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YOUTH IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Acheampong Yaw Amoateng and Elizabeth Biney

Youth in Post-Apartheid South Africa

This book investigates the life experiences of youth in South Africa, considering whether contemporary youth have benefitted from the socioeconomic reconstruction of post-apartheid society.

Student protests against apartheid drove transformative change in South Africa, and the subsequent new constitution promised positive change for the nation's youth across a range of sectors. Adopting a sociological perspective, this book uses primary and secondary data sources to illustrate the myriad ways post-apartheid socioeconomic developments have impacted the life experiences of the country's youth across health, education, family life, economic activity, technology, substance use, and politics. This book considers the historical legacy of colonialism, racism, and immigration in shaping the context in which youth experiences in the country have evolved. This book argues that in 1976 South Africa's youth became the conscience of the nation when they brought the apartheid regime to its knees during the Soweto uprising. What happens to them now will continue to define the nation's future.

This book will interest researchers across the social sciences, especially in the fields of Sociology, Demography, Development Studies, and Psychology.

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A Sociological Perspective

Acheampong Yaw Amoateng and Elizabeth Biney

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We dedicate this book to the memories of our mothers:
Yaa Achiaa
and
Betty Akuba Biney

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Introduction

This book is about the post-apartheid youth of South Africa. Its point of departure is the experiences of youth during the 1976 so-called Soweto uprising, the event that changed the political dynamic of the struggle against the apartheid regime. This singular event in the country's history thrust the youth into the social and political centre stage as the conscience of the nation. One manifestation of the centrality of youth in this society is the fact that they have become the subject of both academic and popular discourse in the country. In fact, the adoption of one of the most liberal constitutions in the world and efforts to reconstruct the country are all measures that have sought to provide equal opportunity to all citizens, especially, youth, in the areas of education, health, family life, employment, etc.

Against this background of relative progress, both the popular and academic literature are replete with accounts of the myriad ways the life experiences of the youth have been impacted by these seismic events. Without a doubt, the life experiences of the country's youth in the post-apartheid era have been studied from the viewpoints of such academic disciplines as psychology, demography, sociology, and public health. This book examines select aspects of the life experiences of youth in South Africa using a sociological perspective in a way that seeks to make it more meaningful to a broader group of scholars in the country and beyond.

Specifically, this book seeks to answer one fundamental question that has eluded scholars who have attempted to examine the life experiences of youth in post-apartheid South Africa: How have contemporary youth benefitted from the socioeconomic reconstruction of post-apartheid society?

To answer this question, the book focusses on select substantive areas of youth life experiences—youth family life, youth health, youth education and skills acquisition, youth economic activity in the labour market, youth substance use, and youth and technology. To this effect, the proposed book uses primary and secondary data sources (archival materials, published literature in the form of journal articles, research and policy reports, etc.) to illustrate the myriad ways post-apartheid socioeconomic developments have impacted the life experiences of the country's youth in the select substantive areas through a sociological lens.

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It does so in two fundamental ways. Firstly, this book recognises the central role of history in shaping the context in which youth experiences in the country have evolved by highlighting the role of colonialism, racism, and immigration. Thus, the book's frame of reference is the evolution of South African society from pre-colonial African social organisation to the transformation of the society through such coordinates as the colonial project, the institutionalisation of racism via the grand apartheid system, formal education, industrialisation of the society, urbanisation, the first and second demographic transitions, and globalisation.

In putting this book in a broad historical and socio-political context, the aim is to present the material gathered from these diverse sources in a way that makes the account of the life experiences of young South Africans accessible to a wide array of audiences: Academics, undergraduates, postgraduates, policymakers, and practitioners of youth development.

Secondly, this book examines the selected substantive issues within the context of relevant theoretical and methodological perspectives in the true spirit of the research act of blending substantive issues, theory, and methods. In other words, after selecting what we consider to constitute critical substantive areas of the life experiences of youth, this book departs from existing sociological analyses of youth life experiences by examining these issues within the context of relevant theoretical and methodological perspectives.

Specifically, the book discusses in much detail such relevant theoretical perspectives as the first demographic transition theory (FDTT), second demographic transition theory (SDTT), globalisation, the family life course perspective, and the family life cycle theory. As a sociological treatise, this book recognises and employs a multidisciplinary approach to the understanding of the multiplicity of the life experiences of youth in a multiracial, multiethnic society.

The central premise of this book is that young people everywhere in the world share certain commonalities as a demographic group, but they also simultaneously experience life under varied circumstances, especially in societies that are ethnically and racially diverse like South Africa. In commenting on the varied circumstances of youth life experiences, this is how Wyn and White (1997, p. 2) put it:

> Increasingly, however, youth researchers have pointed out that the appearance of commonality is superficial only. Even in the same locality, local divisions will make the seemingly common experience of schooling or establishing a livelihood very different and the outcomes may be significantly different. Although social change (especially in the use of technology to enhance "communication" and to bring about workplace restructuring) has affected many dimensions of people's lives, the strength of older patterns of social relationships is revealed by the continuing relevance of gender, class, and ethnicity/"race".[1]

In general, we take this approach in the present book. We seek to bring to the fore these diversities in the youth experience in South Africa with regard to each of the substantive areas we have chosen to focus on. The selection of the substantive areas, theoretical perspectives, and methodological approaches we adopt in the chapters that follow gives a clear indication that we go beyond conventional disciplinary boundaries to focus on the connections and links between young men's and young women's life experiences.

This book has been long in the making. It is the product of years of teaching and researching the lives of young men and women in South Africa by the first author at the Universities of Transkei (Walter Sisulu), Bophuthatswana (North-West), Western Cape, Johannesburg, and the Human Sciences Research Council (Cape Town). During his second tenure at the North-West University (2013–2021), Dr Elizabeth Biney joined him as a Postdoctoral Fellow for a period of three years during which they engaged in several research studies on youth and adolescent development issues which gave the much-needed impetus to this book idea after a blitz of journal article publications on the subject.

0.1 Organisation of the rest of the book

Chapter 1 discusses the conceptual framework of youth experiences within the context of the select substantive issues we focus on. To this effect, we discuss the importance of such theoretical perspectives as the first and second demographic transition theories, globalisation, family life course, and family life cycle perspectives. The first and second demographic transition theories, for instance, help explain the demographic changes that have resulted in the mortality and high fertility regimes in sub-Saharan Africa and the resultant predominance of youth in the populations of countries in the region, the postponement of marriage, and other changes in nuptiality thereof. Meanwhile, globalisation helps us to understand the problems of unemployment of the youth and other economic processes such as poverty, etc., while the family life cycle and life course perspectives help us to understand the timing of such central family events like marriage, childbirth, etc. and the socioeconomic events that underlie such transitions.

Chapter 2 examines the socio-demographic profile of the youth in the country. The essence of the chapter is the presentation of the country's youth as a heterogeneous demographic category by showing their differences in terms of gender, age, race/ethnicity, residence, and their differential access to social and economic opportunities in the country. Indeed, South Africa's youth are from varied historical, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions under which the country's young people live. Differences in age structure with regard to the youth have been highlighted to be reflective of the fertility preferences of the different ethnic backgrounds of the youth, with black African and coloured youth having levels of fertility compared to Asian and white youth.

As far as access to socioeconomic resources, the chapter draws attention to the deliberate state policy of providing differential educational opportunities to disadvantage some ethnic groups and deliberate racial discrimination against them in the housing and employment markets. These past policies have been manifested in current differential patterns in areas of education, employment, and labour force participation by the youth.

Chapter 3 examines the family context of the youth experience. Specifically, the chapter puts the contemporary family context in the context of the historical and cultural evolution of the pre-colonial African family to show the historical and cultural changes that have transformed it from being organised around broader kinship groups to its nucleated form. Among the structural forces that have transformed the family are the first and second demographic transitions and globalisation. Among the changes in the family that contemporary youth are experiencing are solitary living as opposed to living with extended kin, the separation of procreation from marriage, increased postponement of marriage and childbearing, and rational choices to remain single and childless through the increased use of modern forms of contraception.

Chapter 4 examines the health of youth by looking at the challenge of the burden of disease with regard to this demographic category. The central argument in the chapter is that young people in South Africa experience a disproportionately large number of illnesses as a result of their precarious social position. The chapter highlights the contribution of risk factors underlying the health challenges experienced by young people in the country. In doing so, the chapter identifies important social determinants of health outcomes in understanding the social causes of poor health among young people and how best to address and promote youth health and well-being in South Africa.

Chapter 5 examines the circumstances that propelled the country's youth into the limelight by looking at their participation in politics. The chapter sought to revisit the historical role of the country's youth in the country's politics by looking at contemporary youth's political participation. Round 6 of the Afrobarometer survey data was employed to measure four modes of political participation to test the hypothesis that contemporary youth are apolitical and apathetic. The chapter concludes that contrary to the conventional wisdom that contemporary South African youth are apolitical and apathetic, they actively engage in the country's politics.

Chapter 6 examines the crucial issue of the youth's role in nation-building. The chapter examines the brief history of the country's nation-building agenda during the administrations of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki and the stalling of the process after the Mbeki administration. Two main measures of nation-building—the desire for a united South African nation and the acceptance of diversity—were employed among contemporary youth. Overall, the acceptance of diversity by the youth was lower than the youth's desire for a united South African nation, a situation which suggests the persistence of the problem of ethnic-racial tensions in the country going into the future.

Chapter 7 looks at the issue of education and the acquisition of skills by the youth through the education system. The chapter discusses the history of the varied and unequal education in the country as a result of the apartheid system and how the disadvantages created by the education system for sections of the youth population spill over into their performance in the economy. It concludes that despite considerable progress in expanding educational access and opportunity at all levels, particularly for black youths, challenges in youth education persist. The inertia of the dysfunction created by apartheid education continues to haunt efforts by the state as evidenced by young people in South Africa still fighting for their human right to education.

Chapter 8 takes up the issue of the youth in the country's economy. We provide an overview of the challenges facing sub-Saharan African countries in general with regard to the structural transformation of their economies from low-growth, low-productivity trajectories to trajectories of high growth and high productivity as a means of creating employment for the region's teeming youth in particular.

Among the key challenges identified are the volatilities that characterise these economies, weak higher educational systems, and the annual oversupply of labour as a result of the very high fertility levels that prevail in the region. As far as South Africa is concerned, we look at the performance of youth in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy and conclude that like every socio-economic resource in the society, there are variations in the unemployment and labour force participation rates with regard to race/ethnicity, class, gender, age cohort, residence, and province.

Chapter 9 examines the problem of youth anti-social behaviours and, to this effect, dissects the issues of alcohol and drug use, and risky sexual behaviours by the youth. We look at the history of the studies that examined the problem of mental health of youth in general and their alcohol and drug use in particular, of how they evolved from mainly descriptive studies to explanatory studies. We conclude that these studies, which began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, about two decades after the youth's involvement in national politics, continue in contemporary society due to the persistence of the problem among today's youth.

Very few analyses of contemporary youth would be complete without an examination of the youth's interaction with technology. To this effect, Chapter 10 examines the issue of youth and technology. The premise of the chapter is the conventional wisdom which suggests that youth are well-positioned to greatly benefit from and even drive this new revolution since they have more exposure to digital media than older generations do.

While the youth are driving this revolution, the chapter draws attention to the huge digital divide between the global north and south, while it takes cognisance of the divide as far as sub-Saharan Africa is concerned with South Africa clearly having the advantage. We use limited recent empirical data to illustrate the variations among the youth with regard to access to and use of technology within South Africa in terms of residence, race/ethnicity, education, gender, etc. Recommendations about how the playing field could be levelled are made for policy purposes.

Note

1 Wyn, J. and White, R. 1997. Rethinking youth. London: Sage Publications.

1 Youth experiences

A conceptual framework

1.1 Introduction

The life experiences of young people worldwide, especially those in the developing world, have come to occupy the centre stage among policymakers, scholars, and practitioners of youth development in recent decades. In South Africa, the immediate cause of the increased attention to the youth is the pivotal role the youth played in the struggle for democracy during the Soweto student uprising.[1] This epic role played by the youth in the 1970s in destroying the apartheid system in South Africa has earned it the rather unfortunate characterisation as the *Lost Generation*, a characterisation which essentially refers to this generation's truncated education and general socioeconomic mobility because of their involvement in the liberation politics of the day.

The state has played a major role in shining the spotlight on the youth. On the eve of the democratic transition, there was a gradual acceptance of the idea mooted by the youth development sector for a policy and institutional framework that would eventually respond to the socio-economic needs of the youth. In the early 1990s, three institutional mechanisms—a youth ministry, youth affairs attached to another ministry, and a youth agency—were considered for youth development. A decision was taken to mainstream youth development across government departments to accommodate the cross-sectoral nature of youth development and the need for integrated development.

In 1996, the National Youth Commission and the South African Youth Council were formed as two institutional mechanisms to champion and co-ordinate youth development at policy and civil society levels, respectively by the National Youth Commission Act No. 19 of 1996. The National Youth Commission developed a comprehensive national youth policy in 1997 that involved a consultative and inclusive process and promoted an integrated and positive approach towards youth development.

1.2 Conceptualising youth

Since the subject matter of this book is about highlighting aspects of the life experiences of South Africa's youth, we seek to engage in an attempt to define

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the term "youth", albeit without much hope of being able to do so satisfactorily because of the elusive nature of the concept. In other words, despite its popular usage, the term "youth" does not lend itself to an easy definition in the existing literature. A large part of the problem is that like the terms "child", "adolescence", "young adult", "adult" or "elderly", "youth" is essentially a two-dimensional concept, namely, biological and social. Even though both dimensions of these terms are relative, as biological concepts, the terms refer to chronological age, while as social constructs, they refer to the culturally-grounded meaning societies attach to these chronological age-graded terms within the context of their lived experiences.

