that. But, they are not sell-outs *per se*, but people who forget. I think for me, with the connections that I have, with the community and consistently seeing and visiting people…people recognize and they appreciate…But, I think some people tend to have this change of mind. It's like they got a heart transplant and a brain transplant. They are a new person. But, it's not all about that. Even as much as you learn good things from tertiary institutions, you still need to anchor where you come from. So there is a tendency of educated young Blacks to deviate, and completely deviate. [Piwe]

Piwe's perspective is firmly grounded in his own experience of achieving upward mobility and returning to his community of origin. Because of his achievements, Piwe is able to afford the type of class indicators pointed out by Amohelang, such as a BMW and a house which is a tremendous departure from the home he grew up in. Yet, despite clearly having made the transition into a higher social class, Piwe maintains a strong connection with the people in the community where he grew up, and he still identifies strongly with the type of practices that characterize life in South Africa's townships. According to Piwe, the reason why he has not experienced the type of negativity that is present in Amohelang's story is because by returning to his community on a regular basis, and engaging with the people there in a way that shows his connectedness to them, he is essentially portraying an image of himself that shows that he has not abandoned his origins for something he views as better than what life in the township has to offer. Much like Piwe, James has not encountered any negativity on the basis of being identified as someone who is upwardly mobile. He also speaks of preserving the practices of life in the township:

> No, these things happen. But, like I say, these guys who call people "coconuts,"[3] they look at…If I can say it like this. If I go to my friends and they think I have changed, they won't say I am a "coconut." They will just say: "Oh, this guy has changed for whatever reason." This thing of "coconuts" comes in because

3   The term "coconut" is defined in the next paragraph.

some Black people start acting like…they don't do the things they used to do when they were still living in the location, you understand? So it's these things of like only doing the White weddings. My friend, Pumla, I told you about earlier, he is only doing the White wedding [not also the traditional wedding]. So for him, people in the location will say he is acting like a "coconut" because why isn't he doing the cultural things, you understand? My grandparents are very cultural and traditional. They will be very heartbroken with me if I do things like that. That is why I did my initiation, you understand? Going to the mountain and that sort of thing. And it is important for me. I did it because I wanted to. I know it is something my people want and what I want in my life. [James]

The above quote elicits a term that provides valuable insight to the understanding why the experience of estrangement is present in many of the participants' narratives. The term, "coconut," is a term that is commonly used to refer to Black people who act "White" or who adopt White South African values to the detriment of their native culture (Rudwick 2010:55). What is of importance is the idea that once young Black people become upwardly mobile, they are expected to maintain, or at least find a balance between the cultural practices of their social class of origin and the cultural practices of their achieved social class. Yet, it is not enough to merely say that one continues to enact those cultural practices. They are only able to negate the otherwise negative connotations associated with upwardly mobile Black South Africans if they maintain frequent interaction with lower class Black people. This essentially reifies their identity within the community as individuals who do not consider themselves as superior to the people they grew up with, and the culture they were raised in, just because they have achieved a higher class position.

Expectations of Total Financial Independence

Another theme related to the participants' identification with their newly achieved class positions is a perceived expectation of affluence from the side of those who the participants grew up with. For James, this expectation is usually experienced as a humorous banter between himself and his old school friends. James suggests that less fortunate people think of wealth and affluence as an automatic result of completing one's degree and entering a professional occupation. However, as repeatedly shown throughout this theme, the research participants have just started their professional careers and have not had the opportunity to accumulate the type of wealth others have come to expect. For

Sizwe, the expectation of wealth is primarily rooted in his parents' expectations of the level of affluence he should have been able to achieve by now. Yet, as Sizwe points out, his occupational title does not necessarily imply the type of economic prosperity his parents associate with his occupation:

> I think the biggest thing which I've discussed also with my father is when you come from…you know, it's not a racial thing, but when our parents come from…we're maybe the first generation professionals or the second, but my parents have the expectation that when you say you're training towards becoming an attorney, they're thinking in your first year you will be able to accomplish certain things financially, and that's been one of the biggest things. And it makes you seem like you're incapable of managing your finances, whereas you're really only getting so much. [Sizwe]

Piwe's experience of this expectation is also personified in the frequent requests he gets for "handouts" from both his peers and his parents.

> Almost ninety percent of the people that I grew up with have been left behind. There's very few, maybe five out of all the people I met and grew close to, that are successful. And I think it was just from procrastinating. And this thing of "there's still time," you know? So I left a lot of people behind. And some of them, when you go home, the conversation really…The conversations are very short. Because it's all conversations about what can you give me? Seeing as you're so successful, what can you give me? And there's nothing to give them except to say: "Go to school, or try to do something." You know? They cannot get handouts. Because at this stage, where I am, I also have responsibilities. [Piwe]

The topic of the perception of affluence proves to be a contentious issue among the aforementioned participants. During their conversations with the researchers they often made a concerted effort to recount their experiences of this expectation without portraying themselves in an ungrateful or cold-hearted light. This is especially true of Piwe, who adopted an almost apologetic tone while mentioning having to refuse "handouts" to his parents and his friends. This only serves to cement the researchers' perception that, although the research participants may be labeled as "successful" because of achieving upward mobility, this in no way means that they have the economic resources commonly associated with their occupational positions. This perspective, which is rooted in their stories of "going back home," reflects a tragic juxtaposition in their identities. On the one hand, they are expected by their friends and family

to have acquired a certain level of wealth that is simply unrealistic at this early stage of their careers. However, taking into consideration the very real threat of isolation through openly displaying increased wealth, eventually acquiring affluence may mean having to face the risk of alienation if their identities become too far removed from that of their communities.

Maintaining Tradition

All of the participants mention the presence of African traditionalism in their lives. Yet, for some of the participants, upholding traditionalism is perceived as an implicit expectation carried in the eyes of significant others. A common practice shared by young Black South Africans is to divide their weddings into distinct wedding ceremonies. For example, Piwe and Keketso both discuss having separate weddings that include both the traditional African wedding and the more Westernized "White wedding." At the time of the interview with Piwe, he was in Bloemfontein with his fiancé in search of a wedding dress for their White wedding. The topic of his marriage is thus frequently mentioned during the interview, especially when Piwe discusses his connection with African traditions:

> I'm doing a traditional wedding now, and that's why you sometimes hear me referring to my fiancé as my wife. We're married actually traditionally and we're completing it now on the twenty second of November. So we first started with that because we acknowledge our family, and we told them: "Listen, we're doing this because of you. We're showing you, guys, that we are no different. We're both doctors, but there's nothing…you raised us and made sacrifices, and we're acknowledging it." So we're doing that. And then next year for our friends and people we met at varsity, like professors, lecturers, people who are studying and working, we're inviting them to our celebration. Our White wedding. So we're still maintaining that. Our roots are still rooted. [Piwe]

In both Piwe and Keketso's stories, they highlight the importance of upholding the traditions their parents hold dear as a sign of respect. At no point do Keketso or Piwe mention that they were forced or coerced into conforming to these rituals. However, the manner in which they narrate their stories of balancing traditional and Western traditions indicates that it is a powerful expectation, even if implicitly reinforced. The topic of traditionalism prompts James to recount a story that emphasizes the continuing relevance of African traditions

in contemporary South Africa, and how in certain contexts Black people are required to negotiate between Western and traditional ideals:

> I know this guy who bought a new house and he wanted to slaughter a sheep there. It's like a blessing, you see? When you slaughter a sheep at your house, it's like you are offering the ancestors…like something to look after the house and keep the people that live there safe. But, there was such a problem there because the neighbors didn't want him to do that there and they were very unhappy with it. He told them beforehand. He didn't just pitch with a sheep [laughs]. But, they said, no, they don't want him to do that there. So he still did the ceremony, but he didn't get to do it at his house like he wanted. I think most Black people still do these things. But, like what I see happening…there are more and more people my age that stop doing what their tradition tells them. And also because a lot of our people go to modern churches that tell them these things are wrong, you see? [James]

Based on the following extract, we were led to believe that the notion of respect for one's family plays a significant role in James's understanding of the continued practice of African traditions as an important expectation to adhere to:

> My grandparents are very cultural and traditional. They will be very heartbroken with me if I do things like that. That is why I did my initiation, you understand? Going to the mountain and that sort of thing. And it is important for me. I did it because I wanted to. I know it is something my people want and what I want in my life. [James]

A crucial perception raised by James is the idea that contemporary South African Christian churches often frown upon African traditionalism. Although the above statements may be James's personal opinion, they do reflect a degree of incompatibility between African and Western cultures that is especially present in Amohelang's narrative. When Amohelang studied at the University of the Free State, she was increasingly exposed to Christian worship, which did not necessarily feature as part of her upbringing in what she describes as a very traditional Zulu household. As Amohelang began to enact more and more Christian practices at home, she felt that a schism had developed between her and her father. According to Amohelang's following statement, it is the tension between herself and her family that reminds her of the importance of maintaining her traditional roots:

> We're very much strictly Zulu at home, and I'm Christian, as well. But, there is that clash between Christianity and culture, but that has been cleared up in my family. There's no more issues. My parents know where I stand in my relationship to God and my Christianity, and they've respected that. And I also accept that there are certain cultural rules that we need to abide to and entertain. I'll take part in them, I respect them. I never look down on my background or my culture. I never look down on our Zulu culture or ancestors or anything, but I humbly did it for him [her father] to understand that, look, this is the path that I choose, but that does not necessarily mean that I don't respect you, or I won't…Like, for example, if there is a cultural ceremony, I'll go. It's not like I'll stay away or anything. I might just not take part in the finer details of it. [Amohelang]

Amohelang's story emphasizes just how important maintaining African traditionalism is to both her and her parents. For Amohelang, the respect she gives to her parents by participating in different aspects of their Zulu culture allows her to continue practicing aspects of Christianity in the knowledge that she can do so comfortably without having to fear their derision.

Withholding Behavioral Traits Perceived as "Black"

In the preceding section, the importance of maintaining African traditionalism was raised. However, a narrative theme emerged which emphasizes a level of precariousness experienced by the participants with regard to bringing aspects of African culture into their achieved class positions. During the interviews the research participants frequently made statements that differentiated between "them at work" and "them at home." Initially, the distinction between these two identities might not strike one as a necessarily important theme to explore. After all, there is a certain level of professionalism that is expected in the workplace that requires everyone to conduct themselves in ways that they would not normally do at home. It was only during the analysis of the interviews that the researchers were struck by Veronica's following statement which, upon reflection, proves to be a turning point in exploring the expectations of others, which the participants view as associated with their achieved class positions:

> When I'm at the office, I understand it's very prim and proper and I speak a certain way, but when I get home, I'm very much an African. [Veronica]

The above quote emphasizes something crucial to Veronica's understanding of her social position. According to Veronica, displaying African traits (specifically

speaking like an African) in the workplace could be considered as "improper." In essence, within her achieved class position, she perceives an ideology that positions Black South African traits as being inferior to White South African traits. During conversations with Keketso she shares the following story, which sheds light on the perceived contradiction between Black and White South African cultures, and the perceived superiority of White over Black cultural traits:

> As an example with the Sotho women, you know, they wear shoeshoe. It's our cultural dress…It's a material. To us, the Sothos, you wear that on special occasions. You don't just wear it every day. It's your traditional outfit. Whereas here they won't be so accepting. In fact, one of the partners made a comment…they think it's clothes that are just worn by maids. They're like [in an Afrikaans accent]: "Oh, what are you going to do? Clean?" And you're like: "Dude, no! Just because the people that have them in your life happen to be your cleaners does not mean it's something that they specifically wear." You'll go to an African wedding, or a Black wedding, and I promise you, everybody will be in their traditional outfit. [Keketso]

In this story, the contradiction between White and Black cultural values is clear in the older White partner's misunderstanding of the cultural significance of shoeshoe fabric and style. Although he might not necessarily have intended to explicitly make this cultural dress the object of inferiority by referring to it as something "just worn by maids," he invariably did do so in Keketso's eyes. South Africa's middle- and upper-classes have historically been reserved for the White minority. It has only been 20 years since the first democratic elections opened the doors to upward mobility, and the culture perpetuated in the middle- and upper-class is still perceived by the participants as "White." This "White culture" is interpreted as contradicting and even condescending towards those traits characteristic of Black South Africans. This creates an environment of interaction where the participants, upon entering this social space, are expected to leave their Africanism at the door, so to speak.

Conclusion

The emergence of successful young Black South Africans is a theme that has been covered numerous times in newspaper articles and television shows. South Africans frequently read about or hear the term "Black Diamonds" without putting much thought to the effort it took many of these young Black

people to achieve what they have. In the research participants' narratives is an intense sense of pride at having achieved their positions. Not because they are a minority among the Black population, but because of the obstacles they perceive as unfairly stacked against them.

The section on categorization illuminates a shared perception that young Black people are faced with much more than remnants of racial inequality. The fact that they have achieved upward mobility means that they often find themselves in a no-man's-land between White and Black people. Acceptance in either of these groups hinges on their ability to find a balance between indicators of belonging to both worlds. Underlying this balancing act is a profound longing for the freedom to define themselves without having to navigate the negativity that comes with external categorization. Yet, despite seeing themselves as traversing a tightrope of negative categorization, there is a strong sense of group identification that is constructed on the need to help to uplift those young Black South Africans who have been less fortunate than themselves. And although they often discuss the misfortunes of other successful Black people who have been scorned by their communities of origin, the participants narrate a strong sense of solidarity with other Black people, a solidarity based on their understanding of the skewed nature of racial inequality in South Africa.

The participants' longing to identify themselves on their own terms also plays a significant role in their narratives as a powerful source of inspiration for their will to succeed. The vehement recall that *you're not defined by your circumstances* shines through as a desperate cry to remove the association with poverty that was imposed on Black South Africans during the apartheid era. This narrative theme becomes more and more boisterous as the participants recount their interpretation of young Black people who fail to take hold of the opportunities given to them by the state.

We are constantly reminded that there is much at stake for these participants. Although they do not explicitly state the importance of cultural capital, the participants' narratives shed light on an implicit understanding that upward mobility is greatly affected by access to the cultural capital legitimated by White South Africans. However, the delicate balance between living with a foothold in two different class conditions shines through as they describe the pitfalls of displaying the wrong kind of cultural competence in the wrong context. On the

one hand, their achieved class positions require them to stifle any semblance of their class of origin, for example, through the perceived need to not act "ghetto" or "African." On the other hand, they feel that there is an expectation to adhere to the practices of their class or origin or else face the risk of alienation from their roots, their families, and communities.

The importance of finding a healthy balance between two worlds seems to flow over into the participants' very own sense of self. Despite achieving so much more than most young Black South Africans dream of, the participants' perceptions of their class identities are narrated in such a way that the concept of change sometimes feels like a taboo. Even in instances where the participants convey a sense of self that illuminates the perception of belonging to a higher social class, they always do so in a manner that highlights their connection to their class of origin.

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Florian Elliker, P. Conrad Kotze & Jan K. Coetzee

Group Identity and Groupness[1]

Experiences of university students

ABSTRACT | *One of the key transformations South African universities have undergone in the past two decades is the increase of racial and ethnic diversity of their student bodies and academic staff. In this study, we seek to contribute to a better understanding of these transformation processes by presenting students' narratives of how they experience the interracial integration of student residences. We first address the potential groupist and essential underpinnings of ethno-racial identifications by situating our categories of analysis in a social-constructivist framework, underlining the situational and processual character of identifying and establishing "groupness," while simultaneously considering the obdurate quality habitualized ways of identifying may generate. We then present an overview of our sensitizing themes as they are discussed in the literature on race and ethnicity with a focus on South Africa and student experiences. Thirdly, the chapter introduces the reader to the institutional context of the case study, namely, the campus of the University of the Free State and its student residences. Based on focus group discussions and thematic analyses, we present our findings in the form of the cultural themes that are central to the students' narrations of their experiences. These themes include the salience of racial and ethnic identifications, tolerant distance, confusion, fairness, neutrality, ethnolinguistic recognition, regional public arenas, rural-urban divides, as well as socio-economic divides.*

Introduction

In this chapter, we present a focused interpretive sociological analysis of students' experience of transformation on a South African university campus revolving mainly around the closely intertwined phenomena of race, ethnicity, and groupism. The data have been collected since 2011 in the form of narratives generated by means of group interviews and participatory observation. The

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context of this chapter, being situated against the backdrop of South Africa's historical transition to a non-racial democracy and especially informed by institutional attempts at "integrating" groups of individuals who were historically segregated, may offer insights into future issues faced by European and American universities coming to terms with the increasing concrete results of multiculturalism. The analysis presented in this chapter is not aimed at furthering a given agenda or supporting any predominant opinion regarding matters of socio-cultural transformation, but simply aims to investigate the ways in which the people who find themselves subjected to these policies experience their ramifications on an everyday level. As such we primarily analyze the students' experience of group identity as constructed by themselves, as well as the interactions between these "groups." In the first section, we lay out the conceptual background underlying the analysis carried out during this study. The next section presents an informative overview of issues of transformation and diversity on university campuses as offered by existing research in this sphere, while the third section investigates the specific case of the University of the Free State. The fourth section presents the methodological framework put into practice during data collection and analysis, while some of the findings of the study are explored in the fifth section. The study was carried out under the auspices of the program *The Narrative Study of Lives*, of which Jan K. Coetzee is the director. Coetzee provided insight into narrative research on issues of transformation, risk, and uncertainty, as well as editorial input. Florian Elliker constructed the theoretical framework through which the analysis was approached, while Conrad Kotze developed the methodological framework, collected the data, and edited the final manuscript.

Groups and Group Identity

This chapter aims at reconstructing and analyzing how people who are affected by change experience transformation in their everyday life. In South Africa, the process of transformation is officially aimed at improving the lives of historically disadvantaged "groups" and at improving "intergroup" relations. However, when studying social phenomena pertaining to race, ethnicity, and nationality—which are in many ways closely related domains and fields of analysis (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004:47; Brubaker 2009)—the concepts "group" and (group) "identity" appear to be problematic. In this chapter, we do not view

racial (or ethnic) "groups" and "identities" as merely given, but as embedded in socially shared meaning-frameworks additionally informed by subjective experience and socially contextualized understanding. Thus, the experience of "intergroup" relations on a university campus and the students' narrative accounts thereof are likely to be structured, from a sociological perspective, by two contexts: local intersubjectively established ways of (non-)ethnicized or (non-)racialized interpreting and acting, and historically informed cultural patterns of interpretation and action. These contexts have a bearing on how students experience transformation and on what they perceive to be relevant to and characteristic of the process of transformation. They are, firstly, actual contexts that the students have encountered before and during their life on the university campus. Secondly, they have contributed to the intersubjectively constructed meaning-frameworks that inform students' interpretations of current and past experiences.

Although "racism" is generally regarded as undesirable and even illegal, the mundane discursive space in South Africa is still dominated by highly objectified notions of race and ethnicity. This section therefore serves not only to outline our analytical apparatus, but also to reformulate our object of analysis—"intergroup" relations—from a social constructivist perspective. While the empirical analysis itself is based on the data collected in focus group sessions with students, we outline the relevant dimensions of their everyday life—the ethnographic context—in social constructivist terms. In the South African context, which is burdened with a history of racialized segregation and exclusion with dire consequences for the vast majority of the population, it is important to remember that a social constructivist perspective does not deny the reality of racism and its consequences. It merely aims to study this reality in a specific way by highlighting those aspects of reality that are intersubjectively constructed, maintained, and transformed, or what Conrad Kotze (2017) calls the intersubjective etiological dimension. A common misreading of the social constructivist perspective in the tradition of a sociology of knowledge approach is that it allegedly denies the resilient and structured character of social reality. The current analysis explicitly counters this accusation, arguing that much of social reality's seemingly solid and obdurate character is a consequence of institutionalization processes. The reality of race and racism is therefore not the result of an "essential" nature of individuals or populations, but of institutionalized social practices that have the

effect of reifying "groups" and "identities" that are experienced as objectively given by the individual operating from within the natural attitude.

The nature of present experience is shaped by past experiences that have coagulated into a subjective stock of knowledge, which is structured by types and typified relations, along with systems of thematic, interpretational, and motivational relevancies (Schütz and Luckmann 1989; Schütz 2004). Experience plays a crucial role in individual interpretation and informs both the content of intersubjectively constructed meaning-frameworks and their correlating patterns of social interaction. In its habitualized forms, this stock of knowledge provides a background of routine action and interpretation that does not warrant explicit attention by the subject operating from within the natural attitude. This enables members of a society to engage in "focused" action without having to renegotiate taken-for-granted issues through moment-to-moment reappraisals. A large part of the individual stock of knowledge is intersubjectively constructed and passed on to the individual, making it historical in origin and ensuring that, over time, pragmatically efficient patterns of interpretation and interaction are habitualized, externalized, institutionalized, and legitimized. In this way, by means of an ongoing process of communication and mutual understanding, a seemingly objective reality that the individual is confronted with takes shape out of an essentially arbitrary sequence of meaning-ascription (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

Thus, although fleeting and dependent on human reproduction, social reality is locally objectified and comes to inform (and often dominate) the experience of the socially embedded individual. In this sense, the structure of social reality emerges from routinized, habitualized, and institutionalized patterns of (inter) action and interpretation. On the one hand, actions create a context *reflexively* (Gumperz 1982). This means that the social situation is defined by the very act of engaging in certain practices and therewith stimulating the corresponding notions of propriety and ways of reaction among those engaged in these practices. Individuals' socially derived knowledge of these practices tends to reproduce social reality in typical ways—thus the structure of social reality also pertains to the distribution of knowledge needed to meaningfully engage in these practices. On the other hand, (inter)actions are enmeshed within a nexus of objectified meaning-frameworks that seem—from the perspective of the socialized individual operating from within the natural attitude—to be given

in the empirical sense, as phenomena existing beyond individual agency. Hence, social reality is routinely experienced as consisting of different actors engaged in institutionalized routines that the individual subject is only able to bypass at the risk of having his/her own actions subjected to intersubjectively reified expectations. From the perspective of the individual, social structure thus also pertains to the unequal distribution of access to certain social situations, groups, and institutions, or various "arenas" which become accessible to the individual only by means of the internalization of relevant aspects of the dominant stock of knowledge and repertoire of action patterns.

Each of these structural contexts is connected to a conglomerate of knowledge and typical actions. Throughout this chapter we use the term culture to distinguish such broad conglomerates of knowledge and practices from each other. Culture in this sense pertains not specifically to those higher orders of knowledge encompassing art, religion, science, and law, but to all knowledge and practices that are needed to cope with everyday life. Culture therefore generates a paramount reality according to which any given individual is oriented. It does not only refer to a symbolic realm, but to the "intimate link of knowledge and action, of 'cognitive system' and 'social organisation'" (Knoblauch 1995:73). Thus, culture denotes *conglomerates* of *empirically distinguishable* ways of action, interpretation, and knowledge that are bound to and typical not only of specific social situations, groups, organizations, entire institutional realms, and milieus, but also of social categories (this entails, for example, *organizational* cultures or *professional/vocational* cultures). Cultural practices may be institutionalized in varying degrees and encompass more or less objectified expectations of what the appropriate ways of (inter)action and interpretation are within the specific contexts. It is important to note that the term culture neither pertains exclusively to ethnicity or race nor entails essentialist notions, that is, the notion that the sharing of ideas and practices inherently leads to or forms an existential unity of the involved actors. Individuals are always simultaneously participating as actors in several cultures; in the cultures of their organizations and professions, peer groups, sport teams, and families, et cetera. In this way, a significant part of their experience is informed by "cultural interferences" (Reckwitz 2001) stemming from the diverse interactions between the "cultural grammars" of the various cultures that they are involved in. As these interferences may be mutually relativizing, individuals may develop a sense of agency by critically reflecting upon intersubjectively constructed meaning-frameworks in thought and in

action. Our aim is neither to denigrate the existential agency of the individual subject nor to deny the existence of objectively given quanta and qualia, but to explore in greater detail specifically those aspects thereof that arise on the basis of intersubjective meaning-sharing.

In the context of experiences pertaining to ethnicity and race, the concepts of "group" and "identity" often serve as categories of political practice *and* analysis. Both terms are used by both "lay" actors and by political actors to make sense of and frame their activities and their self-understandings and to organize and legitimize the pursuit of their interests. But, as both terms refer to collectivities encompassing a large number of people, they are likely to entail essentialist notions that cannot be unproblematically generalized. Pertaining to "groups," one cannot simply presuppose "single, bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, as main protagonists of social conflicts and as fundamental units of social analysis" (Brubaker 2002:164)—a notion that Rogers Brubaker has called "groupism." Conceived in such a way, "groups" are seen as monolithic and homogenous entities endowed with agency used for pursuing the common goals of its members. This corresponds to the use of identity as an assumed "fixed" or "strong" self of the individual that is seen as being the result of belonging to a specific group, the individual being endowed with particular group-specific "features" and interests. Such "strong" notions are potentially powerful political instruments, and are often used by politically motivated actors who deploy them to achieve certain goals, either against or in the name *of* and avowedly *for* certain "groups" with specific "identities." While many "groups," especially pertaining to race and ethnicity, are identifiable by their obduracy across time and space, solely focusing on the historical manifestation of such groups and their interrelationships may contribute to the generation of social realities wherein essentialist notions are objectified to such an extent that there is hardly any discursive space for alternative perspectives. Thus, research that employs categories of political practice uncritically as categories of analysis runs the danger of reifying social reality in problematic ways. To avoid contributing to this impasse, we employ categories from an alternative set of analytical concepts. For the analysis of the narrative accounts of the students, we make use of the distinction between relational and categorical modes of identification. The former pertains to identification "by position in a relational web (a web of kinship, for example, or of friendship, patron-client ties, or teacher-student relations)," while the latter is used to indicate "membership in a class of persons

sharing some categorical attributes (such as race, ethnicity, language, nationality, citizenship, gender, sexual orientation, etc.)" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:15).

Identification is a situated and context-dependent process. While some categorical identifications may differ from situation to situation, others are more persistently engaged across contexts. Individuals identify themselves and others while constantly being identified by others in their turn, while self-identification and the ascription of identity by others are not necessarily congruent. Thus, categorical identifications that are applied to large portions of populations do not simply constitute "groups" in the sense of collectivities experienced as meaningful by those constituting them, but merely sort individuals into tentative "pre-group" collections (Bowker and Leigh Star 2000). Under certain circumstances, categorical identifications may take on group-like qualities that we analytically separate into commonality, connectedness, and groupness (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:19). In this context, "commonality" denotes the sharing of some common attribute, while "connectedness" denotes the relational ties that link people. Neither commonality nor connectedness alone engenders "groupness"—the existentially meaningful sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group, but commonality and connectedness together may indeed do so (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:20). In the case of large collectivities, it is unlikely that connectedness is needed to create an intense feeling of belonging together; rather, groupness may be created by evoking powerful feelings of commonality. This crystallization of vague and diffuse identifications into a strong sense of belonging to a bounded group is a process that depends on the mapping of particular events onto discursively shared meaning-frameworks.

In contrast to the notion of "large groups," we use the term group to denote relatively small groups, constituted by repeated, often highly patterned, interaction of reciprocally related actors. The prevailing patterns of their interaction are in turn shaped by a shared culture, founded on a common nexus of intersubjectively constructed meaning-frameworks rooted in a shared history. Groups establish and maintain boundaries, routinely distinguishing between members and non-members. Groups are situated in an arena, a physical or virtual space that they depend on for their enactment. They remain relatively stable through adjusting "lines of action" (Fine 2010:367) and routine "interaction ritual chains" (Collins 2004). Group culture thus refers to "those sets of meaning that are tied to a recognisable interaction scene and its routine participants" (Fine 2010:356).

The culture of the group, reflecting a host of past shared experiences which are remembered in a shared "narrative repertoire" (Frank 2012), sets standards for propriety and action, forms a basis of collective representation, and codifies an "interactional grammar" (Fine 2010:366). Its structure results in practices building on previously sedimented routines, and is thus relatively stable. In the routine existence of a group, transformation is likely to consist of incremental change. More fundamental changes are likely due to external pressures or unpredicted events that facilitate a renegotiation of group culture and identity. New members being socialized into the group culture are a potential source of this kind of upheaval. Depending on how strong or weak their affiliations with the group become, they are existentially engaged in the group to various degrees, internalizing the lifeworldly standards of the group culture to a greater or lesser extent and hence also contributing to its reproduction and change in different ways, and informing their self-understanding accordingly.

Groups do not exist in isolation, but are connected to other groups both through sanctioned patterns of relatedness and through the multiple group memberships of any given individual. This gives rise to institutional realms in which specific groups are further connected by means of corresponding institution-wide communication, and embedded in an ecology of groups with differentially distributed authority and access to resources. The groups constituting such an ecology are also rooted in diverse matrices of socially shared meaning-frameworks. Organizational decisions are made within small groups and spread to other micro-publics through an established hierarchy of group relations. As "tiny publics" (Fine and Harrington 2004), they are not only the basis of organizations, but as "small communities of interest and experience, [they] provide the basis of civil society as they are where politics is discussed and enacted" (Fine 2010:361). Groups are internally segmented and may control access to membership more or less strictly, with boundaries being established by informal criteria and/or institutionalized categories. Thus, "through maintaining boundaries, local settings become the site for exclusion or segregation, suggesting why members of social categories have differential access to knowledge, resources, or relations" (Fine 2010:359). In the following section, we will take a preliminary look at the ways in which various groups relate to one another, based on a survey of studies dealing with the issues of importance to our analysis.

Race, Ethnicity, and Groupness in South Africa and the World

Studies on race and ethnicity,[2] long fragmented along national, disciplinary, and paradigmatic boundaries, are slowly emerging into a "new field that is comparative, global, cross-disciplinary, and multi-paradigmatic, and that construes ethnicity, race, and nationhood as a single integrated family of forms of cultural understanding, social organization, and political contestation" (Brubaker 2009:22). Ethnicity and race have been studied in connection to the active use of ethnic and racial notions in the pursuit of collective goals, thus examining the relationship between nation states and ethnic mobilization (Olzak 1983) and between ethnic entrepreneurship and the group's cultural characteristics and access to resources (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990). Ethnicity has further been analyzed in relation to social stratification and discrimination, in terms of culture, and how it links up with politics (Yinger 1985), and in the context of conflict (Williams 1994) and ethnic and nationalist violence (Brubaker and Laitin 1998). Much of this research has been international and comparative. Ethnicity has also been examined in terms of its links to state formation, nation building, and nationalism. Despite increased international mobility, "neither nationalism nor ethnicity is vanishing as part of an obsolete traditional order…Nationalism, in particular, remains the pre-eminent rhetoric for attempts to demarcate political communities, claim rights of self-determination and legitimate rule by reference to 'the people' of a country," while "ethnic solidarities and identities are claimed most often where groups do not seek 'national' autonomy, but rather a recognition internal to or cross-cutting national or state boundaries" (Calhoun 1993:211). Racial and ethnic ways of imagining communities have involved processes of substantialization that are often reproduced by social scientists (Anderson 1983; Alonso 1994). Ethnicity and race have been part of the making of national cultures, that is, part of how "national culture [is] rendered as an implicit, taken-for-granted, shared national habitus" (Foster 1991:237). Research has been carried out on how ethnicity serves as a resource in creating social boundaries and groups (Sanders 2002), and there has also been a focus on the intersection of sexuality and ethnicity indicating

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2   The term race is popularly used to refer to distinctions between populations based on physical appearance, while ethnicity refers to distinctions between human populations based on various cultural variables (Frable 1997).

that ethnic, racial, and national boundaries often overlap with sexual boundaries (Nagel 2000). Attention has been given to ethnicity and gender related attitudes and inequalities (Kane 2000), as well as to the persistence of racial prejudice and discrimination in general (Quillian 2006). There has also been differentiation between ethnicity and race and a focus on the enduring power of the latter (Harrison 1995), for example, in processes of residential segregation (Zubrinsky Charles 2003). A good deal of research has dealt with the macro level, analyzing race as racial formation (Omi and Winant 1994) or as race discrimination system (Reskin 2012). As much research on race, ethnicity, and nation involves rather large "collectives," such "macro"-level investigations implicitly often evoke groupist notions (cf. Brubaker 2002). "Group" is, however—as discussed in the first section—a problematic concept for such *large* communities of people as its use may contribute to the substantialization of these very groups instead of analyzing the social processes that generate feelings of groupness associated with the corresponding population categories.

Sociological work on race and ethnicity in South Africa specifically has been diverse. Apartheid legislation incorporated a racialized perspective in many societal realms, and as the ensuing racialized social realities still indicate a cloven society (Prinsloo 1996), the concepts of race and ethnicity are at least implicitly present in much social scientific research. This is also true in work that is not mainly concerned with race and ethnicity, as in research on poverty and development (Wale and Foster 2007), elite attitudes (Kotzé 1993), work values (Steyn and Kotzé 2004), and the life satisfaction of students (Møller 1996), as well as in the sociology of work (Webster 1999). Empirical work has dealt with race and ethnicity in relation to most social realms, among others in connection with citizenship (Klugman 2008), racial relations at White universities (Gwele 2002), linguistic diversity and identity politics (Venter 1998; Kriel 2003), racialized and (de)segregated places (Piper et al. 2005; Peens 2012), and racial stereotypes (Vahed 2001). The occurrence of (small) groups built around racial and ethnic categories thus remains a characteristic of society in general and of South African society in particular. We argue that the reason for this is not explicitly political in as much as the continued existence of these groups is cultivated not only by organized social institutions, but primarily by the meaningful interpretation and consequent patterns of behavior of people going about their daily lives. Factors linked to race and ethnicity are deeply internalized and correlate with readily observable facts of perception that seem empirically

given, thus carrying over this objectified nature into tangible consequences on patterns of social interaction. With this in mind, we now turn our attention to the specific ways in which these realities seem to impact students worldwide and especially in such a culturally diverse society as South Africa.

Many of the students we interviewed experience their everyday life on campus as shaped by socializing in small groups along racial categories. To move outside of these boundaries is not without impact on their daily lives; for example, they may risk to lose contact with their in-group, as studies show for African American students who chose to adapt themselves to the dominant White American culture in one study (Arroyo and Zigler 1995). While rhetorically professing respectful attitudes to members of all racial categories, students simultaneously confess to forming racial and ethnic enclaves within the broader student body. In such circumstances, social intercourse across racial and ethnic categories may be limited to the extent that it is almost negligible, as has been confirmed by various studies on student self-segregation carried out in the United States (Taylor 2011). Although there are many parallels to be seen in South Africa as students tend to categorize themselves like their international counterparts do, they do so in slightly different ways and under the specific historical and demographical circumstances of the South African society, complicating not only the conventional Black-White dichotomy, but also the commonly used minority-majority distinction. In contrast to many other studies in the domain of acculturation and so-called "intergroup" relations (e.g., Brown and Zagefka 2002; Sennett et al. 2003; Sang, Wang, and Zheng 2004; Brown and Greenland 2005; Chavous 2005; Cole and Yip 2008), the experiences of the participants of our study are not set in a predominantly White setting in which Black students constitute also demographically a minority. While in terms of material wealth and economic power the White population segment remains privileged, it demographically constitutes a minority of South Africa's population and thus lacks political power as a bloc, faced with the challenge of becoming a minority (Alsheh and Elliker 2015). Research on South African university students found, for instance, that White students expect their economic position relative to Blacks to suffer over the next decade, while the Black students expected to gain ground relative to Whites, but still come up short in ten years' time (Dumont and van Lill 2009). In a study measuring the adjustment of Black students at the University of Johannesburg, a historically White university comparable to the University of the Free State, it was found that levels of social, personal, and

institutional adjustment related to race were closely linked to eventual academic performance (Sennett et al. 2003). Ethnic and racial categories are not only implied in the distribution of material wealth and political power, but intersect with an array of other issues, among others discrimination based on sexuality, gender, and religion (cf., e.g., Bishop et al. 2004; Ehrmann 2007), but also issues of psychological health (Arroyo and Zigler 1995), well-being, and academic performance (Liem and St. Louis 2005), as well as broader cultural changes such as postmodern stances impacting the experiences of the students (Dietz et al. 2005)—all themes related to by the participants of our study. These changing intersections all have an impact on the transformation process on the university campus with regard to how students relate to each other in terms of ethnic and racial identifications, much of which is still shaped by student self-segregation (Crozier and Davies 2008).