Many rites of passage such as the initiation to mark the transition from boyhood into manhood among many of the black African ethnic groups of South Africa were and still are age-based. For example, "going to the bush or mountains" for male circumcision among sections of the Nguni ethnic group and participation in the "Reed Dance" by girls of the Zulu sub-ethnic group of the Nguni were determined by age.[2] Thus, it is the use of the term as a social construct that has led to the lack of consensus on its meaning in the extant literature. Further complicating the issue are the varying definitions of youth used by international agencies. For example, the United Nations defines "youth" as those between 15 and 24 years of age, and adolescents as those between 10 and 19 years.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines "children" as persons up to the age of 18 (United Nations 2011). The US Population Reference Bureau (www.prb.org) considers "youth" as those between 10 and 24 years of age. Another commonly used bracket is 14–25 years. The African Youth Charter defines youth as as those between 15 and 35 years of age (African Union 2006), while the National Youth Policy in South Africa defines youth as those between 14 and 35 years of age (National Youth Commission 1997) to provide developmental opportunities for young people who had lost out on beneficiation because of apartheid.[3]

Historically and culturally, pre-colonial African societies were characterised by intense sex- and age-based divisions within the family and the broader society. The patriarchal nature of the family ensured that men or husbands played the more instrumental role of clearing the land for planting and hunting. In contrast, women or wives played the more expressive role of taking care of the home through childbearing, child care, elderly care, and housekeeping. Patriarchal ideology also required the subordination of children to adults both within the family and the broader society. During this period in the evolution of the family in the African context, the need for a large number of children was dominant because children were a major source of labour in families' productive enterprises.

However, the principle of the division of labour ensured that adults and children played different roles; while adults, for instance, felled trees and cleared the land for planting, children picked and carried the farm produce to the home for consumption. Moreover, it was the role of children to fetch water from the streams for cooking and washing, while children, especially girls, fetched firewood from the bush for the provision of energy for the household. Commenting on the reality and functionality of this generational and gender hierarchy in many African societies, Abbink (2005: 10) notes:

> In Africa, a large number of agro-pastoral societies still have intricate age systems, where the generational problem is formally "solved" with the assigning of social roles to age groups and maintaining clear ritual boundaries between them, access to which can only be gained by ritual transition and formal confirmation. Sometimes the application of this age principle has led to an age set system, with fixed, mutually exclusive categories of people of a certain age that are cohesive and move through time as a collective, or to generation sets with alternating ranked categories where parents and children are always members of different opposed groups and have ritual obligations towards each other. They are set in a hierarchical order, each having an expected code of behaviour and a circumscribed public role.

Mazrui and Okigbo (2004) conceived of Africa as having a triple heritage because the three civilisations that have helped shape contemporary Africa are Africa's own rich indigenous inheritance, Islamic culture, and Western traditions and lifestyles. Contemporary South African society is emblematic of the triple heritage, in the sense that the society represents these diverse cultures through the colonial project which also engendered the importation of indentured slaves from India to work on the sugarcane plantations of the then Natal Province of the Republic of South Africa. Indeed, because of this cultural syncretism which characterises the South African society, the trajectories of the lives of youth other than those of black Africans are different from their black African counterparts.

Even though the concept of life stages existed in Western cultures and has been evolving over time, there appears to be no consensus on the exact point in the West's history where this notion of a life stage began. For example, Ariès (1962) used mediaeval paintings to show children as small adults and argued that childhood as an idea has changed over time in Europe. He maintained that childhood was not understood as a separate stage of life until the fifteenth century as children were seen as little adults who shared the same traditions, games, and clothes. Moreover, according to him, adults were detached from children, a situation resulting in the frequent fostering of children during this period.[4]

The explicit articulation of the notion of a developmental stage in Western culture came via the seminal work of two renowned American cultural anthropologists, Margaret Mead and Francis Boas, during the first half of the twentieth century. Mead and Boas (1928), in their book, *Coming of Age in Samoa,* observed that adolescence in Samoa was a period of sexual promiscuity although it was devoid of the stresses developmental psychologists like

Eriksson would later identify with this stage in their psychosocial development theories. Mead's treatise engendered years of intense debate and controversy on questions about society, culture, and science.

Even though the work of Mead (1928) did not elaborate on the stages of human development because they were concerned about when girls in the Samoan culture had reached adolescence, it spurred a considerable amount of research among psychiatrists and developmental psychologists in the West in subsequent years. For example, Eriksson (1968) formulated a theory of psychosocial development that consisted of eight age-graded stages that are differentiated by the main "psychosocial crisis" individuals face during each stage.

Eriksson postulated that the central crises for infants up to three years old are dealing with "trust vs. mistrust" (Stage 1) and "autonomy vs. shame" (Stage 2), while 3–5-year-olds (Stage 3) deal primarily with "initiative vs. guilt". Five to 12-year-olds (Stage 4) primarily manage "industry vs. inferiority" and 12–18-year-olds (Stage 5) deal with "identity vs. role confusion". Older individuals deal with "intimacy vs. isolation" (18–40 years, Stage 6), "generativity vs. stagnation" (40–65 years, Stage 7), and "integrity vs. despair" (65 years and beyond, Stage 8).

In sociological literature, several scholars have written about the notion of a life stage, such as the family life cycle and the life course perspective. The concept of the "family life cycle" became prominent in the study of "family development" in the 1930s—the formation, maintenance, change, and dissolution of marriage and family relations. It was an increasingly popular scheme for researchers in sociology, developmental psychology, and human development who were interested in studying change over the life cycle or differences between individuals or families at different stages of the life cycle (Spanier et al. 1979). The concept of the family life cycle dealt with the "traditional" family life cycle of marriage, the birth of children, the departure of children, and the death of a spouse.

The life course perspective emphasises the importance of time, context, process, and meaning in human development and family life, while the family is viewed as a micro-social group within a macro-social context. The life course reflects the intersection of social and historical factors with personal biography and development within which the study of family life and social change can ensue (Bengtson & Allen 2009; Elder 1998).

This perspective helps us to understand how the individual interfaces with social institutions (e.g., education, economy, occupation, place of residence, etc.) through rational choices as he/she goes through life. The life course perspective directs attention to the powerful connection between individual lives and the historical and socioeconomic contexts in which these lives unfold. As a concept, a life course is viewed as "a sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time" (Elder 1998).

Despite the existence of life stages in Western societies, some scholars have argued that unlike in most African societies, in most modernised industrial societies, these life stages are not clearly marked because "generations are informally delineated, boundaries between 'young' and 'old' are fuzzy, and the category 'young' often acquires a curious prestige and aura of desirability not based on social merit or particular achievements, the latter no doubt connected to the new consumer value of youth for commercial companies. Hence, contestation and struggle as to boundaries, symbolism, prestige and power in the public domain of contemporary societies are common" (Abbink 2005: 11).

The convention of lumping persons of different ages into one group under the rubric "youth" gives a false impression that youth is a homogeneous group. In fact, the South African National Youth Policy specifically mentions such circumstances in defence of the broad age range:

> A person aged 35 years in 1997 was born in 1962—she or he lived during a period of high political conflict, much of which was expressed in schools. Whilst a young person aged 14 years in 1997, was born in 1983, growing up when many new reforms and achievements of the struggle were being released. Thus, it is necessary to recognise the different life circumstances and experiences which shape those who comprise this broad age category.
>
> (National Youth Commission 1997).

Indeed, South Africa's youth is not a homogenous group because of the varied historical, cultural, and socio-economic conditions under which the country's young people live. For instance, because of the racial discrimination against them in the mainstream economy, the majority of the protagonists of the student uprisings in the late 1970s were black African youth. It is rather ironic that while black African youth were fighting to dismantle the apartheid system, their white counterparts were being conscripted into the apartheid military to defend apartheid. The bulk of the current generation of black African youth, many of whom were born around 1990 or thereafter, are either the offspring or grandchildren of members of the lost generation of the 1970s.

The current generation of youth in South Africa has been referred to as the *Born-Frees* or *Mandela's Children* to distinguish them from their parents and grandparents concerning the latter's involvement in the harsh realities of the liberation politics of the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, we recognise that lumping youth together under a broad age band indeed masks the real differences among them since there are such youths as the marginalised or underprivileged youth, the ethnic youth, the hooligans, the first offenders, the unemployed, the drug addicts, the undereducated, etc., and throughout the present book, we control for these differences.

1.3 Theoretical perspectives on youth experiences

Given the sustained attention that the life experiences of the youth have received in recent years in South Africa, as evidenced by the above review, the question to ask at this juncture is: what are the forces that have propelled these issues about the youth to the centre stage? To reiterate, the immediate cause of the increased attention to youth in South Africa results from the crucial role young black African youth played in the liberation struggle against the apartheid regime. But there were more fundamental forces of change that in turn propelled students to play that role in the struggle for liberation.

Specifically, these fundamental changes have been the same changes that have occurred in developed societies, especially societies in Europe and North America. The first demographic transition (FDT), the second demographic transition (SDT), globalisation, and other historical forces of change interacted to impact the life experiences of youth worldwide, including in South Africa. In the next sections, we briefly review these forces of change and examine how they have impacted the life experiences of contemporary youth in South Africa.

1.3.1 The first demographic transition and the youth

Besides the "intellectual" revolution occasioned by the enlightenment in the eighteenth century in Europe, one of the structural forces that has combined to usher in changes in societies across the world is the demographic transition. Historically, the demographic transition initially took place in the countries of the Global North, followed by Latin America, Asia, and now in Africa. Following the enlightenment or the age of reason in eighteenth-century Europe, which saw advances in medical science and technology, the death rate, especially the infant mortality rate, in these societies fell dramatically with the fertility rate lagging behind the death rate (Kirk 1996).

According to the *demographic transition theory*, fertility rates in developed societies started to fall and have now fallen to the point where most of the countries in the North actually have sub-replacement level fertility rates, that is, a total fertility rate of about 1.2 children per woman. In contrast, sub-Saharan Africa's populations are characterised by a developmental stage whereby even though the countries in the region achieved success in reducing infant mortality, fertility rates remained high. The net result of this situation is that a large share of the population is comprised of children and young adults. For instance, Guengant (2017) has observed that as a region, sub-Saharan Africa had experienced rapid declines in under-five mortality, while declines in fertility started later, progressed more slowly, and stalled in several countries, a situation that has led to unprecedented high rates of natural increase, such as 4 per cent per annum in Niger.

In Africa, about 40 per cent of the population is under 15 years of age, while nearly 70 per cent of the continent's population is under 30 years. The World Bank estimated that Africa's share of the world population aged between 15 and 29 years may reach 28 per cent. In fact, in some African countries, three-quarters of the population is under 30 years, while a large share of the 15–29-year-olds will persist for decades to come. For instance, in Nigeria, sub-Saharan Africa's largest country, the youth population is about 80 million, representing about 60 per cent of the total population of that country. In the region's third largest country, Ethiopia, the youth constitute slightly over 65 per cent of the country's total population (Umoh 2012; United Nations 2011).

1.3.2 The second demographic transition and the youth

The point of departure for the second demographic transition was the need to explain the demographic phenomena in the West in the immediate aftermath of the first demographic transition era which lasted a century between 1860 and 1960. As Zaidi and Morgan (2017) have noted, the "second demographic transition theory" has become a population researcher's "go-to" concept/theoretical framework for studying family/fertility change in contemporary Europe, as well as in the Western world more broadly (see, e.g., Bianchi 2014; Sobotka 2008; McLanahan 2004). It is now also being proposed for understanding family change in Asian and Latin American countries (Esteve et al. 2012a; Esteve et al. 2012b; Atoh et al. 2004).

Because of the prevailing low mortality and fertility rates, the general expectations with regard to demographic behaviours were an older stationary population vis-a-vis replacement fertility, zero population growth, and life expectancies higher than 70 years. And because there would be an ultimate balance between deaths and births, there would be no "demographic" need for sustained immigration. With regard to households, the general expectation was that households in all parts of the world would converge toward the nuclear and conjugal type, composed of married couples and their offspring (Lesthaeghe & van de Kaa 1986).

Contrary to these expectations, from the 1970s onwards there was sustained sub-replacement level fertility, a multitude of living arrangements other than marriage, a disconnection between marriage and procreation, and no stationary population. Moreover, as the age at first marriage increased, more single persons tended to live alone or cohabit before marriage, long-term cohabitation replaced marriage, and ultimately fertility outside marriage became much more frequent.

Also, a similar turnaround took place with respect to remarriage. During the FDT, divorce (or widowhood) was often followed by remarriage, and even by continued childbearing. However, during the SDT, post-marital relationships became channelled into cohabitation or "living apart together" relationships rather than remarriage (Lesthaeghe & van de Kaa 1986; Lesthaeghe & Surkyn 2008; Lesthaeghe 2010).

Many scholars have observed that the primary driver of these changes was a powerful, inevitable, and irreversible shift in attitudes and norms in the direction of greater individual freedom and self-actualisation (Lesthaeghe & van de Kaa 1986; Zaidi & Morgan 2017). The fundamental difference between the two demographic transitions. The primary driver of these trends is the cultural shift toward postmodern attitudes and norms (i.e., those stressing individuality and self-actualisation) (van de Kaa 2001).

At the macro level, the second demographic transition provides a view of how societies evolve over time, stressing the role of ideational change in bringing about a package of demographic/family behaviours, while at the individual level, its framework offers individuals' value orientations to be the principal determinants of persons' fertility and family behaviour, and represented the shift in norms, from altruistic to individualistic that characterised the latter (van de Kaa 2002; Lesthaeghe 1995; Lesthaeghe 2014). New motivations underlying family formation behaviour distinguished the second transition from the first, with greater female emancipation and individual autonomy being more central to the second demographic transition than they were to the first transition (Lesthaeghe 1995).