The Case of Life on the Main Campus of the University of the Free State

When students access any university campus, they enter a large and diverse arena of action, constituted by a multiplicity of more or less strongly bounded groups of various sizes. Their experiences, actions, and interpretations within this arena are in many ways implicitly or explicitly related to these groups. The university is enacted through small and medium sized groups—work teams, departments, administrative units, student associations, sport teams, et cetera—all of which are linked to each other through bureaucratically institutionalized connectors typical of large organizations, as well as through more informal processes. An important spatial arena of the University of the Free State is the main campus in Bloemfontein, which is cordoned off from the surrounding city by fences and strictly controlled access gates. All but one of the participants' residences are located on this campus, interspersed between teaching venues, sports facilities, office buildings, parking areas, streets, and park-like lawns. Students living at residences become members of a group in the above outlined sense. The groups are clearly bounded (residents are regarded as members, all other persons as non-members) and have their own exclusive spatial arena (in addition to the public arenas of the campus) within the residence building. The residents participate in a web of relations within the residence, establishing in various ways ties to the group and engaging in various activities as members of

the residence (e.g., participating in residence meetings, sporting competitions, etc.). The groups feature a more or less specific idioculture that is also shaped in activities that represent it externally. For instance, first year students engage in a parade contest, where members of different residences visit each other as a group and perform short plays. Most of the residences have a reputation pertaining to (excellence in) academics or sports, but also to the composition of its members pertaining to commonly perceived socio-cultural categories. At the time of our study, all residences were gender segregated, that is, inhabited exclusively by either male or female students.

Students are connected to other groups, an important one being their family. In some families, it is customary for the parents to visit the residence in the first year to see how their offspring are doing. They may also play a role in deciding whether the student will live on campus or not and in the process of choosing a residence. In some families, members of different generations have lived at the same residence. Among other relevant networks or social relations, students are likely to stay in contact with former school friends, some of them studying at the same university and often part of different residences and peer groups. Student life is not only experienced in groups, though; it may be experienced in relatively anonymous places such as cafeterias, libraries, offices of the university administration. In these contexts, the individual student and the staff adopt their context-dependent, institutionalized roles. During lectures the student role is usually experienced in a collective, but the collective does not necessarily form a bounded group with a specific group culture. Apart from being a spatial arena of and for diverse social situations and groups, the university campus and its institutions are also experienced as "university," as a unity that is presented symbolically. This is done by means of university wide communication, such as weekly newsletters from the vice-chancellor, a campus radio station, the university website, and through events and processes that are interpreted *as* pertaining to parts of or the entire university, the university logo being present in the spatial arena and in the aforementioned communication channels, but also in advertisements and promotional material of the university that appear in regional and national newspapers.

Within the residence, all students share certain duties and obligations (such as adhering to the house rules), participate in residence related cultural practices, and identify each other relationally as members of the residence. At the same

time, students are categorically identified according to "seniority," for example, as a "first year" or "third year" student. In the residences' idiocultures, these categorical identifications have practical implications. Freshman students generally do not share the same "rights and privileges" as second and third year students, have to endure forms of "orientation" during the first year, are sometimes seated separately in residence meetings, and do, mainly in residences for male students, often have to pass an "initiation" at some stage, a *rite de passage* whereby they become "full" members of the residences. Freshman students who do not reside in a residence are not confronted with these relational expectations and obligations. Through their enactment categorical identifications such as "first year student" may form the base for creating groups—in relation to the residence—or subgroups of students, their categorical commonality through shared activities being complemented by relatedness and potentially by feelings of more or less intense groupness (e.g., in the case of shared initiation rituals that are experienced as humiliating). While members of a residence may internally identify each other relationally as members (and interact accordingly), they may simultaneously be identified categorically by non-members of their residence, that is, as members of a certain residence, and be treated accordingly. For the individual, residence membership may be used in a categorical or relational mode of identification by another; life on campus does allow not only for categorical identifications being enacted in environments where students are also relationally identified, but relational identifications may also become categorical ones. Thus, there is a wide range of opportunities for non-ethnic or non-racial modes of categorical and relational identifications. The students' relations to each other and their self-understanding may be formed by adhering to the idiocultures of groups of which they are members, developing strong or weak ties to that group, relationally identifying others as members of the same group or identifying them or others with categories pertaining to university life.

It does also, however, create an environment where university related categorical or relational identifications are enacted in conjunction with racial or ethnic categories. In addition to stereotypical category-bound actions and interpretations, racial or ethnic categories can become entangled in group-related activities and may—as in the example of the "first year" student category—be complemented by direct relatedness. Thus, they potentially serve as the basis for a more or less strong feeling of groupness, concerning not only subgroups within residences or sport teams, but also intergroup friendships or networks. This is of

particular relevance, since for some of the students, the campus and especially the residences are the first action arenas in their life-courses where interaction with people ascribed to other ethnic or racial categories has the potential of going beyond stereotypical category-bound patterns of action and interpretation. For the first time in many cases, these interactions take place over an extended period of time, in relatively intimate, non-anonymous settings (residences), encompassing working and playing relationships, sharing the same mundane activities, and involving relational and categorical identifications pertaining to other realms than race or ethnicity. In other words, the university campus *may* be the first action arena in their lives where certain latent culturally bound meaning-frameworks oriented towards racial or ethnic identifications could be enacted in such a way that actual feelings of groupness are created—enacting *effective* "intergroup" or "group" relations that are otherwise an unsuitable label for such broad population categories as the ones pertaining to race or ethnicity. Indeed, the amplification of the still often segregated and alienating nature of South African society in general in the arena of a historically Afrikaans university tends to result in highly polarized campus politics that rapidly serve to reify issues of race and ethnicity to a level that is seldom concretely experienced off campus. The degree to which such possible feelings of groupness constitute a novelty for a particular student likely depends on his or her biography prior to the university, which is shaped through the belonging to various small groups such as the family, peer groups, et cetera. These experiences may differ with respect to how categorically segregated the group environments were in the students' biographies. The vast majority grew up in groups and graduated from primary and secondary educational institutions that were composed of members of mostly the same racial or ethnic category. Interaction with persons of other categories mainly took place in relatively anonymous settings, or "non-places" (Augé 1995), in spaces within which one does not become part of a distinct group—if such locations were mixed at all in that regard. Indeed, the students' narratives suggest that large parts of these realms are not "categorically mixed" either, but segregated.

The potential creation or amplification of feelings of groupness along ethnic or racial categories at the university campus may thus either be experienced as something new or as a continuation of one's segregated upbringing exclusively among groups consisting only of persons of one category, the latter, however, with the important novelty that the students at the university are formerly

unknown "members" of the same category. Such a creation of groupness might even be more strongly related to the categorical identification, since in the prior lived experience, such identifications have most probably always been intertwined with other identifications. "Others" have also been, and most likely, have *predominantly* been family members, neighbors, peers, et cetera. This gives rise to the categorical identification serving as the only, or one of few, resource(s) available during the generation of such a feeling of groupness, which in turn makes the categorical attribute potentially more salient in its perceived "effectivity" of being a reason/base for bonding, for inclusion and exclusion. Whether ethnic or racial categories serve as a basis for feelings of groupness among members of the same category, it is an empirical question whether category membership alone is sufficient to generate such feelings. Most likely this is not the case, as it is not experienced as an abstractum, but amidst concrete settings with other relational or categorical expectations and obligations. The relevant difference pertains to what set of interpretations and practices are dominant in interaction; either those that are bound to the local residence culture and its relational network or those bound to the racialized categories. Residences might thus provide a potential arena for developing ties that go beyond racial categorical identifications, but might also be a place where racial identity and its social implications are enforced. Institutionally "mixing" residences is thus not a guarantee for the promotion of the former possibility, not least because the residence integration policy (which has failed in the past)[3] and the resulting creation of unbalanced presences of different ethnic or racial categories in a residence tend to make the categorical identification more salient than before.

Data Collection and Analysis

The findings presented in the fifth section concern only one of a whole range of realms that were subject to interventions by the university administration, such as activities of political parties on campus, substance use, gender relations, and religion. As students' perceptions and experiences concerning these issues did not crystallize into readily available "naturally occurring" data—that

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3   The University of the Free State initially implemented integrated residences following the elections of 1994. Students self-segregated and eventually, in 1998, management officially desegregated campus residences.

is, artefacts suitable for data analysis covering all these aspects—data were collected in focus group sessions. They involved "engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion…'focused' around [the above outlined] set of issues" (Wilkinson 2011:168). They differed from "group interviews" in that there was no regular back-and-forth exchange between the researcher and the participants, but the researcher allowed for and encouraged interaction between the group participants (Morgan 1988:12). Used as a self-contained method, the main aim was to facilitate detailed representations about the issues of interest (Bohnsack 2004:220), the points of views mainly stemming from the discussion among the students. The students' interaction generated enriched and nuanced accounts of typical experiences and brought to the fore in more explicit terms differing views in relation to contested issues (Warr 2005). The students' narratives were analyzed primarily with regard to their perspectives concerning the abovementioned issues.

Interested in which ways the students used to make sense of their experiences, we pursued a thematic approach to the focus group data (Silverman 2011), analyzing which domains, categories, and themes structured the views of the students. This first reading suggested an additional reading, as the accounts of experiences often referred to local cultural contexts with relatively autonomous systems of relevancies and action problems that can selectively become a stage for the enactment of population categories. Thus, the data were also read as an ethnographic account to tentatively describe the relevant dimensions of the everyday residence and university context as represented in the students' narratives. For both analytical readings, ethnographic semantics (Spradley 1979) was employed, as it extends the reconstruction of mundane domains of action and interpretation into an analysis of cultural themes.

Being interested primarily in domains, categories, and themes, the interaction of the focus groups was rather instrumental towards facilitating detailed and rich accounts. This was done mainly among students, evoking their systems of relevancies concerning the issues discussed. We did not explicitly analyze the group discussions in terms of their structural properties, however, as the students explicate their experiences and views they account in varying degrees for the presence and anticipated reaction of the other students. The focus group thus constitutes a temporary "tiny public" (Fine and Harrington 2004) that is, indeed, an ethnographic context of its own (cf. Wilkinson 2011:173). An

interaction is generated that is not part of the everyday contexts of the students and which is characterized by the presence of a researcher who "injects" issues into the discussion, who is instrumental in framing, establishing, maintaining, and dissolving the interaction situation, and whose presence—as a relative non-member of the students' lifeworld and as someone with specific gender, age, "ethnic," academic, et cetera attributes—may suggest specific forms of communication and interaction. But, as far as the focus group as temporal and situated accomplishment is based on habitualized practices—and as far as these practices are *not exclusively* competencies for focus group participation—it does allow for inferences as to what kind of cultural practices and standards, for example, the use of population categories, are externalized by the students in their everyday lives and to what extent these are enacted. The next section offers insights into this question by presenting some of the narratives of students living in residences on the main campus.

Findings

According to the data, race and ethnicity remain important identity markers to students currently enrolled at the institution. Almost every response concerning racial or ethnic identification was introduced with a phrase indicating the given individual's pride in his or her racial identification. In the words of Tezovic, a Black male participant:

> I'm Xhosa and I'm proud to be Xhosa. It's my identity.

Racial and ethnic identifications remain a fundamental concern for many students, and the history of the country ensures that it does not vanish into the background of social life. This identification with racially defined feelings of groupness is strong among both Black and White students. Responding to the charge of being descended from immigrants and thus not sufficiently African, Chomp, a White male participant, makes the following remark:

> …what should we do? I was born here, but [I] feel like an alien.

It seems that a certain historical weight, a legacy of mutual violence, has affected the self-understanding of students to a great degree before they even arrive at university. It also seems that, when students arrive at university to start tertiary

studies, racial and ethnic identifications are internalized to the extent that many expect to be staying with others from their own racial and ethnic background in the residence that is to be their home for the next few years. The loss of this homogeneity, which correlates with a weakening of the dominant culture of their biographical background, is lamented by various students, including Mr. S, who experiences the effects of mandatory integration as a process of sweeping change that makes just one more politically correct public arena out of a previously closed cultural safe-space:

> …the hostel used to be part of your identity, now it's just a place to stay.

Although racial and ethnic enclaves remain, there is little outright hostility along these lines. Rather, a sense of understanding, empathy, and solidarity generally flourishes. In the absence of what university policy would define as integration, many students report positive tolerance. The now thoroughly multiracial and multi-ethnic character of the campus and especially the residences does, however, mean that minor clashes sometimes occur. Various occasions are reported, ranging from dissonance in sexual, sanitary, and social behavior to occasional reports of verbal and physical altercations. It does seem as though the most turbulent years of the institution's transformation into a multicultural institute of higher learning is behind it, as mainstream acceptance of multiculturalism is the norm among many students and any behavior infringing on that understanding is seen as radical and deviant from both White and Black students' perspectives. Be that as it may, boundaries along ethnic and racial identifications remain salient in everyday life and "us and them" issues strongly inform student discourse, especially when it comes to issues regarding racially mixed residences and the ways in which students perceive top management's policies in this regard. Black and White students are united in the stance that university administration is implementing far-reaching policies without—or only marginally—involving the students in the process, and with little positive management of the consequences of these policies. A White male participant, Mr. Gericke, laments the enduring self-segregation of students in his residence, even though the intake of new students is strictly managed to ensure diversity:

> It's actually become like the old days now, you know. The Black guys live almost exclusively in one part of the building and the White guys in another.

A Black female participant, Sira, echoes this sentiment:

> I know me as a Black person, I have my own culture, and I'm Xhosa. I'm going to do things this way and obviously won't click all the time with Sotho people because they have their own ways, and also when it comes to English and then Afrikaans people; you just get the feeling that it will never work. In the hostel, I tolerate them. It's not like we like each other, we just tolerate each other. You keep your distance, I keep my distance.

Such feelings of tolerant distance reflected in these comments are not directed at members of other racial or ethnic categories as such; rather, this skeptic stance is shaped by the perception of the way in which university management has implemented integration. Though there are accusations of resistance to change and unwillingness to cooperate directed towards outgroups, such as Ntombi's opinion that

> …some races are resistant to changes,

or that of Mr. Gericke when he says

> …the Black guys don't want to adjust. They disobey the rules and we have to change,

students readily agree that

> …you get the feeling that it's all about numbers. This forced integration only hinders any real progress,

as Mr. S puts it. Sira agrees, further revealing the students' confusion and frustration with a policy that many see as causing unnecessary friction:

> I don't know whether they want us to stay together or accept each other in any way because they just come and put Black people in White hostels and White people in Black hostels, and then they leave it like that. They don't research to see what happens in three months. It's just that thing they do, and they leave it like that.

Indeed, outside of the institutionally managed context of the residence, conflict between members of different racial and ethnic categories does not present itself as a serious issue. Certain cultural practices do conflict with each other, but where this is the case, the issue is usually resolved without the need for violence or institutional involvement. Rather, the main point of contention present is the question of Afrikaans as an official language of the University. This issue

sharply divides the students that participated in this study. There are those who feel that English should be the sole language and that the University should be a linguistically neutral zone. They argue that as they leave their mother tongue at home, Afrikaans-speaking students should do the same. This view can get quite impassioned, as is expressed by Gabby, a Black female participant, when she says:

> Let them learn in Afrikaans so they can get stuck here in the Free State.

A vast majority of participants see the bilingual facet of the University as unfair, and call for one medium of instruction, based not on certain ethnically or racially underpinned cultural outlooks, but on neutral and mutually beneficial concerns. Meeting each other midway in such a fashion seems like an easy solution, but a minority feels just as strong about their right to keep learning in Afrikaans, arguing that their rights would be infringed upon if the language was to be taken away. The third opinionated group feels that Afrikaans can stay, but that equal recognition should then be given to other indigenous languages, or at least Sesotho, which, along with English and Afrikaans, is one of the most widely spoken languages in the region.[4]

There is also little social intercourse between Black and White students off campus, with it being common knowledge that there are different bars and nightclubs frequented by the individuals belonging to the various racial groups. To some this state of affairs comes naturally, while the high degree of social segregation at the University engenders a shocking and traumatic experience for others. Many students that hail from other parts of the country, especially those from the larger, more liberal metropolitan areas, find this state of affairs quite strange, with many theorizing that it might be a regional phenomenon. Tezovic goes on to describe the situation thus:

> I stopped going to certain places. I went once or twice and got funny stares
> and I realized I'm not meant to be here. I stopped going out to certain places.

The measure of this social segregation tends to vary among demographical subsets. A study carried out in the U.S. discovered various differences in racial

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4　The University of the Free State recently adopted a new language policy. English will now be the sole formal medium of education, while support will be offered in Afrikaans, Tswana, and Sesotho, the three most widely spoken indigenous languages in the University (Marais 2016).

identity between individuals with different social backgrounds, noting, for example, that individuals from more cosmopolitan backgrounds tend to diffuse racially tense scenarios more successfully (Tatum 2004). This hypothesis was supported by our findings, with various participants who came here from other metropolitan areas regarding many of the most controversial race-based matters to be a regional issue. Chomp, for instance, said the following:

> In Cape Town, you don't see this. I went to school with Black guys and when I came here, it was like, wow. I think it's a Bloemfontein thing.

This example can be compared to Tezovic's story about coming here from the Eastern Cape and has a lot in common with Sir's story of a White school friend becoming absorbed in what he calls "Bloemfontein's racist subculture":

> This guy was English, like proper English, but when we came here, after a few months, he was talking Afrikaans and we almost never see each other anymore.

Almost identical tales were told by female participants. Following this course of investigation may shed light on differences between the attitudes of students from rural backgrounds and those whose roots are in the city, an important distinction within the Zulu, Sotho, and Afrikaans communities in particular. Various cases of lifelong interracial friendships crumbling after the first few months in Bloemfontein were recorded.

These regional, as well as rural-urban differences intersect with divides in the ethnic realm, complicating the issue of integration and segregation even further. According to Sir, another Black participant:

> Two Sotho guys are tight, but a Sotho and a Xhosa guy are not as tight.

A similar situation was seen in the social behavior of Afrikaans- and English-speaking White students. Thus, an individual's racial and ethnic identification currently plays a major role in the patterns of social contact that person is likely to follow during his or her tenure as a student at the University of the Free State. Many students also believe that management's closure of the residence taverns has worsened the situation as Black and White students who previously socialized together in the same residence now frequent different spots in town where segregationist patterns remain well-established. With the few racially diverse arenas of social contact eradicated by management policies designed to

curb substance abuse, ethnic and racial identification, and the associated indirect self-segregation of students through choices in the leisure domain further contribute to the enactment of boundaries along ethnic and racial categories, a phenomenon which is very much alive at the University. As Mr. Gericke, a White male participant, points out:

> …so we don't really mix. The thing is, we don't have that much in common. Take our languages, for instance, you associate with those you share something with. It's not a racist thing.

While focusing on all this, it is important to keep in mind that race, though an important factor, should not be considered as necessarily always being the most salient phenomenon. Various other factors, like social and financial status, may carry as much weight in the social integration process of especially senior undergraduate students. The data yielded by our research supported this view in the sense that where racial integration is implemented in residences, there is often a vast gap in socio-economic status that largely correlates with race. In this regard, Chomp, a White male participant, had the following to say:

> The thing is, these kids come from homes where they don't have a lot of money for socializing. They can't go to the places or do the things the White guys do because they don't have the money. This makes it even harder to integrate.

All of South Africa's universities are racially integrated today, but one needs only take a walk across campus to see that the reality at the micro-level does not reflect the expectations of the macro-level. As Crozier and Davies (2008) said, "the trouble is they don't mix." In a society like South Africa, where racial separation and enmity have long been the dish of the day, it is important to explore the contemporary self-segregation of students, as well as the behavior of those who form the exception to this rule. This should, however, not be done with any political outcomes in mind, but in the spirit of uncovering the meaningful experiences of the people affected by these processes on a daily basis. All the participants were familiar with the multiracial and multi-ethnic reality of contemporary South African campuses and had been exposed to situations involving culturally diverse actors on various occasions since enrolment at the institution. One area where progress has been made is in perceptions and the emphatic understanding of members of other population categories. Even if voluntary social contact remains rare, incidences of racism and other forms

of prejudice based on race or ethnicity have declined significantly. Since the residence integration policy has been put in place, students have been forced to move beyond their comfort zones and experience unprecedented levels of physical and social proximity to a vast array of individuals differing from themselves in factors such as race, ethnicity, culture, and religion.

Conclusion

Apart from the dynamics of relations between members of different ethnic and racial categories at the University of the Free State, the findings of this study shed light on the status of education as an institution in South Africa. Until 1994, student racial segregation from pre-school to post-graduate level was official government policy, and this arrangement continues to impact on lived realities today. To summarize, the findings of this study include that institutional desegregation is not integration and that the mixing of students belonging to different ethnic and racial categories without sufficient structural and administrative support, *along with* an experienced investment in the process by the students themselves, tends to encourage self-segregating practices instead of mutually shared experiences. Without the inner structures and meaning-making processes of both the institution and members of all backgrounds undergoing fundamental modifications, the arbitrary mixing of different racial categories in classrooms and residences will continue to be risk-factors with regard to the intended outcome of such mixing. This leads us to consider the importance of successful multicultural educational practices as paramount to the successful integration of South African graduate students into the multicultural world of business and post-educational social life. When combined with a sensitive understanding of the ethnicized and racialized histories and relationships in any given society, multicultural education is one of the most powerful assets any student can have (as opposed to experiences of haphazard methods of simple desegregation).

The situation seems to be most tense in those male residences that have seen a significant Black *minority* moving in since 2008. The reasons for this appear to be myriad. According to the narratives, White minorities in Black residences tend to move out after short periods of time, while Black students moving into traditionally White residences stay there. This may be due to a range of factors, and, apart from "White flight," one of the most important is socio-economic status. Many of the Black students simply cannot afford private accommodation

and thus choose to stay where management places them, even if a certain degree of discomfort is involved. This situation results in the illusion that Black students are "taking over" White residences, while traditionally Black residences are not transforming at all. This sentiment, along with certain actions taken by management, has resulted in a sense of alienation, especially in White male students in historically White residences.

The UFS's integration policy is made significantly harder to implement through the stubborn existence of somewhat antiquated residence-specific traditions and value systems, which are slowly but surely starting to evolve as the residences that spawned these systems see their population change. Both Black and White participants report fundamental changes in residence traditions and patterns of behavior and interaction since the advent of mixed-raced residences, and various erstwhile practices, many of which would be seen as highly exclusive and alienating to outside observers, have been replaced by more inclusive, culturally neutral forms of behavior. Once again these changes have been most dramatic in the traditionally White male residences involved in the study. Many of these residences had long histories of physical initiation rituals and traditions reminiscent of military practice which in some cases do stretch back to the time of military conscription under the National Party government and its embeddedness in the Afrikaner nationalist project.

The weakening of these practices has, indeed, brought about change in how a residence at the University of the Free State is defined. Changing demographics and an increasingly top-down attitude from management, albeit one that seeks to further the academic and social mission of the institution, have led to campus residences becoming less and less bastions of "identity and culture," where one's self-understanding is shaped and cultural capital is acquired, and more and more places of residence and study primarily. This move from an emphasis on the collective to a focus on the individual is one that garners strong opinions from students, both for and against the process. There is, however, an emerging trend that accepts the changes, grudgingly in the most extreme cases, but willingly nonetheless. Slowly but surely a paradigm shift is taking place among students. The hardcore hangers-on of the fraternity and sorority type residence dynamic is slowly giving way to a more modern attitude of live and let live, which accepts the importance of individual academic success as a factor that takes precedence over the social identity provided by membership of a given residence.

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A Shock to the System[1]

HIV among Older African Women in Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT | *HIV remains a threat to the ordinary everyday life of older woman in African society. In what can be called 'a reality shock', HIV challenges most of the ordinary everyday endeavors in conservative African societies as it imposes new Western prevention, treatment and health-management methods over long-held African traditions. The reality of the 'Western' HIV epidemic, and its impact on the 'African' ordinary everyday life demands that the infected undergo a paradigm shift in order for them to live harmoniously within their society. This calls for a re-examination of traditional values and a strong sense of responsibility, courage and determination to remain relevant and not be considered odd in one's community, especially as one grows old with the virus. The study, which focuses on the experiences of women from the Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe who are aging with HIV, observes that growing old with an HIV infection fosters forms of inner strength and wisdom that enable the infected to disregard some of the unquestioned traditions and employ effective ways of living well with the life-threatening condition.*

Introductory Remarks

An HIV-positive diagnosis unleashes all sorts of emotions as the person struggles to take in the reality of living with an incurable condition. It most certainly triggers a sense of disbelief and shock. More so, it is a huge cultural shock for Africans in predominantly conservative African societies because it is widely assumed that HIV is a direct threat to African traditions, and is a foreign, modern, Western epidemic. Still persisting in traditional, conservative African thinking are the perceptions and images of the first publicly reported cases of HIV and AIDS in America where homosexual males were dying from compromised immune

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functioning. The result of these perceptions and images is that HIV penetrated large parts of the public thinking in Zimbabwe as a "repugnant" epidemic that affects men who engage in "illicit" homosexual activities. For a long time, many heterosexuals, and especially women, lived under this misunderstanding and got infected with HIV unsuspectingly. Many died as a result and cases were often regarded as misfortunes related to practices such as witchcraft. A common assumption in most African societies is that untimely death can be attributed to witchcraft or unhappy ancestors or retribution from God. This builds on the belief that any natural occurrence such as sickness can be effectively combated by traditional and spiritual means relevant to African ways of being (Mbona 2012). In this context, HIV has been thriving and destroying silently.

In the case of a society holding onto norms, practices, and cultural beliefs without feeling a need to generate alternative reasons for why things happen the way they do (Kain 1994), it becomes common practice to apply meanings to conditions such as sickness that are consistent with age-old practices that are "tried and true" in that particular society. However, in the face of a "foreign" infection such as HIV, it is likely to be more acceptable to incorporate "foreign" factors to deal with the impact of an exposure. In such a situation, common meanings of sickness and ways of dealing with it are likely to be reformed, and borrowed meanings from other cultures are likely to be deployed. Kain (1994) calls this process cultural diffusion. Thus, Western ways of healing, prevention, and management of HIV were implemented within an African context to deal with a problem which is seriously disturbing the traditional lifeworld.

The appearance of a "foreign" infection such as HIV rattles the known reality. The willingness to allow in the strategies, management, and preventative actions coming from the origins of the infection does not occur without disruptions. This results in what Holzner (1972) calls a reality shock. Everyday thinking and acting is confronted by feelings of limitations and of looming crisis that create anxiety and uncertainties. Schütz and Luckmann's (1973) view is that, in the lifeworld, actions can be oriented and rationally motivated to suit the demands of a situation. Experiences then cease to be ordinary and obvious. They now become subjectively analyzed and understood to have a self-fulfilling and meaningful life of their own. At this point a person's consciousness is awakened and directed towards an object that disturbs the ordinariness of the everyday.

He/she now thinks and acts with a rational motive or intention to create and maintain order.

Plummer (1994) discusses this notion of creating social order as reordering the ordinariness of the everyday through a change of values, beliefs, and experiences arising from new exposures. He mentions that, for people to adapt to change—current and future—there must be a shift where the usual way of doing things has to be re-appraised and re-examined because new exposures demand new meanings. Thus, when confronted with new realities or challenges, rationality becomes focused more on preserving life than on satisfying the demands of the status quo at the expense of life and good living. In this chapter, we interpret the narratives of the group of older African women living with HIV in the context of their attempts to understand their new situation and adapt to the demands of the changes brought to their lifeworlds.

Methodological Account

For social scientists interested in human behavior, meaning in context (Merriam 2014) is at the core of the exploration of the research participants' experiences. So, we opted for a qualitative exploration of research participants' experiences, and situated this exploration in their own environment. This study gathered narratives on the experiences of growing old with HIV from eight purposely selected HIV-positive women aged between fifty and sixty-one years who are living in the province of Manicaland in Zimbabwe. The study focuses on a sensitive issue, namely, HIV, as well as a hard-to-reach population, namely, *older* women living with HIV. For these reasons, we decided to work with a small set of participants in order to get a deep understanding of the different meanings and contexts that influence their experiences. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) note, rich data are more likely to be gathered when one engages in-depth with a small number of participants.

We subscribe to all the ethical considerations requiring researchers to act ethically during the engagement with the research participants. The study was formally approved by the University of the Free State's Humanities Faculty Ethics Committee (approval number UFS-HSD2015/0345) and by the Zimbabwean Medical Research Council (approval number MRCZ/B/931). Ethical protocols included acquiring written informed consent from the research participants

prior to their participation. All interviews were audio-recorded. Appropriate measures were taken to mitigate any kind of harm and risk to participants related to this sensitive study. All interviews were conducted without any incidences of emotional breakdowns or withdrawals.

Data were collected using semi-structured conversational interviews with open-ended questions. As a phenomenological study interested in the experiences of their lifeworlds as narrated by research participants, interview questions started with general questions aimed at gathering background information and moved gradually to questions probing more personal and subjective experiences. In this way, the interviews managed to access progressively deeper levels of the participants' lived experiences and their struggle with the reality of growing old with HIV. They were encouraged to express themselves freely and give voice to their own points of view. The data were analyzed thematically; some codes were deduced from the data and literature, while others emerged more inductively from the data.

Philosophical Reflections

The Schützian definition of the lifeworld proclaims that everyday ordinary experiences are central to the constitution of human thought and behavior in a society (Gurwitsch 1962; Schütz and Luckmann 1973). This suggests that ordinary people's experiences of reality and their taken-for-granted interactions in the lifeworld occur naturally and shape their reality quite fluidly. But, in addition to this, every society has its own and sanctioned ways of doing things—a lifeworld that people fit into without thinking or questioning its validity (Overgaard and Zahavi 2009). The everyday is also considered as the unnoticed (Jacobsen 2009) because its activities are mainly obvious and not much attention or reflection is given to these actions. Following this, the way in which sickness is perceived, treated, and managed in a particular society becomes part of reality to the extent that remedies for certain ailments are not interrogated: they are simply known and implemented. If, in a traditional society, a certain sickness is perceived as being caused by witchcraft—as was the case with most research participants in this study when they started to experience HIV-related symptoms—part of the common practice will be to consult a traditional doctor or herbalist for treatment and/or for removing the root cause of events.

The research participants' experience of everyday life, their constitution of meaning, and their social interaction with other members of their society will actively contribute to the way in which they live their everyday life and to the way they perform in their society according to what is expected of them as women. Firstly, this points to the fact that a person's ordinary reality or immediate experience is subject to, and influenced by, his/her interaction with others. Secondly, it indicates that everyday experiences involve shared meanings, as well as a shared consciousness underlying the collective understanding of phenomena (Sokolowski 2000). This connectedness is termed intersubjectivity. These women—the participants in this study—are to a large extent bound to meet and satisfy the demands and expectations of societal norms in order to fit in and be accepted as an authentic part of a whole. Their experiencing of social reality takes place within a socially delineated collective identity. Thus, we contextualize the narratives of female research participants within their larger social environment.

Their gender determines their conduct, persona, relations, and thoughts—all of which are intersubjectively constituted and confirming the "commonness" of their lifeworld. Reality in this lifeworld—which we can call a gendered lifeworld—is imposed and accepted as natural (Schütz 1962). An assessment of the research participants' narratives indeed finds that they feel largely disempowered to act individually and to engage in other forms of agency against HIV infection. This is because the social reality in which they find themselves expects them as married women to be subservient. The research participants' societally imposed inferior status as women means that they could not question husbands if they suspected them of risky sexual behavior, nor were they able to impose preventive methods to avoid an HIV infection or re-infection. These women's powerlessness with regard to sexual matters and their ultimate inability to influence their husbands' risky sexual behavior is embedded in a shared reality that they have internalized through socialization as part of their everyday experiences. This is confirmed in the following statement by one of the participants:

> There was nothing you could do. But, you will know that when he comes,
> you will know that he is my husband. You will just meet [have sex] like that.
> We did not have an opportunity to say: "No-no-no, let us use a condom…"
> NO, it was not something that was expected to be done because a man cannot
> be challenged by a woman and a woman cannot tell a man what to do. It is
> still happening even today. So, when it comes to prevention, we never had

that chance to do anything. Sometimes you would know that my husband has a girlfriend, called this. You could even clearly see and know that this is what my husband is doing. Even sex, we never enjoyed it when it was like that because you would know that here I am being given a disease, but there was nothing that we could do. So, as a woman you would just keep quiet. [Grandma Mecky]

The acceptance of socially constructed ways of doing things leads to normative behaviors becoming embedded in human understandings and being considered as natural. In phenomenological terms, this is called typification (Overgaard and Zahavi 2009). So, there are typical actions that are governed by typical motives and deployed in typical situations with typical consequences (Flick, Kardorff, and Steinke 2004; Overgaard and Zahavi 2009). But, typifications are never entirely rigid and unchangeable; an actor can adapt certain ways of doing things in order to resolve a problematic situation. Alfred Schütz argues that typifications are indeed prone to revision, especially where expectations and needs are not met (Overgaard and Zahavi 2009:105). People can be exposed to situations/conditions that are out of the ordinary, and in these situations, they can also act with rationality in an effort to deal with social reality. So, in response to the familiar and the less familiar, as Alfred Schütz points out in his analysis of the lifeworld (Overgaard and Zahavi 2009:105), typifications are driven by "because" and "in order to" motives.

When applied to this study, we argue that a woman living and growing old with HIV in a traditional African society does not typify the common actions of others. She adapts an attitude that makes it possible for her to deal with her situation and to live meaningfully with HIV. Most of the narratives indicate that the ultimate aim of participants is to manage their condition and to preserve their lives. The narratives indicate that when a woman with HIV is on anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment, she adapts her motives: "I am not using traditional herbs to treat HIV 'because' ARVs are proven to manage the virus effectively and they are working well for me." Or, she can argue: "I use ARVs 'in order to' live longer and healthily with HIV." In both cases, rationality takes center stage over the shared traditional meanings surrounding sickness and its connection to spiritual and traditional healing. This study's participants are taking ARVs "because" this treatment restored their health, which had deteriorated:

> Myself, to tell the truth, from the beginning I was not well. I was sick before taking the pills [ARVs]. So, when I started taking the pills, I don't get sick anymore. But, previously my hair used to fall off [and I had] ringworms all over my body. [Grandma Jessy]

> That time I was not even able to walk on my own, people would lift me up. Then I started to take the ARVs and started to get myself up and walk. And then I realized that the tablets are helping me, up to now. [Grandma Vicky]

> I can say in the first days—those first days, that is, when I say I got so thin. Ehm, the first days before I knew that it's the disease [HIV]. But, when I started to take the ARVs, I gained weight, getting really fit and strong. [Grandma Shelly]

A further dimension of the philosophical framework for this chapter can be found in existential phenomenological thinking, which assists us in unpacking the research participants' experiences of living with an "uncommon" condition. Living with HIV is a deeply existential issue that impacts the self and how an individual responds to changes in his/her everyday experience. It has to do with how our HIV-positive, older women live, feel, and respond to situations that confront them: how they experience changes to their bodies, challenge cultural norms, and interpret new social signals from their environments. From the narratives of participants it is clear that all these changes and challenges contribute to a reality shock. Existential phenomenological thinking, therefore, assists our analysis in that it highlights the individualistic nature of existential aspects in its relationship to acquired expertise, conformity, and the broad cultural reality of society (Kotarba and Johnson 2002).

From this study's findings it is clear that most of the women were emotionally affected by their HIV-positive diagnosis. Their first thoughts were—in line with common perceptions in their society—that HIV is so destructive that nothing meaningful can come out of it. Their narrations capture the feelings of shock, hurt, and death-related ideation that most of them experienced after being diagnosed with HIV:

> To tell you that I did not say anything when I got home [from the HIV testing center]. I was very angry and confused at the same time…I was thinking that it is better to die than to live a life of a sick person. Because it was being said everywhere that this disease cannot be cured. Once you get it, you have it for life. So, I thought of suicide… [Grandma Maybe]

> I was hurt and I said: "How am I going to support these children that were left to me." I was hurt and I cried…I even wrote a will… [Grandma Mecky]

Later, they all altered their perceptions and tried to counter their negative assumptions by seeking life-saving treatment and support. They achieved this by existentially engaging with the collective myths, beliefs, and misconceptions surrounding HIV in their society. By taking up this position, they allowed their existential self to act outside their socially constructed cultural context.