Because the second demographic transition was not only about changes in birth rates, its proponents incorporated other theories of social change into their explanatory framework. For instance, Lesthaeghe (1995) argued that the second demographic transition reflects and builds on not only just Aries' (1980) motivational shift theory but also several other irreversible revolutions in the Western world: the sexual revolutions proposed by Shorter (1971), Westoff (1978) contraceptive revolution. The shift from "king-child" to "king couple" or the rising importance of the adult dyad led to an increase in the minimal standards of union/marriage quality (Lesthaeghe 1995).

1.3.3 Globalisation and youth

Besides the demographic transitions, "globalisation" has been a major structural force that has occasioned changes in social structures across the globe. Even though the phenomenon of globalisation is known to be a part of our lives in the twenty-first century, the phenomenon is rarely precisely defined. Neither has it explained why what was previously described and analysed under separate headings as international trade, migration, and diplomacy has suddenly been transformed into globalisation (Stewart 1996). Giddens (2009) has defined globalisation broadly as an irresistible force, transforming all aspects of contemporary society, politics, and economics from a general point of view.

Similarly, Redding (1999) defines globalisation as the increasing integration between the markets for goods, services, and capital, and at the same time, the breakdown of borders. Braibant (2002) suggests that the process of globalisation not only includes the opening up of world trade, development of advanced means of communication, internationalisation of financial markets, growing importance of multinational corporations (MNCs), population migrations and more generally increased mobility of persons, goods, capital, data, and ideas but also infections, diseases, and pollution.

Other scholars have used the term more tightly to focus on the economic and institutional changes associated with the extension and integration of global markets (Ashton 2008; Wolf 2005). For economists, globalisation is the integration and interconnectedness of the world economy (Neuland en Hough 1999). For example, Gill (2000) defines globalisation as the reduction of transaction cost of trans-border movements of capital and goods, and thus of factors of production and goods, while for demographers like O'Brien (1992), the term is linked to geographical borders, and hence the importance of distinguishing between national, international, offshore, and global.

While the loose definition of globalisation subsumes the effects of the demographic transition, the tight definition makes it almost exclusively an economic concept. Thus, it is difficult to separate the effects of globalisation from the impacts of the demographic transition because these processes are complex and multi-dimensional in nature. Essentially, globalisation is a multi-dimensional construct which includes economic effects, the influence of increased mobility—especially international mobility—and some of the socio-cultural effects associated with the penetration of Western models and ideas through the proliferation of mass media. But since general improved economic and medical conditions underpin the second demographic transition, the opening up of world markets and the relatively free movement of capital and technology offering great potential for economic development engendered by globalisation makes the two processes the two sides of the same coin.

Even though globalisation in principle is supposed to benefit both developed and developing countries equally, some scholars have argued that globalisation is a zero-sum game in which the developed countries win at the expense of the developing countries. For instance, some have argued that because many developing countries have weak economic, legal, and political institutions—making them vulnerable to high levels of corruption, insecurity, and conflict—the advantages that are supposed to accrue to them are dissipated (Hartungi 2006; Stiglitz 2002). According to this viewpoint, developing countries are not competitive in terms of labour, technology, and skills, while developed countries have an abundance of these resources, a situation which in turn makes developing countries unattractive for foreign direct investment. Therefore, free trade as a game is unfair competition and will only benefit the highly industrialised countries.

Stiglitz (2000), for example, has noted that free trade weakens infant industries in developing countries since they are unable to compete with the more mature industries in highly industrialised countries without protection. The logical consequences of such an unequal process as globalisation for the least competitive partners such as countries in the developing world are such social and economic disruptions as lack of access to education and skills, and unemployment. Youth, especially those in developing countries, are not directly affected by these social and economic disruptions engendered by the unequal benefits of globalisation between developed and developing countries.

Specifically, the effects of globalisation are mediated by national systems of education, training, and industrial relations. For instance, Stewart (1996) has noted that education has always been an essential input for economic and social development. He sees that globalisation has increased the returns to education available from exploiting the global economy while also raising the penalties for educational failure. In other words, the benefits of globalisation can only accrue to the citizens of a country if governmental policies seek to elevate the levels of educational attainment of the population and vice versa.

Thus, even though globalisation and social change have provided new opportunities for the youth, one cannot overlook problems such crisis-related aspects as child soldiers (Machel 1996; Stohl 2002; McIntyre et al. 2002), AIDS orphans (Dane & Levine 1994), female genital mutilation (Gosselin 2000), and the sexual abuse of young children, especially in Southern Africa (Richter et al. 2004).

There is very little doubt about the fact that the first and second demographic transitions and globalisation have influenced the life experiences of youth in the world, especially in developing countries like South Africa. For example, like the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, the first demographic transition has impacted the present population dynamics of South Africa profoundly. Like most sub-Saharan countries, for example, South Africa has a youthful population because of the changes in mortality and fertility levels as a result of the changes engendered by the first demographic transition. According to the 2011 population census of the country, about 21 million (41%) of the country's population are children under the age of 20 years, while 34 million (68%) of the population are under the age of 35 years (Statistics South Africa 2011).

Without a doubt, members of this army of young persons in the population have, in turn, been influenced by the changes that have been wrought by the second demographic transition as has been outlined above. For instance, the crucial role played by the youth during the 1976 Soweto uprising that marked the beginning of the end of the apartheid regime can largely be attributed to the changes in outlook and behaviours engendered by this transition. Specifically, the questioning of parental and state authority as a result of migration to the cities, the formation of "families" with persons other than blood relations, postponement of marriage and childbearing, increased acceptance of modern forms of contraception, and formation of "unconventional" marital relationships, etc. were all changes engendered by the second demographic transition which latently contributed to the success of the Soweto uprising.

Besides the first and second demographic transitions, globalisation helps us to understand the opportunities and challenges that the growing youth population of South Africa and other developing societies in sub-Saharan Africa are confronted with. For instance, from an economic viewpoint, such a bulge in the youth population would be beneficial for a country when the youth of today reach their prime working ages. However, in the short term, the problem of employing the teeming youth presents a major challenge to the mostly fragile economies in the developing world. Prospects for the future seem to impact whether African youth bend towards positive or negative outlooks for the future.

Larger numbers of young adults have been facing labour markets that are unable to provide them with gainful employment. High rates of unemployment or underemployment, or in the worst case, political instability, have resulted. For example, it has been observed that one out of three young people in the world is estimated either to be seeking but unable to find work, has given up looking, or is working but still living below the US$2 a day poverty line (Grantham-McGregor et al. 2007). A recent survey of African youth found that while 72 per cent are confident about their financial future, only 36 per cent of African youth believe there are good job opportunities in their communities at present.

However, 82 per cent were confident that their lives will improve in the next two years (African Youth Survey 2020, 2021). Nigeria, sub-Saharan Africa's largest country, is expected to grow to over 440 million people by 2050, becoming the third most populated country in the world. However, the lack of job opportunities in Nigeria is specifically concerning for young people in that country (Price 2019).[5] Daumerie and Madsen (2010) have observed that the growth of the youth segment of the population has put a considerable break on per capita growth and has led to low achievements in households' poverty reduction.

The consequences of youth bulges and widespread unemployment in developing countries have been associated with insecurity, urban social unrest, and political instability (Panday & Richter 2005; Urdal & Hoelscher 2009). Okul (2012) has noted that in Kenya, unless society addresses such youth challenges from an economic and demographic angle, the country is likely to encounter frequent labour unrest, political violence, urban displacement, environmental degradation, and a rise in absolute poverty rates.

Thus, while increasing the youth population may represent a real dividend of youth aspiration in getting the quality education that meets labour market demands and their absorption into the labour market is achieved, it may constitute serious social and political unrest in the respective countries. For example, in the domain of health, while Africa's youth are also beset by the problem of unemployment and myriad socioeconomic challenges despite the opportunities that are available to them like youth anywhere in the world, they are in the grip of a devastating HIV epidemic, especially among young adults aged 15–24 years (Pettifor 2004).

African youngsters still face challenges in the form of widespread poverty, inadequate education, civil unrest, and disease that pose a serious threat to their health and development. The World Bank (2004) has estimated that over 50 per cent of the new HIV infections in Africa occur among young people, especially girls, while many millions of youths also suffer from other sexually transmitted infections. In South Africa, even though a large proportion of the youth are sexually experienced, very few protect themselves during sexual intercourse (see e.g., Kunkel et al 1999). This lack of protection results in such other problems as unwanted pregnancies and infection with sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and AIDS (Kunkel et al 1999; Pettifor 2004; Zabin & Kiragu 1998).

Notes

1 Even though this singluar event by the youth in second cycle institutions in 1976 was the decisive factor in the demise of the apartheid system, tertiary student formations such as the South African Students Congress and the Black Consciousness Movement were equally busy conscientising students at both secondary and tertiary levels of the education system.

2 The annual "Reed Dance" among the Zulus is a rite of passage during which virgins carry fronds of reed to the palace of the Zulu Monarch from which he selects a bride to add to his harem. So, essentially, the occasion is to announce to the public that the girls have come of age and are eligible to marry.

3 In fact, Abbink (2005, p. 11) has suggested that as a result of the AIDS catastrophe in Africa, many orphaned children under 14 are already the main breadwinners for their younger siblings, effectively running the family, a situation that illustrates the need to take the age boundaries as loose, open borders for the category "youth".

4 Expectedly, Ariès' (1962) thesis has come under fire by several scholars. For example, Orme (2001) has noted that mediaeval parents genuinely cherished and grieved for their children, similar to modern parents.

5 Panday and Richter (2005) have noted that the problem of youth unemployment in the developing world is compounded by the expansion of education worldwide, which has occurred at a pace matched by the contraction of opportunities for employment.

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2 Social and demographic profile of youth

2.1 Introduction

We have noted that South Africa's youth are not a homogeneous demographic category, but rather reflect the ethnic, racial, economic, and political mosaic of the broader society. In this chapter, we will discuss the diversity of the country's youth in terms of age, race, ethnicity, residence, and other demographic characteristics. It is significant to note that the discussion of the diversity of the youth population is germane to the understanding of some of the substantive issues this book examines subsequently.

2.2 Distribution of youth age groups

The convention of lumping youth into an age band, in this instance 15–35 years, overlooks the reality that people in this broad age band were born on different days and in different years and therefore have varied outlooks on life. Based on the notion of a life stage, social scientists, especially psychologists and sociologists, have identified "different youths" within this broad youth age band. "Adolescents" have been identified as youth aged between 15 and 19 years old; "Young Adults" are youth aged between 20 and 25 years old, and "Older Adults" are youth aged between 26 and 35 years old.

Table 2.1 shows the age distribution of South Africa's youth according to the 2014 and 2019 General Household Surveys. In 2014, the country's youth constituted over one-third (35.6%) of the total population, while this proportion was 34.8 per cent in 2019. The predominance of children (aged 0–14 years) and youth (aged 15–35 years) in the population of the country is reflective of the changes in the patterns of fertility and mortality predicted by the first demographic transition. Specifically, like other sub-Saharan African populations, South Africa is characterised by a developmental stage whereby even though the country has successfully reduced infant mortality, fertility rates remain relatively high, resulting in a situation whereby children and young adults predominate in the population.

It is significant to note that we see the fertility patterns in South Africa in relative terms as we have indicated above. As already noted, the developed countries of the global north were the first to experience the first demographic

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Table 2.1 Distribution of age groups in total population by survey year

Age group	*2014*		*2019*	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*
0–14 years	28,375	30.69	21,480	30.20
15–35 years	32,901	35.58	24,746	34.79
36+ years	31,283	33.83	24,911	35.02
Total	**92,459**	**100.0**	**71,137**	**100.0**

Source: 2014 and 2019 South African General Household Survey.

transition, followed by countries of Asia, Latin America, and finally, Africa. Significantly, when the transition started in Africa in the 1980s and 1990s, South Africa was one of the leaders as far as Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, is concerned.[1]

The reasons for South Africa's leadership in the fertility transition in sub-Saharan Africa range from effective state policy and programmes to conditions embedded in the social, cultural, and economic structures of the society.

For economic and ideological reasons, successive past governments, under the country's past apartheid system, introduced and implemented very effective family planning programmes, which went a long way towards engendering this regime of fertility decline from the 1960s onwards (Swartz 2002). From the point of view of rational economic reasons, past apartheid governments introduced these strong family planning programmes to control population growth in an effort to ensure the sustainability of the economic growth trajectory, while simultaneously these programmes sought to curb the growth of the indigenous Black population vis-a-vis that of the white minority for ideological purposes. According to Swartz (2002), the results of the state's family planning programmes were so successful that by 1983, over half the eligible women in the country were practising contraception.

Sub-Saharan Africa is known to be characterised by early and universal marriage patterns according to almost all the social science literature, especially anthropology, sociology, and demography. While this demographic feature may have characterised pre-colonial South African society, the reality is that the colonial project and its corollary of the capitalist mode of production introduced in the country ensured that the early and universal marriage pattern was curtailed. Specifically, through such colonial policies as the expropriation of arable agricultural land through the infamous poll tax and outright forcible seizures of lands belonging to the natives, the majority of indigenous populations were driven to the margins of society and were forced to eke out a living in the emerging towns and cities through a migratory labour system.

This situation has affected the country's fertility decline in some fundamental ways. First, because of the participation in the migratory labour system by mainly young males from the countryside, the marriage rate amongst black

Africans has been low to begin with. Because the normative expectation is that childbearing takes place within the context of a marital union, the non-marriage pattern ultimately affects the level of fertility in the population. Secondly, participation in the migratory labour system has resulted in the physical separation of married couples. Thirdly, the introduction of the capitalist mode of production in the towns and cities to which the migrants flock has led to the commercialisation of the bride wealth (*lobola*), a situation which puts marriage beyond the reach of many a young man.