Creating New Meanings

Their HIV-positive diagnoses clearly caused great trauma to the research participants. This reality shock, in the view of Holzner (1972:11), coincides with an unexpected change or occurrence in the everyday reality of a person where traumatic feelings are experienced as a result of extreme disappointment and disbelief. Holzner (1972:11) argues that the feelings take on an unreal character because these experiences are completely unrelated to their shared natural attitude. From the narratives it is clear that an HIV-positive diagnosis was not only traumatic but also entirely unanticipated. With the exception of one, all the research participants claim that they never engaged in sexually risky encounters that might have exposed them to an HIV infection. This following quote is broadly representative of what all the other participants say about finding out that they are HIV-positive:

> Ehm, I was hurt. I felt hurt because I never imagined that situation to happen to me. Because I was married to my husband when I was a virgin, and I was very honest. That is the truth. There was nothing [risky sexual behavior] that I did, yes. So, it was hurtful to me that today I am now told that I have HIV. I did not go around looking for other friends [sexual partners]. [Grandma Jessy]

A reality shock of this magnitude clearly heralds a turning point in life where the everyday must be re-evaluated and new ways found to deal with the situation in order to save one's life (Baars and Phillipson 2014). Holzner (1972) further points out that a reality shock creates doubts about the ordinary ways of doing things and often calls for a reconsideration of reality, causing most of the natural and existing reality to collapse. New meanings must be found to readjust priorities in order to live a meaningful life. From the narratives we can see that participants renegotiated their notions of reality. Initially, they tend to blame

the deaths of their spouses on witchcraft, and thought of themselves as healthy and not infected by the virus. They later changed their views and took steps to manage HIV:

> …myself, before I got treated, I also thought that I was bewitched. Even when my husband passed away, I also thought that he was bewitched, yes. But, now I know that it is HIV. [Grandma Rose]

After confirmation of their HIV statuses, by means of clinical testing, the research participants adapted new perspectives enabling them to deal with the disruptions caused by HIV and their lifeworlds. The ways in which they deal with the hurt and humiliation accompanying their HIV status reveal a shift in the participants' identities. They become more directed inwards and strive to value self-fulfillment, inner satisfaction, and better quality of life. Although often despised and labeled—and even isolated and discriminated against—it seems these women do not allow these issues to get in the way of them managing their HIV status:

> Ah, they call us…There is someone who once gave me this name, calling me *Zhing Zhong* [laughs] [*Zhing Zhong* is a nickname most people in Zimbabwe give to cheap Chinese products that are not durable]. Ha-a-a the *Zhing Zhongs*, you see…But, we never put that into our minds because you can see that it is better because there is treatment for us. Even if we are the HIV people like this, we actually see that we are the same with those people who have sugar [Diabetes] those with what, Asthma. [Grandma Shelly]

> Ehm, people would talk, even today they still say many things—names, nicknames we are given. *Masofa panze* [sofas outside—to signify a funeral; meaning that the HIV-positive people are destined for death] or *vari kunojusa* [they are going for a recharge—collecting ARVs at the clinic]…Ah, these days I no longer care. I am now well; what can trouble me? Let them say what they want, but myself I know that I am taking my medicine and I am living. [Grandma Vicky]

The narratives also indicate that some of these women began advocating for condom use—something that they never did before they got infected with HIV. Grandma Tamar, who is living with an HIV-negative husband, discloses that they started using condoms after learning that she is HIV-positive and she encourages other women to talk about condom use with their husbands:

> …then you must use that condom. You then agree on that. When you are going to Sissy Grace's place, go with it in a pocket so that you don't do what? Take Sissy Grace's disease and bring it here to me. [Grandma Tamar]

New meanings and actions are constructed in the face of a phenomenon such as HIV that is understood and experienced as coming from outside of the normal cultural life and demands new ways of dealing with reality.

Rationality in the Face of HIV

Calls for rational action are by no means confined to our times. Rationality is rooted in enlightenment philosophy where reason and empirical knowledge are presented as superseding traditional beliefs. A significant part of this study pivots on issues related to individual reasoning versus collective culture. For most participants, it appears to be a matter of inner compulsion responding to internal health needs, as well as external social judgments, that drive the impulse to re-fashion their views and experience of reality (Gellner 1992). The research participants are handling HIV in what can be considered as reasonable ways. They shifted their mindset from believing that the sickness and the resulting deaths of their husbands were a result of witchcraft, towards viewing HIV as a medical condition that needs to be managed with clinically-proven Western treatment and not by only consulting traditional healers and diviners.

Living with an HIV-positive status, trying to come to terms with it, and striving towards a better life knowing that you must grow old with this condition require a rational approach and a fair share of level-headedness. In this regard, Western medical intervention is a given. But, this realization—that a future life will coincide with disciplined taking of medication—does not come naturally. Realizing the full impact of living with HIV and making rational choices goes hand-in-hand with having access to knowledge about the disease and its effects. The research participants in this study went beyond common sense to acquire knowledge of the problem (HIV) at local clinics and at HIV/AIDS support groups: they decided not to follow blindly the common assumption that HIV equals death. They did not give up on life but chose to enroll in HIV programs, even though some already displayed symptoms associated with AIDS—the more advanced stages of HIV infection—and realized that they might die as a result of HIV. Their decisions to start with anti-retroviral treatment went together with

the rational acceptance that this particular treatment regime is the best option available to them.

Other noted rational actions taken by these women—besides seeking effective treatment—include embarking on a healthy diet and refraining from any actions that might fuel the spread of HIV. In many cases, the research participants— supposedly because they believe that they got infected by their husbands and now prefer celibacy—indicate that it is important for them to take care of their psychological well-being.

> I control myself [being faithful to one sexual partner]. Even the food that I eat: I do not eat things that are too sweet plus I do not eat food that is too oily. I eat traditional vegetables like pumpkin leaves and black jerk leaves. [Grandma Tamar]

> Ehm! [Laughs] What for? [Getting a sexual partner]. Ah, not again. NO, I cannot start again. What for? [Laughs] I only want to focus on living now. I have my children and they now have their own children, what else do I need? [Grandma Shelly]

> To just live without thinking about it. Yeah! Not to think too much about it every time; that everywhere you are you think about it, no-no. Don't get concerned by it—that this AIDS; when is it going to end? [Grandma Tamar]

Although each one of the eight participants has her own subjective experience, there are similarities in the way they manage their condition. It seems that they create a modified lifeworld characterized by the everyday experiences that revolve around HIV and managing it. Even their relationship experiences are shaped by HIV:

> I don't have a friend that I can say I talk to, but for these friends of mine in the [support] group that I am with. Like these ones that I take tablets [ARVs] with. We can talk to each other without any problems because we are all the same. And it is easy for me to talk to them because what they have [HIV] is the same as what I have. So, there is no one who says: "I don't have the disease" [HIV]. [Grandma Vicky]

> Yes, someone [sexual partner] who is also in the program [ART] because your [social] network is not, not a problem. Partner, let's take a condom. You are now: What now? Using a condom. Partner, today it's like this. He understands because he is living in it. [Grandma Tamar]

A New Openness

The narratives of the research participants reveal that some of these women consider themselves as experts in HIV issues and are even conducting HIV counseling and advocacy activities with little shame. They believe that they will be listened to because of their age. They give their personal testimonies to encourage others to know their HIV status and to get the necessary help—though they realize that many in their society despise people with HIV. HIV is often associated with younger people in their society and HIV related issues (especially when discussed with members of the opposite sex) are seldom discussed because of the sensitive link between HIV, sexual activity, and the body. In the case of one of the participants, a son noticed that his mother was infected with HIV, but could not tell her. He waited to broach the subject when the mother later disclosed her HIV status to him:

> …he told me that: "Mother, I saw it long ago that you are now sick [HIV-positive]. But, as a child it was not possible for me to tell you first"…It was not possible for him to tell me that this is what is there. So, he talked to his father when I was away in South Africa: that he must go and get tested. [Grandma Maybe]

This poignant story is a testimony to the need to break through cultural, gender, and age barriers to health. Participants' boldness in going against the socially accepted norms and advocating for rational choices in terms of lifestyle and treatment are doing just that. Their advocacy can be partially attributed to the maturity and social status that age brings, but it is mainly due to the fact that they have lived long with HIV and are exposed to positive HIV discourse through their involvement in support groups.

New Everyday Practices

It is documented that the older a person gets, the more self-control and care he/she exercises in as far as his/her health (Emlet, Tozay, and Ravies 2010). The older women in our study decided to embrace life by choosing to treat themselves with the recommended and prescribed medication for HIV and AIDS, namely, ARVs. They even chose a specific time to take their pills to ensure strict adherence as reflected in this narrative:

> I take them [ARVs] at 7 [o'clock] before I go to bed. 7 [o'clock] everyday, that's enough. Then the next day I do the same as usual. Why did I choose that time? Because I am a person who goes to [work in] the fields. I might forget [to take the pills] at times when I am in a hurry to get there… [Grandma Tamar]

Their ARV treatment ensures that they are ageing well with HIV. As members of a society with socially defined ways of handling sickness they report that they initially sought healing from herbs and traditional alternatives. But, when this trusted ally failed, they embraced a new solution:

> Myself, I no longer use such things other than ARVs. I once used that stuff. What do we call it? Moringa [plant consumed for its nutritional medical value]. I would eat it...I later realized that: "Hey! Even the doctor told me that you are mixing things and you are damaging your body." [Grandma Kate]

> Myself, no-no-no! I do not use those things [traditional herbs] and I do not encourage it. That is why I feel sorry for those people who refuse to take ARVs and prefer to drink traditional medicines. [Grandma Jessy]

> Ehm, herbs, a-a-h no! We just use ARVs; just eat our food. The food we are encouraged to eat—black jerk, pumpkin leaves, dried vegetables, what-what…Yes, AND FISH, yes! This beef is the one that we are not encouraged to eat. It's [the] red meat that has problems. But, if you want to eat it, make sure it is well cooked…Those herbs N-O-O. [Grandma Shelly]

Driven by their own motives, preferences, and interests—all related to survival—these women act in the face of a threat to their everyday reality. This leads to a re-evaluation of traditional meanings regarding everyday life experiences. One such re-evaluation relates to the notion and practice of hospitality in their society. The custom of visiting others and of sharing a meal with the host is highly valued in most African societies. In the Zimbabwean context, desirable social connectedness involves checking upon one another and sharing whatever food is available with visitors to one's homestead. There is even a Shona proverb: *Hukama igasva hunozadziswa nekudya*. It translates literally to: "Relations are half fulfilled unless one has eaten the food offered by the host." The participants—who now follow a healthy diet—actively defend their health rather than compromise it with practices that may be detrimental to their condition:

> Don't let other people force you to eat things that are not good for you [as an HIV+ person]. Because when I visit, those spices, we are not allowed to eat them. But, others will eat spiced food because they are shy. Don't be

shy. [With] these things [HIV] you cannot be shy. You need to be open. That personally, ehm, things with spices, I do not eat...And if you see that it is difficult for you, don't go there. Stay at your place because you know that this is what I am [HIV+]. [Grandma Tamar]

In a remarkable turnaround from traditional collective cultural norms to a much more individualistic approach, participants decide not to jeopardize their health by eating the food of kinsmen. Interestingly, cultural norms also support this new brand of individualism: the boldness shown by these women is enabled by the fact that older people are often better positioned to stand their ground and live life in terms of their own needs—no matter how out-of-the-ordinary their actions might appear to others.

From Collective to Individual Orientation

Clearly participants get to a point where they become less bothered by what the collective says or does. Another example is participation in traditional beer-drinking ceremonies common in Zimbabwean society and where traditional beer is used as a medium to contact the ancestors in times of need. Women prepare traditional beer at sacred places in mountains, mainly at the beginning of the rainy season. When the beer matures, people in the community gather and share it amidst the singing of traditional songs and dances. During these ceremonies a portion of the beer is spilled on the ground in request to the ancestors for rain. Attendance and participation are traditionally mandatory, but some of the research participants—who stay connected to their rural roots—claim that they now abstain from these ceremonies. They are—as people who are living with HIV and who are on anti-viral treatment—aware of the adverse effects of alcohol on their health. As a result of their age and maturity they also feel more inclined to challenge the previously unquestioned ordinary everyday norms. Some of these sentiments are reflected in the following:

> Even beer, that beer that is brewed in rural areas for traditional purposes, I don't do such things. At times you are told that everyone must drink it and if you refuse, they say: "H-e-e, she is refusing to drink the traditional beer. Who does she think she is? H-e-e, she must be punished." [Grandma Kate]

There are also challenges to traditional practices that fuel the spread of HIV. Some research participants discourage the tradition of "wife inheritance" and

refused to get inherited by their husbands' brothers. This practice is part of the culture in Zimbabwean society: to meet the needs of the widow and to have a "provider" for the deceased's family:

> Myself, when my husband died, I was still very young [28 years old]. But, some relatives did not know what had caused the death of my husband. They wanted me to be inherited by someone else, but I am the one who said it is not possible that I get inherited because the way my husband died. The way he was sick and then his death certificate [I suspected that] there is something related to this modern disease [HIV and AIDS]. So, I did not agree to be inherited because of that. [Grandma Mecky]

> …our views are different, but myself I saw that, ehm, I did not like wife inheritance. H-a-a! Inheritance! I refused it…That's how the disease [HIV] spreads, that's how the disease spreads. You will be spreading it to another man together with his wife. It's a big sin to do. When you know that you have the disease, just stay like that. What else do you want? Just live on your own. [Grandma Shelly]

> Ehm, I can say that inheritance is not a good thing. Yes, because you can spread the virus to that person who inherits you. But, if it was possible for the man who inherits you to understand, you would just say: "Let us use condoms." [Grandma Vicky]

A prominent part of the research participants' lifeworld is the high value placed on the role of a grandparent in taking care of grandchildren—even when the child's parents are still alive and capable of taking care of the child. The custom of being an engaged grandparent stems partly from the need to combat loneliness in old age and it also enables grandparents to pass traditional knowledge on to younger generations. The grandparents introduce grandchildren to traditional values, practices, and the overall culture of their society. The increase of orphans due to AIDS-related deaths of parents has also brought about a condition where grandparents are forced to become primary caregivers of orphaned children. This situation poses challenges to grandparents who are themselves living with HIV because of the expanded roles and duties that come their way. One of the research participants narrates how she had to send away a grandchild who was staying with her because of her HIV-positive condition. She says that the child's behavior caused her constant stress. Knowing the requirements related to her condition—that stress is not good for her immune system as an older person with HIV—she acted against the ordinary and everyday practice in her society

and refused to take care of her grandchild. This grandmother was not prepared to risk compromising her immune system:

> I once stayed with one of them [grandchildren]. So, she started to get very mischievous. So, as a grandmother I saw that my CD4 [cells] will decrease. [Grandma Rose]

Another example of research participants changing their behavior and actions relates to the way they limit their roles as grandmothers owing to their HIV infections. Traditionally, a grandmother prepares solid food for babies sometimes by way of masticating it before feeding the baby. But, with HIV, they cannot do this because of their fear that the child can get infected with the virus:

> When it comes to food, I know that I am sick [HIV-positive]...It is no longer possible for me to bite and spit for my grandchildren. [Grandma Maybe]

> I now know that it is no longer safe to do that. Or that I suck a *freezit* [ice lolly packed in a plastic sachet] and spit it into her [small child] mouth. Or even a sweet, a lollipop that I am sucking. If she asks me for it, I cannot give her. [Grandma Kate]

In their culture, mothers are expected to be carers and overseers in the family to ensure that the family is well cared for. Some realize that overworking their bodies to meet their socially defined roles can be detrimental to their health as older women living with HIV, hence:

> Some of the work that I used to do, big jobs, I have left them. I saw that I cannot carry those heavy bags anymore to go and sell in South Africa. I cannot do it anymore. I am old now. It was possible before then. [Grandma Vicky]

> …if it was possible to find things to work with that go hand in hand with our status. Things that do not make us overwork, yes. In life, ehm, those pills need us to rest. We sometimes overwork ourselves because we are seeing that, ehm, especially myself a widow, ehm, I am straining myself. [Grandma Rose]

Concluding Remarks

The findings show how participants' lifeworlds are challenged and disturbed in the context of HIV infection, which necessitates many changes to everyday life. The ordinary and the traditional way of life is exposed to several reality shocks, which call for flexibility and innovation to maintain meaningful

engagements. Many of the clinical issues related to HIV treatment and care constitute disruptions in as far as traditional culture and meanings that surround sickness in many conservative African societies. HIV entered African spaces in the context where sickness is commonly perceived as a punishment from God or from the ancestors, or from witchcraft. The traditional way to deal with sickness, therefore, often involves spiritual and divine healing combined with traditional medicine.

As in many other African contexts, in traditional Zimbabwean society, HIV is perceived as foreign and coming from the outside, and more specifically, from the West. Prevention and treatment options from the West are thus also seen as "foreign tools" and similarly under suspicion having followed the virus from the outside. The illness, its prevention, and its treatment can all be regarded as countering traditional indigenous medicines and challenge the way traditional people from Africa normally exercise their health, familial, community, and even conjugal rights.

To survive and live meaningfully with such a threat to life and living requires several paradigm shifts involving re-assessments of circumstances and options, as well as the adoption of new ways of doing things. This study found that the overwhelming desire is to live healthily and to grow old with HIV. Rationality, intentionality, and motivation take center stage and life saving steps are employed. All participants took uncommon steps and employed rational means to manage their condition. As older women who are living with HIV, they constantly have to weigh up the requirements of a healthy lifestyle against the demands of everyday life and injunctions to adhere to cultural norms several of which go against health needs. A norm that works in their favor is that age is revered in Zimbabwean society: some use this to move beyond personal coping into the realm of advocacy.

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The Sangoma or the Healthcare Center?[1]

Health-Seeking Practices

ABSTRACT | *Traditional and Western medicine are both commonplace in South Africa, and are often consulted in conjunction with each other. The chapter aims to fill critical knowledge gaps in understanding how women as caregivers decide on medication when experiencing illness in the home. In order to achieve valid and rich in-depth understanding about the types of medicine that individuals opt for, a narrative study was conducted. The research participants are women from Bloemfontein's townships. Analysis of the participants' narratives suggests that there are social-economic, traditional, and cultural trajectories associated with negotiating medical treatment. The findings indicate that the context in which individuals give meaning to, diagnose, and treat illness influences their remedial choices. Accordingly, many individuals constantly shift between different types of remedies, as they believe that they yield different, but unique possibilities and solutions.*

Introductory Notes

People in post-apartheid South Africa still experience enduring disparities, one of which is Black African people's health. Of the country's total population of almost 55 million, just over 44 million (or 80.5%) identify as Black Africans (Statistics South Africa 2015). The rest of the population is made up of 4.8 million Coloreds (8.8%), 1.3 million Indians/Asians (2.5%), and 4.5 million Whites (8.3%). The life expectancy of South Africans at birth is estimated at 59.2 years for males and 63.1 years for females (Statistics South Africa 2015:2). The health status of Black African South Africans is generally much lower than other population groups and therefore one can assume that the life expectancy of Black African South Africans will be lower than their Colored, Indian, or White counterparts. There are many reasons for lower life expectancy for Black

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Africans, including unemployment and poverty, but one that has raised attention in the health sector is the HIV prevalence rate. In particular, HIV/AIDS is prevalent among the Black African population. The estimated HIV prevalence of the total South African population is 10.2% (Statistics South Africa 2015), but the HIV prevalence among Black African adults of 15-49 years old is 22.7% as against the 0.6% of their White counterparts (Shisana et al. 2014).

Attending swiftly and competently to the onset of an illness and deciding on a treatment modality is vital and impacts on the health outcome. However, medical help can be delayed when the nature of an illness is associated with stigma such as in the case of HIV/AIDS or sexually transmitted diseases (Besana, Cole, and LaRoque 2011). The home is a space where health decisions are mostly made (Williams 2002:149) and initial health-seeking practices very often take place within the family. The household then becomes a curative space of care where meanings of illness and medications are shaped (Kamutingondo et al. 2011) and where decisions on treatment are negotiated. Several treatment options are available in present-day South Africa in response to different illnesses. These treatment options include seeking help by means of Western medicine, consulting traditional healers, employing complementary medicine, using home remedies, and even reverting to prayers. There is also the option of not treating and/or allowing the illness run its course. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 80% of people in Africa use traditional medicine as their primary treatment modality (Chinsamy 2012), and we can therefore assume that a large proportion of South Africans are doing likewise. Biomedical and indigenous medicines offer different healing properties and individuals are therefore compelled to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each method (Hardy 2008).

In Black African families in South Africa, women are often the primary and informal caregivers. Thus, they play vital roles in selecting a treatment modality when a family member is unwell. In this chapter, which is based on research undertaken in the Mangaung Township, Bloemfontein,[2] South Africa, we discuss everyday health-seeking practices of African women who are their families' primary caregivers and who have to decide on a preferred treatment. These

2   Bloemfontein is the capital city of the Free State Province (South Africa); is one of South Africa's three national capitals and is known as the judicial capital of the country. The city is also known as Mangaung, the Sesotho name meaning "Place of Cheetahs."

decisions rest upon cultural understandings, the conceptualization of health and illness, the availability of treatment modalities, and the family's financial situation. Social and cultural backgrounds influence how people negotiate medical treatment (Barnard and Turner 2011). To understand health, illness, and treatment, cultural aspects such as what constitutes illness, health, and well-being, as well as associated healing practices, must be considered (Freund and McGuire 1995). Culture is nothing natural or innate, but rather a social construct into which individuals are being socialized (Hagemeier 2011).

What constitutes health is contested and there is no single definition of it (Senior and Viveash 1998:5). The World Health Organization (1998:9) suggested that health should be seen as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being; and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." This is a useful starting point because it suggests a holistic approach and considers physical and mental aspects of well-being. The social aspect, including economic, historic, and political facets, is pertinent because poor economic and harmful social conditions affect people's well-being (Eyles and Woods 1983); also, the cost of comprehensive healthcare often puts quality medical attention beyond the reach of the average poor person.

While South Africa's primary healthcare system aims to provide healthcare for everyone (Lugte, Friedman, and Mbatha 2008), Black African people in the Free State Province, where this research was conducted, experience some of the lowest levels of life expectancy in South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2015). The Mangaung Municipality in particular experiences a shortage of clinics and faces other challenges such as low levels of security, the need to upgrade existing clinics, and the lack of infrastructure maintenance (Tamasane 2013). Thus, the safety and well-being of the Municipality's citizens depending on healthcare at these clinics are often compromised.

Different Healing Modalities

The Health Professionals Council of South Africa (HPCSA) assists in developing medical policies and is regarded as the key medical regulatory body in South Africa (de Vries et al. 2009). The HPCSA aims to ensure "quality healthcare standards for all, by enhancing the quality and developing strategic policy frameworks for effective co-ordination and guidance" (de Vries et al. 2009:121).

Medical pluralism is "the co-existence and availability of different ways of perceiving, explaining and treating illness" (Hagemeier 2011:159), with the home often being the place for deciding on and making available medication. The household then becomes a therapeutic space of care where meanings of illness and medications are shaped (Kamutingondo et al. 2011).

The South African healthcare system is a dual medical system comprising of private and public providers. Most Black African citizens of the Free State Province cannot afford private medical care and are therefore obliged to use public health facilities. The Free State provincial biomedical health and well-being infrastructure is distributed through four health complexes: the Southern Free State Health Complex (SFSHC); the Northern Free State Health Complex (NFSHC); the Eastern Free State Health Complex (EFSHC); and the Academic Health Complex (AHC) (Mohai 2013). Their facilities cater for the largest part of the estimated 2.8 million of the Free State's inhabitants, which constitutes a 5.2 percentage share of the country's population (Statistics South Africa 2015). Within these health complexes there are 32 regional and district hospitals, with 155 mobile clinics and 352 clinics (Mohai 2013). Although statistics are unreliable, there are estimated to be around 200 000 traditional healers in South Africa, with a possibility of a traditional healer being in or near the neighborhood of every Black South African (Hassim, Heywood, and Berger 2007; Dickinson 2008; King 2012). The Traditional Health Practitioners Council provides oversight on traditional healers as explained and recognized in the Traditional Health Practitioners Act (No. 22 of 2007) (King 2012). The national government and the healthcare system therefore acknowledge and support the use of traditional medication. It is not recognized as alternative/non-conventional, but rather as a form of medicine in the healthcare system (King 2012; World Health Organization 2012). It is true to say that traditional health practitioners and users are placed within an "African cosmology" that renders different lifeworld views on medicine to those associated with "scientific inquiry" (Dickinson 2008).

Biomedicine

Biomedicine (often also referred to as Western medicine) refers to "the predominant medical theory and practice of Euro-American societies, a medicine widely disseminated throughout the world" (Hahn and Kleinman 1983:305). A

biomedical approach focuses on the individual and on individual well-being. The starting point for the practitioner and patient is that "something is wrong with the body," and for the professional to treat this wrong thing within the body there has to be a diagnosis—"a cause identified and the body thus fixed" (Hagemeier 2011:145). In this "mind-body dualism," the individual's body and mind are seen as separate from each other and sickness is attributed to the individual rather than to the social or environmental context (Hagemeier 2011). In the biomedical model of health, sickness is treated with medication (Hahn and Kleinman 1983), practitioners are often unfamiliar with patients' backgrounds, and they may lack empathy and humanity while operating state-of-the-art technology (Charon 2001). Patients are treated homogeneously despite diverse cultural backgrounds and different understandings of the illness and healing modalities (Engel 1977). Biomedicine has a culturally specific illness perspective (Engel 1977) rooted in Western and scientific ways of understanding illness (Mokaila 2001). Taking a patient's medical history is thought of as "medicalized tasks directed not at the patient's lifeworld, but at diagnostic evidence" (Hahn and Kleinman 1983:316).

Traditional Healing Methods

African people often draw on indigenous healing modalities. There are many reasons why traditional remedies are favored over Western medication. An indigenous healer often explains the physical or mental illness in cultural terms, which is more readily accepted or understood than a biomedical explanation (Atindanbila and Thompson 2011). Traditional healing practices are often rooted in wider folk belief systems and they continue to be an important part of many African people's lives (World Health Organization 2002). A further reason for favoring traditional healing is the affordability of traditional medicine.

Indigenous healers provide medical treatment that is not only affordable, but also accessible and available to everyone for any type of illness or problem (Pretorius 1999). A traditional belief system often identifies the causes of an illness as the power of evil spirits, being enchanted by an enemy, or as the result of the anger of certain beings (Hirst 2005).

Complementary / Alternative Non-Conventional Methods of Healing

The terms "alternative," "non-conventional," "complementary," and "parallel" methods "refer to a broad set of health care practices that are not part of a country's own tradition, or not integrated into its dominant health care system" (World Health Organization 2002:7). Self-medication, a common practice in developing countries (Shankar, Partha, and Shenoy 2002), can be defined as "obtaining and consuming drugs without the advice of a physician either for diagnosis, prescription or surveillance of treatment" (Shankar, Partha, and Shenoy 2002:4). Complementary alternative medicine includes the following healing practices: Ayurveda; naturopathy; osteopathy; therapeutic aromatherapy; homeopathy; phytotherapy or herbalism; chiropractic; therapeutic reflexology; therapeutic massage therapy; and Chinese medicine and acupuncture (Hassim, Heywood, and Berger 2007). Influenced by traditional beliefs and low socio-economic status, the use of alternative self-medication is often prevalent in developing countries (World Health Organization 2002).

Some Factors That Influence Medical Decision-Making Processes

It is important to examine and understand health-seeking practices in South Africa and to study factors that influence treatment choices because these impact on the health outcome. Golooba-Mutebi and Tollman (2007) suggest different approaches among poor indigenous people with regard to ill health depending on worldviews and circumstances: a wait and see approach, visiting a traditional healer, a visit to a clinic or hospital, self-medication, or any combination of these. There are many factors that influence decision-making processes, including advice from social networks, cultural norms, socio-economic status, or available treatment modalities (Weiss and Lonnquist 1997). A further important aspect includes the relationship between the caregiver and the sick person.

Individuals seek healthcare in order to maintain or restore health and well-being (Jetten, Haslam, and Haslam 2012), and medical treatment is sought if the illness is perceived as being serious. When assessing an illness, individuals normally categorize the possible medical treatment options available to them by considering three conditional treatment features. The first feature of consideration

is whether the medical treatment has any potential consequences which include harmful side effects. The second feature is whether the diagnosis of the illness indicates a perceived severity (whether the condition has serious consequences). The third feature is whether there is a reasonable prognosis for recovery (Caspi, Koithan, and Criddle 2004). The consideration of treatment options might not always take place in a conscious and premeditated manner.

Prior experience with a medical condition and its treatment often helps a caregiver to choose between different modalities. In most cases, individuals "consider intervention based on convincing repetitive suggestions and personal testimonials" from social network groups (Caspi, Koithan, and Criddle 2004:71). This means that the social network group influences the decision-making process. Most of the time there are assumed power roles in health decision-making and these power roles are occupied by specific people (Besana, Cole, and LaRoque 2011), such as the mother in a household, the giver of care, and the care recipient, often a child.

Factors promoting health-seeking practices have collective, dynamic, and interactive elements that are also influenced by historic and socio-economic elements. In this chapter, we discuss factors that influence Black African women to select one health approach over another. The study draws in particular on the families' experience of health and well-being over the last five years.

Methodological Notes

Ethical approval for the research was granted by the Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State's Humanities Faculty[3]. The study was conducted in a resource poor area of Batho in the Mangaung Municipality and data were collected from the communities in the sections known as Lusaka and Maphikela. To qualify for inclusion in this study, a research participant had to be a Black African woman and the primary caregiver of at least one child (being a biological, foster, or adopted child) and to make health-related decisions. Twelve women were recruited with the assistance of a non-governmental organization (NGO) working with women in these particular areas. Semi-structured in-depth interviews, specifically on health-seeking practices, were conducted with six of these women in Sesotho, the participants' native language. The other six women, who participated in an

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3   Clearance number UFS-HUM-2013-003.

extended project on family life in resource poor areas in Bloemfontein, also offered narratives on aspects of health-seeking. Aspects of these narratives are included in this chapter. The interviews were transcribed in Sesotho and then translated into English in consultation with other Sesotho speakers in order to obtain the most appropriate English translation.

The study is situated within a qualitative paradigm and applies an interpretive theoretical framework in order to make sense of participants' experiences of reality and their everyday lifeworld (Kelly 2006; Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge 2007; Creswell 2013). Guided by an interpretive sociological framework, we aim to understand rather than to explain individual experiences and realities. We also aim to understand the complexity, points of commonality and differences between the accounts of the research participants. We employ concepts from phenomenological thinking, existential phenomenology, and feminist theories to broaden and deepen our understanding of the everyday lifeworld by looking at questions that explore the research participants' experiences and views within real-life contexts (Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge 2007:4). We emphasize the narrative interpretation of experiences and reality, in which there is a "sequential unfolding of someone's story" (Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge 2007:14).

The interpretive sociological framework in terms of which this research has been conducted is strongly embedded in social constructionism. In this respect, the chapter aims at illustrating that the meaning and experience of illness are to a large extent shaped by the social and cultural contexts within which the research participants find themselves. For this reason, the chapter focuses on the illness experience, the cultural meaning of illness, the way in which the illness experience is socially constructed, as well as the way in which medical knowledge, decisions, and practices are socially constructed. Reality is created by individuals who act within their particular environment and who also act upon environment and circumstances. The research participants in this research therefore enact their practices and decisions regarding illness and they fill these practices and decisions with meaning.

A brief description of the 12 women from the resource poor area of Batho's Lusaka and Maphikela communities in Bloemfontein, who participated in this research, is shown in Table 1. They are the women who decide on and negotiate a cure for an ailment in their households.

Table 1. Participant information.

Pseudonym	Year born	No. of people in the household	Number of children (living and deceased) under her care
Dineo	1953	13	11 (including 3 grandchildren and 5 foster children)
Lerato	1942	5	3 (grandchildren), (5 children deceased)
Dimpho	1964	3	2 (including 1 grandchild)
Mampho	1949	3	4 (grandchildren), (1 child deceased)
Karabo	1951	6	7 (including grandchildren), (1 child deceased)
Teboho	1933	4	6 (grandchildren), (7 children deceased)
Nomasonto	1972	8	6 (including 2 grandchildren)
Phaphama	1999	8	6 (including 4 brothers and 1 nephew)
Khomotso	1963	10 and 2 tenants	8 (including 4 foster children, 1 adopted niece, and 1 grandchild)
Khetiwe	1969	13	9 (including 5 foster children)
Lebohang	1998	13	1
Ledisi	n/a	n/a	5 (including 1 grandchild)

Source: Self-elaboration.

The Illness Experience

In order to discuss remedies, we first examine what research participants consider as illness. The illness narratives are embedded in the context of the family because being a member of a family is often considered essential for survival. In all cases, family members contribute to the research participants' sense of physical and emotional well-being. The research participants define family in terms of love, trustworthiness, respect, helpfulness, and honor, and families form a support structure in their lives. All research participants experience financial hardship and often illnesses. Other dire conditions within which all the research participants find themselves are unemployment, being the primary carer of the family, the geographical location within which they live, and social and economic factors related to their lifeworlds.

We now discuss the research participants' experiences and the meanings they attach to illness, health, and well-being in order to understand how their perspectives on illness are related to their upbringing, culture, history, and the world of indigenous beliefs *vis-à-vis* the world of Western beliefs. These "two worlds" of indigenous and Western beliefs are not necessarily separate, but rather represent unique worldviews that fuse, but also clash at times, and in the analysis

of the narratives we indicate how the research participants draw on either world for different, temporally, and contextually influenced reasons. To understand the illness experience, we need to understand the meaning of what constitutes an illness, and to define illness in terms of what we understand it to be. Based on their realities and experiences, the participants construct their subjective definitions of illness and afford meaning to an illness and its symptoms. Most participants express feelings of fear, panic, and anxiety at the onset of an illness. They dread the illness because of its uncertainty and possible consequences. For our research participants, an illness in the family usually means disruptions to daily routines, further financial hardship, suffering, and even the possibility of death. Because funerals are important traditional cultural events, the participants will, in the event of death, be obliged to provide an appropriate funeral that will add further financial burdens to the family.

From the participants' narratives, it is clear that their meaning of illness deviates from conventional understandings. Most of them believe that illness is when a person cannot move freely. Participants also define illness as something alien or foreign to them. If the illness is perceived to be minor, then the participants call it *mokgotlani*. These minor illnesses (*mokgotlani*) allow for bodily movements to take place and for the appetite to be only partially and temporarily affected (e.g., when one suffers from a headache or stomachache).

> You would hear them say: "No, they have only a mild illness [*mokgotlani*]…
> They are small things, like my foot pains me here." But, you can still work,
> like the body is in pain, but you can still do things. This is only called a mild
> illness. When you are ill, it's when you can't move. That is illness. [Teboho][4]

From the stories shared by the research participants, it is clear that they have their own subjective definition of illness, health, and well-being, which is influenced by their social reality. The research participants identify lack of appetite, tiredness, weakness, vomiting, and sweating as the main symptoms of feeling unwell.

> You can see sometimes when someone has no appetite for anything. Sometimes
> they would say: "It hurts here." Sometimes: "I'm running out of energy, I feel
> this way." Another might say: "When I eat something, I vomit. Maybe it
> doesn't go well with my system." So you need to clean your intestines. Things
> like those would help me tell that this person is ill. I have to take them to the
> doctor, or try to figure out what could heal them. [Lerato]

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4   All names used in this chapter are pseudonyms.