In any case, the coital infrequency which results from the physical separation of the few married couples due to the migratory labour system has affected the rate of marital fertility resulting in the decline of total fertility in the population. Moreover, according to Swartz (2002), factors such as the impact of HIV/AIDS, which has increased the mortality rate of younger women in their reproductive years, eventually decreases the total fertility rate and the impact of the disease in increasing the use of condoms and therefore help explain South Africa's fertility decline.

2.2.1 Distribution of youth by race/ethnicity

Table 2.2 shows the distribution of youth age groups by race/ethnicity in South Africa using the 2014 and 2019 General Household survey data, respectively. Two significant findings are depicted in the table. Firstly, again, we observe the effects of the first demographic transition on the country's demographic dynamics with the relative predominance of children and young people in the country's population. Secondly, what the table depicts is evidence of the country's diversity with regard to the racial variations in its fertility patterns. Due to the fact that the fertility levels of black Africans and coloured South Africans—the poorest race groups—are higher than the Asian/Indian and white counterparts, children and young people constitute a large share of the populations of black Africans and coloureds compared to Asian/Indians and whites.

The South African population policy (Department of Welfare 1998) argues that the basic demographic factors of fertility, migration, and mortality are an integral part of poverty prevalence in South Africa. According to this line of reasoning, these demographic factors cannot be seen in isolation from social

Table 2.2 Percentage distribution of youth age group by race/ethnicity

Youth categories	*Black/African*		*Coloured*		*Asian/Indian*		*White*	
	2014	*2019*	*2014*	*2019*	*2014*	*2019*	*2014*	*2019*
15–19	28.1	25.2	26.8	26.1	20.1	20.4	24.2	22.8
20–24	26.3	24.3	25.0	26.1	24.4	20.1	21.2	22.3
25–29	22.9	23.6	22.8	23.3	23.9	27.0	22.9	20.2
30–35	22.7	26.9	25.4	24.5	31.7	32.6	31.8	34.8

Source: 2014 and 2019 South African General Household Survey data.

factors such as education, unemployment, poor health, and housing quality and their interrelationships with poverty.[2] Swartz (2002) supports this line of reasoning when he notes that the fertility trends among population groups in South Africa show the same patterns as that of poverty. For example, the African component which is the poorest with regard to per capita income has the highest fertility rate, while the white population which has the highest per capita income has the lowest fertility rate.[3]

2.2.2 Distribution by type of residence and province

Where do the youth in South Africa live in terms of the rural-urban divide? This question is germane because in South Africa, like most sub-Saharan African countries, the place of residence is very meaningful with regard to access to jobs and such modern amenities as schools, infrastructure, recreational facilities, hospitals, etc. Following the expropriation of agricultural lands and the forcible removal of black Africans from the countryside under the colonial project, this demographic group, in particular, became impoverished and was forced to eke out a living by migrating to the emerging towns and cities to look for employment as miners, cooks, gardeners, and housekeepers. Because these colonial policies were meant to provide labour for the mining of the discovered minerals around some of the biggest metropolises today, the pattern of socioeconomic development favoured emerging towns and cities.

During this period, however, the city-ward movement of mostly black Africans was restricted through such apartheid-inspired legislation as Influx Control and the Group Areas acts. These policies formed the context for the so-called single-sex hostels where mainly black African migrant workers were housed without their female partners and their offspring who remained in the rural places of origin. While these residential patterns have been changing in the twenty-first century, the essence of the policies persists to a large extent.

Table 2.3 shows the residential patterns of contemporary youth in South Africa in terms of their geographic location. Black African youth are the most likely to live in rural areas, while white youth are the most likely to live in urban areas; in fact, 50 per cent of black African youth still live in rural/tribal areas compared to only 42.2 per cent who live in urban areas.[4]

Even though South African youth are increasingly becoming urbanised, the rate at which black African youth are becoming urbanised is faster than that of coloured, Asian/Indian, and white youth. For example, between 2014 and 2019, nearly one-fifth (17%) more black Africans lived in urban areas compared to 1 per cent more coloured, Asian/Indian, and white youth, respectively.

However, even though black African youth may be becoming urbanised more than their other counterparts, the reality is that they are living mostly in the informal or peri-urban areas of the towns and cities of the country. For example, while only 8 per cent of black Africans lived in informal urban areas in 2014, by 2019, 38 per cent of them lived in such areas, an increase of 30 per cent.

Table 2.3 Percentage distribution of youth by type of residence and province

	Black African		*Coloured*		*Asian/Indian*		*White*	
Residence	*2014*	*2019*	*2014*	*2019*	*2014*	*2019*	*2014*	*2019*
Urban—formal	42.2	58.7	92.5	94.2	97.1	98.2	92.5	93.2
Urban—informal	8.1	37.8	1.2	1.0	1.7	1.5	0.0	0.4
Rural/tribal	49.7	3.5	6.3	4.8	1.2	0.2	7.5	6.3
Province								
Western Cape	4.6	4.6	62.5	49.8	5.4	3.8	27.9	26.3
Eastern Cape	12.2	12.3	8.1	14.4	21	0.8	8.4	7.7
Northern Cape	3.9	2.8	19.8	21.9	1.0	2.0	5.1	3.0
Free State	9.1	6.0	1.4	22	1.6	0.3	8.2	7.5
KwaZulu-Natal	19.4	20.5	2.0	1.9	64.2	58.8	7.0	4.5
North West	8.8	6.7	1.1	0.9	1.7	1.3	6.0	4.6
Gauteng	16.3	24.3	4.5	8.2	20.8	27.5	27.0	37.4
Mpumalanga	12.0	9.9	0.5	0.2	1.9	2.5	7.2	6.6
Limpopo	13.6	12.9	0.1	0.4	1.4	3.1	3.1	2.5

Source: 2014 and 2019 South African General Household Survey data.

Significantly, there was a gradient decrease in the proportions of coloured, Asian/Indian, and white youth who lived in urban informal areas between 2014 and 2019. Poverty and unemployment are the bane of rural life. Moreover, given the development of urban centres through infrastructural improvement and the establishment of industrial zones, the social and economic disadvantage of black African youth, the bulk of whom live in rural areas, cannot be overemphasised.

Table 2.3 also shows the distribution of the country's youth by province. Consistent with other patterns of apartheid-inspired urban planning and development, the country's provinces are selective of ethnicity and hence the youth. From Table 2.3, we find that youth of black African background are the only group that is scattered throughout the country, with "marginal" majorities in five sixout of the nine provinces, namely, Eastern Cape, Free State, North West, Mpumalanga, and Limpopo provinces, respectively. On the other hand, coloured, Asian/Indian, and white youth dominate in the Western Cape, Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Gauteng provinces, respectively. For example, coloured and white youth constituted 63 per cent and 28 per cent respectively of the youth population in the Western Cape in 2014 and 50 per cent and 26 per cent respectively in 2019.

While coloureds, whites, and Asian/Indians are the three dominant ethnic groups in the province, there is a gradual shift in the youth population dynamics in the Western Cape as the proportions of the coloured, Asian/Indian, and white youth populations are decreasing. In fact, the population of the most dominant group, coloured youth, decreased by 13 per cent points between 2014 and 2019, while the population of white youth in the province decreased by 4 per cent points during the period; the Asian/Indian youth population decreased by 1 per cent.

In the Northern Cape, coloured youth made up one-fifth (20%) of the youth population in the province in 2014, increasing their share of the total youth population in the province to slightly under one-fourth (22%) in 2019. Asian/Indian are the majority group in the province, making up 64 per cent and 59 per cent of the total youth population in 2014 and 2019, respectively, followed by black African youth with 19 per cent and 21 per cent of the youth population in 2014 and 2019, respectively. Finally, in the Gauteng Province, white and Asian/Indian youths are the dominant groups in the country's wealthiest province. White and Asian/Indian youth constituted 27 per cent and 21 per cent respectively of the total youth population in the province in 2014, and 37 per cent and 28 per cent respectively in 2019.

Like place of residence, the provinces where the country's youth reside are selective of the socioeconomic opportunities the country has to offer them. The Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and Western Cape provinces are the leading provinces in the country in terms of such socioeconomic resources as employment, educational facilities, housing, etc., yet these provinces are dominated by coloured, Asian\Indian, and white youth, while black African youth are largely confined to some of the poorest provinces in the country, namely, Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces. Of the nine provinces in South Africa, three powerhouses stand out. Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and Western Cape collectively contribute a significant portion to the country's value-added, reported at over 60 per cent (Statistics South Africa 2022). So, to the extent that provinces in the country are selective of socioeconomic opportunities, black African youth are highly disadvantaged.

Rationally, it could be argued that *ceteris paribus*, the settlement patterns of people, like the supply and demand of labour, are determined by the economic forces of demand and supply. However, in South Africa, one cannot discount the inertia of the apartheid architecture because historically, the white minority government under the apartheid system had deliberately intervened to plan urbanisation in the country. For instance, black South Africans had lived and worked in the Western Cape, Cape Town in particular, for a long time, and had been an integral part of the local economy since the early nineteenth century (see e.g., Saunders 1981). However, they were subjected to peculiar disadvantages when compared to the rest of the country.

In the Western Cape, in particular, the then apartheid state legislated against the employment of black African labour in favour of coloured labour in some designated areas of the province.[5] In 1951, when Dr I.O. du Plessis, who was reputed to be extremely sympathetic to the "coloured" people, in his first report as Commissioner of Coloured Affairs, made the following direct assertion:

> One of the most serious problems facing the Coloured, and particularly the unskilled labourer, is the increased competition by the large numbers

> of Natives who have entered the Cape Peninsula, in particular, and the Western Province in general – the traditional sphere of the Coloureds.
> (Commission for Coloured Affairs 1952)

Even though other provinces may not boast of such explicit exclusionary legislation as the coloured labour preference policy in the Western Cape, the project of spatial segregation which began in earnest in the mid-1950s remained the model for the apartheid planners who reserved city centres in the country and the suburbs around them, as well as those close to major roads, for people classified white. These political and non-rational processes are significant in understanding the unequal access to the country's socioeconomic resources and its effects on the life chances of the youth.

2.2.3 Youth educational attainment

The Balkanisation of the education system under the apartheid system in an effort to ensure differential outcomes for racial/ethnic groups and deliberate state policy to leave black Africans and coloureds behind have had grave implications for how disadvantaged groups like black Africans and coloureds perform in the broader economy. Table 2.4 shows the distribution of education by age and race/ethnicity. It is quite evident that the historical disadvantage of black Africans and coloureds vis-a-vis Asians/Indians and whites continues to the present.

In fact, most adolescents (youth aged 15–19 years old), especially among black Africans and coloureds, are mostly in school because of grade repetition,[6] and others are currently enrolled in other educational institutions.[7] In fact, data from the 2019 General Household Survey shows that approximately two-thirds (64.3%) of learners were still in school by the age of 18 which usually represents the age at which learners exit the schooling system. A notable percentage of learners, however, remained in primary and secondary schools long after they should have exited those institutions.

Almost one-quarter (24.3%) of 20-year-olds were, for instance, still attending secondary school. Post-school education has remained relatively low for youth aged 19–22 years of age. The proportion of students attending universities and technical and vocational colleges remain very similar throughout the reference period. Since learners drop out of school before the age of 18 years and/or opt to drop out after the compulsory Grade 9 limit, and inadequate access to money to pay for fees, it can safely be assumed that this situation is selective of black African and coloured students.

Thus, for an objective appraisal, we limit our observation of the educational differences to young and emerging adults (youth aged 20–35 years old). White and Asian/Indian South African youth have higher education completion rates from Matric (secondary school) and upwards than their black African and coloured counterparts in the country. For instance, 65 per cent of white and Asian/Indian youth respectively have completed Matric by the end of their 24th birthdays compared to 42 per cent and 48 per cent of black African and coloured youth, respectively.

Table 2.4 Percentage distribution of educational attainment by age and race/ethnicity

	Educational attainment	*Youth age group*			
		15–19	*20–24*	*25–29*	*30–35*
Black African	No schooling	0.4	0.5	0.6	1.0
	Primary	15.0	6.0	6.0	8.0
	Middle	75.0	44.0	42.0	43.0
	Matric	9.0	42.0	38.0	36.0
	TVET	0.3	6.0	9.0	8.0
	Tertiary	0.0	2.0	4.0	5.0
Coloured	No schooling	1.0	0.4	0.6	0.6
	Primary	15.0	5.0	9.0	6.0
	Middle	71.0	42.0	43.0	44.0
	Matric	13.0	48.0	37.0	39.0
	TVET	0.2	3.0	6.0	5.0
	Tertiary	0.0	2.0	5.0	5.0
Asian/Indian	No schooling	1.0	0.0	2.0	0.8
	Primary	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
	Middle	71.0	13.0	20.0	14.0
	Matric	28.0	65.0	56.0	49.0
	TVET	0.0	5.0	9.0	6.0
	Tertiary	0.0	17.0	13.0	28.0
White	No schooling	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.3
	Primary	4.0	0.5	0.5	0.6
	Middle	70.0	9.0	13.0	7.0
	Matric	24.0	65.0	46.0	42.0
	TVET	0.0	11.0	13.0	14.0
	Tertiary	1.0	16.0	28.0	36.0

Source: Computed from the 2019 South African General Household Survey.

While by the end of their 29th birthdays, 28 per cent of whites and 13 per cent of Asian/Indians, respectively have attained a tertiary qualification, the same is true for only 4 per cent and 5 per cent of black African and coloured youths, respectively. And by the end of their 35th birthdays, more than one-third (36%) and 28 per cent of white and Asian/Indian youths respectively have attained a tertiary qualification compared to only 5 per cent respectively of their black African and coloured counterparts.