While the illness experiences might be unique, the participants define illness in similar terms, namely, as a loss of bodily functioning with the person being unable to perform ordinary tasks or partake in daily life activities. According to the research participants, a person is considered ill mostly when her/his ability to take care of her/himself is compromised:

> Like being ill? I don't know what I would say it is…When we say this person is ill, it's when they can't stand up and they can't feed themselves. That's when you should know that person is ill. They have an illness…they don't know how to feed themselves. They can't do anything. The person is ill. [Teboho]

To diagnose an illness, participants observe and listen, compare and evaluate a person's physical appearance and alertness. For most of the participants, illness should not be immediately associated with death, but should be regarded as a mere experience that will probably pass with time. Many participants do, however, refer to it as the correlation between illness and death. This can be ascribed to the high prevalence in their community of serious illnesses related to HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS has a high prevalence in South Africa. It is therefore not surprising that all participants allude to or discuss HIV/AIDS in the context of their families and all participants mention at least one family member who passed away due to complications of AIDS. AIDS remains very stigmatized and is often circumscribed rather than named. Not naming the disease by its name indicates the level of stigma still associated with HIV/AIDS. In some households, it might be acceptable to talk about a family member who is HIV positive, but most families are too embarrassed to discuss it. In the narratives, HIV/AIDS is often simply referred to as being "sick." Lerato says:

> It's her, but I don't say much about this thing she has [HIV/AIDS].

And Khetiwe suggests:

> I didn't want help from other people, you know, because the children were… because they were positive [HIV positive]. People dislike people who are like that.

Cancer is another serious and prevalent illness, which, together with HIV/AIDS, evokes many emotional responses and reactions. The participants' stories of the

various serious illnesses are always accompanied with sadness—either expressed in their voices or through crying. It is clear that serious illness takes an emotional toll on the research participants' lives.

> It was cancer, she passed away at National Hospital, where these doctors were checking her. She was admitted there, they even transferred her from National. When I went there, they said her cancer is very huge, there is nothing they can do, they can't even burn it [administer chemotherapy]. When I came back, that was her passing. [Karabo]

> It's my mother, she was old and then she had cancer, yes [lowering her voice and facing down to the floor]. She was staying back home, but I went to get her to stay here with me. It was on and off like that, but she was going to the doctor until she was admitted and slept in the hospital. She passed away in the hospital. [Mampho]

In the case of Mampho, both her mother and grandmother died from stomach cancer. Karabo's older sister was also a victim of cancer. In both cases, Western doctors diagnosed and treated the cancer.

The research participants believe that illness can be caused by the environment, lack of sanitation, poor living conditions, unemployment, and an unbalanced diet. Illness might also be a consequence of emotions, spiritual intervention, and witchcraft.

> Another reason is because of things that are caused intentionally by people. It is things that are made intentionally, and these people are envious/jealous. Sometimes these people want to see what you are going to do and it is things like that. But, I still think, maybe it is God's purpose. [Lerato]

How to Deal with Illness?

All the research participants claim to be familiar with the different types of remedies, namely, Western medication, traditional healing, as well as complementary and self-healing practices. Most research participants relate taking similar initial steps to decide on an action. They explain that their medical decision-making processes depend on prior knowledge of a specific illness experience and that they normally replicate what worked for them in the past or what worked for others. The cost of treatment, availability of treatment, type of illness, social networks, testimonials from others, and prior experience with the

treatment help the research participants to negotiate medical treatment. "If they are sick," Ledisi relates, "we call an ambulance to take them to hospital." This action is usually taken when the illness is perceived as serious or when seeking medical treatment has been delayed to the point where the patient has fallen gravely ill. Transport is often not readily available, thus calling an ambulance remains an option for poor people who will not be required to pay for this service. The flipside of this is that the demand for public ambulance facilities is so big that calls for ambulance services are often left unheeded for several days. It is quite common that referrals from one biomedical institution to another take place when an individual looks for help within the institutionalized Western medical services of clinics and hospitals. Khetiwe recalls her experience:

> The clinic gave me a referral letter to go to the hospital. The hospital didn't admit them, they just gave them medication. If someone is sick in this house, I take them to the hospital. I start at the clinic, and if they don't help them, then I go to the hospital. I go to National or Pelonomi Hospital, I hire a car, I don't take an ambulance.

The next excerpt summarizes the process that many of the research participants follow when deciding on medical treatment.

> I first look at what is bothering them [meaning symptoms], and find out whether the illness is serious. When I have something in the house, I would first try and mix it around and give to the child. Sometimes we buy Disprin. Even though sometimes you give them Disprin, you can see when the child needs a doctor. So I would then try and see where to go. Traditional healers don't fail. But, if a traditional healer can't treat the illness, that's when I see I need to go to a Western doctor. When it fails, then I go and see a traditional healer. It's not every time that a traditional healer may fail on healing, but you will change them so often [try several different healers]. You would hear another person saying: "I was helped by this other traditional healer." And then I would take them to that traditional healer. There is always a traditional healer who will be able to heal that illness. [Lerato]

In the quotation above, Lerato discusses a familiar sequence in the decision-making process: an initial assessment of the symptoms, dispensing medication at home, consulting a traditional healer, and, finally, going to Western doctors if the illness persists. Using Disprin is akin to acting in trial and error. If Disprin and home remedies fail to ease the illness, the research participant moves to a professional. Sometimes she needs to see a doctor, in which case she then

makes a decision as to where to go (to a Western practitioner or a traditional healer). In the case of Lerato, she first seeks help from a traditional healer, and this selection of the traditional healer is influenced by other people's opinions, namely, those from her social network groups. Lerato's belief in the power of indigenous medicine is profound:

> There is always a traditional healer who will be able to heal that illness. [Lerato]

This is also expressed in her determination to move from one healer to another to find help.

The Cultural Meaning of Illness

Another reason for seeking help from traditional healers rather than biomedical practitioners is related to the cause of the illness. If the illness is believed to be the result of supernatural intervention, then individuals are more likely to seek a traditional healer's help than that of a biomedical practitioner.

> With my previous husband who passed away, the first thing he used to do is go to a traditional healer. Yes, I remember during those times when we were still at his family home in the 1990s. We used to go to this other women, who told him that he has *sejeso* [food poisoning: witchcraft] and that he has pimples in his stomach. She told him he has *sejeso* and it's been there for a long time, even before me and him met. [Dineo]

Some people only prefer traditional medication when they feel that the illness is not too serious, but for severe illnesses they prefer a biomedical practitioner. In most cases, if the illness is experienced as being normal and even minor, then the caregiver prepares the remedy for the illness.

> I go to the Batho chemist if I want those. They have traditional remedies available. I just go there and say I want this type of medication. I don't even know what it is, but I go looking for it. They give it to me, and tell me how to prepare it. You see, Bongani, he had a colic problem when he was still an infant. I told his mother to dab a little medication on top of his head, his palms, under his armpits, and just below his legs, before you take him anywhere with you. [Khomotso]

In most cases, the illness definition plays a big part in negotiating medical treatment. Traditional medication is often used to prevent bad spirits and to

suppress supernatural causes of illness. Some research participants prefer mixing both traditional and biomedical treatments to heal illness. If an illness is considered to be normal and minor, then the research participants often revert to self-healing.

> If they have stomach ache, as the mother, I am old now, so I will go to the chemist or mix vinegar, bicarbonate of soda, and sugar and give it to them to drink. [Ledisi]

> I go to the hospital, when a child is really sick and I see he really needs a hospital. I go to a traditional healer, when a child is not sick. I do this so that when a child is walking outside, he's not attacked by bad spirits. But, if he is really sick, then I take him to the hospital. But, I don't like going to Pelonomi [Hospital] or the clinic. I usually go to a private doctor in town. [Khomotso]

> Another thing is what type of illness is it. What was I crying about? Looking for the right medication for that illness and which corresponds with my beliefs. [Lerato]

As we can see from Lerato's remark, belief systems and past experiences, which reflect culture and tradition, often guide the treatment choice. Nomasonto explains in the following quotation how she comes from a household where the cause of an illness was always assigned to the supernatural (witchcraft).

> My culture and medicine [laugh]…I grew up in a house of...if you are sick. My father is going to think: It's like Siphesihle crying at night: *Bamthakathile*! [Bewitched] *Abathakathi*! [Witches], you know [laughing]. But, I'm just ignoring it. I will just say: "Maybe it's something wrong. It's something. It's just a child, he cannot say where is the pain." My culture is witchcraft [laughing]. [Nomasonto]

Culture plays a prominent role in the research participants' treatment decisions. *Lengana* (Sagewood, see: http://www.bioafrica.co.za/oils/artemisia.htm) is known by African people as a cultural and traditional herbal plant that is used to treat many illnesses. Drinking a liquid mixed with this plant is believed to have healing properties. Most of the research participants plant *lengana* in their backyards or collect it in the forest.

> As I am a Sotho parent. Any of my children, whatever illness they have, I take *lengana* and mix it with something and they will be healed. There are those that I can see that they are very serious. They need a doctor. [Dineo]

Medical Knowledge, Decisions, and Practices

To negotiate illness in a household that is already seriously constrained by poverty and deprivation adds a substantial burden on caregivers. From the narratives, it is clear that several research participants are driven by sheer desperation when having to deal with illness in the household. In many cases, a hit-or-miss strategy is inevitable.

> I first look at the child. I look at the illness. It's so that when I have looked at the child, I have identified what is wrong with her. What is the illness and what would treat it. That is when I take a step. [Dineo]

> It's like sometimes, when a child says he has a headache, I will just go to the shops and buy a Panado [pain relief], or Disprin [pain relief]. When they have flu, buy a flu medication. During those days, I would take Bostol [pain relief] and honey and mix them. It's flu medication. [Teboho]

Decisions are based on the interpretation of the illness, as well as on the meaning that the caregiver constructs about what the symptoms of the illness represent. For some caregivers, the presence of blood is indicative of serious illness, and without blood an illness is often regarded as minor, and treatable by the touch of a traditional healer.

> You see, right now the person...I take a person to the doctor who has been stabbed or when there is blood. And you don't know where the blood is coming from, right. So you have to take them to the doctor. Because these days blood is diseases, so you can be able to protect yourself. But, Itumeleng was just sick. But her, I took her to a traditional healer. I saw that she was… she had that devil's worshipper spirit. And that man prayed for her, and said I should get holy water and oil and make her drink it. So when we pray in this house, we pray every day, and now she is fine. [Khetiwe]

Khetiwe alludes here to another aspect of the health spectrum: violence and accidents. In terms of her criteria, the presence of blood means and represents the need for biomedical intervention. Something is wrong with the body. She also speaks of the need for extra care and protection when blood is involved because, "these days blood is diseases": this is a clear reference to HIV. After a caregiver has constructed the illness meaning, the next step is often to consult her social networks or therapy reference networks known as *dirati*, which are

family, friends, church, neighbors, or community members. This is illustrated by Dineo and Teboho:

> Yes! I do. The lady next door and my daughter are the people I usually exchange advices with. "Have you ever given her this?" "Have you done this to her?" "Take this and give to her." [Dineo]

> Yes! When my child is ill, I would go next door and the person would tell me to give them this. It will help them. [Teboho]

The advice that research participants might receive from their network groups is based on personal testimonials, knowledge, and understanding. The input from these social networks impacts on the health-seeking practices and decision-making processes of an individual as the members of the social networks might combine their individual experiences of illness and remedies and advise on treatment. The importance of social networks is illustrated in the following:

> Well, the first person I call is my mom. Like she will know what to do. She will tell me to do this and to do that. [Lebohang]

> Yo! I get very scared when someone is sick in the house. If they cry, I cry with them. Then I think: Let me call my neighbor. I ask my neighbors to come and help me because someone is sick. Then they come. Zuki is the person I usually call and she helps me. She comes with medication or whatever she thinks will work. Then she will give it to the child. [Khomotso]

> I panic. But, luckily enough, my mother is here. That's why I'm saying we are starting to bond. That anger, I think it is decreasing. I see her importance because I didn't see it before as I focused on my grandmother. I rely on her that much. So I do feel like: Wow, we are starting to bond! [Phaphama]

> Like when I take them [children] to doctors, but they don't get well. I go to *dirati* [therapy reference groups]. People would come and tell you that this person once had this very illness. So, go buy such a thing. [Mampho]

Experiencing a feeling of helplessness and desperation in the face of a loved one being ill opens a caregiver to asking for help, advice, and support. By sharing the anxiety and powerlessness when confronted by the suffering of someone in one's inner circle, a mother manages to pull through. Survival of an illness is not only the effect of medical care— it is often also the result of support.

The research participants consider the advice given by their network group when deciding on the treatment, indicating the essential role of these networks. In some cases, as illustrated by Dineo, participants attempt to cure an illness first by drawing on their own knowledge and remedies:

> Yes! Certainly…But, the illness is the first thing I look at, before I ask for help. I look first at the illness and then I treat her/him with my own stuff…But, when I see it is persisting, I then ask for advice from them. [Dineo]

For some research participants, their choice of treatment is based on what they know and what they have seen as working for others and for themselves. The research participants' previous experiences also influence the decision-making process. The following quotations point to some of the factors they take into account when deciding on medical treatment:

> You know, with me, when someone teaches me on which one [medication] works for which illness, that is how I decide.

> When I was growing up, someone back home, or me, was ill. And I would be healed accordingly…I was healed by this type of medication. [Lerato]

Participants often experiment with medication in a process of trial and error. For example, if the *lengana* mixture does not help, the next remedy is tried.

> I would go see a doctor, even though my spirit doesn't allow it…and my going to see a doctor is when traditional healers have failed. [Teboho]

If an illness persists, some individuals who use traditional medication might switch to biomedical treatment, and those who use biomedical treatment might revert to traditional healing practices or remedies. The following quotations illustrate some of the research participants' treatment approaches:

> It's to know that this type of medication helps with that. So I am not a person who usually changes medication. I drink the medication that is given to me by a doctor that I know. That when I use their medication, I will see results. [Dimpho]

> I first start by healing myself, and if I see that the illness still persists, I then go see a *sangoma*, and say: "Can you please help me here. I have this kind of problem. I have tried, but I can't treat it." When the *sangoma*…because traditional healers know the way traditional healers know. Because these medications do not work the same. The traditional healer will give me the way

the traditional healer gives me. And when the traditional healer has given me, I will try using them like that and see whether they can heal me and get well. If I don't get well, the traditional healer does not know how to heal. Maybe I should go see a doctor [Western doctor]. [Teboho]

I choose medication that I see and know [through her upbringing]. [Lerato]

It's because you believe it will help you. Right now, if my child had flu and I had *krustunent* [a plant known to the African women, and it is used as a form of herbal medicine], and if I believe it will help my child, then the child will be healed. I used to heal my children with it. [Teboho]

You know what makes you decide? You know…it's like it's the time there was an ill person. You once saw what cured Happy [her grandchild]. So it comes back in your head, that thought comes back. You are going to buy that to help this person, yes…Someone once had this illness, and they drank such a thing. So let me go to find it for them because that other person: when they were ill, things were like this and that. So it helps. [Mampho]

The research participants' lived experiences, amidst different healthcare options, explain the fact that they encounter various barriers when negotiating medical treatment. Some of these barriers include: socio-economic status, the location where they live, their limited finances, their knowledge of health, and their cultural beliefs. On the practical level, the participants express a need to self-treat because of the fact that medical care is often unattainable. The most prominent problems that research participants experience are therefore related to affordability, availability, accessibility, service, time, as well as the perceived quality of medical treatment.

Conclusion

Reality is experienced as being subjective, contextual, and temporal. The experience of illness is also subjective, contextual, and temporal. In addition, it also has an emotional impact leading to caregiver burden because of the uncertainty of the direction that the illness will take, the unpredictability of the implications of the illness, and the financial strain usually associated with sickness. Most research participants' narratives contain feelings of panic, fear, anxiety, and uncertainty related to the onset of an illness. This is a manifestation of the consequences that illness brings: cost of treatment, loss of income, and fear of harm and death. Findings from this study indicate that family, friends,

social networks, and strong cultural beliefs influence women's explanations of and attitudes towards illness. Illness is constructed through particular lenses and, with the odd exception, few of the participants' accounts reflect on accidents, violence, and physical injuries as part of their illness narratives.

Illness experiences and the accompanying anxiety and stress often bring cohesion and solidarity. One of the key findings of this study is that most participants move between Western and traditional healing practices. All research participants experience deprivation and financial hardship. They have to deal with poverty in the household and they also face poor health facilities. Accounts of poverty and hardship are mixed as the narratives deal with illness, their lived suffering, and their struggle to survive from day to day.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the decision to engage with a particular medical remedy is influenced by a variety of socio-economic variables: the social status of women as caregivers; the type of illness; access to services; perceived quality of the service; the time of the day the illness occurs; seriousness of the illness; past experiences of illness; distrust in clinics; therapeutic/social networks (*dirati*); and their definition of illness. Women as caregivers often consult with one another in order to decide on what to do when experiencing illness.

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Experiencing Physical Disability[1]

Young African Women in Lesotho

ABSTRACT | *This chapter unwraps notions related to young African women's lifeworld experiences of physical disability. The study is positioned in the broad context of the theoretical frameworks of phenomenology, existential sociology, the social construction of reality, feminist disability theory and intersectionality. Focus is given to the way social systems of cultural oppression and discrimination impact upon women with physical impairments and manifest in how they perceive and make meaning of their everyday life experiences. Women with physical impairments often experience a double measure of oppression—being both female and disabled. When these women try to engage in a normal life and interact with others, they experience barriers imposed on them by their social reality—particularly in the form of cultural norms and patriarchal ideals. There are also instances where participants demonstrate resilience in the face of negative social stereotyping, instances that clearly show that they are not different, and do not perceive themselves as being different, to able-bodied women. Drawing on semi-structured in-depth interviews with eight young Black women who are living with physical disabilities in Lesotho, the objective of this chapter is to examine their everyday life experiences within a predominantly able-bodied society.*

Introduction

Physical impairment is a complex human condition that can strike anyone, in spite of his/her social rank or status. The World Health Organization (WHO 2011:261) signaled at the beginning of this decade that more than a billion individuals in the world were living with some or other form of physical impairment, making individuals with disabilities the world's largest

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single minority. The fact that many of the world's physically disabled people are women makes it likely that this group is prone, too, to other forms of inequality such as being deprived of proper education, being more likely to be unemployed, and when they are employed being more likely to have low income jobs (WHO 2011:262).

According to the Lesotho Ministry of Health and Social Welfare's Draft National Disability and Rehabilitation Policy (2011), this country has very limited coordinated disability databases to provide accurate statistics on people with disabilities. Additionally, no recent, comprehensive national disability survey has been undertaken in this country—the last was conducted in 2001 by the Bureau of Statistics (Dube et al. 2008:10) and revealed that approximately 4.2% of the population or around 80,000 individuals in Lesotho are seriously disabled. A more recent study in 2010, Living Conditions of Persons with Disabilities, found that 3.7% of Lesotho's 1.8 million suffer from one or more severe disabilities (Kalebe 2016:8). This statistic was generated via a 2006 Population and Housing Census, which Shale (2015:184) elaborates on by offering a breakdown in terms of gender:

> The results of the census were presented for the first time to stakeholders in December 2009 and they indicate that 3.7 per cent of the total population of Lesotho has some form of disability of which 2.1 per cent constitute males and 1.6 per cent females.

Amongst the major forms of severe physical disabilities are visceral, skeletal, and disfiguring impairments such as paralysis, limping, amputations, lameness, deformity, and suffering from a hunched back. Contrary to the situation worldwide, the occurrence of physical impairments in Lesotho is more prevalent among male members of society. This is mainly due to amputations resulting from accidents related to male migrant labor in neighboring South Africa. The total physical disability ratio for Lesotho is 4,179 per 100,000 of the population, with the male disability ratio of 4,814—about 26% higher than the female physical disability ratio of 3,556 (Dube et al. 2008).

Although the number of disabled women in Lesotho might be smaller than the corresponding number among men, women with physical impairments often face additional challenges as a result of their disability. They often are excluded from taking part in many mainstream activities such as attending

school, being considered for a job, and being regarded as an efficient mother and wife. Knowledge of how women with physical disabilities experience their everyday life is, however, limited and the issue of impairment has often been ignored within mainstream sociological practice (Turner 1992:252). Research done on women with physical disabilities originates mainly from first world countries and mostly focuses on the psychological, economic, and social issues that impact women with disabilities. The research often ignores these women's everyday experiences (Shakespeare 2006:197). The voices of women with physical impairments have therefore been omitted almost entirely in research in developing societies. This is also the case in Lesotho, and there is, therefore, little understanding of how young Black women with physical disabilities in this country experience their everyday reality. This chapter seeks to add to our understanding of the experiences of women suffering from physical disability by taking a phenomenological approach to this issue. A phenomenological approach attempts to describe the participants' lived world in a way that increases the understanding of these human beings through analyzing their experience (Norlyk, Martinsen, and Kjaer-Petersen 2013:2).

Experiencing Disability

Women in developing societies with physical impairments often experience multiple forms of discrimination, which makes it hard for them to meet the expectations of the roles related to being a woman. This is the case because in developing societies being a wife is often seen as synonymous with being a co-provider, a sexual partner, a mother, and a domestic worker. When women with physical impairments are not able to perform these roles, they are often regarded as not being self-sufficient and, therefore, less fit for the role of a wife. Depending on the severity of their impairment, some women with physical disabilities are indeed unable to perform all of the basic activities of daily living related to household chores and community engagement, which may compel them to be dependent on others. Although many women with physical impairments are able to perform most of the roles ascribed to them and although they appear to be largely independent, they are often unlikely to get married because they are perceived as not being fully capable for the role of a wife (Hanna and Rogovsky 2006:44).

Women with physical disabilities are often made to feel inadequate and vulnerable as sexual partners. Many individuals believe that women with physical impairments cannot have a normal sex life. As a result, it becomes hard for women with physical disabilities to be in serious relationships. Because of society's prejudiced views, able-bodied men tend to be discouraged from being in relationships with disabled women (Tilley 1996:140). Societal prejudices can portray women with physical impairments as unattractive and as a risk in as far as the outcome of love is concerned. Hanna and Rogovsky (2006:45) summarize society's prejudice in this regard:

> Physical attractiveness is the most visible and most easily accessible trait of a person. Physical attractiveness is also a constantly and frequently used informational cue…Generally, the more physically attractive an individual is, the more positively the person is perceived, the more favorably the person is responded to, and the more successful is the person's personal and professional life.

When women with physical impairments perceive that they are seen as unattractive and unworthy of love, they experience negative perceptions of their body image. Hence, they are made to feel uncomfortable in their own society because they do not only have to deal with the male gaze but also with general societal ideals of what constitutes feminine beauty.

In this chapter, the spotlight falls on disability and impairment as experienced in and through the body in terms of cultural and personal narratives that allow an individual to construct her own meaning of disability as part of her lifeworld (Papadimitriou 2008:694). The body is central to the experiences of everyday life. How people interact in everyday life emphasizes the importance of embodied experience (McMahon and Huntly 2013:31). Embodiment is viewed as highlighting the physical and emotional framing of our bodies in everyday encounters (McMahon and Huntly 2013:31). For this reason, disability in this chapter is understood from the point of embodied experience of action and meaning. The lived body of the disabled women is an impaired body. Moreover, this lived body is linked to these women's experiences and past actions; it is also linked to the thoughts and beliefs that they, as women with physical impairments, have encountered in their lives (McMahon and Huntly 2013:31).

By focusing on the narratives of women who are living with physical disabilities, an understanding will be gained of how their lived body represents subjective experiences that entail, or are connected to, the concept of embodiment. From the perspective of Bill Hughes and Kevin Paterson (2006:101), "the impaired body is not just experienced: it is also the very basic experience." The way these women perceive their bodies will provide us with a perspective on their world. It is important to consider the meaning of the lived body in order to understand the experience of disability; in turn, the meaning and experience of disability can also help to recall the concept of the lived body (Hughes and Paterson 2006:101).

The body is described by Hughes and Paterson (2006:101) as "an experiencing agent, itself a subject and therefore a site of meaning and source of knowledge about the world." Hughes and Paterson (2006:102) further consider the importance of physical, emotional, and cultural factors in determining the embodied experiences of women with physical disabilities. Peters, Gabeland, and Symeonidou (2009:548) claim that

> the body becomes a metaphor for culture, where culture is created from whole body experiences and the disabled body is the interactive force for cultural identity and change.

This means that a physically impaired body often cannot escape cultural meanings. When women with physical disabilities cannot meet the cultural expectations of the normal body, they often perceive their bodies as a source of pain, unworthiness, shame, and imperfection.

Labeling women with impairments in terms of their body limitations implies stigma. Stigma often originates from cultural expectations and from social disgrace (Goffman 1963). When a woman is unable to meet the cultural expectations of the feminine body, the body is stigmatized. In modern, developed societies, the stigmatized view of the disabled body often leads to reactions which may include making attempts via surgery to eliminate the basis of stigmatization (Holmes 2010:110). Furthermore, women with physical impairments may experience isolation because they are viewed as members of a stigmatized group by the non-disabled society (Wendell 1996:25).

The preceding arguments explain why it is the case that disability is perceived as an important characteristic of self-identity. Identity describes and determines belonging. It refers to what people have in common and how they are different

from each other (Davis 2006:233). At its most basic function, identity provides a person with a sense of individual location. Women with physical disabilities experience difficulties in developing a positive sense of identity because of discrimination and oppression. As a result of failing to develop a positive sense of identity, women with physical impairment experience a negative perception of self, which prevents them from engaging with societal activities. This leads to social exclusion, limited opportunities, and negative labeling (Blinde and McClung 1997:327).

From what has been said thus far it is clear that society plays an active role in determining the negative self-perception of women with physical disabilities. This suggests that the self-image of women with physical disabilities is connected to fear of others' attitudes and reactions. In extreme cases, they might even avoid contact with others altogether (Blinde and McClung 1997:328). Many women with physical impairment accept the labels given to them by their society—that they are in essence incapable and in need of help.

Of all the barriers that women with physical disabilities face, the attitudes and prejudices of others can be the most difficult to negotiate. More often than not the way a woman with a physical disability feels about herself is affected by the attitudes of those around her. The negative attitudes of members of society often result in discrimination, stigma, and stereotyping. These inevitably impact the women and can lead to poor self-care and low self-esteem (Power and Dell Orto 2004:31). Some negative ways in which able-bodied people react towards disabled women are gazing or staring, as well as projecting fear, hostility, and anxiety (Sawadsri 2011:61). In addition, women with physical impairment are often patronized when they appear in public because of the inferiority inherent in disability, as imposed by the able-bodied individuals. Because of these negative reactions and attitudes, women with disabilities often experience discomfort and apprehension during interactions with others. Within society the negative attitudes towards women with physical disabilities stem from the assumption that disability is a problem in need of attention—mostly in terms of medical intervention (Cameron 2014:137).

Methodological Reflections

This chapter builds on sociological theories that can provide us with insight into the research participants' lifeworlds: phenomenology, existential sociology, the

social construction of reality, intersectionality, and feminist disability theory. The research is largely situated within the context of ideas in Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's social construction of reality (1991). The social construction of reality relates to the intersubjective understanding of personal experiences—understanding that reflects shared meanings about women with physical impairments. A phenomenological perspective also guides the research. Following the phenomenological perspective, human beings constitute meaning and researchers need to make sense of people's lifeworlds. The research, therefore, attempts to establish how the research participants experience the interrelationships between disability, race/ethnicity, religion, social class, and gender.

This qualitative study made use of purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling involves locating specific participants who can speak authoritatively on the research topic. The premise of our purposive sampling is that it selected women with physical disabilities because they share particular knowledge, and experience, of disability (Creswell 2013:155). Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used for collecting data on participants' personal stories—their histories, experiences, and perceptions. A research schedule guided the interviews. The narratives were digitally audio-recorded, transcribed into Sesotho, translated into English, and then analyzed thematically.

At the time of the interviews, two participants were married, two were in intimate relationships, and one of them was a single mother, while the other three women were single. All the participants lived for most of their lives in rural areas, but at the time of the interviews they were all residing in Maseru, the capital of Lesotho. Their socio-economic status and their educational level did not play a role in their recruitment as research participants. In-depth interviews took place in the privacy of participants' homes and all efforts were taken to avoid any discomfort to participants. A starting point to the interviews was the introduction of the research topic to the participants. They were then provided with details about the project and their role therein. After discussing the documentation outlining the full extent of the ethical context within which they would participate, and after dealing with all their questions and concerns, those willing to be part of the project were given the opportunity to sign consent forms. All the interviews were conducted individually. The interviews started with an introductory section in which each participant was asked to tell us about

herself. They also talked about their families, their day-to-day experiences, and their relationships. These experiences and relationships were explored in terms of participants' feelings, emotions, and reactions. Rest breaks were provided during the interviews to allow for participants' maximum comfort. Special care was taken to be attentive to any special needs associated with participants' physical disabilities.

Ethical Issues

Fully aware that this research deals with sensitive issues and with a vulnerable group in society, the stringent ethical procedures laid down by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Free State (ethical clearance number: UFS-HSD2015/0615, 09-Nov-2015) were faithfully implemented in order to protect the participants. The research participants' informed consent was obtained to audio-record the face-to-face interviews so that the interviews could later be transcribed, translated, and analyzed. All documentation related to their participation, such as the informed consent document, was presented in Sesotho—the participants' mother tongue. Participants were given the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity; one related strategy was to use pseudonyms to protect their identity. These pseudonyms are used in this chapter.

Presenting the Findings

The findings focus on the narratives reflecting the experiences of eight physically disabled women in Lesotho. We draw on Botle—one of the participants—to provide the context from which to hear their stories. Botle articulates living with, and the experiencing of, physical impairment:

> Let me start off by saying it is very difficult to find a job, especially when you are a woman with a disability. What happened is I first started off as a volunteer at the IEC [Independent Electoral Commission] during the elections. My friends and other people told me that I should apply to volunteer because I had experience. While I was a volunteer at the IEC, I also applied to study part time at the NTTC [National Teachers Training College] and I was admitted. There was a lot of discrimination against individuals with disabilities at this institution [NTTC]. We were given special care and we

were welcomed in different ways from the able-bodied individuals…This made me feel different from others. I was not alone…there were many of us [disabled people]…Women and men, young and old alike. When I realized that there were many people with disabilities, I started growing emotionally and spiritually. We were allocated rooms [dormitories] downstairs because all the other rooms were upstairs. In most cases, the rooms downstairs had single rooms. However, we were first asked if we preferred to stay in single rooms or sharing. They gave us options…sometimes you would like to stay with other people…roommates…When it was time to eat, we were given first preference, we were told not to queue for food... [Botle]

From Botle's narrative, it is evident that people with disabilities in Lesotho are perceived as different from able-bodied people and are regarded as being incapable, helpless, and dependent. People with impairments at this institution were treated differently and although some of the arrangements made for them can be said to come from a caring and considerate space, it is possible that their agency might have been undermined in the process (Garland-Thomson 2002:6). Botle initially felt that she was seen as being "different" and experienced this as being perceived in a negative light. This way of society looking at disability leads people with disabilities to experience a sense of conflict with their identity (Wendell 1996:83). But, when she realized that she was not alone, that there were many others with physical disabilities in her new community, she "started growing emotionally and spiritually."

Beauty Concepts

Women with physical disabilities are usually stereotyped and seen as unsuitable to pursue female beauty ideals. After raising issues that contribute to female beauty—such as make-up, clothes, and hairstyle—the research participants were asked about their attitudes and practices in this regard. Khauhelo gives her take on this matter:

[Laughs]…I like doing these things so that I can also look beautiful like other women. I should not look ugly just because I have a disability. I do not want to be ugly just because I am disabled…No…I have to look beautiful, really. A woman should look stunning all the time, whether she is disabled or not. [Khauhelo]

These duties are not a waste of time because one has to look and dress appropriately—so that one looks beautiful. The hair must be nice…Even if it

is short, it must always be clean. The clothes should always look nice and one should dress for her body just like other women do…Yes. [Botle]

I like them. A woman has to look beautiful…I like being pretty and presentable. I do not want to look like I come from the farms. I have to look pretty all the time. Even when I am at home…People should think that I just came back from somewhere. [Iponeng]

Several participants believe that physical attractiveness is important; being physically impaired does not mean that they have a diminished right to beauty or to caring about their appearance. For Lisebo, on the other hand, using make-up, following fashion, and changing hairstyles are not that important because she feels less attractive:

I am…ehm…I am not a beautiful person…Yes ma'am…I am not a beautiful person. [Lisebo]

Feeling unattractive and undesirable, however, was not a common trend among the participants. The majority seem to concentrate on their physical appearance and spend more time preparing to look attractive. These participants seem to believe that having their hair styled, wearing make-up, and dressing well added to their sense of femininity.

Barriers to Intimate Relationships

The focus now shifts to physically impaired women's experiences of intimacy in as far as their relationships are concerned. Women with physical disabilities often find it harder to experience everyday intimacies, which non-disabled people take for granted. This may be the case because many able-bodied people fail to consider them as desirable and romantic partners (Hanna and Rogovsky 2006:44). As a result, many women with physical impairments experience insecurities and fear of being rejected by men.

This is exactly what Palesa reveals of her experience. Her negative attitude towards relationships and intimacy seems to hinder her from being with a partner. The resulting insecurity leaves her isolated:

I am scared that they will not love me. I wonder if they will love me the way I am. Maybe it is because I am self-doubting. I am scared. I think they will only take advantage of me because I am disabled. [Palesa]

Palesa's fear of being taken advantage of probably stems from a previous relationship. She says that she broke up with her boyfriend because she was assuming that he only wanted to have sex with her:

> The relationship was good…but the problem was sex…I think about so many negative things that persuade me to break up with men. [Palesa]

Nthati speaks about the difficulty of getting into a relationship. She explains the distrust that she experiences towards able-bodied males. She also believes that she does not deserve to be loved by a man because of her impairment:

> Hah…I think non-disabled guys feel sorry for us. When you are in a relationship with them and you have a disagreement...they give you that look. Like they feel sorry for you. I do not believe that a non-disabled man would love me. They just feel sorry for me. I am scared that I might fall in love with him and the next thing, he regrets being in a relationship with a disabled woman while there are so many able-bodied women out there. [Nthati]

Like Palesa, Nthati's fear of rejection stems from previous relationships. As she interprets past experiences, able-bodied men whom she dated seemed to be in a relationship with her because they pitied her, not necessarily because they loved her. The experience, or interpretation, of being pitied has impacted so negatively on Nthati that she believes no able-bodied male can ever love her because of her impairment.

Marriage

The expectation to find a partner and to marry is an important issue for the research participants, and a right that most able-bodied people take for granted (Pfeiffer 2006:74). Many participants experience negative attitudes to them getting married from their immediate families and from the public in general. These attitudes center around the non-acceptance of disabled women as wives because they are perceived to be unfit for this role. Being a wife is normally seen as a helping role such as being able to provide for and take care of a husband and children (Hanna and Rogovsky 2006:44). Married women interviewed for this study do speak about being dependent on their husbands and explain how they rely on their husbands for support with many activities.

Iponeng indicates that her husband is able-bodied and she speaks passionately about her marriage. She mentions a balance between independence and

dependence in relation to her husband and that she has not experienced any serious challenges in her marriage:

> I have not experienced any challenges in my marriage thus far. I was expecting many challenges because I had seen so many things happen to other married couples. I did not experience the biggest challenges…I do not ask my husband to do things for me. He knows what I am able to do and he knows what I am not able to do. He does things for me. [Iponeng]

Iponeng emphasizes that she is unable to do some things that able-bodied individuals can do. Nonetheless, she is worthy of being loved and taken care of. She reports that she has not been abandoned by her partner, although other married couples around her broke up. Viewed from a feminist perspective, Iponeng has constructed an identity as a wife without undue emphasis on having to depend on her husband to some extent. A level of co-dependency is, after all, characteristic of all relationships. However, Botle points out that, based on the level of dependency, women with physical impairments may experience negative reactions when they are supported by their husbands:

> When you are married and your husband does things for you like getting water from the community tap, people start talking. They say: "Wow, he has eaten it" [love potion]. Sometimes they will say: "Look at how he is struggling. Why did he marry someone with a disability?" [Botle]

For some of the research participants who are not married, their dilemma regarding marriage is further complicated by able-bodied individuals who talk able-bodied men out of marrying women with physical impairments. The remarks by Nthati illustrate this point:

> The other thing that made me sad was when one guy asked me to marry him… when I was doing my grade eight. I asked him why he wanted to marry me and he told me it is because his parents told him to marry, since he was old enough. Again, he told me that he told his parents about me and they had a problem with him marrying someone with a physical disability. His parents were worried if I would be able to perform the roles of a wife. For example, they were worried if I could take care of their son, do his laundry, cook for him, and many other things. When he told me this, I was very sad! [Nthati]

Nthati clearly experienced negative perceptions and stereotypes that position women with physical disabilities as not being capable of performing the

traditional gendered roles associated with ideal wives (Hanna and Rogovsky 2006:44) and mothers (Garland-Thomson 2002:7). The research finds that participants are doubly disadvantaged due to gender discrimination and their physical impairment.