Table 2.3 shows the distribution of educational attainment of race/ethnicity by gender. In terms of racial identification, the story is the same whereby black African and coloured females lag behind their white and Asian/Indian counterparts in educational attainment, although within racial groups, females have higher educational attainment rates than their male counterparts. Across race/ethnic groups, 25 per cent and 19 per cent of white and Asian/Indian females respectively have attained tertiary qualifications compared to only 3.2 per cent of their black African counterparts.

As far as educational differences between males and females within the race/ethnic groups are concerned, the differences are more pronounced

Table 2.5 Distribution of educational attainment by gender and race

	Educational attainment	*Gender*			
		Male		*Female*	
		N	*%*	*N*	*%*
Black African	No schooling	80	0.8	52	0.5
	Primary	1096	11.0	698	7.0
	Middle	5336	52.3	5325	50.0
	Matric	2011	29.0	3598	33.5
	TVET	504	4.9	716	6.7
	Tertiary	268	2.6	341	3.2
Coloured	No schooling	8	0.8	8	0.7
	Primary	123	12.1	62	5.6
	Middle	503	50.0	557	51.0
	Matric	328	32.3	393	36.0
	TVET	25	2.5	46	4.2
	Tertiary	27	2.7	35	3.2
Asian/Indian	No schooling	1	0.5	3	2.0
	Primary	2	0.9	0	0.0
	Middle	71	32.3	33	19.4
	Matric	104	47.3	91	54.0
	TVET	11	5.0	32	19.0
	Tertiary	31	14.1	32	19.0
White	No schooling	1	0.2	1	0.2
	Primary	10	2.2	2	0.5
	Middle	110	24.0	95	22.0
	Matric	202	44.0	190	44.0
	TVET	51	11.0	39	9.0
	Tertiary	90	19.4	106	25.0

Source: Computed from the 2019 South African General Household Survey.

among whites and Asian/Indians compared to black Africans and coloureds. For example, a quarter (25%) of white females have a tertiary qualification compared to 19.4 per cent of white males. Also, 19 per cent of Asian/Indian females have a tertiary qualification compared to 14 per cent of their male counterparts. Such educational attainment differences exist between females and males among black African and coloured youth but they are hardly significant statistically.

2.3 Summary and conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to show the social and demographic profile of South Africa's youth. The essence of this chapter has been to present the country's youth as a heterogeneous demographic category by showing their differences in terms of gender, age, race/ethnicity, residence, and their differential access to the social and economic opportunities in the country. Indeed, South Africa's youth are from varied historical, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions under which the country's young people live. Differences in age structure with regard to the youth have been highlighted to be reflective of the fertility preferences of the different ethnic backgrounds of the youth, with black African and coloured youth having higher levels of fertility than Asian and white youth. As far as access to socioeconomic resources is concerned, this chapter has drawn attention to the deliberate state policy of providing differential educational opportunities to disadvantage certain ethnic groups, especially black Africans and coloureds.

Notes

1 It is trite knowledge that South Africa is characterised essentially by the juxtaposition of both developed and developing world socioeconomic conditions along racial lines because of the country's historical legacy of apartheid. Expectedly, the fertility transition in the country occurred at a much faster level for whites and Asians as compared to Africans and coloureds (Swartz 2002).

2 On the one hand, poverty persists, while on the other hand, fertility declines. This is in stark contrast to the experience in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, where poverty usually goes hand in hand with high fertility (Department of Welfare 1998).

3 This is the classic argument that South Africa is characterised by the juxtaposition of developed and developing world conditions whereby the white and Asian components of the population mimic the socioeconomic patterns of the developed world, while the black African and coloured components mimic the conditions of the developing or Third world countries.

4 Official census figures for 1985 classified 89.6 per cent of the white population of the RSA as urban (about 4.1 million), 77.8 per cent of the coloureds (2.2 million), 93.4 per cent of the Asians (767,000), and 39.6 per cent of the Blacks or Africans (6.0 million), to give a total urban population approaching 13.7 million (Smith 2001). It is noteworthy that these urbanisation figures for the ethnic groups in 1985 are very consistent with the figures by the General Household Survey data presented in the present tables.

5 This was the infamous *coloured labour preference policy* (1954), which excluded Africans from working inter alia as domestic workers, gardeners, and petrol pump attendants.

6 According to the 2019 General Household survey data, 4.2 per cent of persons aged between 15 and 35 years old repeated a grade. Of these, 13 per cent of those aged 15–19 years, 4 per cent of those aged 20–24 years old, 0.2 per cent of those aged 25–29 years old, and 0.0 per cent of those aged 30–35 years, respectively had repeated a grade in school.

7 According to the 2019 General Household Survey data, for the country as a whole, 29 per cent of youth (aged 15–35 years old) are currently attending educational institutions and of these 83 per cent of those aged 15-19 years old are currently attending educational institutions.

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3 Youth and family

3.1 Family defined

Worldwide, young people respond to environmental influences as they navigate the transition from childhood to adulthood. Among the key environmental contexts that influence their behaviours are the institutions of the family, the school, the neighbourhood, and the peer group. In almost every human society, the family organisation is the most basic structure within which the individual forms an identity through the provision of economic, social, and psychological security and support, and by socialising the individual into the broader society (Chirisa et al. 2018;

In this chapter, we examine the family context of the youth in South Africa and look at how the variations in this institution have been changing over time and how these changes have impacted the youth in other domains of their lives. While the examination of the family context of South Africa's youth requires some working definition of the concept of the family, the paucity of systematic documentation and problems with conceptualising the term has rendered the task of defining the term *family* difficult. As a social construction, the term *family* has had varied meanings, forms, and roles depending on the culture and time, making the term a rather elusive, ideologically riddled, and complex concept (Makiwane et al. 2017; Ogormegbunem 2014;).

Consequently, numerous definitions of the term *family* have been formulated by different theoretical perspectives in the sociological literature. For instance, central to the functionalist notion of the family is the Newtonian notion that the universe is ordered and interrelated. According to this definition, the family is the basic unit of society and interfaces with other institutions such as education, economic, and political institutions which together function to maintain the stability and survival of the whole society.

At the sub-system level, this notion of hierarchy explains patterns such as gender and age stratifications whereby men and women perform different roles, while adults and young persons also perform different functions to ensure the survival of the whole society (Johnson 1971 On the other hand, the point of departure of the structural conflict theoretical perspective of the family is a Darwinian notion of a "struggle" that does not see the family as assuming a

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stable form or function at any particular time but changes and mutates relative to material conditions prevalent at a time (e.g., Schornack 1987).

The significance of these different ideological notions of the family is that the term *family* is often used to describe "a group of individuals who share a legal or genetic bond" (Ogormegbunem 2014: 197), though its meaning is indefinitely wide and rather subjective. In Western societies, the term "family" is generally synonymous with a conjugal pair and their offspring (husband, wife, and their biological or adopted children) or the nuclear family system. Despite the narrowness of the above definition of the family, it is nevertheless significant for several reasons. First of all, it allows for the distinction of members of one's conjugal and nuclear family and those of the extended or joint family. Secondly, it shows the importance of the family as a basic unit of kinship structure. Lastly, it reflects Western cultural values about family (Mafumbate 2019; Radcliffe-Brown 1950).

In most African societies, however, the term *family* connotes more than the nuclear family of the father, mother, and children; it includes other members like uncles, aunts, grandparents, cousins, in-laws, and even unrelated persons. This not only makes the traditional African family characteristically large, but also multigenerational or extended in nature.

This consanguineal kin grouping is also far more complex than that of the Western archetypical conjugal kinship system; it comprises several joint elementary and nuclear families in separate but closely situated homesteads. This extended family system acts as both an economic and emotional network that provides individual members with a sense of self and belonging (Amos 2013; Degbey 2012; Siqwana-Ndulo 1998). In fact, Makiwane et al. (2017) have argued that the definition of family should go beyond the nuclear and extended dichotomy in contemporary South Africa.

This is because these two concepts do not adequately capture the entirety of family because, in reality, the notion of *family* has evolved beyond biological and affinal relationships to include co-residents who may not necessarily be related by ties of blood or marriage but rather by a common interest or emotional ties. And this conceptual confusion is made even murkier by the conflation of the terms *family* and *household* in the literature. For instance, in South Africa specifically, the *household* has often been the unit of family analysis and this has led to the interchangeability of both terms with presumed shared understandings (see, e.g., De Vos 1983).

In fact, Statistics South Africa (2018: 75) defines a *household* as an arrangement of co-residents who "provide themselves jointly with food and/or other essentials for living", while the White Paper on Families in South Africa (2013: 11) defines a *family* as "a societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care or the ties of marriage (civil, customary or religious), civil union or cohabitation, and goes beyond a particular physical residence".

Thus, a *family* in contemporary South Africa refers to a social group of common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction. Whereas previously, kinship relations were logically assumed to be prior to households, determining the rules of residence, “household organisation lay at least partly outside the realm of kinship analysis” (Russell 2003: 6; Mafumbate 2019). Despite the conceptual confusion regarding what constitutes a *family* in the South African context, there is a broad consensus about the need to recognise the coexistence of both the nuclear conjugal kinship system and the extended consanguineal kinship system. This approach to defining the *family* in South Africa recognises the diversity that defines contemporary society in the country with regard to how people in family relationships maintain production, reproduction, and consumption roles at the household level (Gyekye 1996; Makiwane et al. 2017; Russell 2003).

3.2 The family in pre-colonial African society

The pre-colonial family in South Africa, like in most pre-colonial African societies, was characteristically large, extended, and multigenerational—a residential amalgamation of several close kin in one locale, cooperating economically, socially, and politically to ensure the welfare of members. This extended family had a collective obligation, including performing the vital functions that the conjugal nuclear family does—i.e., the socialisation of the young as well as the maintenance of adult members in the event of unexpected life crises. Thus, traditional family life was premised on the traditional ethos of collective solidarity or *ubuntu* (material and social reciprocities, and a strong sense of “community”) and interdependence rather than individualism (Degbey 2012; Mafumbate 2019; Sooryamoorthy & Makhoba 2016; Therborn 2006).

Like the family institution everywhere, the family in traditional[1] African society was primarily formed through the institution of marriage, whose main purpose was to have children and establish kinship. This largely explains why marriage tended to be universal in most African societies.[2] Thus, social institutions and related social order in pre-colonial Africa revolved exclusively around kinship organisation. Essentially, the family system in many African cultures was organised around lineage and clan and was defined by the presence of a man, his wives, many children, and other relatives in the same physical space or locale (Marks & Rathbone 1983; Radcliffe-Brown 1950). This family form and similar ones in the community formed the basis of the socioeconomic organisation of African society as the economic, political, and social life of society was organised around these institutions.

Politically, family or clan heads formed the ruling classes in these communities and these family heads were called on occasionally to settle disputes and dispense justice. Economically, since the land was held in trust by the family heads and chiefs, they allocated land for production in the subsistence economies on behalf of members. Socially, the family was responsible for organising marriages, educating and socialising young members, and also acting as a social safety net for the aged and other vulnerable members of society (Degbey 2012; Haregu et al. 2017; Idang 2015; Mazrui 1991).

3.3 The family and youth functioning

The family institution has several dimensions, but its primary function of socialisation of the younger ones into becoming responsible adults of society usually puts the focus on the parent–child dyad in the analysis of such outcomes as youth negative and positive behaviours. In view of the fact that this socialisation role of the family occurs during the formative period of a child's life, the quality of the parent–child relationship is bound to affect the child throughout their life. To this effect, the family literature is replete with empirical evidence of how the family, represented by the parent dyad, impacts the youth. In fact, in the Western context, where there is a long history of this genre of research that relates family structure to child outcomes, one strand of family scholarship has found that marriage and the presence of both parents in the household are good for the psycho-social development of children (e.g., Fagan 2012; McLanahan & Sandefur 1994; Sun and Li 2011; Sweeney 2010).

As far as educational outcomes are concerned, many cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have suggested that the number of parents available to children has a strong effect on educational outcomes. Moreover, studies using Western samples have indicated that parent–child closeness is associated with reduced adolescent pregnancy risk through teens remaining sexually abstinent, postponing intercourse, having fewer sexual partners or using contraception more consistently (e.g., Whitbeck et al. 1999).

Rodgers (1999) found that parental support was not related to sexual risk-taking among sexually active teens, while Upchurch et al. (1999) found that high emotional support from parents was related to older age at first sexual intercourse for sons. Also, Manlove et al. (2007) found that delay in first sexual intercourse for girls was predicted by parent–teen closeness and parental monitoring. Kirby (1999) observed in a study that the living arrangements of the adolescent child have a profound impact on adolescent sexual behaviour. Specifically, he established that living in a "non-traditional" family structure (i.e., families with parents who were divorced, separated, or were never married) served as a risk factor for initiation of sex. In another study of the timing of first sexual intercourse, Upchurch et al. (1999) found that adolescents living in a "traditional" family structure (i.e., families with both biological parents) reported a later median age of first intercourse than youth living in any other family situation, including stepfamilies with two parents in the home.

Following this tradition of research in the West, many studies in Africa have associated positive child outcomes with the presence of two biological parents in the household. For example, some studies in South Africa have found that family structure is highly correlated with educational outcomes (e.g., Anderson 2000; Case & Ardington 2006). As a dimension of schooling, in Kenya, some studies have observed that children in two-parent households were 1.23 times more likely to be in the right grade for age compared to children in one-parent households. Moreover, children living with one or two biological parents were more likely to be enroled in school, compared with children living with no biological parents (e.g., Ngware et al. 2012; Hyunjoon 2007). In a study of black Africans in South Africa, Anderson (2000) found that family structure was highly correlated with educational outcomes.