Motherhood

Identifying self in relation to motherhood is an important issue for women. The research participants discuss in detail their experiences of motherhood. An interesting point is made by Botle who says:

> My name is Botle Sello from Malibamatso. I got married in Pitseng. I have a house in Tsikoane…I am 35 years old. I have two daughters and my husband is non-disabled. [Botle]

Similarly, Nthati says:

> My name is Nthati Pheko, I am 30 years old…From St. Michaels, but I was born in Quthing. I have a daughter and I live with her. [Nthati]

From the narratives of Botle and Nthati it is clear that constructing an identity as a mother plays an important role in the sense of self of these participants. In doing so, Botle and Nthati imply that they are as capable as any able-bodied woman of effectively carrying out the role of child-bearing and child-rearing.

According to Garland-Thomson (2002:17): "Women with disabilities often must struggle to have their sexuality and rights to bear children recognized." This is borne out by some participants who report that their right to care and to reproduction was violated by nurses at the clinics. They also seem to have experienced discrimination during pregnancy. For example, Nthati was told that she would not be able to give birth naturally because she had polio. She was also told to stop falling pregnant. This is part of her story:

> I remember on the day I was going to give birth…the nurses told me that I had to give birth by caesarean section. They told me that I could not give birth naturally due to my disability. They told me that because I had polio, I would not give birth naturally. They also told me that I should never get pregnant again…But, I do not know, I think that I will still have more babies. I do not know. The nurses told me that because I had a disability, I would never give

birth to a healthy baby…But, I gave birth naturally. I did not have to go through any surgical procedures. My baby was healthy. Nothing went wrong. [Nthati]

Botle shares a poignant story, which takes place at the hospital at the time she was going to give birth:

> Even at clinics and hospitals the female nurses ignore us. They do not take care of people with disabilities. For example, when I was pregnant, I went to a hospital. When I got there, the nurses ran some tests and everything was fine. When it was time for me to give birth, I asked one lady to take me to the hospital and we got there on time. When we got there, we went to one nurse's office and she told me to go to the labor ward and wait for her there. What astonished me was that there was one nurse with a physical disability in that office…They were sleeping. I went to the labor ward as directed. The other nurse who asked me to wait for her in the labor ward came, but she had to go back because she had forgotten to bring gloves. Immediately when the nurse turned to get the gloves, I gave birth. When she came back, the baby was born and I did not know what to do. I was so scared because the bed was too small and when the baby came, I had to grab her because I was too scared that she was going to fall. However, the baby did not fall and I realized that the reason the baby did not fall was because she was connected to the umbilical cord… So, the umbilical cord was around the baby's neck and I was scared that it would strangle her. But, when I looked closer, I realized that it did not do any harm to the baby. When the nurse arrived, she found that the baby was born. She did not even apologize. That is how much non-disabled women care about disabled women! They ignore us… [Botle]

One factor, which seems to fuel the attitude of nurses, is reflected in negative perceptions of impairment which suggest that women with disabilities are not capable of giving birth; and when they do fall pregnant, that they will not give birth to normal/healthy babies. But, as Botle and Nthati's experiences clearly show, being physically impaired does not mean one is incapable of giving birth to normal, healthy babies. These participants have challenged ideas about the normalization of bodies and socially held assumptions about rights of reproduction (Garland-Thomson 2002:15).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we focused on the everyday lived experiences and aspects of the lifeworlds of women with physical disabilities in Lesotho. As is the case with

most able-bodied women in society, women with physical impairments also value pursuing feminine beauty ideals. The perception of femininity is strongly associated with looking and feeling attractive. As such, several participants believe that using make-up, following fashion, and changing their hairstyles make them more feminine and that in this regard they are no different from able-bodied women. The need to conform to socially sanctioned standards of ideal beauty and the continuous practices that coincide with the presentation of their bodies in line with these norms are too demanding for some. For most participants, feeling comfortable in their bodies seems to be an important part of femininity.

Drawing on the experiences of women in this study, it seems that in Lesotho, a long road lies ahead in order to reach the point where women with physical disabilities will become accepted as capable of living normal lives as normal members of society. Not only is there a need for changed perceptions regarding the roles and values associated with impairment but there is also a need to address public opinion on the rights of disabled people. This is particularly important because the experiences and feelings of disabled women often contribute to public opinion and re-enforce, rather than challenge, attitudes towards the physically impaired. Some participants who do not have partners seem to believe that they will most probably be abandoned by any potential partners. These negative attitudes have led them to distance themselves from possible relationships under the assumption that no man will fully love a woman with a physical impairment.

Society has long moved past accepting the right of women with physical disabilities to exist in society. More needs to be done to firmly establish the right to ways to make their existence meaningful and effective.

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Mother-Daughter Communication on Intimate Relationships[1]

ABSTRACT | *Sex education and conversations about intimate relationships are generally regarded to be important and can contribute to young women's positive or negative reproductive health development and general well-being. The findings contained in this chapter suggest that in a resource poor South African township, mothers and their daughters struggle to initiate and conduct meaningful discussions about sex. These discussions are often framed in terms of possible negative consequences of intimate relationships, such as unplanned pregnancy, dropping out of school, or possible Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection. However, these discussions are clearly not altogether effective as several young research participants had an unplanned baby. Emotional aspects that are normally associated with intimate relationships—such as companionship, trust, understanding, and love—are often missing from the mother-daughter conversations.*

Introducing the Topic

Gender-based violence and coercive sex in heterosexual relationships are widespread in South Africa. The control and coercion of a sexual partner is often accepted as a normal aspect of masculinity (Wood and Jewkes 1998; Stern, Rau, and Cooper 2014) and young women frequently are considered easy targets and fair game. Unwanted and often unprotected sexual intercourse can result in a high teenage pregnancy rate, rampant HIV infection—with one in five pregnant teenagers in South Africa infected (Shisana et al. 2014), and an increase in other sexually transmitted diseases. Studies have demonstrated the influence of the family in the development of sexual understandings and practices among adolescents and young adults (Hutchinson and Cederbaum 2010:550). Parent-child communication on sex and sexuality has been identified as an

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instrumental process associated with positive or negative intimate relationships (Hutchinson and Cederbaum 2010:550). Thus, understanding processes of sexual socialization is important, the aim of which is the development of healthy intimate relationships and prevention of negative consequences. In particular, the communicative interactions between mothers and their daughters help to establish and foster healthy sexual practices that can contribute to the daughters' overall physical and psychological well-being. Parents and caretakers are in a unique position to guide and educate, and to pass on responsible decision-making skills to their children; this includes decisions on intimate relationships. Passing on knowledge from one generation to the next is also imbued with the older generation's own values (Wilson and Koo 2010:2; Stone, Ingham, and Gibbins 2013:228-229). These values might, of course, not necessarily reflect or match the younger generation's values. Differences in values and expectations have the potential to create frictions, as we go on to demonstrate.

Over the recent past, general debates on sex and intimate relationships have become intrinsically linked to the dangers of being exposed to the HIV virus and safe sex practices. This is particularly relevant in South Africa, a country with the fourth highest HIV prevalence globally (CIA 2015). Sexual and reproductive health problems remain more common among women living in resource poor and historically disadvantaged communities (Lesch and Kruger 2005:1072; UNAIDS 2016). In South Africa, prevalence among young women aged 15-24 is estimated to be 14.8% (UNAIDS 2014). This high proportion is in part attributed to relationships between young females and older males known as the "sugar daddy phenomenon" (Besant 2013), or, more formally—age disparate relationships—hallmarks of which are sexual and material transactions considered beneficial to both parties. South Africa's recent demographic survey found that 33.6% of adolescent females aged 15-19 had sexual partners who were 5 or more years older than them (Shisana et al. 2014:67-69). Moreover, 22.4% of youngsters aged 15-24 report another high-risk behavior—having multiple sexual partners (Shisana et al. 2014:67-69). A positive trend is that condom use at the last sexual intercourse was highest among 15-24 year olds, although only just over one quarter (27.4%) said they use condoms *consistently* (Shisana et al. 2014:71-81). Less encouraging is that an estimated 10% of all females report sexual debut before the age of 15 (Shisana et al. 2014:65). In addition, an estimated 33% of all women give birth before they reach the age of 18, which decreases their ability to progress in terms of education and financial independence (Lesch and

Kruger 2005:1072; Makiwane and Mokomane 2010:18). Informal forms of intimate relationships that involve material exchange for sex (such as the sugar daddy phenomenon), alongside multiple and concurrent sexual partners, are of concern because these relationships can contribute to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (Stoebenau et al. 2011:5; Fehringer et al. 2013:207) and are often marred by unequal distribution of power where intimate partner violence (IPV) becomes a significant public health concern (Jewkes et al. 2011:4).

Despite the benefits of parent-adolescent conversations on intimate relationships, many parents find it difficult to discuss sex and sexuality with their children (Jaccard, Dittus, and Gordon 2000:188). Research from developed countries suggests that open discussions about sex between mothers and their daughters, family closeness and support, cordial communication patterns not related to sex, and a generally authoritative parenting style, including co-parenting and monitoring of children's activities, are often the basis of mother-daughter communication (Elliot 2010:311). However, an overview of parenting and communication practices as reflected in studies from developing countries, including South Africa, shows that good mother-daughter communication on intimate relationships is rare (Iliyasu et al. 2012:139). In sub-Saharan Africa, socio-cultural norms influence parent-child conversations about sex and sexuality (Bastien, Kajula, and Muhwezi 2011:2) and discussions on these topics are often taboo (Chikovore et al. 2013:2). Sexual socialization has historically been considered the responsibility of the extended family and not necessarily a topic of discussion between mothers and their daughters (Bastien, Kajula, and Muhwezi 2011:2). But, with changing family constellations, this responsibility has shifted to mothers and caregivers who often are ill-equipped to provide adequate sex education. This has ripple effects on the decisions young people take (Chikovore et al. 2013:2). In South Africa, Phetla and colleagues (2008:506) find that "mothers are often themselves sexually and socially disempowered and thus unable to assist their children in constructing positive and responsible sexual identities."

The traditional—mainly Western—nuclear family consisting of a breadwinner and homemaker at the helm resembles little of the African family, which historically is mostly characterized by patriarchal traditions, polygamy, social and cultural patterns of kinship, and strong emphasis on fertility and lineage (Therborn 2006:13). A traditional African family is usually extended and

includes the head of the family (male), his wives, children, grandchildren, and sometimes also the head of family's siblings with their partners and offspring. Traditional life revolves around the community, which plays an important role in the care of everyone, and appropriate social behavior, obligations, and responsibilities within the family and society are clearly delineated (Siqwana-Ndulo 1998:411). Over time these traditional family constellations have been eroded, with poverty and inequality being significant outcomes of systematic racial segregation, exclusion, and sexual discrimination in the past (Statistics South Africa 2008:21). As a result, the majority of Black Africans live in poverty (Shisana et al. 2014:51). This has impacted on the life within families and households, which struggle to achieve and maintain a basic standard of living. Many face problems such as income insecurity, unemployment, inadequate and poor housing, constrained access to education, poor sexual and reproductive health, and lack of or limited access to social capital (Statistics South Africa 2012:15).

Its colonial and apartheid history, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, an ongoing migrant labor system, increased unemployment, modified gender roles, changing sexual and nuptial norms, high divorce rates, and weakened intergenerational relations are some of the significant factors shaping the contemporary South African family constellation. Key structural changes can be seen in the increase in female-headed households, an increased number of older persons obliged to take positions of parental oversight, and—on the other extreme—child-headed households (Takyi 2011:1). It is against this backdrop that the current study was undertaken in the resource poor township of Batho, in the Bloemfontein metropolitan area.

This study examines the willingness for, and the extent and content of, mothers and daughters' conversations on intimate relationships. It explores whether the mothers and daughters feel at ease during these conversations and how they understand and frame intimate relationships. It also seeks to understand how mother-daughter communication on intimate relationships potentially influences the daughters' views on sexual relationships and their decision-making processes in this regard. The quality of the mother-daughter relationship and the communication between them impacts on how the daughters approach and formulate intimate relationships over their lifespan (Miller and Hoicowitz 2004:192). Considering the vulnerability of young daughters to sexually risky

behavior, the role of mother-daughter communication needs to be looked at in terms of the factors that foster and hinder effective communication, and also in terms of the quality of the information imparted by the mothers. It is against this background that the current study attempts to understand communication within the family and aims to identify how those who share their experiences with us portray and assess parental knowledge and its influence on the choices and decisions made by daughters in their sexual and intimate relationships.

An Outline of the Study

This study is situated within the context of the interpretivist paradigm, which aims to understand the everyday lives of individuals. Its focus is on the human experience and how people create and maintain meanings of their actions and experiences (Brinkmann 2012:18). The interpretivist paradigm takes into consideration the social, cultural, and individual dimensions and contexts that influence people's lives, and attempts to question, clarify, and understand aspects of social reality.

The mothers' own understanding, interpretations, and expectations of intimate relationships are regarded as pivotal to the content, extent, and frequency of their communication with their daughters. To do justice to the complexities and sensitivities of this study, a qualitative approach has been followed because it allows us to interact with research participants within their natural settings and to engage with participants' views and realities as captured in their own words (Flick, von Kardorff, and Steinke 2004:5). A qualitative approach allows exploring and understanding how both mothers and their daughters' belief systems, emotions, desires, and everyday realities influence their conversations on sexually related issues.

This study received ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State's Humanities Faculty (UFS-HUM-2013-004) and was conducted in a resource poor area of Batho in the Mangaung Municipality of Bloemfontein. Four Black African mothers and five daughters were recruited with the assistance of a social worker from a non-governmental organization working with women in this area. Other than having a daughter (biological, adopted, or foster) there were no other inclusion criteria for the mothers. The daughters had to be between the ages of 18-22 years, and living in the same

household as their mothers. The age restriction is for two reasons: One, to avoid the need for parental consent for daughters under the age of 18; and two, it was assumed that daughters over the age of 18 had experienced more communication exposure than those younger than 18 years.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted in isiZulu, isiXhosa, or English, depending on a participant's language proficiency. Individual interviews were conducted in a location selected by the participant. The mothers and their daughters were interviewed in separate conversations. To allow for honest conversation and to protect their privacy, care was taken that none of the participants could overhear the individual interviews with the researcher. Follow up phone calls or face-to-face conversations were carried out where any clarifications were needed. The first author transcribed the interviews verbatim in the language in which the interview was conducted before translating the transcripts into English. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to elaborate on linguistic nuances and issues of translation and its complexities other than to say that some passages have been cross-translated to check for accuracy. Words and expressions with ambiguous meanings were discussed in a team of multilingual researchers in order to find the best and most meaningful English translation.

The interviews are thematically analyzed. Following multiple readings of all transcripts, themes and subthemes within and across the transcripts—first read separately for the mothers and their daughters and then across the mothers and their daughters—emerged, which allowed us to uncover issues and interpret what is happening in relation to the phenomena under investigation; this approach offers in-depth understandings of participants' social realities and everyday experiences (Braun and Clarke 2006:80). Subsequent analytical processes involve the interpretation of identified themes, examining the differences and commonalities between themes and between the participants' responses, and linking interpretations to the literature. To protect the identity of our research participants, we have used pseudonyms throughout the chapter.

Sex Talk between Mothers and Their Daughters

As in any relationship, mothers and their daughters converse frequently about inconsequential, mundane topics, but as indicated in the literature (Miller and Hoicowitz 2004; Phetla et al. 2008; Bastien, Kajula, and Muhwezi 2011;

Iliyasu et al. 2012; Chikovore et al. 2013) there are often barriers to initiating a conversation about sex and intimacy. Veiled in secrecy, embarrassment, shame, guilt, and awkwardness, a conversation on sex is often triggered only after watching an episode of a popular television program where sex was topical, as a consequence of an event such as the first menstrual bleeding, a pregnancy, a diagnosis of sexually transmitted disease (STD), or in the context of the HIV pandemic. From the interviews with mothers and their daughters, we glean that the flow of their conversations about intimacy is hampered, resembling a monologue with little reciprocal, conversational qualities, and best described as didactical efforts in as far as the mothers talking at rather than with their daughters. Delius and Glaser (2002:30) aptly describe it as much more of a contemporary "awkward inter-generational silence on issues of sexuality" rather than a constructive discussion.

As we pointed out earlier, sexual coercion, violence, teenage pregnancy, HIV/ AIDS, and STDs are serious concerns, and a mother fears that her own history (for example, unwanted pregnancy at a young age) will repeat itself. This often shapes the content of the conversations and the focus is on partner choice, HIV/ AIDS, and pregnancy. These conversations, however, often remain superficial and frame sex and intimate relationships in a particular way—highlighting the perils of having sex and the possible negative consequences thereof. The absence of discussing emotions, and the meanings of love and commitment in relationships, is very noticeable.

Hormonal Changes or Don't Eat Eggs or Peanuts and Don't Drink Milk

Most of the young research participants were ill-prepared for hormonal changes, their first menstrual bleeding, or for understanding the implications of these changes. Lizzy was shocked to discover blood on her underwear:

> I was fifteen. I was in the streets playing; when I got to the toilet, I saw this red thing on my underwear. "Mom, what the hell is this?" She was like: "No, man, you are getting older, you are growing up. It shows that you are becoming a woman. So, do this, do that, don't play with boys, don't eat eggs, don't drink milk." Because they say, when you eat eggs, you will become stronger [points to her tummy], like when you drink milk, it makes you fertile and peanuts too. [Lizzy, daughter]

Phaphama also recalls her mother's words: "Do not drink milk and don't eat eggs when I have my periods." African folk wisdom considers milk, eggs, and peanuts fertility-boosting foods and their consumption should be avoided during menstruation. The advice given to Lizzy and Phaphama contributes little to their understanding of what is happening to their bodies and how or why this should alter their interactions with boys, which is left unexplained. The transition to womanhood is explained in simple terms without elaborating on what becoming a woman might mean and what it is to be a woman in personal, relational, cultural, or societal terms. Instead, warnings are uttered, restrictions put in place, and abstinence from sex urged. The onset of the first menstruation is frequently described as a confusing, frightening, distressing, and awkward experience because these young women's understanding of normal physical developments is vague. Not all participants reveal to their mothers that they started menstruating because they were unsure what their mothers would think or how they would react. Instead, they confide in their peers.

A reference to fertility and conception is frequently used in association with the onset of menstruation:

> She [mother] would say there will come a time when you will see blood, and when you see blood, you must know that you will be able to conceive. [Thato, daughter]

"Growing up" is the ambiguous term for the transition to womanhood—a time that also has significant cultural markers. It indicates a new status in the young woman's life and, traditionally, she is ready for marriage. The mothers' messages to their daughters following menarche are dichotomous: from innocence to corruption, from purity to impurity. It is also strongly associated with danger and risk, such as pregnancy or HIV infection. The mothers' stance is often strongly rooted in their own, often negative intimate relationship experiences. The mothers fear that their daughters will mimic their life with little or no education, few opportunities to improve their socio-economic position, and an inability to move forward because of getting caught up in abusive and coercive relationships.

Boyfriends and Sex

The conversations about boyfriends are mostly characterized by tension between the mothers and daughters. Particularly contentious are the selection of a

boyfriend and the meaning of the term boyfriend. The meaning of the latter is often loose and a mother and daughter's understanding is often incongruent. The mothers associate "boyfriend" with a more permanent relationship, while the daughters do not seem to have clear frameworks for the concept of a boyfriend.

Despite the fact that during adolescence relationships are often less permanent, the mothers envisage an ideal and more permanent partner for their daughters. They consider specific criteria, which include a good education to offer economic security, politeness, respect, and the capacity to make the daughter happy. A good education is rightfully linked to employment opportunities, independence, improved living conditions, and elevated social status. But, the daughters' boyfriends rarely match these ideals and so their relationships cause tension between mothers and daughters. Caroline (mother) says:

> I wish they [referring to young girls] could find someone who is educated, who is working, a quiet person, who doesn't drink, who doesn't smoke *nyaope* [South African street drug: a mixture of marijuana, heroin, antiretroviral drugs, and Ratex (rat poison)]. He must be a respectable man.

Caroline lists the desired and undesired traits, which are likely to be based on past experiences with her daughter's or her daughter's peers' boyfriends. A man who respects his elders, and especially his partner's mother, is considered worthy of the daughter's affection and it is assumed that he will treat the daughter with the same respect. Qualities of an ideal partner for their daughters reflect notions of goodness, success, a non-user of substances, respectfulness, and good manners. These idealistic visions coexist and clash with their daughters' current relationships, often deemed less desirable by the mother. Rachel makes her sentiments clear in the following excerpt:

> I don't like that one [daughter's current boyfriend]. First impressions are important, especially if you are not known to the girlfriend's family members. It is expected that your boyfriend be respectful when he sees your mother. Now if he disrespects her in her own yard; if he comes here drunk, doesn't speak in a proper manner to your mother, do you think your mother would like him? Do you think she will like him? [Rachel, mother]

Rachel disapproves of her daughter's current boyfriend because he turned up drunk, unruly, and disrespectful. A substance abuser is considered an unsuitable partner for her daughter and such a relationship is met with strong disapproval.

Letty (daughter) demonstrates how her mother initiated the meeting with Letty's boyfriend:

> "Letty, this Tsepho, is he your boyfriend?" At first I was too shy to admit it. Like: "Aah…ya he is my boyfriend." Then she was like: "I want to meet him."

Letty did not volunteer information about her boyfriend because she felt shy, and perhaps unsure and embarrassed because she knows that she acts against her mother's wish for her to desist from or at least delay dating. Although Letty uses the word "shy," this may conceal another reason why she was not comfortable to share with her mother that she has a boyfriend. Letty fears her mother's judgment and disappointment and resorts to deceit in order to maintain the relationships with her boyfriend and keep her mother happy. Another young research participant, Thato, recounts how she initiated a conversation to tell her mother[2] of her previous boyfriend (her baby's father):

> She [mother] was coming back from work and I said to her: "Do you know I'm in a relationship? He is my classmate, but I don't know what kind of person he is because he is quiet." My mother said: "I want to see him, it seems like you love him." [Thato, daughter]

Here, too, the young woman is invited to introduce the boyfriend. Approval seems to be an important process in legitimizing the relationships. In both Thato and Letty's cases, the mother expresses a wish to meet the boyfriends to assess their suitability and worthiness. Thato, perhaps, hopes for some guidance from her mother because her boyfriend is quiet, or she might consider this as a desirable attribute that could please her aunt. Mothers and their daughters' values and viewpoints do not always match. Although the mothers attempt to impose their values on their daughters, this may not be regarded to be the best outcome for the daughter, as Thato illustrates:

> I keep telling her that I found someone, but she [mother] gets angry! She says: "What about Bongani's [her baby's] father? I don't dispute that he did you wrong, but you must forgive him. I like Bongani's father and I will tell on you." [Thato, daughter]

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2   Thato's mother is in fact her aunt, who is sister to her late mother. However, in some African cultures, like the Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Swati cultures, your sisters' children are said to be also yours. The use of *aunt* is restricted to your brother's children.

And this is confirmed by the mother about her thoughts on the daughter's ex-boyfriend.

> I like him [previous boyfriend who is the baby's father]. When they had him [the baby], they had a fall-out. When she had to come home, she gave herself to that *tsotsi* [thug, dodgy, untrustworthy character—the current boyfriend]. He's a drunk even, that *vukuvuku* [dirty looking thug]. Bongani's father comes here in fact. He knows how to greet, ask about your health, he even asks to speak to Thato [daughter]...now you see a person like that. [Rachel, mother]

The mother compares the two boyfriends, and juxtaposes the qualities of the current with those of the ex-boyfriend. Rachel has the baby's well-being and upbringing in mind, and she considers the father's involvement in the baby's development, including the benefits of financial and emotional support. The mother is explicit that she does not want her grandchild to have a *tsotsi* as a father figure. Bongani, the ex-boyfriend, fits the ideal notion of a partner and father because of the way he conducts himself. The notion of partner choice and the daughter's agency is illustrated here. Even though the mother did not approve of the daughter's choice of partner, the daughter decided to date him anyway because of her negative feelings towards the father of the baby after he initially denied paternity. People are guided by emotions and feelings in decision-making processes (Douglas and Johnson 1977:vii), and this is particularly true in relationships and partner choice. Regardless of what the mother says about the daughter's current boyfriend, she continues to date him, forsaking all reasoning because of her feelings for him. Parental advice is rejected, contributing to tensions within the household that are brought about by the complex relationship between the mother and her daughter.

Understanding Intimate Relationships and the Danger of HIV Infection

The conversations between the mothers and their daughters contained hints at sex, but frank discussions about sex are avoided or remain rudimentary and limited to cautioning about risky behavior and its possible negative consequences. Sex is portrayed in negative terms and the mothers tend to talk down to their daughters rather than to engage in a mutual conversation that involves both parties. Thato says that her mother:

> …talked to me about sex, that I shouldn't open my thighs. This would happen [gestures with hands at imaginary protruding tummy].

Thato's mother uses "thighs" as a reference to sexual intercourse; she is vague in her wording and explanation. Not heeding her mother's advice, Thato had an intimate relationship and fell pregnant.

Letty had her first sexual experience and her mother is displeased, annoyed, and exasperated. Letty recounts the moment she reveals her first intimate experience:

> The first time I had sex, she was angry at me: "Don't you ever do it, don't you ever!" She was shouting at me!

This reaction does not invite a conversation and alienates Letty from her mother. Questions remain unasked and unanswered and assumptions end in anger and frustration, preventing the opportunity to have an open conversation on intimacy and loving relationships. Vague and euphemistic messages are unhelpful, unsettling, and alienating. Letty recounts that later her mother went to the boy's home to scream at him for deflowering her child, portraying her daughter as a victim and the boy as a perpetrator. In her interview, Letty tells that the decision to have sex was mutual, she was curious and wanted to have sex for fun.

HIV and AIDS are prevalent, widespread, and devastating conditions in South Africa and affect individuals, families, and their communities. Thus, preventing their children from becoming HIV-infected is foremost on every parent's mind. All research participants experience fear of becoming infected and most participants share a story of a close relative's HIV status. HIV is mostly discussed in the context of having unprotected sex, but the use of a condom to prevent HIV and STDs is rarely stressed. Ithuteng tells of the fear-instilling words from her mother Caroline:

> *Ousie*[3] [respectable word used for a female adult] Caroline told me that if you have sex at a young age, you will get pregnant. You will be positive [HIV], *Ousie* Caroline[4] tells us.

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3   The word *Ousie* is part of South African usage and originally refers to a Black woman who usually works as a maid. However, as time has evolved, the word is now used as a title of respect for women.

4   *Ousie* Caroline is Ithuteng's foster mother.

In Caroline's mind, there is little doubt that a sexual relationship will have negative consequences, resulting in either an unwanted pregnancy, becoming HIV infected, or worse still, both. A conversation about condoms, the availability of condoms, for example, in public places such as taverns, truck stops, or clubs where high-risk behavior is prevalent (Society for Family Health 2015) is avoided.

Rachel, a mother, highlights the importance of testing for HIV when entering a relationship and stresses that in order to prevent deception, both parties should be present when the results are received. These concerns speak to broader issues of trust within relationships, and how people can be deceived into thinking their partners are HIV negative, while in fact they are in the window period phase of the HIV life cycle.[5]

> Go and test and make sure that you go in [consultation room] together. People don't trust each other, we go in together to get tested, but when the results come, a person goes in alone, and you don't know what was said, right? When he goes in, they tell him he is HIV positive, and you are sitting outside. Then you go in, and they tell you: "You are OK." When he comes to you, he won't tell you the truth, he will ask you first. If you say you are OK, he will say the same thing. So you enter the relationship with that thing [that both tested negative], then that's it when you relax. So I tell them that when they go test, they must enter the room together, and when the results come out, if the sister asks, if she should disclose the results, say: "Yes, we are together." Don't sit outside. [Rachel, mother]

This concerns broader issues and boundaries within relationships, which in turn are culturally embedded. It also addresses the protocols and processes of clinics, ethical issues, and the rights of an individual. Such complex considerations may challenge and test young people's communication skills, but are important and warrant transparent conversations and the caliber of mentoring that makes such conversations possible.

All research participants tell of family tragedies involving HIV/AIDS. April, for instance, talks about the burden, pain, and loss associated with HIV/AIDS:

> I like sitting my daughter down and tell her about these issues. I tell her that two of my daughters—her sisters—died because of HIV and they left their

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5   After being infected, HIV tests usually detect HIV antibodies 3 to 12 weeks after the infection (AIDS Foundation of South Africa 2014).

children behind. These children are left behind by their mothers because of their death from HIV. I tell her these things and I also tell her that when she has a boyfriend, they must use a condom at all times and never spend the night without. [April, mother]

Grief, loss, sadness, and financial burdens are some of the consequences of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, of which April has first-hand experience. She also expands on the burden of care on grandparents because of the death of a child or children and the effects this has on the well-being of other family members, in particular children. Embedded in this narrative is the goal to teach her daughter to take responsibility and precautionary measures when engaging in sexual intercourse. She also endeavors to teach her that every action has consequences beyond the individual, affecting also the extended family—in particular grandmothers who then become heads of extended households.

Pregnancy

In keeping with findings in the literature (cf. Jewkes et al. 2001), mothers are also worried about the implications of falling pregnant at a young age. They are in particular concerned that their daughters miss educational opportunities and that a baby adds to financial burdens experienced in already cash-poor households.

I tell them that if you are in a hurry to be in a relationship, you must know that you will get pregnant. And when you give birth, you must know wherever you go, even when you have to go to the toilet, you will take your child along. I told you that I want you to finish school. I don't want a child. [Caroline, mother]

Caroline makes her stance explicit. Her ominous words spell out the realities of having a baby at a young age. Her words speak to various issues: that a sexual relationship is associated with falling pregnant; that having a baby means around-the-clock commitments with the added burden of responsibilities, and that school is interrupted, possibly discontinued, resulting in the forfeiting of further educational opportunities. The last comment, "I don't want a child," is ambiguous: it can be interpreted that Caroline considers a baby a liability for her daughter, but it could also mean that she is worried that she, as the grandmother, would find herself in a position of child minding or rearing. Despite the ubiquitous warning words by all mothers/caregivers about falling pregnant at a young age, four out of the five daughters interviewed had babies.

Three managed to continue with their education. From Thato's excerpt, we glean the difficult decisions teenage mothers have to make:

> I got pregnant in May and during May we were busy with exams. I wrote and finished my exams. When I finished, I went to Botshabelo. I had not told anyone [about the pregnancy], but other people kept saying things, like my teacher said: "What is wrong with you?" Things like that, and I would say: "There is nothing wrong." I left when I finished my exams. When the schools opened...I didn't go back to school for a whole week. The following week my friend called me and told me we were writing [exams], I must come. So I went. Then I wrote. We were writing the final exams in December. My report came back and I had failed Math. In January, I gave birth. After I gave birth, I went back to school. The lady social worker said I shouldn't be back at school because my child is still an infant, therefore I can't be enrolled for grade 12. I have to repeat grade 11 because I was not attending my classes properly. So I said: "I will see when I come back to school." Because she was talking about my child, I will still decide when I will go back to school. [Thato, daughter]

Thato's experience does not speak of a particularly supportive education system for teenage girls with a baby, and this has implications for Thato's future. Her ambition to become an engineer has been squashed following her pregnancy. She is 20-years-old, failed in grade 11, has a child, her friends are ahead of her in school, and she is currently not attending school. These are some of the consequences of being a teenage mother.

These pregnancy narratives also include accounts of paternity disputes. The relationships are often casual with the father refusing responsibilities, resulting in absent fathers—perpetuating the pattern of the daughters, who also told of absent fathers.

> When I was pregnant, he didn't want to talk about the baby, so I decided to stop dating him. He wasn't happy. Have you seen when you tell a person that: "Hey, I'm pregnant." He was like acting up…He used to rent a place around here, right now I don't know [where the father is]. He's never seen her [baby], she's three. [Diteboho, daughter]

Thato recounts that she and her boyfriend had made a decision to have a baby only to be abandoned by the very same boyfriend after she told him she was pregnant.

> I would say, yes [the pregnancy was planned]. He wanted a child and I also wanted one…But, when I told him about it, he said: "It was not my child." [Thato, daughter]

These accounts testify to the tenuous, vulnerable, and fragile nature of the relationships. The responsibilities of caring and providing for a baby often fall exclusively on the mother and her family. The mother-daughter narratives are imbued with fears of this added burden and this highlights and locates the difficulties between mothers and daughters within their relationship. It also points to the external social factors within which individuals and families exist and the ways in which historically difficult socio-economic factors shape their lives.

Mothers Lack Experience to Talk about Sex

As we alluded earlier, the mothers' understanding of sex and sexuality is permeated with their own history, upbringing, and socialization. In their conversations, the mothers frequently juxtapose the past and the present—their own experiences of sexual socialization and the task of educating their daughters. From the mothers' accounts, we can see that the conversations between them end their own mothers did not educate them well in terms of sex and intimacy. Friends, sisters, and grandparents had always been more likely to be sex educators. Talking about sex was, and partially remains—as we demonstrate—a topic that is not freely discussed.

> It's how we were raised. You see, this thing about a person being pregnant. You never knew that when we were growing up. When someone was going to give birth, they would send her far away…You didn't know. [Terry, mother]

> You know how things were when we were growing up…You would never speak about such things to your mother. They [elder sisters] were responsible for us because they were constantly vigilant in regulating our behaviors. They saw the slightest changes in our behaviors and bodies. And when one got pregnant, they would know. And only then would they talk to us. [Lorraine, mother]

Sex is shrouded in secrets and mystery. An educational conversation takes place post-event and many mothers (research participants) fell pregnant at a young age. The pattern of silence and teenage pregnancy is repeated, as the young research participants (daughters) attest. The mothers' stories show resentment

towards their own parents because of the veil of silence and secrecy, and the resultant unplanned pregnancies.

> It's not the same with us. I did not know that when you start menstruations, you can fall pregnant. And that is the reason why I had a child at a young age. [Dolly, mother]

> During our days, our parents never told us such things; we couldn't talk to them about such things. Only until you get raped and you don't know what you are supposed to do, or you get pregnant with an older man and you don't say anything. I used to hide these things from her. My mother never taught me what I was supposed to do in those situations. That is why I say: "It is important to attend the course in family matters, so that I can educate my children while they are still young." [Dineo, mother]

Dineo paints a grim picture of sexual violation accompanied by little understanding or support, which motivates her to acquire tools to be better prepared to educate her daughter. However, she still finds it difficult to engage with her daughter on the topic of sex: she describes male genitalia as "bags of potatoes and a stick" and uses other evasive and vague terms. Uncertainties and confusion remain, and indicate a deep uneasiness when discussing sex and sexuality. Another mother talks about her bewilderment:

> When I was young, they used to say to us: "When you meet a boy, or when you sleep with a boy," instead of saying: "When you have sex." This left us confused as we thought by sleep it means just sharing a bed. We conceived children and nobody told us about these things. My father used to say to us: "Men carry babies." And we would ask ourselves: "How and what does my father mean by saying that?" We saw men walking around, but they did not carry babies. We only got to understand what he meant as we were growing up and experiencing things: he meant that when you have sex with a man, then you will fall pregnant. [February, mother]

Concealing knowledge, misinformation about sex, or the use of fear tactics cause confusion and embarrassment, prevent open conversations, fail to prevent pregnancies, and have the potential to impede healthy sexual relationships. Questions about sex and sexual experiences were more commonly shared with friends and peers who continue to be important sources of information.

In Conclusion

Talking about sex and intimate relationships with young adults is important for a myriad of reasons. However, just talking is not enough: in the mother-daughter conversations we scrutinized communication was often lacking depth, clarity, and focus. All participants experienced levels of embarrassment and unease, which stall the conversation flow between mothers and daughters. Conversations are not spontaneous and age-appropriate and tend to occur only following a trigger such as the onset of the first menstruation, dating, or pregnancy. The daughters react with apprehension, suspicion, resentment, and at times hostility, when their mothers initiate a conversation about sex. Both parties are motivated by their own set of reasons for having these talks. The mothers consider their daughters' well-being, safety, health, educational and employment opportunities, while the daughters focus mainly on dating and having fun. These are unequal starting points for conducive talks on sex and sexuality. Regardless, the daughters say they would prefer being educated by their mothers because they are more trustworthy than peers and friends. Talking about sex with their peers and friends is more comfortable, but has a coercive component: to engage in sexual activities.

Set in the context of impulsiveness, coercive behavior, and reaction against risk taking, the mothers and caregivers are apprehensive about their daughters' interest in sex and sexuality. The potential for negative consequences of unprotected sex is serious and the prospect of a precarious life is real. The conversations between the two generations are inhibited, unidirectional, and often didactic. Warnings of negative consequences of having an intimate relationship are issued in the hope of deterring the young women from having sex. Research on African mothers indicates that they tend to take up the discourse of instilling fear and emphasize negative consequences as an intervention strategy to curb sexual activity (Pluhar and Kuriloff 2004:316; Lesch and Kruger 2005:1077). Pregnancies and HIV/AIDS are often the mothers' preferred conversation topics. Pleasure, love, desire, and emotional aspects of relationships were rarely considered. This reduces an intimate relationship to an act devoid of meaning beyond sexual gratification. Sex, then, is associated with fear of being discovered, of falling pregnant, of becoming infected, and is reduced to something dirty, unspoken, and clandestine—restricting women's attempts to explore and develop their sexuality in a positive way.

The mothers and their daughters are challenged to conduct open discussions on intimate relationships. The mothers' own upbringing bears the marks of outdated cultural frames, discomfort, lack of knowledge, as well as silence and jokes about sexual matters. And these issues are reflected in the communication with their daughters. History, race, class, gender, age, education, and socio-economic status influence these conversations and model sexuality and sexual agency (Pluhar and Kuriloff 2004:318; Lesch and Kruger 2005:1078). Mothers and their daughters recognize the value of discussing sex and intimate relationships in a society that experiences high rates of HIV and AIDS, teenage pregnancy, and sexual violence. Their attempts, however, are awkward and, considering that four out of five daughters had an unplanned baby, the outcome of these conversations is not favorable. Mothers' efforts to discourage their daughters from having a boyfriend were in vain and safe dating was not promoted (see: Wood and Jewkes 1998). The young women frame relationships in terms of companionship, trust, understanding, and love, regardless of bad experiences, and the mothers' prevailing perception is that relationships lead inevitably to pregnancy, lost opportunities, and financial burdens. It would be advisable, then, for mothers to rather start conversations with their daughters from these more positive perceptions and desires.

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Life as a Stranger[1]

Labor Migrants from Lesotho

ABSTRACT | *Drawing on in-depth interviews with nine Basotho labor migrants in Bloemfontein, this chapter examines their experiences of being a stranger by exploring their accounts of everyday life. Literature on migration studies confirms that migrants face numerous challenges in destination areas, and South Africa is no exception in this regard. The major concerns expressed by the research participants are harassment by the police, hostility from the local citizens, poor living conditions, exploitation by employers, the language barrier, and difficulty in accessing public services. This chapter argues that these constraints make it difficult for the Basotho migrants to establish a sense of belonging. The chapter focuses on the life of migrants as strangers, by exploring to what extent they lead marginalized lives, what levels of insecurity they face and to what extent they are excluded from access to public services. These migrants express a sense of being outsiders and strangers in Bloemfontein.*

Introductory Remarks

Migration to South Africa has increased significantly since 1990 (Crush and McDonald 2000:2). Approximately two million people staying in South Africa during the 2011 census were born outside of its borders (Statistics South Africa 2012:28). South Africa draws foreigners from other parts of Africa, especially from countries north of its borders, because it is well-endowed with infrastructure, resources, and services (Peberdy 2001:25). Lesotho is one of the top ten countries in the world whose citizens attained temporary and permanent residency in South Africa in 2013 (Statistics South Africa 2014:17, 37). Migration from Lesotho to South Africa is a long-standing occurrence (Murray 1981:12). It dates back as far as 1867 when diamonds were discovered in the Orange Free State (now called the Free State), and 1887 when gold mines

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were opened in Transvaal (now called Gauteng). The surge in mining led to a demand for cheap labor, which was then extracted from neighboring countries such as Lesotho, Botswana, Mozambique, and Swaziland. Basotho men (men from Lesotho) sought work in the mines, and their migration coincided with declining agricultural production in Lesotho at that time (Modo 2001:443). During the 1970s and 1980s, Lesotho, as a country, had most of its working population employed outside of its borders. More than 50 percent of the adult population of this Mountain Kingdom were temporarily employed in various sectors of the South African economy, especially in the gold mines (Cobbe 2012:1-3). Therefore, money earned in neighboring South Africa has always been a major source of income for individual Basotho households and for the Lesotho government as a whole (Mensah and Naidoo 2011:1018).

In the early 1990s, however, when gold production slowed and employers became more inclined to employ men from the local South African labor force (Cobbe 2012:2), many Basotho men were retrenched. This opened a new dimension to labor migration from Lesotho to South Africa. The loss of jobs on the mines coupled with lack of job opportunities and increasing poverty within Lesotho forced many women to take over from men as bread winners and to enter the labor market. A large proportion of them sought employment in the Free State. However, with little or no formal education, job opportunities were limited to domestic and farm work (Ulicki and Crush 2007:155, 161).

A vast amount of research has been conducted on migration from Lesotho to South Africa. Much of it revolves around work on mines, on farms, and domestic work. For instance, researchers have studied the effects of the migration of mine workers on family structure (Gordon 1981; Murray 1981; Modo 2001; Mensah and Naidoo 2011), female migration and farm work, the recruitment process, working conditions, employer demand (Ulicki and Crush 2000; 2007; Johnston 2007), and the employment experiences of domestic workers (Griffin 2010; 2011). While these studies are valuable, they are mostly quantitative in nature and thus more concerned with measurement and generalizations rather than with individual cases and life experiences. They focus almost exclusively on one aspect of migrant life—working conditions—and largely ignore the subjective lifeworld of the migrants. They also fail to take into consideration other sectors in which Basotho work. This chapter seeks to add to existing literature by taking a phenomenological approach to the study of migration in order to capture the

essence of everyday life. It assumes a qualitative stance in order to reveal the existential experience of being a migrant laborer. Moreover, the chapter moves beyond the common categories of mine work, farm work, and domestic work to include a number of other occupations such as hairdressing, construction, and taxi driving.

Migrant Experiences in South Africa

Most of the narratives of migrant experiences of the research participants in this study tell of humiliation and hardship in their country of destination, as well as in South Africa. Migrants face many challenges on a daily basis, including exclusion from their own communities, xenophobic attitudes against them in the receiving country, economic hardship, and barriers to accessing public services. Migrants are often discriminated against because the dominant population group perceive them as being different and threatening. By focusing for a moment on the concept of belonging, we can move towards an understanding of the experience of exclusion. Belonging is often part of the discourses and practices of socio-spatial in/exclusion. Belonging encompasses boundary maintenance, especially those boundaries which distinguish the world into "us" *vis-à-vis* "them." In other words, the politics of belonging is about belonging to a *group* (Yuval-Davis 2006:204; Antonsich 2010:650). Belonging to a group implies being integrated into the communities in which one lives. A sense of belonging therefore speaks to whether Basotho migrants feel part of the communities in which they live and whether they are able to express themselves in full. This also includes how welcome they feel in Bloemfontein.

Ruth Wodak (2008:60) defines exclusion as "deprivation of access through means of explicit or symbolic power…Inclusion would imply access to participation, citizenship, media, information, language learning, power positions, organizations, jobs, housing, education, and so on." Exclusion is the result of the perceived, as well as real, differences between groups. People become aware of differences through processes such as migration, which bring people from different parts of the world into contact with each other (Easthope 2004:131). Although migration to South Africa has been going on for a long time, Belinda Dodson (2010:6) notes that it increased drastically during the post-1994 era after South Africa's shift to democracy. She points out that African

migrants coming to South Africa from various source countries and interacting directly with South Africans have led to the existential experience of cultural differences. Montserrat Guibernau (2013:14) confirms that perceived differences inevitably lead to an external categorization of others. This involves labeling and stereotyping, as well as creating assumptions about beliefs, views, and behaviors of those perceived as belonging to *another* group. Assessments of "otherness" are due to the parallel assumption of similarity between members of one's own group and perceived differences from those belonging to the out-group.

Belonging revolves around the interplay of difference and sameness based on perceived boundaries that are created between those who do, and those who do not, belong (Ralph and Staeheli 2011:523). The dominant in-group tends to associate the idea of belonging with sameness (Antonsich 2010:650). This is a challenge for migrants as members of the out-group because a person will only be accepted into the group if its members believe that he or she is *similar* to them (Ralph and Staeheli 2011:523). So, in order to belong, people finding themselves outside the dominant group must attain a significant degree of similarity by adopting large parts of the culture, language, values, norms, and beliefs of the dominant group (Yuval-Davis 2006:209; Antonsich 2010:650). Saloshna and Thirusellvan Vandeyar (2011:4165-4166) note in this respect the importance of language by emphasizing that it "serves as a gatekeeper for acceptance in the host society." They believe that the inability to speak the basic language of the host society inevitably leads to exclusion. However, even if a person does assimilate into the dominant group, Marco Antonsich (2010:650) cautions that there will always be other markers of difference, such as place of birth, skin color, or even accent, which would prevent complete sameness and, as a result, can lead to the exclusion of the individual. Vandeyar and Vandeyar (2011:4166) emphasize the importance of accent by arguing that even if migrants can speak the language of the host society, their accent sets them apart from the local people, and that can distinguish them as "other."

Ruth Wodak (2008:64) adds that the exclusion of migrants is typically justified by arguments such as "they are a burden on our society," "they are dangerous, a threat," "they cost too much," "their culture is different." By so doing, she maintains, migrants easily become scapegoats as the host society blame them for unemployment, causing general dissatisfaction, abusing welfare systems, or posing a threat to established cultural practices and traditions. The same applies

to South African society. Contrary to South Africans' expectations, since 1994, when the country achieved political democracy, development has been slow, while poverty and inequality have increased (McConnell 2009:34). Migrants became a convenient target to blame for high unemployment and crime rates, for an over-crowded informal trading sector, for the growth of the drug trade, and for bringing diseases such as malaria, yellow fever, and AIDS (Crush 2000:109; Peberdy 2001:24; Gotz and Abdoumaliq 2003:131; McConnell 2009:35; Dodson 2010:5-6; Landau and Freemantle 2010:378). According to Sally Peberdy (2001:28-29), as well as Ingrid Palmary, Janine Rauch, and Graeme Simpson (2003:111), an extreme form of exclusion resulting from the above stereotypes is xenophobia. Migrants often experience xenophobia in the form of harassment by the authorities and the police, and through negative societal attitudes and acts of discrimination and prejudice.

Loren Landau and Iriann Freemantle (2010:379) maintain that police often harass migrants irrespective of whether they are legal or not. They might even disregard work permits, or any other legal documents that migrants hold. It is alleged that police sometimes go to the extent of destroying such documents in order to arrest migrants. They make arrests solely based on migrants' physical appearance, their inability to speak the official languages, or merely for fitting the profile of undocumented migrants. Ingrid Palmary and her co-authors (2003:113) add that the police sometimes deny migrants access to services when they have been victimized, based on the argument that foreigners do not have rights to state resources. Michael Neocosmos (2008:588) also relates how the police frequently abuse their power and how they regularly raid and assault migrants in their own homes. Caroline Kihato's (2013:40-41) study on migrant women of Johannesburg shows that police raids are very common at migrants' places of work. When on their way from work to their places of residence, the migrant women narrate, they often encounter the police at roadblocks where they have to pay bribes in order to avoid arrest (Kihato 2013:40-41). In a study on Congolese migrants in Johannesburg, one Congolese migrant said it was necessary for them to have cash with them at all times, just in case they bump into police (Kakonde 2010:227).

Similarly, in the streets and communities where they live, migrants experience hostile attitudes from the locals. A study conducted by Jonathan Crush (2000) on public attitudes of South Africans towards migrants and non-citizens shows

that South Africans are intolerant of and hostile towards these people. In a study done in 2007-2008, African immigrants in Cape Town reported regular incidents of xenophobia in their everyday lives. They narrated experiencing negative attitudes from local South Africans, even from their neighbors. They described locals as being rude to them: they scorn and laugh about their complexion, mock their accent, and call them *makwerekwere* (Dodson 2010:15-16), in other words: "those who speak in an unintelligible language" (Hansen, Jeannerat, and Sadouni 2009:193). Peter Kakonde's (2010:227) study on Congolese migrants shows that they are often easy targets of crime. This is because migrants are forced to carry cash due to the difficulty of opening bank accounts because they lack proper documents. Moreover, Morten Madsen (2004:179) states that criminals will take advantage and attack migrants because they know that migrants will not report the crime.

Another consequence of lacking proper legal documents is that migrants can be exploited by their employers. Employers pay migrants virtually any wage they see fit because they know that migrants cannot complain to the authorities out of fear of deportation. In addition, hiring and firing practices are unfair because of this. As a result, the migrants lack economic security, and the low wages make it increasingly difficult for many to survive in South Africa. Labor migrants in various studies claim that their wages are barely enough to meet their basic needs and cannot allow them to generate savings. This makes it difficult to plan for the future (Dinat and Peberdy 2007:194; Ulicki and Crush 2007:163; Griffin 2011:89-90; Pande 2014:384).

In addition to the difficulty of opening bank accounts, the absence of legal documents restricts migrants from accessing other basic services such as housing, healthcare, and education. Even migrants with legal documents often report some difficulty in accessing services, as is shown in Caroline Kihato's (2013:33-34) study on migrant women in inner-city Johannesburg. According to her, the women struggle to access services since employers and service providers, such as landlords, banks, clinics, and schools, disregard their documents.

Housing is a major problem for many migrants globally. Various studies note that it is equally a concern for migrants in South Africa. In the first instance, landlords and agencies frequently refuse migrants the possibility to rent. Those who do find housing pay excessive rent in spite of the poor quality of housing:

most houses/rooms have no bathrooms, electricity, or running water. They are also situated in the less desirable areas, and those who live in urban centers often live in over-crowded neighborhoods (Calavita 2005:111-114; Pande 2014:383). Regis Chireshe's (2010:195) study on the narratives of Zimbabwean migrant women in the Eastern Cape found that most of the women live in poor and unhealthy conditions. These migrants endure poor housing conditions due to their inability to afford the excessive rent (Chireshe 2010:195). They often have irregular employment, which means an irregular income. Those working full-time earn low wages as most of them work in retail, factories, and as street traders (Peberdy and Majodina 2000:279-280). Tolerating poor housing conditions is also related to difficulties convincing landlords to rent them rooms since they lack traceable references (Chireshe 2010:195). Comparing the housing situation in their countries of origin to housing in South Africa, a study on Somali migrants shows that the migrants classify accommodation in South Africa as uncomfortable, crowded, and as only a roof over their heads as they have no other options (Peberdy and Majodina 2000:283-284). Migrant women in Johannesburg (Kihato 2013:60) similarly agree that housing in their home countries is safer and better than what they encounter in South Africa.

Healthcare services, on the other hand, are often perceived as relatively accessible. In a study on HIV risk perception and healthcare access among Zimbabwean migrant women in Johannesburg, the women acknowledge that healthcare services are more accessible in South Africa than in Zimbabwe where anti-retroviral drugs are usually unavailable. However, they mention several barriers to accessing these services. These include financial constraints, fear of being asked for legal documents, and negative attitudes from medical personnel—particularly at hospitals (Munyewende et al. 2011:156-157).

All of these experiences demonstrate that migrants do not have full rights to the cities in which they live. It can be argued that processes of globalization and urbanization have led to the disenfranchisement of many urban residents. Migrants are stripped even further of these rights to the city because they are non-citizens. As much as they share in the routines of everyday life in the cities in which they live side-by-side with locals, they do not have full access to, let alone control over, the cities (Purcell 2002:99-102). Because of all these problems, Kenneth Madsen and Ton van Naerssen (2003:62) argue that merely crossing an international border poses major challenges to belonging in the destination

country—regardless of how close it may be to the home country. While South Africa in general, and Bloemfontein in particular, is a familiar place to Basotho in terms of geographical and cultural similarities, migrants from Lesotho are still humiliated and made to feel like strangers—they still experience xenophobia, restrictive immigration policies, and exclusion from many opportunities that are open to South African citizens. In addition to the many overt ways in which Basotho migrants are discriminated against, they also experience numerous covert social boundaries in their everyday lives in South Africa.

Theoretical and Methodological Reflections

This qualitative study explores Basotho labor migrants' experiences in an interpretive manner. An interpretivist paradigm focuses on how individuals interpret their lifeworlds (Gray 2014:23). Interpretivism is particularly interested in the uniqueness of individuals and their experiences. In this project, we draw on the theoretical guidelines provided particularly by reflexive sociology because of its focus on individuals' interpretations of events in their lifeworlds within the context of broader social structures (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:3).

The study follows a narrative design with an interest in the lived experiences of Basotho migrants as told by them. We followed a purposive sampling method to reach the research participants. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants who are knowledgeable about the topic of interest. So we chose to collect narratives from migrants themselves. We also decided to choose migrants working in the informal sector, and without work permits, because we believe they struggle even more with a sense of belonging than other groups of migrants who hold work permits. Lawrence Neuman (2012:149) suggests that purposive sampling is ideal for specialized, hard-to-find populations, which applies to Basotho labor migrants without work permits and who are difficult to locate.

We had interviews with nine participants—four women and five men. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. The interviews were guided by an interview schedule which is formulated on the basis of the research questions, concepts from the theory, and the review of the literature. The schedule consisted of mostly open-ended questions to enable the participants to express themselves, but it also had a structured component to enable the researcher to gather specific information from participants (Merriam 2009:90). A pilot interview was

conducted in order to check the relevance and effectiveness of the interview questions. As Kathryn Roulston (2010:99-100) urges, interviews must be scheduled at a time and place convenient for both the researcher and participant; interview sites were places of work and places of residence. According to John Creswell (2013:20), sites such as these constitute participants' world of lived experience and offer the greatest possibility of getting a deeper understanding of their experiences. Appropriate ethical measures—including informed consent, with voluntary participation, and protection of confidentiality—were taken to safeguard the participants. These measures were all in line with the formal ethical requirements and directives of the University of the Free State's Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities (Ethical Clearance Number: UFS-HUM-2013-29). All the interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. The raw data were transcribed verbatim, translated into English, and analyzed thematically.

Living as a Stranger

When analyzing the migrants' stories, their experiences of life in Bloemfontein can be categorized into experiences of marginalization, insecurity, and exclusion. In the findings below, pseudonyms are used.

Marginalization

The migrants lead marginalized lives as they are often harassed by the police and the general Bloemfontein public. Indeed, their everyday accounts point to the fact that they are sidelined and treated as outsiders by authorities and society alike. This finding coincides with information from the literature presented earlier: xenophobia—both in the form of harassment by the police and negative societal attitudes—is a common challenge for migrants in South Africa. The migrants report that police will even go as far as to raid their homes in the middle of the night, come to their places of work, and harass them by searching them in the streets. One man, who works as a laborer in building construction, attests to the police raids:

> Like the police, they sometimes arrive here in the middle of the night demanding to see our passports and the like. If you happen to ask: "Who are you?" "We are the police!" When you tell them: "I cannot open for the police at this time of night, come during the day because I cannot open for you now!"

> They are going to kick the door. They kick it, they kick it. You will eventually
> open the door so that they can enter. [Tumelo]

The act of the police forcing entry into the migrants' homes at night endangers the migrants' lives as it becomes difficult for them to differentiate between authorities and criminals. Due to the high crime rate in many township areas in Bloemfontein, it is not far-fetched to imagine that people who knock at your door at night posing as police officials are actually criminals who mean you harm.

At the realization that the migrants' documents are not in order, instead of making arrests, the police often assault the migrants or demand bribes from them. One woman who works as a domestic worker narrates:

> They always **bother** [emphatically stated] people from Lesotho by constantly saying: "Give us your passport, give us your passport!" And if it shows that you have overstayed your visitor's visa, THEY BEAT YOU UP [loud voice]. They don't arrest you. They assault you. Or they say: "Give us a bribe!"…Yes, they will beat them up, insult them. "You *makhonyo*,[2] bring the passport!" When you take it out and he finds that you have overstayed your visitor's visa, **they will beat you up**, **they will beat you up** [emphatically stated]. If they don't beat you, they say: "Give us R250 if you have it so that we leave you." If it's there and you give it to him, the following week they send others. [Itumeleng]

Similarly at their places of work, many participants explain that police arrive unexpectedly demanding to see their work permits. Work permits are not issued for migrants working in the informal sector. Knowing that they will not have work permits, the police chase after these migrants demanding this permit. One man who works as a taxi driver, after numerous encounters with the police at roadblocks, visited the offices of the South African High Commission seeking a work permit, just to discover that he does not qualify for one. This is his story:

> Yes, there is…there is a role I once played in trying to find a work permit, you see. It happened that when the police stopped me on the road and told me that I have to get it, I gave myself time to ask them how I can find it. They said: "No, you will find it in Lesotho!" I will find it in Lesotho? Yes, okay, that's how he answered me, so when I got to Lesotho, I tried to find where I can find a work permit, where they are found. Then I found the office which grants work permits. Eh, I think it is where students go to find study permits. So there at the office, the people I found at the office explained that: "Eh, there is

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2   A word people in Bloemfontein use to curse someone.

no way that people who drive taxis can qualify. We cannot issue them work permits here because South Africa has many people who drive taxis!" He explained it like that...there is no way we can issue work permits for people who are going to drive taxis in South Africa. [Tebello]

The police often humiliate Basotho migrants by randomly stopping them in the streets to search them. The participants mentioned that the police identify Basotho by the jobs that they do. For instance, they claim that the police are well-aware that the construction sector is dominated by Basotho workers and that is how they are caught. Alternatively, the migrants believe that the police identify them by their accent and the way they run. One man who installs ceilings and partitions clarifies this:

> No, again the problem that I've realized…You should see how easily we get arrested. We are caught because of the way we walk, the way we speak. When they tell you to count from one to five, they are going to catch you, when you get to two. How does a person from Lesotho say two? Two [saying it in a different tone], they say one, two. A person from Lesotho when they say two, they say two [saying it in a different tone]. When they are told to count from one to five, they say one, two [saying it in a different tone]. They tell you: "Get into the van!" They say: "Run from here to that door!" Before you even get to the door, they say: "Come, get into the van!" Have you seen what they do? They [demonstrating]…This thing, isn't it they always get arrested in my presence? They say: "Run from here to there, run!" When a person runs, they say: "Come back!" Then I ask them how do you know that that person is from Lesotho? They say a person from Lesotho and one from Bloemfontein don't run in the same way. [Kutloano]

The harassment that migrants experience at the hands of the police makes them live their everyday lives in fear. For most, a negative impact of this harassment is financial because the fear of not knowing when they will get arrested makes it difficult to budget. It also means having to get money, including loans, so that they can go home to renew their visitors' visas. For taxi drivers, the implication is that they sometimes lose their jobs during regular roadblocks when caught by the police and sent back to Lesotho, as the taxi owners have to replace them with local taxi drivers.

Local citizens are not welcoming either. The migrants maintain that some members of the Bloemfontein community are hostile towards them; they call them names, mock their dressing style, and accuse them of a number of

misdemeanors. This is in line with earlier reports that South Africans are often intolerant of non-citizens. The name that is often used to mock Basotho migrants is *moholoane*. In Lesotho, this term is actually used to show respect among men, but local people in Bloemfontein use it to degrade Basotho. As one man puts it:

> South Africans, ma'am, most of them actually don't like us, Basotho. They really despise us. If you look closely, even in their conversations, when you listen. There is also that thing that you will hear them saying: *Baholoane*,[3] *Baholoane*. It's true that in Sesotho we know what it means to say *moholoane*. But, the way in which they use it, I mean, you find that it's like they belittle [emphatically stated] us...Sometimes, let's say, maybe I appear wearing my gumboots, you see? Yes, there are those who you will find, a person just standing there and mocking you and saying: "These ones wearing gumboots, these ones wearing gumboots!" Swearing and insulting us! [Tumelo]

As occurs with migrants elsewhere in the world, local citizens tend to use Basotho migrants as scapegoats and blame them for things such as job shortages. The migrants refute this by arguing that local people stay behind in the locations, while they go out and look for work. One woman who works as a hairdresser at a beauty salon makes this point:

> Yes, there are those small talks which will sometimes annoy you…There was a girl who liked saying girls from Lesotho take their men [pause]; we're witches. What is it again? WE EVEN TAKE THEIR JOBS [loud voice], but you find that when you leave the location for work, those very people from here are the ones just sitting there not looking for jobs. They claim that we take their jobs…I don't think there is someone's space I have occupied because I have never seen them coming here seeking jobs. It's people from Lesotho who come here seeking jobs, while they are relaxing at the location. [Limpho]

From the narratives above, it appears the local citizens are not willing to accept the migrants as part of their communities. They view them as outsiders who do not belong in South Africa. Even the police, who are supposed to ensure everyone's protection, pose as a threat to migrants' security. In addition to this marginalization, the migrants' everyday lives are also marked by insecurity.

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3   Plural for *moholoane*.

Insecurity

The migrants' insecurity is physical in the sense that they mostly live in poor conditions. All the participants in this study live in the townships, on the outskirts of Bloemfontein. We conducted most of the interviews at the participants' places of work or residence. When interviewing people at their places of residence, it was clear that the majority of them live in generally poor quality housing. This correlates with findings of studies discussed earlier, which found housing to be a major problem for most migrants in South Africa (cf. Peberdy and Majodina 2000:283-284; Chireshe 2010:195; Kihato 2013:60). One participant's room, for instance, had three double-sized beds taking almost the entire space, and the roofing was of poor quality with plastic sheets for a ceiling. At another participant's place of residence the room was in very bad shape: the roofing was old, the floor was cracked, and plastic bags had been used to cover the walls. Crates were used to store things, and a curtain was used to divide the room. At another participant's home the roofing was old, the paint on the walls was peeling off, and pieces of cloth had been used to fill up the holes, sheets of torn lace curtaining had also been used to cover some parts of the wall. The room was divided with a curtain into kitchen and bedroom. All the houses appeared to be old.

The participants' narratives highlight these poor housing conditions. They raise concerns about leaking roofs, dust during strong winds, overcrowding, and landlords who take no steps to maintain properties. They in fact emphasize that the houses people rent out to people from Lesotho are generally in bad condition. One woman says:

> …the houses we normally live in are not good. In fact, the houses that people rent out in Bloemfontein are not good houses, especially if they rent them out to people from places like Lesotho. Even if you tell the landlord: "You see how it is here!" He will not even take the initiative to maintain. [Rethabile]

Most of the participants state that housing back in Lesotho is much better in comparison to Bloemfontein, where housing is often just a matter of having a roof over one's head. This corroborates other studies mentioned earlier, which indicate that migrants perceive housing in their home countries as safer and as more comfortable than housing in South Africa. As one man says:

> This house that I stay in, ma'am. It is just a house because one is on the move, you understand. As long as you just have a roof over your head so that you can work. I mean, in comparison with where I stay in Lesotho: no, this one is not in good condition. It's just a shelter to protect one against rains and to ensure that you don't sleep outside. I mean, even you can see. [Tumelo]

The poor quality of housing in which the participants live even endangers their lives as they might get ill or suffer physical injuries. For instance, the dust that constantly gets in during winds and the damp from the leaking roofs can cause respiratory diseases. Even worse, if the roofs get blown off by strong winds, the participants can sustain serious injuries. Their health is therefore at risk.

The migrants' insecurity is also financial: according to their stories, they suffer exploitation at the hands of their employers in their everyday lives. Their employers usually pay them less than the amount they had initially agreed on and most migrants feel that they earn meager wages. Sometimes employers do not pay the migrants at all. Some participants also claim to have been unfairly dismissed. They are afraid to report any of these incidents out of fear that they will get themselves arrested due to not having work permits. The employers are well aware of this fact and it is why they continue to exploit migrants. Studies conducted in South Africa reinforce the finding that employers normally pay migrants low wages because they know they will not be reported to authorities. One man recalls:

> Oh, I nearly forgot one of the things I despise about working in construction. You find that you have worked; let's say we get paid per fortnight. You work. After a fortnight, when you have to get paid, sometimes you are paid only half of the money. You no longer get the amount that you expected, depending on how much you had agreed you would make per day with your employer. You find that the money is no longer…For example, let's say you agreed that the money you make per day: when you calculate, it's supposed to be R400 in a fortnight. You find that when it's pay day, your employer gives you only R350. When you try to find out what happened with the rest, the supervisor is going to explain that: "No, man, the money arrived just like that." Or: "Our employer didn't send the full amount, we didn't get the full amount of money. That is why I give you this much."…Just like now, there is someone that I worked with. I think I worked with him for about two weeks and three days…the total amount of money that I had to get from that person was R1 300, depending on the job description and the number of days we would take to finish the job. But, he only paid R500. Eh, the remaining R800 is with him. It is still with

him. So when we went to confront him about the rest of the money, he kept on beating about the bush. And now he doesn't even answer his phone when we call…We will never get it. As we continue working, you are going to find that, eh, you work for a fortnight. That fortnight, by the time that person has to pay you, he has disappeared. He is gone. There is no money. You have worked for nothing. You no longer get that money. [Tumelo]

He points to the challenges they face when thinking about reporting their employers to the police:

Hey, now we have a problem because when we think of reporting him to the police, there is a problem at the police station. When we get there, they are going to ask. We are asked [emphatically stated] if we have work permits that allow us to work in this country. That is the challenge we are facing. When we go and report them to the police that: "Hey, we have a problem, we worked with this person, but now the problem is that he no longer pays us as per our agreement." Then comes up the issue that we don't have work permits, permission to work here. If we don't have such a document, then we are facing a challenge. [Tumelo]

There are also cases where employers pay the migrants in kind instead of in money. However, they do not tell the migrants beforehand. Migrants are perplexed after the completion of a job when they expect to get their wages and are instead offered goods. This points to a lack of consideration for other people's circumstances and feelings. It is also deliberate disrespect because they are aware that the migrants cannot report them to authorities. One woman who works on a part-time basis shares her experience:

Yes, this one of blankets, washing clothes: some pay me well, others don't pay. She tells me that: "No, I will pay you with clothing." And, mind you, she tells me when she is supposed to give me money, she doesn't tell me at the time I start work…Any clothes that can fit me. She will be telling me: "I have these shoes, what size do you wear?" I say: "I wear size seven." Then she says: "I have size seven shoes, I'll give them to you. What size do your children wear?" Then I tell her: "No." "I will give you those clothes." I say: "No, I'm not going to be able to work for clothes."…Honestly: no. I didn't see it better to take them because I also have to send my children something so that they get food to eat. So I found it useless to take the clothes because they're not going to eat them [sad]. I didn't take the clothes. I didn't get money… Eh, I don't know what I can do because when I tell the story to someone,

she/he will say: "Ooh! When you go to the police, they're going to ask you to produce a work permit." It's things like that. [Itumeleng]

Some participants have become aware that employers exploit migrants, and have as a result maneuvered ways around that. One man learnt first-hand that employees from Lesotho are generally paid less than local workers and so now he conceals his origins. He tells his story:

> Mm, they don't even know that I'm from Lesotho. They will take advantage of me, if they know I'm from Lesotho. Isn't it a fact that people from Lesotho are undermined? And you should know that if you work for an employer who knows that you're from Lesotho, you will find that your salary is not equal to other people's salaries…Yes, they are paid less. You are going to find that people are being paid R150 a day, while you are only paid R120 or R100. Eh, I realized because I saw, my first employer knew that I am from Lesotho. When I came to check my salary, I found that: nah, man, my salary is little. These other people have more. Then I thought that maybe it's because I found them already at the firm. Then I learnt...Those who found me already at the firm, these people are also getting more money than I am. Then someone said: "No, it's because that person knows that you are from Lesotho and there is nowhere you can complain." After I left that firm, moving from that firm to the next, I never again disclosed that I'm from Lesotho. [Kutloano]

Employers' exploitation of migrants deprives them of their livelihoods and of a full sense of belonging to the society. Financial security is an important component of belonging. By being paid less than the agreed amount, by not being paid at all, or being unfairly dismissed, migrants enter an unstable economic situation which leads to both hardship and heightened feelings of social exclusion. Additionally, migrants are excluded by being deprived access to services.

Exclusion

The migrants are excluded from access to public services. They are also excluded in terms of communication because of their inability to express themselves in some of the more prominent languages such as Afrikaans or Tswana during their dealings with service providers and the general Bloemfontein community. While Basotho migrants acknowledge that healthcare services are fairly easily accessible in South Africa, as do migrants from elsewhere, their experiences are that services such as banking, education, and the opening of accounts are difficult to access. They mention that they are usually hindered by their

inability to provide specified documents required by service providers. One such document is an affidavit from the landlord stating that the migrant indeed stays on the landlord's premises. Migrants argue that it is difficult to obtain such an affidavit as the landlords work and often stay far away, and are therefore difficult to reach. Others report that they are denied services merely because they are from Lesotho. One man explains that his children were denied entry into school because they are from Lesotho:

> No, services are being offered, but sometimes with that **bias** [emphatically stated]. For schooling of children, there is still discrimination. In some areas, they don't allow them. They say they don't take children from Lesotho. [Thabo]

Migrants also maintain that they are denied services by the police. This fact corroborates earlier findings that the police deny migrants services when they seek help. One woman tells the story of a fellow migrant whose grievances were not attended to by the police when she went to report assault:

> Well, they [the police] haven't done anything to me, but they do to my fellow migrants. They won't be treating them well when they have complaints. They will be like: "**She is a _moholoane_**" [emphatically stated]. Yes, they will be like: "Oh! She is a _moholoane_!" My fellow migrant will be going to the police to report: "My husband assaulted me." When she arrives, they will be saying: "Oh! These _baholoane_ are irritating!"…And they don't assist them. They will be saying: "You should come at a certain time." When you return, they say: "Come at a certain time!" [Itumeleng]

In general, lack of South African citizenship hinders migrants from accessing services. This is because they are asked to produce South African identification almost everywhere. One woman sums this up:

> Everywhere you meet deadlines, everywhere. You can go to the bank to open an account—the problem is that you don't have an ID. Obviously, you cannot find your own, right? Because you're not…What do they say a person is? You are not a citizen. In many things, we're hindered by citizenship. You are not a South African citizen, so you don't have the right to these and that…For instance, JUST OPENING AN ACCOUNT [loud voice]. To open an account, you will find that if you use a Lesotho passport, they don't want to open an account for you. For clothing, for…Not for clothing because I have a clothing account…A furniture account. There is no furniture shop which can open an

account for you. You will find them saying: "No, we don't open accounts for people from Lesotho!" So I don't know whether Basotho have disappeared with their things or what…It's not easy. In everything, they say: "No, not people from Lesotho. We want IDs." [Limpho]

In addition to difficulties accessing public services, the migrants encounter language problems in communicating with service providers. This is because in Bloemfontein there are many Afrikaans-speaking people. Sesotho is also a common spoken language. There are other languages such as Tswana, which is related to Sesotho although it is still a different language. According to the migrants' narratives, the many unfamiliar languages limit their interaction with local people in Bloemfontein. The difficulty in communication is a significant challenge; as the literature indicates—language is a very important prerequisite for migrants being accepted in the destination area since it is an important means for interaction (cf. Vandeyar and Vandeyar 2011:4165-4166). The participants acknowledge that their first language, Sesotho, is one of the spoken languages in Bloemfontein, and that they are able to communicate with some local people. However, in their experience, when it comes to public services, Sesotho does not help them much since they come across service providers who do not understand Sesotho. One woman says:

It's my language and it counts in my favor. Sometimes it doesn't. It helps me when I communicate with people like this. When I go to the shops, I will find people who don't speak Sesotho. Then I become confused as to what language I'm now supposed to speak in order for this person to understand…Let me say, I go to the hospital there, I will find a *lekoerekoere*.[4] She/he is not going to understand what I'm saying. If I go to the shops where they say there's a job available, when I arrive, I won't find a Mosotho[5] person. I will find that she/he speaks Xhosa, Zulu, English, so I will have to speak English. And I don't know it that well. I will then have to find someone who knows English to translate what I'm saying. [Itumeleng]

A similar degree of exclusion pertains to work. Participants maintain that they struggle to find jobs as some employers are not Sesotho-speaking. Because some migrants moved to Bloemfontein to explore job opportunities, the language barrier limits their prospects. In one man's words:

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4   A name Basotho used to call people from other African countries.
5   Singular for Basotho.