While Africans aged 8–18 years from female-headed households were more likely to be enroled in school than those from male-headed households, children from female-headed households experienced less total educational mobility than those from male-headed households (Nimubona & Vencatachellum 2007). Among Coloureds and Asians, the odds of dropping out were 1.3 times and 1.5 times greater for children in female-headed households compared to children living in male-headed households. Furthermore, in their study of race differences in educational outcomes in post-apartheid South Africa, Heaton, Amoateng, and Dufur (2014) found that contrary to existing research, children in female-headed households were on par with children in two-parent families (the comparison group), while children in households without a mother had a substantial disadvantage.

McGrath et al. (2009) found that the hazard of first sex was statistically significantly higher for women and men whose mother or father had died, respectively. On the other hand, they found that the hazard of first sex was statistically significantly lower for women whose mother or father was a co-member of the same household. The parenting styles of adolescents have been found to play a significant role in their sexual behaviour. As far as family structure is concerned, Amoateng et al. (2013) found, in a North West Province study, that adolescents whose parents were either single or divorced were more likely than those whose parents were married to report irregular partners. Specifically, the odds of adolescents whose parents were single or divorced reporting irregular partners were significantly higher than those whose parents were married or cohabiting.

And the odds of irregular partners for adolescents who rarely informed their parents about whom they were with at night were lower compared to adolescents who always informed their parents about whom they were with at night. Amoateng and Kalule-Sabiti (2013) found that when parents monitored the activities of girls, they were less likely to report both lifetime and recent sexual activity. Specifically, they found that the odds of a girl reporting lifetime sexual activity were lower when her parents monitored her, while the odds of a girl reporting recent sexual activity were lower when she was monitored by her parents.

Also, Amoateng et al. (2013) found that adolescents from middle or upper-income homes were less likely to report lifetime sexual activity compared to their counterparts from lower-income homes. However, those from upper-income homes were much more likely to initiate sexual intercourse earlier than those from lower-income homes. As far as parenting is concerned, adolescents who rarely informed their parents about whom they were going out with were more likely to report lifetime sexual activity compared to those who always informed their parents about whom they were going out with. Amoateng et al. (2006) found that parent–child connectedness, in the form of support, warmth, and closeness was inversely related to youth antisocial behaviours such as pregnancy risk, drug or alcohol use, and lifetime and recent sexual activity.

In a study of selected sub-Saharan African countries in which family structure was measured by marital status, presence of the husband, and polygyny on children's schooling, Amoateng, Heaton, and Mcalmont (2017) found that children were somewhat better off educationally if their mothers were in a monogamous union, while they were worse off if their mothers had never married, divorced, or separated. In general, both polygyny and the presence of a husband in the home detracted from children's education.

3.4 The changing family context of the youth

In the past, the institution of the family in African societies was defined by patterns such as early and universal marriage, high rates of polygyny within the context of agrarian economies, high levels of fertility and its concomitant large households, and the virtual absence of divorce. However, the changes wrought by modernising influences have engendered family structural changes, such as conjugal instability, leading to increasing incidences of single-parent households headed mainly by females; while changes in educational outcomes, such as school enrolment and educational attainment, have also been observed (e.g., Bommier & Lambert 2000; Lloyd & Hewett 2009; Niehaus 1994).

The family context of youth in South Africa is presently undergoing tremendous changes due to historical circumstances and the impact of modern structures, ideas, and values. Modernisation in the form of formal education, urbanisation, and wage labour, which ignored fundamental principles inherent in African customs and ethos, has affected the traditional African family profoundly. Specifically, aspects of modernisation, such as the expropriation of agricultural land, the discovery and mining of gold and diamonds, and the importation of indentured labour from India and Malaysia, have had the net effect of profoundly changing the traditional African family.

Besides the changes wrought by the colonial project in the form of formal education, urbanisation, and wage employment, changes affecting the traditional African family have been engendered by the changes embedded in the second demographic transition (SDT). The changes brought about by the second demographic transition entailed sustained sub-replacement level fertility, a multitude of living arrangements other than marriage, and a disconnection between marriage and procreation. Moreover, as age at first marriage increased, more single persons tended to live alone or cohabit before marriage, long-term cohabitation replaced marriage, and ultimately fertility outside marriage became much more frequent. A similar turnaround took place with respect to remarriage.

During the first demographic transition, divorce (or widowhood) was often followed by remarriage, and even by continued childbearing. However, during the second demographic transition, post-marital relationships became channelled into cohabitation or "living apart together" relationships rather than remarriage (Lesthaeghe & van de Kaa 1986; Lesthaeghe & Surkyn 2008; Lesthaeghe 2010). Below, we present some of the specific changes the traditional African family has been encountering empirically.

3.4.1 Living arrangements of the youth

Consistent with the forces of change as outlined in the conceptual framework in Chapter 1, the family institution in contemporary South Africa is becoming organisationally flexible and accommodating of non-traditional forms. The family has been adapting to these influences by making allowances for new ways of living and attitudes towards living arrangements, family formation, sexual relationships, and childbearing evolve (Ogormegbunem 2014). As a marker of family change, the residential dimensions of the families, households, are taking diverse forms as they respond and adapt to meet new and emerging needs and demands. One outstanding and visible change in this regard is the fact that families and households in pre-colonial Africa that were solely occupied by kinship groups are increasingly becoming nucleated, although these changes are not consistent with the classic nuclear family (two biological parents and their children).

Specifically, households of the youth are increasingly witnessing forms as diverse as solitary living, single-parent and female-headed families, and even child-headed households. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 depict some of the changes that form the context of the family life of youth in contemporary South African society, especially their household living arrangements.

Table 3.1 shows the living arrangements of youth in the country, while Table 3.2 looks at the youth's living arrangements by age group. De Vos (1995) has observed that since a household is essentially a confluence of people at different points in their life courses, age becomes a crucial factor in the analysis of family change because the cumulative experiences of these individuals help to define the family as a social institution. Table 3.1 shows that the extended family system, which was at the heart of the kinship system of traditional African society, is no longer the modal family form among the

Table 3.1 Distribution of youth living arrangements by race in South Africa

Family Type	*Race (%)*			
	Black African	*Coloured*	*Indian/Asian*	*White*
One-person household	20.9	11.0	17.5	20.4
Couple-headed household	9.3	10.5	13.2	19.8
Classic nuclear family household	40.4	54.5	55.3	47.0
Extended nuclear family household	28.1	21.9	12.9	10.0
Non-family household	1.3	2.1	1.0	2.9

Source: Data computed from the 2019 General Household Survey.

Table 3.2 Distribution of youth living arrangements by race and age group

Family type	*Race*	*Age group (%)*			
		15–19	*20–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*
One-person household	Black African	2.8	13.8	28.35	42.7
	Coloured	0.6	4.3	16.1	27.7
	Indian/Asian	0.0	1.55	6.5	9.6
	White	0.7	14.15	23.7	39.2
Couple-headed household	Black African	1.7	5.8	13.4	17.9
	Coloured	1.1	6.1	15.0	23.6
	Indian/Asian	0.0	2.8	21.1	26.7
	White	2.0	8.4	28.0	37.4
Classic nuclear household	Black African	53.7	46.2	34.2	25.0
	Coloured	68.1	61.7	48.7	33.7
	Indian/Asian	85.7	76.6	39.1	24.2
	White	84.8	56.2	35.6	16.0
Extended nuclear household	Black African	41.1	32.4	22.6	18.5
	Coloured	29.0	26.5	15.7	13.3
	Indian/Asian	13.4	13.1	15.0	10.0
	White	11.2	14.1	10.2	5.9
Non-family household	Black African	1.0	1.7	1.4	1.0
	Coloured	1.2	1.4	4.5	1.6
	Indian/Asian	0.8	0.9	1.5	0.8
	White	1.3	7.2	2.5	1.4

Source: 2019 General Household Survey.

country's youth. In fact, over one-quarter of youth (26%) live in an extended family, while almost three-quarters of them (72%) live in some variant of the nuclear family system.[3] Indeed, the modal family form among the youth is the nuclear family, even though the youth of black African and to some extent, of coloured descent, are still more likely than their white and Indian/Asian counterparts to live in extended or multi-generational households.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 have both shown what we have been emphasising all along with regard to changes in the family context of the youth. First, contact with Europe and subsequent implementation of the colonial project affected the African family in fundamental ways. For instance, the fact that the traditional African family has had to coexist with two different family systems, namely, the nuclear and stem family systems representing the Europeans and Indians respectively, led to the adoption of these "alien" family forms by indigenous Africans. Second, the impelled migration of Africans, mainly males, into the emerging towns and cities following the expropriation of their land in the countryside, had historically meant the adoption of aspects of these European and other alien family systems by migrating Africans and vice versa.

The solitary living that resulted from this city-ward migration of Africans and other changes related to the family such as postponement of marriage and childbearing has been observed by several scholars. For instance, describing these changes in the family as an institution, Russell (2003: 10) noted:

> The new domestic arrangement adopted by black people to accommodate changed circumstances are within the *agnatic idiom*, which is proving no less resilient and adaptable than the Western *conjugal idiom* providing a charter by which most South Africans continue to order their radically altered domestic lives.

In fact, the issue of solitary living among black African youth, in particular, has led some family scholars to argue that in South Africa, the nuclear family has become the preferred family form among them and in the process making this family system the modal type in South Africa (see, e.g., Amoateng 1997; Ziehl 1994). For example, Table 3.2 shows the living arrangements of the youth by age group. One dynamic about the youth's living arrangements is that youth in the higher age band prefer solitary living or living alone, regardless of their racial background. It is also significant to note from Table 3.2 that the proportion of African youth aged 25–34 years who live alone is larger than the proportion of white youth in the same age group.

While culturally solitary living is a stage in the life course of whites or peoples of European descent for whom the nuclear family system is a cultural preference, this is hardly the case with black Africans. In fact, this view is backed by the data in Table 3.2, which suggests that black African youth continue to live in extended family households in contemporary society. The fact that black African youth tend to live in extended family households is further illustrated by analysis of the "*relationship to the head of the household*" variable in the 2019 General Household Survey data.

Specifically, analysis of the youth's relationships within households shows that black African youth tend to live in extended family households as shown in Table 3.2. This table shows that almost one-third (31%) of persons living in black African youth's households consisted of siblings, parents, uncles, aunties, grandparents, grandchildren, and other relatives of the heads of such households; such relatives constituted 23 per cent of households of coloured youth.

On the other hand, the proportions of relatives in Indian/Asian and white youth households were 20 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively. Moreover, the incidence of couples' households and the households of the classic nuclear family of a couple and their children is significantly higher among white and Indian youths compared to their African counterparts. For instance, while one-fifth (20%) of white youth live in couple-headed households, only 8.2 per cent of black African youth live in couple-headed households. The proportions of couple-headed households among coloured and Indian/Asian youths are 10 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively.

Thus, for black Africans, living alone is not a cultural preference but rather due to such historical and contemporary constraints a racial discrimination in the employment and housing markets.[4] The fact of the matter is that these single-person households, which were found to be on the increase in the emerging towns and cities in South Africa, were the result of the racial discrimination against black Africans in the job and housing markets. This racial discrimination in the formal housing market forced the teeming black African job seekers to seek shelter in the shacks that mushroomed in the shantytowns that sprang up around the outskirts of the towns and cities.

These restrictions on the housing market became more acute especially following the passage of such apartheid-induced legislation as the Group Areas and the Influx Control Acts that put African males into single-sex hostels in the emerging mining towns. The majority of Africans, especially African youth, have been compelled to live in mostly informal housing at the peripheries of the towns and cities to which they flock in search of better employment and educational opportunities.[5]

3.4.2 Patterns of family formation in pre-colonial Africa

Marriage and childbearing have always been key central events defining the family as a major social institution in virtually all African cultures as it forms the context of family building process in these societies. In fact, this is one reason why marriage is almost universal in nature in many African societies. As far as childbearing is concerned, the normative expectation was that this family event would occur soon after marriage.[6] In fact, the centrality of childbearing in some sub-Saharan African societies made barrenness almost a taboo.[7]

There are several reasons for this pronatalist ideology in traditional African cultures, but for the sake of brevity, three fundamental reasons should suffice in providing a context for the patterns of childbearing in traditional African societies. Firstly, children, and a large number of them for that matter, were important in the perpetuation of the kinship systems that formed the nuclei of social organisations in these pre-colonial societies. Secondly, the agrarian nature of the societies during this period in history meant that children were needed as sources of labour for families' productive processes. The need for children to provide labour for the family's productive processes was part of the rationale for the widespread practice of polygyny during this period. Finally, apart from families' desire for large family sizes to assist with family enterprises such as farming and for security in old age, ecologically high child mortality led parents to have additional children to protect against loss or to replace losses.

It is within the context of the high premium placed on childbearing in pre-colonial African society that some scholars on African customary law have argued that the concept of "illegitimacy" is largely alien to many African cultures. For example, Bennett (1991: 358) writes: "Illegitimacy is said to have no place in customary law since 'birth in or out of wedlock is irrelevant to the child's status in the community or its legal rights and duties'". Thus, because of the premium African cultures place on children, births outside of marriage are not necessarily frowned upon in most African societies. Actually, in some African cultures, childbearing outside of marriage is a normative stage in the family formation process.[8] However, because marriage was relatively early and universal, the level of so-called out-of-wedlock births was not as high as it is now.

As regards marriage, even though in the past it took diverse forms, the normative pattern involved the presence of a husband, his wife or wives, their children, and in most cases other kin in the same household. During this period, practices such as polygyny and marriage customs like bride wealth were normative parts of the institutions of marriage and family in sub-Saharan Africa, making marriage in pre-colonial Africa essentially polygamous.[9]

Even though both monogamy and polygyny in pre-colonial Africa cut across lineage systems, polygyny has historically been associated with patrilineal, patrilocal, gerontocratic, and pronatalist agrarian cultures that limited women's access to land, inheritance, support from kin, and sources of formalised power (Bledsoe 1993; Smith-Greeway & Trinitapoli 2014). Since a typical polygynous marriage involved a man marrying women much younger than him, this age difference created a gender hierarchy between a more experienced male and a less experienced female (Blanc & Lloyd 1996).