> Eh, Sesotho as my language here in Bloemfontein—it honestly gives me problems sometimes. Especially at work because you find that Afrikaans is the most generally spoken language. Since we work with White people, you are going to find that it is necessary to know Afrikaans. And if you don't know Afrikaans, you cannot work...We even prefer to work with Whites because they are trustworthy. Now, most of them don't know Sesotho. They speak Afrikaans. So if you don't know Afrikaans, you cannot be able to work with him because you will not understand each other. [Tumelo]

While Sesotho is spoken in Bloemfontein, the migrants maintain that the dialect differs from that which is spoken in Lesotho. They say that there are some instances when local people fail to understand them when they speak. The alternative is to speak English when they encounter people who do not understand Sesotho. But, resorting to English does not always help as the participants maintain that they sometimes come across local people who do not understand English. The fact that most research participants emphasize that a language barrier exists between them and local residents is in contrast with literature that suggests that migrants from Lesotho do not experience a language barrier in South Africa (cf. Hansen, Jeannerat, and Sadouni 2009:193).

Conclusion

Migration from Lesotho to South Africa has a long history and it will continue into the future. Researchers have documented dimensions of this migration, but mostly focus on increasing female migration, the recruitment of farm workers, and employer demand in shaping labor migration from Lesotho. Fewer studies investigate the everyday experiences of migrants and of those that do, most have a narrow focus on working conditions. This chapter explores a broader spectrum of events and situations in the everyday lifeworld and everyday experiences of Basotho labor migrants in Bloemfontein.

When analyzing the migrants' narratives, it becomes clear that they are treated as strangers in a place they are familiar with: geographically and culturally, the Free State is not particularly different from Lesotho and the distance between Maseru and Bloemfontein is relatively short. But, because the migrants have crossed an international border, they are considered as outsiders. Authorities and the general community alike are hostile towards them. The police abuse their power and subject the migrants to humiliation. They chase after them at

work, demanding work permits which they know the migrants do not hold so that they can demand bribes. They harass them in the streets and humiliate them by making fun of them. But, it is not only the police; members of society at large call them names, mock their dressing style, and accuse them of stealing jobs. Landlords are unresponsive to their complaints about poor housing conditions which endanger their physical health. Their lack of proper documents restricts them from accessing public services and also makes them vulnerable to exploitation by employers. Their employability is judged on the basis of language proficiency rather than capability.

It cannot be denied that these migrants' everyday lives are characterized by marginalization, insecurity, and exclusion. The local people have set clear boundaries regarding who can and who cannot belong in South Africa. The lack of South African identity documents already implies that migrants cannot be provided with services. They are harassed and exploited by authorities and employers because they lack recourse to the law. Their dressing style and accent distinguish them as "other." For some time, a modern view of life in our times has been that everyone who inhabits the city—irrespective of nationality—has the right to urban residency. But, it is clear that the migrants' right to participate in and to have free access to Bloemfontein still very much depends on citizenship. Crossing an international border indeed poses a challenge to belonging irrespective of how close the distance may be between the country of origin and the destination.

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Experiencing Boundaries[1]

ABSTRACT | *The Lesotho-South Africa border is regarded as highly porous with many Basotho migrants seizing work and educational opportunities in South Africa, while simultaneously maintaining strong ties to family members, businesses, and land in Lesotho. The fact that Sesotho is spoken on both sides of the border is one of the particular factors that has made it possible for people to move back and forth with relative ease. The border nevertheless remains an important political and socio-cultural barrier in the lives of those crossing it. While some have managed to acquire the permits that enable them to cross the border freely and take up formal work, others occupy a precarious legal status, which limits their housing and employment prospects. Moreover, the lives of all African migrants in South Africa have been affected by growing xenophobic violence in recent years. This has reinforced distinctions between insiders and outsiders, and limited the opportunities migrants have to experience belonging to South African society. Despite these emerging dynamics, the ways in which the border is perceived by migrants—as both a physical barrier between countries and as a social barrier distinguishing peoples—has yet to be explored. Drawing on narrative interviews conducted with Basotho migrants living in Bloemfontein, South Africa in a variety of legal and employment circumstances, this chapter aims to highlight the meaning of the border in the migrants' day-to-day lives.*

Introduction

> It should be obvious that the construction of borders reflects existing ethnic, group, and territorial difference (subsequent) just as it is often responsible for the creation of those differences in the first place (antecedent). [Newman 2006:155-156]

Borders are material in that they can be viewed as lines separating two sovereign territories. They are also much more than that, however, insofar as they influence culture, identity, and people's territorial belonging. As Morehouse (2004:20) puts

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it, borders, like all boundaries, "are material and metaphorical spatializations of difference." People actively reproduce boundaries and borders through their perceptions of difference and the various ways they perform identities and modes of belonging. However, they may also challenge material borders through transgressive practices carried out in their everyday lives.

Lesotho's position as a landlocked country inside South Africa makes it a unique case study by which to study borders and border crossings. Lesotho is the only UN member "entirely enclosed by another member" (SAMP 2002:9).

Figure 1. Positioning of Lesotho.

Source: Self-elaboration.

Geographically, socially, and economically South Africa and Lesotho have long been closely linked. Due to the relative strength of the South African economy, however, there has been a strong historical tendency towards movement from Lesotho to South Africa (Murray 1981). From the late 1800s until the 1990s, many Basotho men came to work in the mines. The number of migrants grew exponentially over time, and during the 1970s and 1980s as much as 50% of the working age population of Lesotho was temporarily employed in South Africa (Cobbe 2012). Moreover, according to recent statistics, in 2013 Lesotho was represented among the top ten source countries for migrants receiving temporary and permanent residence permits for South Africa (Statistics South

Africa 2014:17, 37). The economy of Lesotho has become very dependent on funds generated through migrant labor, which are usually sent back to Lesotho in the form of household remittances (Mensah and Naidoo 2011).

While migration from Lesotho to South Africa has remained steady over time, the characteristics of those moving have gradually changed. Since the 1990s, there have been fewer opportunities in the mining sector, which has reduced the number of men moving for work (Coplan 2001). Instead, more women have been moving to South Africa to seek work in the domestic and agricultural sectors (Ulicki and Crush 2007). That said, today both male and female migrants from Lesotho can be found working in a wide range of employment sectors, ranging from the informal to the formal, from the less skilled to highly skilled. There are Basotho migrants working in the healthcare, beauty, education, agricultural, retail, and domestic service sectors. It can therefore not be said that all migrants have a similar, homogeneous perspective or standpoint from which to experience the Lesotho-South Africa border. Any investigation of the border experience must therefore take into account the different circumstances encountered by these migrants, and the different opportunities they have to transcend the border between the two countries.

Most migrants from Lesotho to South Africa move to the neighboring Province of the Free State, where there are numerous linguistic and cultural similarities. That said, growing xenophobia in South Africa in recent years has raised the importance of South African citizenship as a prerequisite for belonging to the nation state, something which has heightened the socio-cultural meaning of the border between the two countries. Hence, while migrants from Lesotho may experience fewer cultural and linguistic barriers than most migrants to South Africa, they still experience xenophobia, restrictive immigration policies, and they are excluded from opportunities which are open to South African citizens.

Researchers have written about increasing female migration, the recruitment of farm workers, and employer demand in shaping labor migration from Lesotho (Ulicki and Crush 2000; 2007; Johnston 2007). However, little effort has been made to understand how Basotho labor migrants view the border—as a physical/political barrier and as a socio-cultural construct. In this chapter, a phenomenological approach is adopted to explore the experience of Basotho labor migrants who cross the South Africa-Lesotho border in order to obtain

work. The chapter investigates how these migrants perceive, experience, and make sense of the border, and in doing so, aims to build an understanding of how the migrants under study attribute meaning to the border in their everyday lives.

Placing the South Africa-Lesotho Border

As Morehouse (2004) points out, context is key to understanding how boundaries are shaped and attention must therefore be given to their historical, geographical, and socio-economic formation. In Southern Africa, borders are a colonial construct. In many cases, these borders were drawn arbitrarily and were the outcome of power struggles between colonial powers. Interestingly, Lesotho was formed when the Basotho people resisted colonial rule during the wars in the Orange Free State of South Africa in the 1860s (SAMP 2002). Aided by a mountainous geography, the Basotho people were able to defend their territory. While some mobility restrictions between South Africa and Lesotho were put in place from that time, in practice, people moved freely across the border. It was only in 1963 when passports were first required to cross into South Africa (SAMP 2002). The apartheid government in power in South Africa at the time practiced isolationism and viewed people coming from Lesotho as a potential security threat. Anti-apartheid activities were indeed often planned and executed from Maseru, the capital of Lesotho. While security concerns are no longer an issue between the two countries, Lesotho is today treated just as all other foreign countries, and Lesotho citizens require visas to enter South Africa. Justifications typically given for this are "unauthorized immigration, employment, free use of South African social services, and criminal activity in general" (SAMP 2002:4). In reality, however, the South Africa-Lesotho border is a very porous boundary. While employment and study permits are more difficult to acquire, one can easily acquire a one month visitor's visa which can then be renewed by simply returning to Lesotho and then reentering South Africa. Moreover, according to a recent SAMP [South Africa Migration Project] report (2002), immigration and customs regulations can easily be overcome due to corruption at the border, and many people continue to cross the border illegally by way of swimming the river that divides the two countries or by crossing at other unpatrolled areas.

A tradition of moving across the Lesotho-South Africa border has been well-established for generations and even today, despite the imposition of visa

requirements, some Basotho cross daily for school, work, or shopping, while others move for longer periods of time. Such migration patterns are well-established between South Africa and Lesotho, but also between South Africa and other countries in the region, such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Botswana. Ethnic and linguistic similarities between people on both sides of the border, as well as family and kinship ties have encouraged migration flows in the region. Recognition of the linkages between South Africa and the countries neighboring it was given at the end of apartheid in 1994, when the country became increasingly open to African migrants. Disparities between South Africa and its neighbors in terms of political stability, infrastructure, resources, and services, as well as the greater number of job opportunities in South Africa have also contributed to the significant influx of migrants from neighboring countries since that time (Peberdy 2001).

In recent years, however, there has been growing resistance to immigration in the South African context. Following the establishment of democracy in South Africa in 1994, expectations were very high, with Black South Africans feeling that they would finally receive what had long been denied to them under apartheid: financial security and a better quality of life. Instead, competition for jobs, housing, and other state resources has led to a growing emphasis on legal belonging in the country at the expense of linguistic and cultural commonalities or kinship ties maintained across borders. There has therefore been growing violence and resentment directed at migrants, who are often blamed for the high unemployment and crime rate, over-crowded informal trading sector, the growth of the drug trade, and for bringing diseases such as malaria, yellow fever, and AIDS (Crush 2000; Peberdy 2001; Gotz and Abdoumaliq 2003; McConnell 2009; Dodson 2010; Landau and Freemantle 2010).

Migrants have been frequently subjected to harassment by the police, detention, and deportation, and have been the targets of day-to-day xenophobic attitudes which exclude them from full participation in and belonging to South African society (Crush 2000; Madsen 2004; Neocosmos 2008; Hansen, Jeannerat, and Sadouni 2009; Dodson 2010; Landau and Freemantle 2010). Migrants may be identified by their lack of official status in South Africa, but also on aspects of their physical appearance, their dress, their accents, or their language skills. A study conducted by Crush (2000) found that the majority of immigrants, refugees, and non-citizens in general living in South Africa had, according to

their own perception, at some point experienced harassment by both South African citizens and the authorities.

Given the growing opposition to migration in the South African context, migrants from Africa in particular have faced growing risk of deportation and arrest. They have been increasingly subjected to police raids of their homes and workplaces, and to road blocks (Neocosmos 2008; Kihato 2013). It is not uncommon even for documented migrants to face such difficulties, with many relying on bribery as a way to overcome harassment (Madsen 2004; Sidzatane and Maharaj 2013).

So, despite the seemingly arbitrary meaning of the borders in the region, in the postcolonial context, there have been strong nationalist movements in many Southern African countries which have served to strengthen the importance of borders between states. In the post-apartheid context of South Africa in particular, this has resulted in an increased importance being placed on citizenship and a reluctance to honor multiple citizenship claims, and more generally—to welcome migrants, especially those seeking asylum or looking for work.

Borders and Everyday Life

Borders are physical, geopolitical entities, but they also greatly impact and are impacted by identities and constructions of difference (Newman and Paasi 1998; Gielis 2009). As Jenkins (2015:14) points out: "It is at the boundary during encounters with Others that identification occurs and identity is produced and reproduced, along with the group in question. Group boundaries, in this view, can be said to exist simultaneously in *individual knowledge* of them, in *practice and interaction*, and as encoded and embodied in *institutions*." To date, there has not been a great effort to link the literature on group boundaries and political borders. While the former considers the social processes by which "ethnic" categories are maintained despite the mixing and movement of people between these categories, the latter is associated more with geopolitical concerns. Hence, the studies of political borders and socio-cultural boundaries are divided by discipline, terminology, and conceptualization (Newman 2006). But, material borders are one type of boundary among others, and in this study, the goal is to explore the relationship between the material border and less tangible boundaries separating and connecting Lesotho and South Africa.

Central to this endeavor is moving away from a top down view of borders that favors only the perspective of the nation state, to instead consider how citizens and migrants perceive, perform, reproduce, and challenge physical borders in their daily lives (Johnson et al. 2011). As van Houtum (2011:60) puts it: "We are not only victims of the border, but also the producers of it." Through othering, displays of nationalism, performances of national belonging, as well as through various claims-making processes related to mobility, human, and political rights people enact borders in their everyday lives (Gielis 2009; Johnson et al. 2011; Jenkins 2015). As Newman and Paasi (1998:187) put it, even if boundaries "are always more or less arbitrary lines between territorial entities, they may also have deep symbolic, cultural, historical and religious, often contested, meanings for social communities." Hence, it is not only borders, but also the process of bordering itself that impacts on people's everyday lives.

The space in which bordering occurs can extend well beyond the line of the physical border itself to encompass the lived spaces of those who cross the border. As Gielis (2009) has emphasized in relation to those moving between Germany and The Netherlands, borders can therefore be understood not only in their material form, but also as something that is lived and experienced. Several recent studies have emphasized the everyday lives of borderlanders who may live lives that transcend a physical border. The everyday lives of these migrants are frequently depicted as cosmopolitan and hybrid, with the border itself being conceptualized not only as a place of division but also as a meeting point between places (Morehouse 2004).

It is also important, however, to understand the order, categories, and limitations imposed by the physical border as something that can be resisted and challenged by those living in border spaces. As several scholars have pointed out, the political division imposed by the presence of a physical border is not something that necessarily coincides with the perceptions, agenda, and everyday practices of those living on either side of the demarcation. As Jones (2012:697) notes:

> People accept that the state is there and a categorical order has been imposed, but they do not necessarily accept those categories. When required, they perform their role as subjects of the state, but at other times they continue to think and live in alternative configurations that maintain connections across, through, and around sovereign state-territoriality. [p. 697]

Hence, people may challenge the border by engaging in various transgressive activities such as illegal crossings, the smuggling of goods, and otherwise refusing to abide by state regulations (Jones 2012). While not necessarily overtly political in motive, such initiatives challenge the top down understanding of borders and instead highlight the way people live their everyday lives in border spaces.

Of particular interest to our study is the work of scholars like Struver (2005) who have drawn on the work of de Certeau to understand the everyday practices migrants use to overcome the challenges people face through the process of migration in their everyday lives. According to de Certeau (1984), the daily practices people adopt in order to "make do" are sometimes in opposition to the practices and strategies used by states to control citizens. In this sense, migrants should not be seen as simply responding to institutional and social structures they encounter, but also as active agents who find ways to circumvent these structures in order to achieve their goals. As Highmore (2002) notes, de Certeau offers an alternative way of looking at the political. Everyday life, according to de Certeau, is inventive and its politics is one that emerges from everyday practice, whether conscious or unconscious.

Several studies have considered the everyday experiences of migrants in South Africa, as well as how they "make do" and "get by" despite the challenges they face. For the many migrants who are not legally entitled to work, working life can be very difficult with low wages being the norm, and on account of their precarious legal status, exploitation and abuse are also common experiences. This creates an inability to plan ahead financially (Dinat and Peberdy 2007; Ulicki and Crush 2007; Griffin 2011; Pande 2014) as they are never sure how long they will be working in a given place and with what wage. In order to deal with their lack of economic security, many migrants may work overtime or take on multiple jobs. For those with higher levels of skill, who may find it easier to secure work, not having citizenship or permanent residency may pose as a barrier to career progression.

The living conditions of the migrants are similarly shaped by their place in the labor market. A number of factors including the temporary nature of their stay in South Africa, their official legal status, their income, and the contacts they have (or lack) in the country may influence how and where they choose to live. A number of studies have addressed how housing is a major concern for migrants

who are lacking in resources and security (Chireshe 2010; Munyewende et al. 2011). As they attempt to get by in the new country of residence, the migrants may experience poor living conditions, overcrowding, and threats to their security. This negatively impacts them psychologically and in terms of health.

The precarious living status and livelihoods of migrants in South Africa raise questions concerning how they perceive and experience the border and the spaces associated with the border. This chapter aims to build on the existing literature on the everyday lives of migrants in South Africa, but in doing so, goes beyond a specific focus on living and working conditions to instead consider how they make sense of their situations as border-crossing labor migrants.

Narrating the Border

The study is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm which, according to Gray (2014), focuses on how individuals interpret their lifeworlds. Interpretivism is especially interested in the uniqueness of individuals, and as such it lends itself to a qualitative approach. The study follows a narrative design. The interest of this study is in the experiences of Basotho migrants as told by them. That is similarly the interest of narrative inquiry, according to Chase (2005). Butler-Kisber (2010) suggests that narrative inquiry is an appropriate design when we want to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of individuals. The study is therefore following in the vein of thought adopted by border studies scholars such as Newman (2006) and Newman and Paasi (1998) who argue that narrative is a useful way for understanding how people make sense of the borders that affect their daily lives. As Newman (2006:152) puts it: "Through narrative, we perceive the borders which surround us, which we have to cross on a daily basis and/or are prevented from crossing because we do not 'belong' on the other side."

The purposive method of sampling is used to obtain the study participants. Purposive sampling involves selecting people who are knowledgeable about the topic of interest. The researcher relies on his/her judgment and prior knowledge to choose participants (Neuman 2012). By studying knowledgeable participants, Patton (2002) observes that the researcher will be able to answer the research questions. With our interest in understanding how Basotho labor migrants negotiate belonging in their everyday lives, we choose Basotho labor migrants

themselves as participants since they are the most knowledgeable about their experiences. We choose participants with a range of backgrounds, skill levels, and legal statuses. More than half are labor migrants in the informal sector without work permits, while others hold valid work or study permits, or even South African identification documents.

Fifteen participants relate their experiences to us: eight women and seven men. The semi-structured interviews used to gather data are based on open-ended questions. This gives participants the space to express themselves, but is structured enough to ensure that specific information is obtained from participants (Merriam 2009). The interviews are guided by an interview schedule formulated on the basis of the research questions, concepts from the theory, and the review of the literature. A pilot interview is first conducted in order to check the effectiveness of the interview questions. After finalizing the interview schedule, we meet with participants in their places of work, residence, or leisure, which, according to Creswell (2013), constitute their world of lived experience. It therefore offers the greatest possibility of getting a deeper understanding of their experiences. These meeting places are also convenient for the participants. As Roulston (2010) urges, interviews must be scheduled at a time and place convenient for both the researcher and participant. All the interviews are audio recorded with the permission of the participants. The interviews are conducted in either Sesotho or English. All Sesotho interviews are transcribed and subsequently translated.[2]

Study Findings

As already emphasized, the border between two countries can be looked at in a variety of ways: as a material entity, as a lived political reality, and as a social construct or socio-cultural marker of difference. Naturally, these different types of boundaries overlap in a number of ways. For the purposes of analysis and presentation, however, in what follows, the findings of the study will be presented by considering how the participants perceive, experience, and imagine the "physical," "lived," and "socio-cultural" boundaries separating South Africa and Lesotho.

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2   Ethical Clearance Number: UFS-HUM-2013-29.

The Physical Boundary

For many of the participants, Lesotho is divided from South Africa as much by geographical features as it is by a political boundary. Many make reference to the Caledon River dividing the two places, as well as the mountainous geography which distinguishes Lesotho and gives it a slightly different climate. While Lesotho is associated with rural landscapes, the move to Bloemfontein denotes a shift to urban life; hence, from the perspective of the participants, migration from Lesotho to South Africa can be considered a case of internal rural to urban migration rather than a move across an international boundary.

As discussed, South Africa and Lesotho are highly integrated, and there is a longstanding history of migration between the countries. Hence, it is not surprising that the participants regard the political border between the two countries as highly porous and easy to cross; movement across this boundary is regarded as expected, and in all ways unexceptional. A SAMP (2002:22) survey indicates that most Basotho see borders between South Africa and Lesotho "as an unnecessary and artificial construct." The same can be said for the participants in this study. The border is the physical manifestation of a political arrangement that is beyond their control and strategies are needed to overcome it.

The majority of the participants have Lesotho passports and enter South Africa on a monthly visitor's visa, which they find relatively easy to acquire. Some also mention, however, that South Africa can be entered without first acquiring a passport, for example, by knowing the right people and/or offering bribes to the border guards.

One woman, Rethabile,[3] who is currently working in the informal sector, tells the following story:

> At the time when I first came here, I didn't have a passport. It's the point that I don't have a passport, but I am going to Bloemfontein. Then she [the woman helping her] showed me where I should wait when I get to the border gate and what I should do to be able to leave. I waited there while she talked to some guys at the border gate. Then she told me: "These people who are standing there can be able to help you cross to South Africa." They were still being paid R50 then. So they showed me how I must go, and that lady went through the gate directly. When she got to the other side, she stopped the car and we got

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3   All participants' names have been changed to pseudonyms.

in. By the time I returned home, she told me what I should do when I get to the border gate. She called some guy she knew who helped us cross the last time, and told him that: "Hey, that girl is going to pass at a certain day. She will call and you will make a means of how she can cross." He called me, indeed, he called me. I got to him and he helped me cross, and I passed there. I first came here in 2007. In 2007, I didn't have a passport. Then it was 2008, and I still didn't have a passport. In 2009, I still didn't have a passport. In 2010, I applied for a passport. [Rethabile]

At present, most of the participants in the study opt to have a more secure status in South Africa, although this ranges from holding a work or study permit to having a monthly visitors permit which requires returning to Lesotho on a monthly basis for the purpose of renewal. The issue of permits affects how the participants perceive the physical distance between South Africa and Lesotho, and the porosity of the border. While not far in geographical distance from Bloemfontein, Lesotho still takes time and money to reach, especially when going by public transport. Most travel by shared taxis (minibuses) which cannot cross the border and hence travelers must make multiple transfers and physically walk across the border. Those who have to go back every month bemoan the time and cost it requires and the frequent trips back are something most would avoid, given the choice. Since Rethabile, cited above, received her passport, she is among those making the monthly trip:

> If it wasn't for the passport, I wouldn't go home every month, I would maybe skip a month. If I don't go this month, then I know next month I'm going. This month I should at least just send them [the family] money so that when I give it to them this month, they should be able to see what they can do. The R200 that I use for transport to Lesotho, I should know that instead of using it for transport, I add it to what I give them so that they can see what to do. [Rethabile]

Her preference that the money used to travel to Lesotho be spent on other things such as additional remittances for her family members back in Lesotho is shared by a number of the participants in the study who live in Bloemfontein on visitors' permits.

For those who have been able to secure proper work permits, however, the perception of the border is very different. These participants tend to have higher incomes and, in some cases, even access to personal vehicles. Hence, for them,

trips home are motivated by personal rather than economic reasons, and the travel distance and financial cost is much less of a barrier. These migrants are also more likely to be from middle class families, and as such they have grown up crossing the border regularly for the purposes of shopping, medical appointments, or entertainment—something that has given them the impression from an early age that the distance between Lesotho and South Africa is relatively insignificant. While some use their privileged status to make more trips across the border (for example, every weekend, in order to maintain their personal and family lives in Lesotho), others use their relative stability to stay in South Africa for months at a time without making trips back. These migrants therefore have much more choice in terms of how often they cross the border.

While some migrants have a more secure status in South Africa than others, this is not something they take for granted and almost all the participants are interested in improving their status in South Africa. While for lower skilled migrants acquiring a work permit in South Africa denotes increased freedom and security, those with work permits are interested in what kind of opportunities being a permanent resident might bring. Legal status is something few of the participants can take for granted, as even work and study permits eventually expire and another permit has to be sought.

Overall, the physical border demarcating South Africa and Lesotho is regarded by the participants as porous, but inconvenient and unnecessary. Interestingly, however, it is in the border spaces, beyond the line of the border itself, where the migrants experience and live out their daily lives, that the border has the greatest impact.

The Lived Boundary

Although the participants regard Lesotho and South Africa as very similar in many respects, their political status as outsiders, non-citizens, and, in some cases, undocumented workers greatly impacts their experience in South Africa, and they feel the power of the border between the two countries impacts many aspects of their lives.

The issues that many of the participants have with documentation and, in particular, the fact that they lack work permits, has made them vulnerable to exploitation. At work, many are paid very low wages, have encountered unfair

hiring and firing practices, and/or feel they cannot progress in their field of work due to discrimination or policies that overtly favor South African citizens. Kutloano, a man who works in the informal sector, says he tries to hide the fact that he is from Lesotho in order to avoid these setbacks:

> They will take advantage of me, if they know I'm from Lesotho. Isn't it a fact that people from Lesotho are undermined? And you should know that if you work for an employer who knows that you're from Lesotho, you will find that your salary is not equal to other people's salaries. Yes, you are paid less. You are going to find that people are being paid R150 a day, while you are only paid R120 or R100. Eh, I realized because I saw, my first employer knew that I am from Lesotho. When I came to check my salary, I found that: nah, man, my salary is little. These other people have more. Then I thought that maybe it's because I found them already at the firm. Then I learnt those who found me already at the firm, these people are also getting more money than I am. Then someone said, "No, it's because that person knows that you are from Lesotho and there is nowhere you can complain." After I left that firm, moving from that firm to the next, I never again disclosed that I'm from Lesotho. [Kutloano]

Their precarious position in both South Africa and the labor market means that employers can threaten to have the migrants arrested if they are knowingly undocumented. Alternatively employers may abuse their power by firing and hiring people at will, thereby forcing migrants to accept employment expectations that they know are beyond those normally expected of South African workers. The Basotho migrants endure these conditions because the wages they receive are often still much higher than what they would receive in Lesotho.

Among those migrants with higher levels of skill job security is still not guaranteed and the general perception is that it is often difficult to compete with South African citizens and/or permanent residents. Sometimes official regulations prevent employers from hiring people without such permanent status, while in other cases, the participants simply feel that employers are not willing to do the extra paperwork needed to secure them a proper work permit. Mamello, a woman who holds a Master's degree and is working as a professional social scientist, encountered such difficulties:

> Again, when I applied for another position [at a local institution], I was told that I was not going to be given that particular position because I am from Lesotho. So that position, or most of the positions are only for permanent residents. There were so many issues so they did not want to go through that. [Mamello]

A secondary effect of the poor labor market position occupied by many of the participants is that they typically also have limited options in the housing market. Rethabile, a woman working in the informal sector, describes the situation as follows:

> The only problem is that the houses we normally live in are not good. In fact, the houses that people rent out in Bloemfontein are not good houses, especially if they rent them out to people from places like Lesotho. Even if you tell the landlord: "You see how it is here?" She/he will not even take the initiative to maintain there. I think it's caused by the fact that we are not taken too seriously. [Rethabile]

While earning higher wages in South Africa, the migrants are often forced to live in crowded, substandard living conditions relative to what they are used to in Lesotho. For those with more financial means, this is naturally less of an issue, although even those with steady jobs and good incomes sometimes willingly choose to sacrifice their own comfort in favor of meeting the needs and desires of their families in Lesotho. One woman, who works as a nurse and has a relatively secure salary and a car, chooses to live far away from her place of work, in an area which she perceives as unpleasant and unsafe, in order to save money for investments she is making in Lesotho.

The participants emphasize that having a South African ID, or at least a proper work or study permit, is essential when trying to access medical services, banking, and education for one's child. As Limpho, an undocumented participant working in the informal sector, puts it:

> The most painful part is that whenever you go, if you don't have an ID, they won't…You won't receive services, have you seen? When you say: "No, I hold a Lesotho passport," they say: "No, we don't want passports, we want South African IDs." [Limpho]

The findings reveal that the everyday border space as experienced by the participants extends well beyond the border itself. To live in South Africa without proper documentation is challenging, despite the proximity of Lesotho to South Africa and longstanding patterns of migration between the two countries. While the Basotho migrants acutely experience the political boundary between South Africa and Lesotho in many aspects of their lives, their perception of the socio-cultural boundary between the two countries is more complex and nuanced.

The Socio-Cultural Boundary

The participants feel that there are many similarities between South African and Basotho society which facilitate ease of movement between the two places. It can even be said that the participants view the socio-cultural boundary between South African and Basotho society as blurred, thereby challenging the political boundary between the two countries. This should be considered carefully, however, as the participant narratives point to complex constructions of similarity and difference across the Lesotho-South Africa divide.

It is typically assumed that there is no language barrier between the Free State in South Africa and Lesotho because of the large presence of Sesotho speakers in the Free State. The participants, however, have a number of different views on whether or not their knowledge of the Sesotho language makes it easy for them to find work and live in the city. While some participants feel that Sesotho facilitates their integration into South African society, others feel that differences in the way Sesotho is spoken in South Africa and Lesotho sometimes limit their communication with local residents. As one participant, Liteboho, perceives it:

> Mm, it [Sesotho] is a spoken language, which is mostly spoken [is the dominant language in the area]. But then again, when you speak Sesotho, people from Bloem still don't understand. I don't know what kind of Sesotho they speak. There are instances where they don't understand when you speak…Mm, it's important that one knows English because this Sesotho can only take you as far as the Caledon River [border between Maseru and South Africa]. [Liteboho]

A common perception among the participants is that while Sesotho is enough to secure a livelihood in Lesotho, one must know more languages to perform well in South Africa's labor market. Proficient English was a requirement for many jobs, while Afrikaans, a language to which Basotho have little exposure, is widely spoken in Bloemfontein. Finally, while Sesotho may be the dominant African language in the region, it is also common to encounter people who instead speak Xhosa, Zulu, or Tswana, which pose difficulties to communication. Interestingly, while some make an effort to change their accent to match the local way of speaking, others take pride in maintaining what they consider to be a purer form of the Sesotho language. Hence, the issue of language is not clear-cut across the Lesotho-South Africa boundary, and is experienced differently by the participants.

Lifestyle differences between the two countries are also noted and debated. South Africa's economy is more based on the exchange of money and goods than Lesotho's where many people still live on farms and are therefore more self-sufficient. Moreover, those who move to Bloemfontein from the villages of Lesotho experience a number of other differences on account of adapting to an urban environment. Cultural differences experienced on a national scale, however, are relatively small, and include things such as the types of food available and consumed, clothing styles, or ways of meeting and greeting and interacting with neighbors. These differences are generally asserted positively in favor of the Basotho way of life which is regarded as more simple, traditional, and "pure." Some participants refer to South Africa's diversity as problematic, insofar as it "contaminates" traditional Sotho norms and ways of life. A common assertion is that Sotho people in South Africa, on account of mixing with other ethnic groups and adopting a more capitalist way of living, have forgotten their traditions. Limpho explains her point of view as follows:

> You know, Basotho are quiet people, who are reserved, or respectful. Here, I think because of many ethnicities…I don't know how I can say, it's like. Just like I was complaining about children. That you will find them loitering at night, dancing at the shops. I mean, we are not the same, we are not the same! So these ones, I don't know, maybe it's because they will imitate the ways of Xhosas, imitate the ways of, what are they called, Coloreds. I mean, it's like they don't exactly know where they stand. [Limpho]

One point that is repeatedly emphasized is the perception that children are raised in a more desirable way in Lesotho, where traditional values such as respect for elders are held in higher regard.

> In Lesotho, we are not able to do as we please as children, and we still have respect for our parents. Children here do as they please. They don't like school, and they don't respect their parents. This is what I see, that here it's different from home. [Kutloano]

Such perceptions of difference are shared by participants across the skill spectrum. Thato, who works as a university lecturer, states the following:

> It's important that I still know who I am. You know? As much as I'm here in South Africa, I want it to be known that I'm Sotho, I'm not really South African. You know? At least with my language, my values. OK, not culture as such. Somewhere, somewhere…Because culture evolves, circumstances

don't always agree with culture. One needs to change. I can't really say "my culture." No…But, values. There are certain values that we have that I regard as very important, which I am trying to instill in my child, as well. [Thato]

Hence, the socio-cultural boundary between the two countries is something to be reproduced and reinforced in order to preserve what are considered valuable modes of being in the world. The majority of the participants wish to raise their children in Lesotho in order to ensure that they are raised the "proper" way. And if this is not possible, they will try to raise them in accordance with "Basotho values" in Bloemfontein.

Compared to South Africa, Lesotho and the Basotho people are regarded as relatively innocent, naive, and untouched by some of the social difficulties faced in South Africa. South Africans in this regard are perceived as a less innocent Other who is, among other things, capable of violence and crime. As Pule, a male skilled professional, puts it:

And coming from Lesotho I was probably very ignorant. In my town, I can walk at nine in the evening, or ten, and you don't really feel something could happen to you. But, later in that area, it's called Willows, it's a high crime area because of the students that stay there. It was ten pm, some guys came at me with a gun, demanding cell phone and wallet. Coming from a country like Lesotho you become ignorant. From where you come from it's probably way different. But, here it's a different environment. You have to remember, these people, they mean business [laughs]. They are not scared to exhibit raw violence. I've had to learn quickly, to choose where I stay. When you're driving, you always feel that you have to be extra careful. Crime is everywhere, particularly in your poorer countries, but because of our conservative nature, if somebody steals something from you, they usually come in daylight and they sort of come behind you and pull it out without you feeling, and if they react, they simply run away. But, here it's sheer violence. [Pule]

On the other hand, however, one female participant, Liteboho, notes some positive things about South African culture and society, such as how she has more freedom to choose her way of life and how she is less often the subject of ridicule and gossip:

So back home you know that even if you do this hairstyle [bob cut] I have on, it's a problem. I have cut my hair like prostitutes, in such and such a way. I mean, back home they look at even the tiniest detail from your nails to your

hair, including how you walk. It's a huge difference, it makes people to end up…You understand, when you get here, you feel like you have arrived at a completely different world. You feel free about everything, it only depends on what you want. [Liteboho]

Moreover, while Lesotho is less diverse than South Africa, some participants feel that it is, somewhat ironically, more open to people from different backgrounds as it has not endured the same experience of racial apartheid and national isolation that South Africa has. One participant notes, for example, the ease with which he socializes and studies with White people while undertaking tertiary studies in South Africa, something that many Black South Africans still struggle to do.