One major characteristic of the pre-colonial African family was that even when marriage was monogamous, it was not a single event between two individuals but rather a multi-stage social process uniting two (extended) families. Thus, during this period in history, the family was a cooperative enterprise due to the nature of the family production processes in households where households engendered economies of scale and the simultaneous dependence of both children and mothers on the married man's limited resources.

3.4.3 Youth and changing patterns of family formation in South Africa

As predicted by the structural conflict perspective of the family, coordinates such as formal education, wage employment, and urbanisation that were engendered by the colonial project have all wrought changes in the patterns of family formation as defined by marriage and childbearing. For example, even though the institution of marriage and childbearing are still valued, traditional practices with regard to them continue to change in the face of modern values and influences (Mabaso et al. 2018; Thobejane & Flora 2014).[10] For example, as part of the changes affecting the institution of marriage, there is a growing acceptance of alternative forms of domestic partnerships, especially among the youth in the society.

One major change in the institution of marriage in contemporary South African society is its incidence and timing. The early and universal marriage that characterises sub-Saharan African societies is rapidly giving way to delayed and even non-marriage patterns. In fact, study after study has shown that there is a general decline in the proportion of married people in South Africa, a situation that is largely driven by non-marriage patterns in the society, especially among black Africans in the country (Hosegood et al. 2009; Moore & Govender 2013).

As far as childbearing is concerned, the combination of the conventional modernising forces and adoption of the core values of the western family system has occasioned changes in the childbearing patterns of the indigenous African peoples. Specifically, the trend toward modernity, which has resulted in the gradual transformations of African marriage and family organisations away from corporate kinship and extended families toward nuclear households, tends to put a premium on not only childbearing but large families because of the functional utility of children on family enterprises.

Significantly, the restrictions on formal housing, rather than popularity of nuclear households, have resulted in the concomitant shifts from high to low fertility rates in African families due to such developments as the rapid expansion of educational opportunities for women and the availability of modern contraceptive methods.[11] Furthermore, modernisation, via forces such as wage employment and urbanisation, has acted to undermine kinship organisation by encouraging single parenthood, education, access to modern contraception, and scarcity of marriageable men, especially in the cities where liberal ethos prevails. All these factors have contributed to the decline in fertility in most sub-Saharan African societies.

Tables 3.3 and 3.4 show the changes in childbearing patterns in contemporary South African society. After lagging behind Europe, North America, Asia, and Latin America for decades in the first demographic transition, sub-Saharan Africa has been witnessing a transition in its fertility regime, albeit with variations in different sub-regions and countries. Invariably, the expansion in formal education, urbanisation, availability of modern methods of contraception,

Table 3.3 Distribution of children ever born by background factors

Socioeconomic factors	*Number*	*Mean*	*Std. dev*
Race/ethnicity			
Black African	7359	1.68	1.59
Coloured	848	1.64	1.47
Indian/Asian	88	1.20	1.56
White	214	1.24	1.23
Educational level			
No Education	190	3.12	2.25
Primary	862	2.66	2.00
Secondary	6581	1.52	1.43
Higher	881	1.42	1.23
Type of residence			
Urban	4805	1.54	1.43
Rural	3709	1.81	1.72

Source: 2016 Demographic and Health Survey.

Table 3.4 Distribution of parental status by marital status and race/ethnicity

Race/ethnicity	*Single, never married (%)*	*Currently in a union/ living with a man (%)*	*Formerly in a union/ living with a man (%)*
Black African			
No	48.4	8.7	6.9
Yes	52.0	91.0	93.0
Coloured			
No	59.0	14.0	17.0
Yes	41.0	86.	83.0
Indian/Asian			
No	86.0	33.0	0.0
Yes	14.0	67.0	100.0
White			
No	91.1	41.0	0.0
Yes	9.0	59.0	0.0
Total			
No	42.0	8.0	5.0
Yes	58.0	92.0	95.0

Source: 2016 Demographic and Health Survey.

and delayed marriage have largely influenced the decline in the total fertility rate (TFR) in sub-Saharan Africa.

As the most developed economy on the continent, South Africa has been a pioneer in this demographic transition for all intents and purposes. The country has been witnessing a steady decline in the total fertility rate from 2.8 to 2.4 births per woman over the last two decades as it scores high on most of the observed determinants of fertility decline. Specifically, South African women of reproductive age are increasingly delaying marriage and their first births, extending the interval between subsequent births, and using some form of modern contraception.

The two tables together illustrate two issues concerning the changes in childbearing patterns in South Africa. Firstly, Table 3.3 provides empirical support for the fertility transition in South Africa as predicted by the first demographic transition theory. The fertility decline in the country is now below the replacement level of two children per woman. Even though this decline is true for young women across all social and economic groups, there are slight variations with regard to race/ethnicity, type of residence, and socio-economic status.

For instance, the total fertility rate is higher among young black African and coloured women compared to young Indian/Asian and white women in the country. Moreover, as predicted by modernisation theory, young women without any formal education have a larger number of children ever born than their counterparts with higher levels of education, while young women who reside in rural areas have a higher number of children ever born than those who reside in urban areas. The second issue worthy of note about the changing childbearing patterns in the country is the fact that childbearing continues to occur both in and out of socially recognised marital unions, with out-of-wedlock births happening with increasing regularity due to the increasing postponement of marriage in contemporary South African society.

Table 3.4 shows that while the bulk of childbearing continues to take place within the context of marriage, more births are taking place outside marital unions. For example, the Table shows that almost six out of ten (58%) single, never-married women report having children compared to only 42 per cent of such young women who do not report having children. Conversely, 92 and 95 per cent of women who are currently or formerly in a union report having children.

Survival analysis of the DHS data showed that while the median age at first birth for the country's youth is 19 years, by the end of their 19th birthday (the median age at first birth), 50 per cent of the women remain childless. As far as changes in the patterns of marriage among the youth are concerned, Figure 3.1 shows the results of the survival analysis of the timing of marriage among persons aged 15–34 years (Youth) in the country using the 2019 General Household Survey data by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA 2019). We use survival analysis to examine the question of changes in the family formation patterns among the youth, especially the twin family events of marriage and childbearing in the absence of a longitudinal data set.

Because some of the respondents in the survey (the 2019 General Household Survey), especially those in the younger age group, may not have experienced the event in question (i.e., *censored observations*), conventional statistical techniques such as regression analysis are not able to handle their

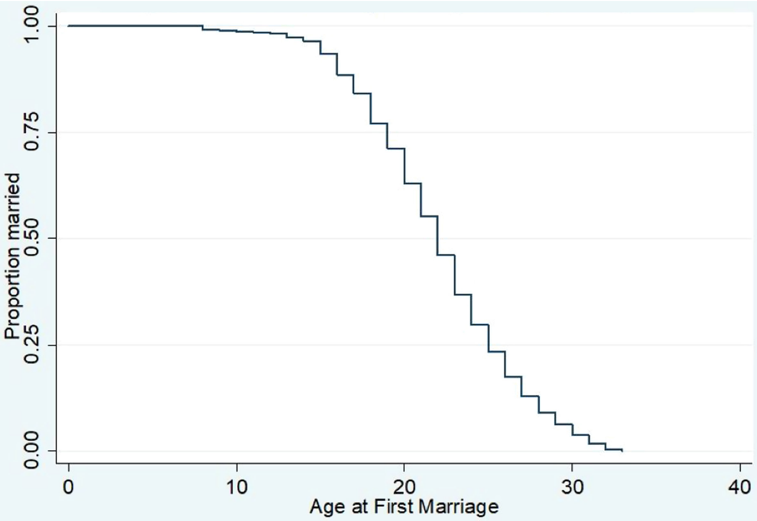

Figure 3.1 Survival analysis of age at first marriage.

future behaviours regarding those events; such cases are treated as missing data and are usually excluded from the analysis. However, survival analysis is flexible enough to handle such cases by capturing the marriage and birth experiences of women who are yet to experience those events in the calculation of the cumulative proportion that experiences the event at specific ages. The results in Figure 3.1 show that the median age at first marriage in the country is 22 years. This means that by the end of their 22nd birthday, at least half (50%) of the women in the country have married.

This finding is consistent with a study by Garenne (2004) in which he found an average median age at first marriage of 24 years for the Southern African countries of Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa. And with regards to South Africa specifically, Ayiga and Rampagane (2013), in a comparative study of Uganda and South Africa, estimated the median age at first marriage to be between 24 and 29 years. It is significant to note that the median age at first marriage of 22 years in South Africa means that not only is the incidence of marriage low in the country, but marriage occurs relatively late in a woman's life. In fact, in Garenne's (2004) study, in which he derived estimates of the median age at first marriage from a wide list of sub-Saharan African countries that participated in the demographic and health surveys, most estimates lay within the 15–19 age band when all cohorts were combined.

As we have already noted, these changes in marriage patterns in South Africa, like changes elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, are a result of both internal and external stimuli, as well as the interaction between these stimuli. The internal stimuli of change are mainly the cultural changes in values and norms that have been occasioned by the interaction between the internal and external forces of change. To the extent that ethnicity reflects cultural norms, values, and ethos, it mirrors the cultural changes in marriage patterns with regard to the youth in the country.

Figure 3.2 shows the results of the survival analysis, which depict the relationship between ethnicity and age at first marriage among the youth in the country. What is clear from the graph is the fact that, like their counterparts elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, black African females are more likely to marry early compared to other ethnic groups in the country, that is, whites and Indians. For example, by the median age of 22 years, 56 per cent of black African females have already married compared to only 44.3 per cent of other ethnic groups in South Africa. However, while black African females may marry earlier than their other ethnic counterparts, the incidence or rate of marriage among them is relatively lower than their white and Indian counterparts.

In fact, some family scholars have attributed the low rate of marriage among black African youth in South Africa to the increasing rates of cohabitation among this demographic group (Hosegood et al. 2009; Moore & Govender 2013). Essentially, these family scholars argue that whereas in the past these non-marriage partnerships or cohabitation were an acceptable precursor to marriage, it is increasingly becoming an alternative to marriage in contemporary South Africa (see, e.g., Moore & Govender 2013).

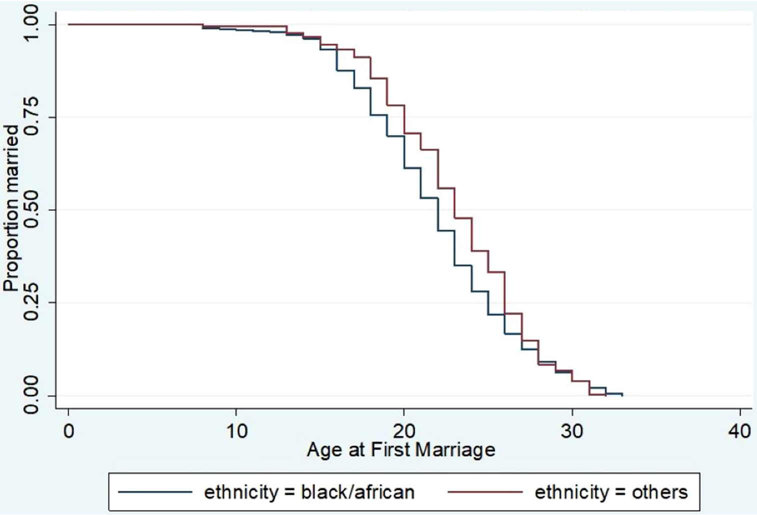

Figure 3.2 Survival analysis of age at first marriage by ethnicity.

Thus, according to this argument, there is a blurring of the distinction between the legal definition of marriage and the sociological perception of what constitutes a marriage because the people involved in such partnerships redefine terms and conditions. Moreover, these scholars argue that cohabitation has become so common in South Africa that methodologically this domestic arrangement is counted as "marriage" in censuses and sample surveys (van de Walle 1993).[12]

This argument with regard to the rate of cohabitation among black Africans is clearly blunted by the available empirical evidence, as the rates of cohabitation among South Africa's youth between 2008 and 2019 do not show any significant variations. For instance, examination of the GHS data showed that whereas the cohabitation rate among black African youth increased from 7.1 to 9.5 per cent, the rate among white youth more than doubled from 5 to 11 per cent during the same period; the increase was from 6 to 9 per cent and 3 to 5 per cent for coloured and Indian youths, respectively.

Two issues are worth mentioning from the above empirical evidence regarding cohabitation and marriage among black Africans in South Africa. First, the incidence of cohabitation is generally not as high as scholars make it out to be. Secondly, the phenomenon of cohabitation is certainly not the preserve of black African youth, as the rate is even higher among white youth. Thus, the increasing popularity of cohabitation as an acceptable marital arrangement as an explanation for the low rates of marriage among black African youth begs the question of why marriage rates are low among black Africans in society.

The fact of the matter is that the increasing popularity of cohabitation as an alternative marital union is an epiphenomenon rather than the cause of the low rates of conventional marriage in general; both cohabitation and low rates of marriage are by-products of more fundamental forces of family change.

Throughout this chapter, we have belaboured the point that as offspring of members of pre-colonial African society, the heritage of black African youth regarding marriage is that of the early and universal marriage regime. However, such structural forces as formal education, wage employment, circular migration, and urbanisation have jointly affected these patterns of early and universal marriage. The pre-colonial agrarian African societies that engendered the early and universal marriage patterns were altered by the expropriation of agricultural lands in the countryside.