It can be argued that many of the differences experienced by the participants can be considered social in nature rather than cultural. By far the issue of greatest importance in their narratives is not how they perceive South Africans, but rather how they feel perceived *by* South Africans, especially in a context of growing xenophobia and intolerance towards outsiders. Kutloano sums up a number of the various accusations that he feels Basotho people are subject to:

> When they [South Africans] talk about people from Lesotho, you can hear that they don't…They don't like us. Eh, firstly, they say we take their jobs. Secondly [pause], they say we are the criminals here in Bloemfontein. Thirdly, they say we are the ones killing people here in Bloemfontein. [Kutloano]

It is a commonly held perception that South Africans perceive people from Lesotho as a threat, just as they do migrants from neighboring countries. While those working as undocumented migrants are most fearful of violent attacks in their homes and workplaces, those working in more professional environments appear to be somewhat less exposed and affected by such discourses. They nevertheless believe that Basotho migrants are viewed negatively in South Africa, and that their position in the society is therefore not secure. Given the attacks experienced by many migrants just months before some of the participants were interviewed, it is not surprising that they generally perceive the situation of foreigners in South Africa as getting worse rather than better.

Basotho people deal with the Othering they experience in the South African context by identifying and asserting what they see as the positive aspects of their Basotho identities, often expressed in socio-cultural terms. A common

argument, for example, is that rather than stealing jobs from South Africans, Basotho people are simply more hardworking and entrepreneurial.

The socio-cultural boundary between South Africa and Lesotho is more difficult to define than the physical border or the lived border spaces experienced by labor migrants. There are clearly many similarities across the boundary that facilitate movement between the two places. At the same time, however, subtle cultural differences and a social context that encourages the view that Basotho people are Other because they cross an international boundary to enter South Africa lead Basotho people to be self-conscious and aware of what differentiates them from their South African counterparts.

Conclusion

The physical boundary between South Africa and Lesotho is highly porous, and movement across it cannot be considered new, or in any way exceptional. What has changed, however, is the way this border is treated, with Lesotho citizens becoming increasingly regarded as foreigners. This has created a number of difficulties for migrants from Lesotho in South Africa, insofar as they require visas to enter the country and are frequently the subjects of xenophobia, exploitation, and even violence once they have entered South African territory.

The departure point of this chapter is to consider how the migrants perceive the border in their day-to-day lives. For the participants in this study, who work in a range of employment sectors ranging from the informal to the formal, the unskilled to the highly skilled, the border is merely an inconvenient boundary demarcating two highly connected national spaces. While it can be claimed that there is a common language and culture that transcend the border, it is because of the political boundary and economic inequalities between South Africa and Lesotho that the migrants are easily exploited, and are limited in what they can achieve in South Africa. That said, many continue to disregard official regulations concerning who can and cannot work in the country, and use their networks to take up jobs without the proper documents. They do what is necessary in order to achieve their economic goals, often finding ways to save money through working multiple jobs and living in substandard conditions. Where necessary, they may use bribes in order to avoid arrest or deportation.

Hence, they employ what de Certeau would consider tactics that circumvent the intentions of the state to control who can and cannot cross the border.

The physical border has nevertheless created a number of powerful socio-cultural effects, many of which have impacted the way the participants view themselves and South Africans. Perhaps most significantly the physical border has reinforced a sense of "pure Basotho" identity among the participants, which is positively asserted, especially in the face of growing xenophobia and anti-migration sentiment in South Africa. In this sense, the boundary between Lesotho and South Africa is reproduced by the participants themselves who tend to idealize Basotho traditions, values, and ways of life. Most have a great deal of pride in being Basotho and do not wish to assimilate to South African norms. The ability to maintain a Basotho way of life is in turn reinforced by their (often) insecure legal status in South Africa, and hence an enduring feeling of temporariness; visa regulations require migrants to frequently return back to Lesotho to renew their visitors' visas, which has in part contributed to the fact that most migrants maintain strong ties to their villages of origin.

To be sure, the legal status of migrants, and the level of job security they are able to attain, have some impact on how they perceive the border. Legal migrants in professional positions find it easier to cross the South Africa-Lesotho physical boundary and therefore perceive the distance between the countries as less of a barrier. They are also less often the targets of xenophobia and anti-migration discourses. Even so, these migrants are acutely aware of what they believe distinguishes them as Basotho migrants and have a strong sense of Basotho identity. Like their less legally secure counterparts, they would also prefer to raise their children in Lesotho and maintain what they regard as traditional Basotho values, irrespective of their intentions to stay in South Africa for the long term.

In conclusion, one of the key findings of this study is that there is a great deal of overlap between the physical, lived, and socio-cultural boundaries separating national entities; the relationships between these different types of boundaries should be considered in the context of specific border space contexts. It is hoped that more studies will pursue this endeavor in the future, so that border studies can adequately engage with more sociological understandings of ethnic groups and boundaries.

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Insurgent Citizenship and Sustained Resistance of a Local Taxi Association[1]

ABSTRACT | *A growing body of literature on urban and grassroots social movements is replete with case studies of citizens mobilizing against infrastructural development projects. These mobilizations, known as insurgent citizenship—the participation in alternative channels of political expression—take different forms and have various impacts. An investigation into the case of the mobilizing agenda of the Greater Bloemfontein Taxi Association (GBTA) against using a costly intermodal transport facility in Bloemfontein is aimed at highlighting the often-neglected dilemma of how powerless citizens—for example, taxi owners—respond to state hegemony. Theoretically, the chapter is grounded in the conceptual framework of insurgent citizenship and, empirically, draws on narratives of a range of participants. The findings provide an understanding of the importance of organizational structure and leadership in the sustained insurgent action by the GBTA. It is argued that the insurgent action by the GBTA is produced mainly by—on the one hand—the conflictual relationship between government policies and practices and—on the other hand—grassroots resistance to their exclusionary and marginalizing effects. Furthermore, the findings elucidate that insurgent practice may be driven by neoliberal principles of competition, profit, and entrepreneurship.*

Introduction

Globally, infrastructural development projects often have been a primary source of protests by urban and grassroots social movements (Mayer 2000; McAdam et al. 2010; Abers, de Oliveira, and Pereira 2017). These projects can include a wide range of issues such as the construction of turbines, power plants, roads, dams, and airports. Research on the protests against infrastructure projects has shown how activists use a range of protest tactics, including demonstrations (Kirchher 2012), sustained policy advocacy by non-governmental organizations

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(Steinhardt and Wu 2015), or adapting transnational labels that connect them with similar struggles in other countries (McCormick 2010). Similarly, there has been an increased focus on sustained resistance campaigns against infrastructural projects in developed countries and, to a lesser extent, in developing countries (Pahnke, Tarlau, and Wolford 2015). Two common themes emerge from these studies. First, these campaigns illustrate the ways citizens engage with the apparatus of the state. The state apparatus refers to the institutions of representative democracy and to the ability of citizens to access them or to act in relation to them (Khanna et al. 2013). Second, the campaigns highlight how citizens or relatively powerless groups respond to domination (Scott 1985) by actively forming new ways of resistance. The campaigns show that citizens—through collective efforts—"have the potential to provide a more meaningful practice of citizenship and democracy for those living on the socio-economic margins of society" (Runciman 2014:27).

Central to any discussion on citizenship is the question of civil rights and claims (Holston 1998; 2008; 2009). The understanding of citizenship—as depicted above—does not entail a passive citizenry that assumes that the state "is the only source of citizenship rights, meaning, and practices" (Holstein 1998:38). Active citizenship is closely linked to Holstein's (1998:47) conception of insurgent citizenship which has been termed to refer to an engaged citizenry who negotiates "what it means to be a member in the modern state" (1998:47). In the context of this chapter, insurgent citizenship is conceptualized as "alternative channels of political expression, with the aim of attaining greater autonomy" (Duboc 2013:67). While the conception of insurgent citizenship often refers to spatial contexts to frame and explore struggles for citizenship located in urban areas (Douglas and Friedmann 1998; Friedmann 2002; Witger 2017), it also serves as an analytical lens for the analysis of social rights enshrined in progressive constitutions such as those in countries like Brazil (Witger 2017) and South Africa (Matebesi 2017).

Post-1994 South Africa is often referred to as a democratic state in which citizen rights are enshrined in the constitution. However, as Brooks (2017) found in his review of the discourses of participatory democracy, mechanisms and programs designed to foster such rights do not always operate within the bounds of accountable institutions. Thus, it is not surprising that, contextualized within more than two decades of complex political reforms, South Africa has

experienced widespread citizen struggles against a myriad of issues, many of which relate to municipal services (Alexander 2010; Langa and Von Holdt 2012; Matebesi 2017). Several voices have also been heard "insisting upon a radical equality within the social order" (Brown 2015:3). One of the institutions at the forefront of protest against perceived injustices is the taxi industry. The minibus taxi industry, which constitutes a significant form of public transport in South Africa, has a history of struggles for recognition during the apartheid years (Sekhonyane and Dugard 2004). For example, by 1989, the South African government only recognized one national taxi body, the South African Black Taxi Association (SABTA). Over time, and primarily due to the apartheid government's policy of economic deregulation initiated in 1987 (Dugard 2001), the minibus taxi industry has been haunted by the proliferation of rival and unregulated taxi associations. The lack of regulation resulted in overtrading with subsequent concerns over ambiguous taxi permits, claims to taxi ranks, and conflict over routes (Sekhonyane and Dugard 2004). Since the early stages of the establishment of the widespread use of minibus taxis, the rivalry in this industry has lead to high levels of violence that have claimed many lives, resulting in this industry being characterized as murderous (Bank 1990; Khosa 1992; Bruce and Komane 1999; Mashishi 2007; Bähre 2014).

This chapter examines the somewhat paradoxical non-violent sustained resistance or insurgent act by the Greater Bloemfontein Taxi Association (GBTA)—a voluntary association of taxi owners and operators—to use the capital-intensive Mangaung Intermodal Public Transport Facility in Bloemfontein. The construction of this multi-storeyed taxi rank began in April 2009 and was completed in early 2011. The new taxi rank was built to bring different public transport modes, like buses, minibus taxis, and trains, under one permanent roof. After completion, local minibus taxis used this taxi rank for only three weeks. At the time, some of the major complaints by the GBTA included structural defects such as poor ventilation, narrow pathways, and a lack of adequate entrance and exit space (Makhafola 2012; Seleka 2012; Tlhakudi 2012). The more than six-year-long protracted negotiations between the Free State Provincial Government, the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (Mangaung Metro), and the GBTA are yet to resolve the impasse. The discussions often centered on the progress made by the Mangaung Metro with the plan to buy a building opposite the exit of the taxi rank to create more exits for a large number of minibus taxis. In October 2016, there was renewed hope that the new taxi

rank will be used when the Mayor of Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality signed a memorandum of agreement with the GBTA (Gaeswe 2016). However, so far the stalemate continues.

This chapter uses an interpretive approach to the study of insurgent citizenship and addresses three questions. First, what are the grievances of the GBTA about the intermodal transport facility? Second, what are possible explanations for the sustained non-violent insurgent act by the GBTA? Given these two interlinked objectives, the chapter contributes to the understanding of grassroots insurgent practices and to the exclusionary and marginalizing effects of the conflictual relationships between government decision-making processes and the responses they elicit. In particular, the chapter seeks to enhance the understanding of the web of socialized roles and entrenched behaviors that the weak (in this case, the GBTA) and the dominant (in this case, the Mangaung Metro) are caught within.

Insurgent Citizenship

An analysis of sustained resistance campaigns by a marginalized group such as the GBTA can benefit from an application of insurgent citizenship as a conceptual guide. Globally, insurgent citizenship is not only increasing in quantitative terms but it has also evolved regarding its mobilization and the protest tactics that it employs—in both democratic and authoritarian political settings. Scholars ascribe the rise of political protests in recent decades mainly to the process of (post)modernization, which emphasizes that evolving individual values have radically changed modern people's way of interacting with the political system (Inglehart 1990). This process coincides with a general reduction of levels of political trust among citizens. At the same time, the values of self-expression, including the emergence of the so-called insurgent citizenship, increased (Norris 1999; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002; Adler 2012).

Everyday spatial practices and manipulations dominate the focus of literature on insurgent citizenship. Scholars advancing the spatial context argue that cities are the breeding ground for emerging insurgent citizenship practices (Routledge 1997; Holston 1998; 1999; Isin 1999; Friedmann 2002). Holston (1998:48) identifies contemporary urban life as "sites of insurgency because they introduce into the city new identities and practices that disturb established histories." A distinct element of insurgent practices is that they transcend localized identities.

Insurgent practices also contribute to a socially diverse and heterogeneous urban population, by propagating for inclusive and substantial citizenship. Similarly, Friedmann (2002) further emphasizes the evolution of the notion of citizenship from an individual (one-to-one) relationship with the nation-state to a more universalist approach. This evolution towards a more mass-based way of life has not only contributed to the weakened role of representative democracy but has blurred formal power relations as well.

Closely linked to the notion of insurgent citizenship are theories of collective action. Here, community context and framing theories, as well as civic capacity and political opportunities are at the core of the motivation and capacity to mobilize (Opp 2009; Wright and Boudet 2013). The framing perspective is a social-psychological approach that focuses on how movement activists construct interpretations of social problems and the goals of resistance (Bendford and Snow 2000). The framing processes not only "articulate grievances, and generate consensus on the importance and forms of collective action to be pursued" (Williams 2004:93) but they also "present rationales for their actions and [for] proposed solutions to adherents, bystanders, and antagonists" (Williams 2004:93). The framing efforts of activists are the foundation of collective action (McAdam 1982).

Advocates of the framing perspective propose four conditions that must be met for collective action to take place (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Byrd 2007). These conditions are discontent (prevalent dissatisfaction without relief), ideology (collective identification of complaints as being morally legitimate by the aggrieved), ability to organize (core leaders of the aggrieved group are capable of recruiting, sourcing resources, and communicating strategies), and political opportunity (the extent to which civil liberties allow freedom of speech and association) (Oberschall 2004). Furthermore, the framing perspective contends that, in respect of movement ideology, "individuals actively produce and maintain meaning" (Dobratz, Walner, and Buzzell 2016:325). Thus, the masses will assess what is wrong and who is to blame (diagnostic framing) and what action needs to be taken (prognostic framing). Frame alignment is achieved when, according to Snow and colleagues (1986), people have a shared understanding of what is wrong and what action needs to be taken.

Another building block of the notion of insurgent citizenship is organizational structure. The structure of groups is at the basis of the forms of collective action undertaken by these groups (Opp 2009; Thomas and Louis 2014; Matebesi 2017). For example, Thomas and Louis (2014) use the violent and non-violent protest dichotomy to discuss the different forms of collective action. Simply put, non-violent and violent protests include as forms of collective action the following components: normative collective action (for example, the signing of petitions, attending peaceful protests), and non-normative collective action (for example, riots and sabotage); moderate, but not militant action; and activism, but not radicalism (Moskalenko and McCauley 2009; Becker et al. 2011). For Scott (1985:136), resistance is the opposite of hegemonic compliance and involves the overt or subtle structures related to "collective defiance of power holders." Regarding these views, peaceful forms of collective action and resistance can only be coordinated by highly structured groups. This high level of structuredness enables group leaders to communicate, frame, and sanction members without much effort (Opp 2009).

The notion of insurgent citizenship can be applied to wide-ranging contexts as demonstrated by studies conducted in various contexts in South Africa (Miraftab and Wills 2005; Meth 2010; Von Holdt et al. 2011; Langa and Von Holdt 2012; Runciman 2014; Brown 2015). South Africa has a rich history of citizen struggles against oppression by the apartheid state before 1994. At that time, the struggle was mainly about achieving recognition of formal citizenship. In the post-apartheid order—characterized by an expansion of civil rights—the struggle has shifted towards articulating "aggressively for a thicker and more substantive practice of citizenship" (Brown 2015:59). Some even argue that insurgent citizenship advances democracy and transforms the character of state-society relations (Machado, Scartascini, and Tommasi 2009; Matebesi and Botes 2011; Runciman 2014). In South Africa, the first decade after democracy was obtained in 1994, was characterized by a period of relief from citizen struggle due to the end of what Von Holdt (2013:589) refers to as "a break in the violent confrontations of the apartheid era, and hope that the democratic state will address the substantive rights (albeit their ironies and ambiguities) of citizens." Developments during this early stage of democracy were broadly in line with public opinion. However, since 2004 insurgent citizenship has increased in post-apartheid South Africa, with around 1400 protests in the period 2004-2017 that directly targeted local municipalities over the perceived inadequate provision of

services (Municipal IQ 2017). In the next section, the context of the case of the GBTA is provided as an example of insurgent citizenship. In this example, I also focus on a historical overview of the taxi industry in South Africa.

An Application: The South African Taxi Industry and the State

The minibus taxi industry has become one of the most significant contributors to the informal economy of South Africa. This multi-billion industry is predominantly Black-owned and transports over 60% of the country's lower socio-economical employment commuters (Mahlangu 2002; Czeglédy 2004). The taxi industry is sometimes hailed for playing a critical role in creating self-employment, as well as employment for many South Africans (Fobosi 2013). However, the industry has not always been regarded as a formal business in the country and, as a result, the lack of formal recognition led to the formation of the South African Black Taxi Association (SABTA) in 1979. At the time, SABTA served as the umbrella body for over 400 affiliated local taxi associations across South Africa (Moyake 2006). The internal conflict within SABTA subsequently led to the establishment of many rival taxi associations, such as the South African Long Distance Taxi Association (SALDTA). The competition between taxi operators became more and more intense and eventually signaled the beginning of prolonged violent clashes between rival taxi associations and individual taxi drivers (Hansen 2006). According to Ingle (2009:87), this violence was further compounded "by the zero-sum notion that competition is something to be suppressed."

In an attempt to provide safe, affordable transport, well-trained drivers, and acceptable employment relationships (Mahlangu 2002), the post-1994 democratic government has taken some steps to formalize and regulate the industry (Fobosi 2013). These steps towards re-regulation were resisted actively by the industry, represented by powerful taxi associations, often leading to the escalation of violence during the late 1990s (Khosa 1992:232; Dugard 2001; Sekhonyane and Dugard 2004:15). As Dugard (2001) points out, 1947 deaths and 2841 injuries were recorded between 1991 and 1999. Thus, many scholars portray violence as endemic in the taxi industry or, even worse, they characterize

it as a "murderous industry" (Bank 1990; Khosa 1992; Bruce and Komane 1999; Dugard 2001; Hansen 2006; Mashishi 2007).

A significant challenge for the taxi industry came from the introduction of the Taxi Recapitalization Program initiated by the government in 2005. Under the Taxi Recapitalization Program, taxi operators were paid an amount to scrap their old and mostly unroadworthy vehicles and buy new ones. However, several concerns were raised over the implementation of this recapitalization program. These concerns included, firstly, the length of time that it took to implement the program. The slow progress was ascribed to the high number of government departments involved in the process. Secondly, the consultation approach adapted by the Department of Transport (the government department overseeing the taxi industry) involved occasional high-level strategy meetings. Despite inputs from the taxi industry at these consultative meetings, the Department of Transport proceeded to make pronouncements on matters which had not been fully supported by the taxi industry. Thirdly, the taxi operators raised concerns that they were left in the dark about the cost of the new minibus vehicles that would have been fully compliant with the government specifications. Other concerns included the lack of subsidies to the industry, the lengthy period it would take to supply new vehicles, and the requirement that an operator's permit had to be converted to an operating license before obtaining a scrapping allowance (Moyake 2006).

Since then, the taxi industry has faced significant challenges, not least of all related to their resistance to the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system implemented by various metropolitan centers in the country. The BRT introduced dedicated lanes and formal embarking/disembarking facilities for municipal buses, aiming at faster journeys. Improved bus services held implications for the taxi industry. Additionally, contestations over routes by different taxi associations and the transformation and restructuring of the taxi industry continue, which lead to numerous confrontations as a result of unlicensed vehicles, persisting violence, and the general lack of safety of commuters. The hostile environment in the industry was taken further by the mushrooming of meter taxi companies such as Uber and Taxify. No other meter taxi company has met similar hostile reception than that given to Uber, which has been criticized for unfair competition practices and for having disrupted the existing systems in the passenger transportation industry in South Africa (Dube 2015).

Methodological Notes

This chapter draws on the narrative accounts of members of the taxi associations, taxi drivers, taxi owners, and key informants among municipal officials in Bloemfontein. A qualitative approach embedded in an exploratory, descriptive design was employed in order to gain an understanding of the complexity of the experiences of the participants. A non-probability purposive and snowball sampling technique was used to recruit the chairperson of the GBTA, 12 taxi drivers, eight taxi owners, two municipal officials, and two local architects. Semi-structured in-depth interviews, conducted by the author over an 11-month period (April 2016 to March 2017), were used to collect the data.

The interviews were conducted at the informal taxi ranks in the central business district of Bloemfontein and not at the mostly defunct new intermodal transport facility. The interviewees signed consent forms before the commencement of the in-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews with the key informants from the taxi industry were conducted in Sesotho and English in the case of the two municipal officials. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and a thematic analysis was used to identify, analyze, and report on common issues, as well as specific experiences and perspectives regarding the contestation around the intermodal transport facility. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the narratives of the participants were triangulated with newspaper reports and official government reports on the intermodal transport facility. The main themes covered in the research deal with the grievances commonly expressed by the research participants and with the underlying reasons for the sustained non-violent insurgency of the GBTA. These two themes are presented in the following two sub-sections.

Grievances of the Greater Bloemfontein Taxi Association (GBTA)

More than six years (2011 to 2017) passed since the completion of the Bloemfontein intermodal transport facility that cost about 400 million South African Rands. According to a report published three years before the construction of this facility, the primary goal of the Metropolitan Municipality was to expand and redevelop the old Russel Square taxi rank in the central business district of Bloemfontein into the city's primary transport facility. The plan also included

the integration into this intermodal facility of the Bloemfontein railway station and bus transport facilities (Mangaung Metro Municipality 2017). This chapter aims to address the question: Why did the GBTA manage to foster insurgent citizenship among its members?

The framing perspective, which involves the articulation of grievances and generating consensus on collective action strategies, is helpful in providing a context within which to answer the above question. Simply put, the framing perspective looks at how "meaning is socially constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed" (Benford 1997:410). Various motivations were mooted in the media at the time for the construction of the intermodal transport facility. Firstly, there was the issue that the three formal transport facilities in Bloemfontein—Central Park Bus station, CBD taxi rank, and the railway train station—which catered for more than 50,000 commuters on a daily basis, could no longer handle the ever-increasing number of commuters (IMIESA 2011:56). The available formal minibus taxi facility in the CBD of Bloemfontein could only make provision for approximately 200 taxis, and it was estimated that about 700 more taxi bays were needed (IMIESA 2011:57). Secondly, the inability of the three formal taxi facilities to handle the coordination of taxis led to the mushrooming of informal facilities. There were eight different operational associations, all affiliated to the Greater Bloemfontein Taxi Association (GBTA) (Seleka 2012). The high number of taxis in the CBD of Bloemfontein led to numerous other challenges such as pressure on traffic flow and pedestrian mobility, overcrowding, and safety of the public (IMIESA 2011). Thirdly, the existing transport infrastructure was regarded as not being user-friendly. These taxi facilities were difficult to reach as they were scattered all over the CBD. For this reason, the notion of an integrated transport facility with proper pedestrian facilities was propagated (Seleka 2012; Tlhakudi 2012).

From the motivations mooted in the media for the construction of the intermodal transport facility in Bloemfontein, I now turn to the grievances reported by the research participants. Among the main grievances shared in the interviews are the size of the intermodal facility (particularly for taxis), the lack of consultation, and the safety issues. For the GBTA's taxi owners and taxi drivers, one of the most common complaints concerns the inability of the new intermodal transport facility to accommodate a large number of taxis, as well as the bigger, new minibus vehicles. Other complaints from taxi drivers relate to the fact that two

taxis cannot simultaneously enter or leave the building. The inadequate space compelled commuters to spend long periods waiting in queues. Consequently, this affects the traffic flow around the intermodal transport facility adversely. Taxi drivers also complain about the single lift, which is often out of order. As a result, one taxi driver notes:

> It has been a nerve-rattling and bone-jarring experience as commuters were expected to climb two flights of stairs before reaching the taxis.

Taxi owners also report their inability to understand why the rank was built in the first place. One taxi owner remarks:

> This taxi rank does not meet any of our needs. I keep on asking myself what the real reason behind the building of this death trap was.

Expanding on this obviously emotive response, another taxi owner says:

> Anger aside. I do not want to lie, it is a beautiful building, but, it cannot be occupied by human beings.

The majority of taxi owners highlighted the negative impact on the health of people. One taxi owner explains the health threat as follows:

> I would rather work from the streets than in that so-called state-of-the-art taxi rank. You do not have to stand longer than 30 minutes in that rank without reaching for your breath. Eh! No, we are not that desperate!

Taxi drivers share similar experiences about the potential health threats. A taxi driver makes the following remark:

> The building cannot accommodate 22-seater taxis, as it is too small. What does this mean for the owners? The poor ventilation in the building, which is compounded by fumes from the exhausts of taxis in an overcrowded taxi rank is bound to cause significant health hazards in the end. Another problem relates to safety. Should a taxi catch fire, or any other fatal incident, for that matter, happens, personnel from emergency services will find it hard to reach those affected in time.

Another central concern of the research participants relates to the consultation process before the building of the intermodal transport facility. The responses from taxi drivers and owners differ from that of the GBTA representative regarding

the consultation that took place. Both taxi drivers and taxi owners describe the consultation process as being "farcical." A taxi driver, for example, says:

> We heard about the building of the facility, but thought we would be informed.

Similarly, one taxi owner also expresses concern that they had not been sufficiently briefed about the construction of the intermodal transport facility.

An interview with the municipal representative reveals that the taxi association was indeed consulted. According to the municipal representative, all the relevant stakeholders, including the GBTA, had been consulted in time and were provided with opportunities to comment on the design of the intermodal transport facility. One quotation from the municipal representative captures this position:

> The GBTA was part of the many trips to Johannesburg that we took with architects to familiarize ourselves with the kind of facility, including the taxi rank that will best suit the needs of the taxi industry in Bloemfontein.

The municipal representative continues by stating that the GBTA was even requested to provide the number of registered taxis that will be using the facility. The Municipality remains steadfast that they consulted with the GBTA. However, when asked why the GBTA is failing to acknowledge that they were consulted, the response from the municipal representative was that, perhaps, the GBTA wanted to put pressure on the Municipality to allow them to manage the facility. Concerns about the purported intention of the GBTA to manage the transport facility were also reported in the media. One municipal official was quoted as follows: "This is absurd. How will they manage such a vast facility when they were unable to manage a smaller taxi rank?" (Tlhakudi 2012:2).

An architect, when asked for an opinion about the intermodal transport facility, explains that, although he was not involved in the project, he does not believe that the fault of the design of the building is with the architects. He, however, points out that:

> It was undoubtedly a glaring oversight to have thought that such a large number of vehicles would be able to enter and exit the rank without trouble.

He concedes that this building is of architectural significance for the following reason:

> This building yields a poignant lesson for us in the building industry that we should never ignore or underestimate the human factor when designing structures. Certainly, I believe this is what happened here.

Another architect notes that he is impressed with the innovative materials used on the intermodal transport facility, unlike the traditional kerbside shelters used for taxi ranks. His primary concerns center on the issue of ventilation. He expresses both his approval and disappointment:

> Such a building should serve the purpose of resolving some of the pressing challenges experienced in the CBD and not create any new ones. I must admit, it is a worldclass building, and for that, we need to applaud the Municipality and other role players. However, I reckon not enough attention was paid to natural ventilation, which would have been a sustainable design strategy, considering the main objective of providing buildings with the required air quality and quantity. Within this context, cross-floor ventilation is not a luxury, but a necessity in such buildings.

Previous research demonstrated the central role of the collective identification of complaints as being legitimate by the aggrieved (Oberschall 2004; Taştan 2013; Karriem and Lehn 2016). Despite the differing opinions about whether the GBTA was consulted or not, many of the participants' concerns centered on the user-friendliness of this intermodal transport facility.

What Enabled the GBTA to Sustain the Non-Violent Insurgency?

This section of the chapter focuses on the conditions that made it possible for the GBTA's collective action. Several studies demonstrate that organizational structure is closely linked to the success of a social movement (Opp 2009; Taştan 2013; Thomas and Louis 2014). The GBTA is a unitary actor and, as with most modern-day social movements, its superior coordination of strategy and mission within its ranks allows it to use its resources to advance its insurgency effectively. Thus, the taxi drivers and taxi owners had an advantage of belonging to an organization which had been in existence for some time. The organized structure of the GBTA provides the aggrieved with the necessary leadership, and it was able to mobilize resources and to create an environment conducive to the sustained insurgency.

The GBTA indicates that the collective action was possible because its members remained resolute in their decision not to use the new taxi rank at the intermodal transport facility. The chairperson of the GBTA commented extensively about how the Association acted as a means through which individual members could exercise a degree of agency. When asked about the relatively peaceful nature of their collective action, the chairperson of the GBTA indicates that he cannot underline enough the importance of their peaceful approach:

> For us, our peaceful approach has become a powerful tool of politics. The taxi industry is often seen as being managed by ill-fated and ill-advised elements.

He further criticizes the Municipality for having tried to unleash the police on taxi drivers during the early stages of the insurgency. He emphasizes that the approach of the GBTA caught authorities by surprise as they were eager to suppress the action of taxi drivers by using police brutality and unjustified arrests:

> To me, it would be fair to state that our collective spirit rendered the police helpless and insecure. Does our action really justify the vilification we had to endure from the police?

Several taxi drivers and owners cite that the Municipality took a conservative stance in as far as dealing with the GBTA on the matter of the new intermodal transport facility. They emphasize that even they were themselves surprised by the new sense of camaraderie among themselves that was engendered by their collective action. One taxi driver recounts how ill-behaved other taxi drivers were towards one another in the past and that as a result of their collective action, their attitude towards each other changed. The fact that the GBTA was able to act as a single voice for the local taxi industry in respect of the impasse about the intermodal transport facility is hailed as exemplary by this same taxi driver. Another taxi driver expresses the renewed discovery of the collective power of the GBTA in the following way:

> It is evident that shortcuts do not yield positive returns. We have demonstrated to the state that we are a force to be reckoned with. We have certainly defeated the iron-fisted law and order approach of the state. At one point, we thought we had no choice but to use the rank. But, our leaders told us to be determined in asserting our rights and that we have to continue the struggle for an industry that is taken seriously by everyone, including the state.

Attempts by the Municipality to force taxi operators to use the intermodal transport facility soon after its completion were widely reported. Several newspapers referred to the attitude of the Municipality and the state towards the GBTA and its members during 2013. Some of these articles reported that the Mayor of the Municipality set September 2013 as the deadline to relocate all public taxis to the new intermodal transport facility. The Municipality stated: "The reality is the facility has to be used at some point because the government has made a huge investment in this building" (Molebatsi 2013a:2). This deadline came and passed without any change in the attitude of the GBTA and its members. The earlier optimism of both the Mayor and the Municipal spokesperson once again met with non-violent resistance by taxi drivers.

One taxi driver notes that the Municipality undermined them and that the facility should instead be used as a government garage or parking area. Towards the end of October 2013, the Free State Provincial Member of the Executive Committee for Police, Roads, and Transport issued an ultimatum in which he gave the Municipality and the GBTA three weeks to reach an agreement on the relocation of public taxis to the intermodal terminal or else he would step in to enforce the law. He further showed his intention to use strict action when he said: "The pick-up point is the official taxi rank, and those refusing to adhere to that stipulation will have their licenses revoked" (Molebatsi 2013b).

This time, the GBTA seemed willing to compromise and persuaded some of its members to relocate to the new terminal. Again, the majority of the taxi owners and taxi drivers vowed not to use the facility, stating that they would not be intimidated or "ordered around like kids" (Mekoa 2013; Molebatsi 2013b). Many taxi drivers interviewed are of the opinion that their campaign had gained widespread sympathy from the community. This sympathy, they believe, is mainly due to the intransigent attitude of the state, including the Municipality, and the use of security forces while claiming to support negotiations.

In summary, the GBTA had the leadership and organizational structure, as well as empathetic members to advance its goals. While the GBTA provided the leadership and organizational structure to sustain the non-violent insurgency, it was its members who refused to abandon the use of informal taxi ranks when the Association seemed ready to give in to the Municipality's threats.

The Future of Non-Violent Insurgency

It is known that the most successful protest movements in history have been the ones that have set their agendas. In an attempt to make sense of the future relationship between the Bloemfontein Municipality and the GBTA, representatives from both were asked what their views are in as far as the impasse is concerned. The Municipality representative offers the following view:

> We are committed to ongoing negotiations which are at a critical stage, but we are really disappointed in how things turned out. I only hope there will be much more rigorous introspection on the part of the Taxi Association before the next round of meetings.

The Greater Bloemfontein Taxi Association (GBTA) is of the opinion that the Municipality is negotiating in bad faith. As the GBTA chairperson argues:

> For us, it will be a major step forward if the building could be extended. That is a simple demand from us. Our members are also demanding that the Public Protector should release its report about how the funds allocated to the building of the intermodal facility were spent.

Similar utterances are made by taxi drivers and taxi owners who state that they are adamant that they will only use the new facility when the space around the entrance and exit of the taxi rank and the air ventilation problems are resolved. One driver sums up this view:

> We know that not all our demands can be met at once, but let the Municipality show us that they genuinely want to contribute to a solution for the new facility by addressing our concerns.

In Conclusion

This study focuses on the sustained non-violent insurgent activism by a civic organization in an urban setting in Central South Africa. Social movements across the globe have used civil disobedience as a means of exerting pressure on the political system. These collective acts by ordinary citizens give new impetus to what is known as insurgent citizenship. This study confirms the importance of both organizational structure and leadership when marginalized groups attempt to mobilize towards obtaining their rights. The findings suggest that a pre-

existing organizational structure is important for social movement mobilization, and it provides institutions with improved organizational opportunity.

This research provides insights into social movement studies. Firstly, as confirmed by several researchers (Meth 2010; Von Holdt et al. 2011; Langa and Von Holdt 2012; Runciman 2014), citizens turn to non-institutionalized means once institutionalized ways of settling disagreements proved to be unsuccessful. The non-violent insurgent action by the GBTA follows on the failure of formal channels of engagement with the Bloemfontein Municipality. Also, the resistance of the GBTA should be understood against a general trend in post-democratic South Africa where citizens are increasingly taking a firm stance against any perceived threat or injustice.

The question remains: What motivated the GBTA to adapt a non-violent insurgent approach? According to Butcher and Frediani (2014:119), "insurgent practices have manifested in a diversity of approaches ranging from contestation to negotiation-based practices." In the context of this research, studies suggest that successful social movements often benefit from their organizational structures (Heckathorn 1989; Opp 2009; Tapscott 2010; Lupo 2014). Peaceful protests also require coordination and restraint, something that only a structured group such as the GBTA can provide. This kind of structure makes effective communication, mutual encouragement, and sanctioning possible. Conversely, spontaneous and highly fragmented groups have weak authority structures and often fail to constrain violence (Opp 2009). In highly structured groups, the leaders and members of the groups regularly meet to discuss activities (Morris and Staggenborg 2007). In such highly structured groups, collective action is achieved through a sanctioning system consisting of strict norms requiring cooperation (Heckathorn 1989).

Notwithstanding the organizational structure, individual motivations, and internal group dynamics, studies of insurgent practices also have to consider the broader political, economic, and cultural context of their cases. In South Africa, several studies report on the long-standing contentious relationship between the state and the taxi industry (Bank 1990; Dugard 2001; Fobosi 2013; Gibbs 2014; Dube 2015). This research reveals that, while overt civil disobedience (often in the form of boycotts and road blockades by the taxi drivers) against the state is not uncommon, the sustained insurgent act by the GBTA is unprecedented.

Thus, the GBTA's resistance can be construed as part of a long-standing tradition in the power and ideological conflicts that exist between the state and the taxi industry.

In conclusion, I argue that the GBTA case is not merely reflecting a considerable degree of non-responsiveness by the state. Instead, the GBTA's insurgent act is a cause of, and a means for, demanding and practising new forms of citizenship in the 21st century. Since interest groups mobilize concessions around social issues, it is argued that effective social movements are often produced through the dialectical relationship between government policies and practices and grassroots resistance. In the case of the GBTA, the non-violent insurgency was itself also driven by neoliberal principles of competition, profit, and entrepreneurship.

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*But I'm still a civilized man,
you know, and a man needs
more than scents and shadows
to make sense of the world.*

A fella needs a story.

Don't you think?

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