The resultant migratory labour system that became institutionalised in the Southern African sub-region, and the discrimination in the job and housing markets in the receiving towns and cities of South Africa, all functioned to limit the rational choices of the participants, especially black African youth, in this migratory labour system.

Figure 3.3 shows the effect of formal education on the timing of marriage in South Africa. The median age at first marriage for female youth with no education or only primary school education is 18 years. In other words, by the end of their 18th birthday, 54 per cent of the female youth with either primary school education or no schooling at all have already married. On the other hand, the median ages at first marriage for female youth with secondary and tertiary education are 22 years and 24 years, respectively. In other words, by the time female youth attain the age of 22 years, 54 per cent of them with secondary education have married, while 57 per cent of female youth with tertiary education have married by the age of 24 years.

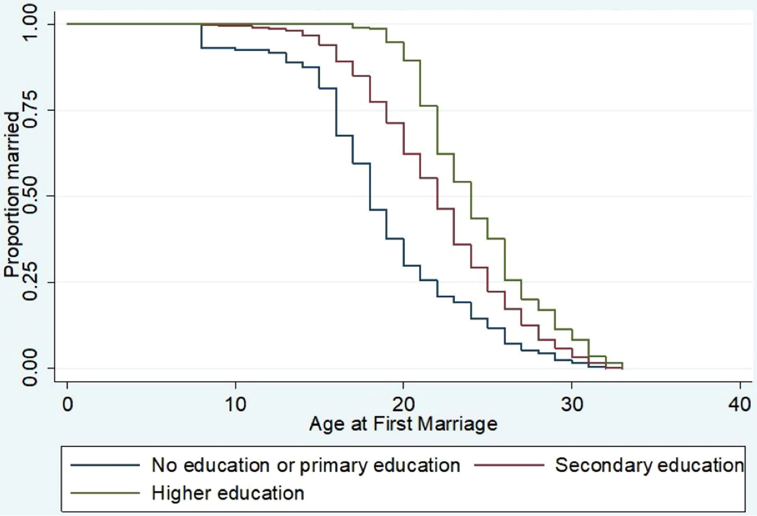

Figure 3.3 Survival analysis of age at first marriage by education level.

Because of the length of time that is required for a person to stay in school to receive educational qualifications, school becomes a competing activity to family events such as marriage and childbearing; hence education has a positive effect on age at first marriage and eventually age at first birth. Besides delaying a woman's entry into a marital union, education endows a woman with economic and social resources which make her independent and help her participate in the decision as to when she marries and bears children.

The effect of socioeconomic resources on the timing of marriage is illustrated in Figure 3.4, which shows the results of the survival analysis of the relationship between household wealth and age at first marriage. Female youth from poor households tend to marry early compared to their counterparts from medium and richer households. For example, by the end of their 21st birthday, 55 per cent of female youth from poor households have already married. This contrasts strikingly with female youth from rich households, among whom 55 per cent are married by the end of their 23rd birthday. For female youth from medium-wealth households, 53 per cent are married by the end of their 22nd birthday.

Urbanisation is spurred by the growth of towns and cities when people move from the countryside to these new locales in search of the socioeconomic opportunities that emerge there as a result of this growth. As far as South Africa is concerned, historically, the process of urbanisation began in earnest following the discovery of minerals such as gold and diamond during the late nineteenth century in places like Johannesburg and Kimberley in the Gauteng and Northern Cape provinces, respectively. In general, cities and urban areas in developing countries like South Africa tend to be selective of such modern amenities as schools, hospitals, electricity, transportation

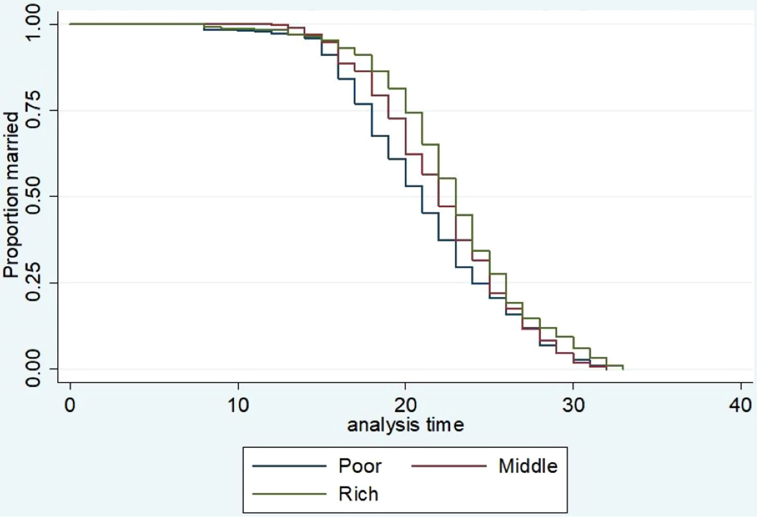

Figure 3.4 Survival analysis of age at first marriage by wealth status.

systems, and employment opportunities which tend to act as pull factors in the migration decisions people make to move from rural areas to urban areas.

The net result of the concentration of modern amenities and socioeconomic opportunities in urban areas is that urban areas come to have a unique ethos in the form of modernising values, norms, and beliefs that put a premium on the pursuit of activities that tend to compete with family activities such as marriage and childbearing. This rural/urban variation in the family formation process, as far as the youth are concerned, is reflected in the results of the survival analysis with regards to age at first marriage for the country's youth as depicted in Figure 3.5.

Female youth in urban areas tends to delay marriage on average by about one year compared to their counterparts in rural areas. According to Figure 3.5, whereas 51 per cent of urban female youth have already entered into a marital union at the age of 22 years, 54 per cent of rural females have married by the age of 21 years.

As we have sought to demonstrate throughout this book, youth is not a homogenous category, as youth differ on myriad social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions. One of the crucial criteria on which youth differ is age. The significance of age with regard to youth dynamics lies in the importance and magnitude of peer influence as far as youth outcomes are concerned. One can hardly assume that peer influences on adolescents and/or young adults would be the same as those on emerging adults. These variations were empirically validated by the results of the survival analysis of age at first marriage we conducted for our female sub-sample using the 2019 General Household Survey data by Statistics South Africa as shown in Figure 3.6. As Figure 3.6 clearly shows, 50 per cent of the youth aged 15–24 years old have

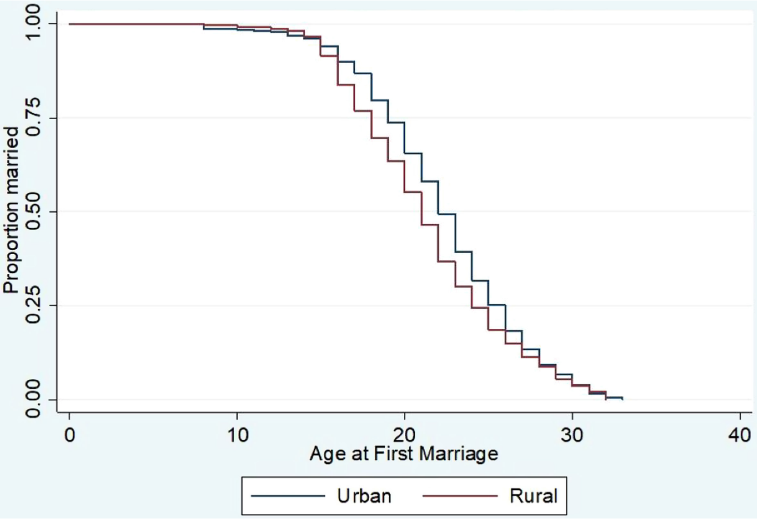

Figure 3.5 Survival analysis of age at first marriage by place of residence.

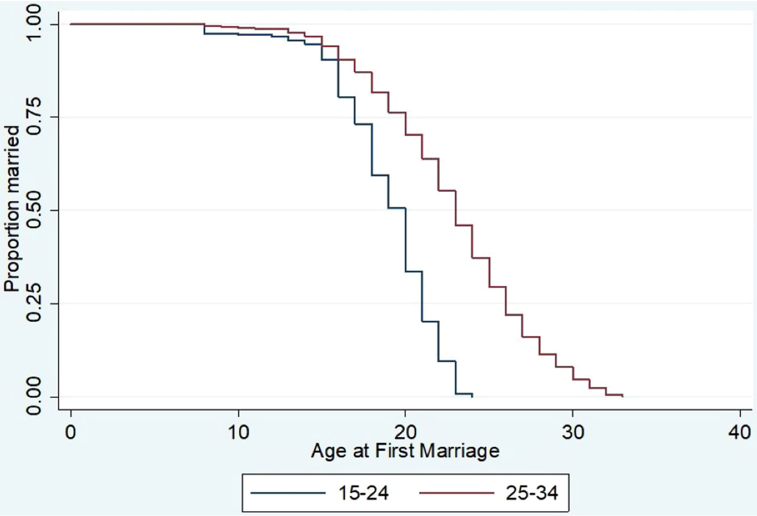

Figure 3.6 Survival analysis of age at first marriage by age.

already married by the end of their 20th birthday compared to 54 per cent of the youth aged 25–34 years old who have married by the end of their 23rd birthday.

3.5 Summary and conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to examine the family context of youth in South Africa as it is one of the influences on the life experiences of young people. To this effect, this chapter took a broad historical perspective by looking at the structure and function of the family institution from pre-colonial times to the present. After examining recent survey data provided mainly by the country's statistical agency, Stats SA, we conclude that the heritage of the vast majority of the country's youth is the extended multi-generational family system, which has been juxtaposed with the Western and Indian/Asian nuclear and stem family systems.

This chapter has also demonstrated how all these family systems have been in flux due to external forces of change. The major trends of this family transformation have been witnessed increases in solitary living arrangements among the youth, a movement from early and universal marriage patterns to late and in several instances, non-marriage patterns. The increase in non-marital births, especially among black Africans, appears to be a function of the increasing postponement of marriage in modern African societies.

In fact, marriage is largely accessible to white and Indian/Asian South African youths because, economically, they are better off than black African and coloured youths because of their poor economic situation in the employment and housing markets.[13] Also, because the concept of illegitimacy is more relevant in the isolated nuclear and stem family systems of whites and Indians/Asians, they are more sensitive to childbearing outside a marital union than their black African and coloured counterparts. The pronatalist ideology which led to the bearing of a large number of children in the pre-colonial African family has been abandoned in favour of smaller family sizes. The fundamental reason why fertility levels have fallen in South Africa is the tendency among young South Africans to postpone childbearing due to such modernising influences as formal education, urbanisation, wage employment, and access to modern and effective methods of contraception. Over time, the youth are putting off not only marriage but also childbearing, especially among young women who are increasingly being educated and being exposed to urbanising influences.

In conclusion, contrary to the view that the increasing solitary living and late family formation patterns among black African young men and women represent increasing nuclearisation of the family in the black community, it is actually a fracturing of the family in the community whose essence is a communalist ethos engendered by co-residence of members, early and universal marriage on one hand and large family sizes on the other hand.

Notes

1 The term "traditional" is used to describe African societies before the advent of colonialism.

2 Because of the extent of the penetration of the capitalist mode of production in South Africa, the universality of marriage in the society is limited compared to other African societies.

3 One-person and couple-headed households are considered variants of the nuclear family system that consists of a married couple and their children.

4 In fact, at the outset of the industrial "revolution" in South Africa, young black Africans who flocked to the cities and towns to work in the newly discovered mines were forced to live in the so-called single-sex hostels because of such laws as the Influx Control Act.

5 Shacks are informal structures built with disused tin, aluminium, and/or cardboard materials usually on "invaded" public and private lands around the cities and towns of South Africa.

6 It is significant here to note that premarital birth in traditional African society was frowned upon, so the bulk of childbearing took place within the context of marriage.

7 Barrenness was attributed to the influence of witchcraft and other evil spirits, so couples who were unable to bear children would visit shrine after shrine to seek help in countering the effects of such evil spirits.

8 In fact, because childbearing was desirable and entire communities cared for children, showing proof of it before marriage acted as a catalyst for the completion of marriage, which was a process as opposed to being an event.

9 Polygamy could either be polygyny, whereby a man marries multiple wives, or polyandry, where a woman marries more than one man.

10 It has been estimated that in South Africa, the incidence of polygyny declined from 7 per cent in 1998 to 2 per cemt in 2016 (NDoH, Stats SA, SAMRC, and ICF 2019).

11 It is noteworthy that demographers long attributed the prevalence of high fertility rates in Africa to the resistance of indigenous socio-cultural systems to external forces.

12 In fact, the increasing tendency to count cohabitation as "marriage" in censuses and sample surveys is hardly limited to South Africa as it is almost a universal practice on the African continent.

13 Recall that for young black African men, the wait to accumulate enough savings to pay the bride wealth further puts marriage beyond the reach of many of them.

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4 Youth and health

4.1 Introduction

Health, vigour, and vitality are frequently associated with youth. Yet young people are susceptible to illnesses just like other groups, including children, adults, and the elderly. Even though research has established a significant empirical correlation between age and health risks overall (Gouda et al. 2019; Jaul & Barron 2017; Maimela et al. 2016; Singh et al. 2019), young people exhibit patterns of disease and health risks that set them apart from other age groups due to the disproportionate burden that some diseases place on them (Gouda et al. 2019). For instance, a breakdown of the total disease burden by age group in the world reveals that young people, especially those under the age of 15, have relatively lower non-communicable disease burdens compared to older people (Roser & Ritchie 2021; World Health Organisation [WHO] 2018).

Over a third (34.3%) of South Africa's population is under the age of 35 years (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA] 2022). This has the potential to give South Africa an economic advantage in the form of higher productivity and a positive growth trajectory in the future. Reaping the benefits of this youth bulge, however, will require young people to be healthy and successfully transition to adulthood. Improving young people's health is crucial for their current well-being as well as for lowering the burden of adult disease because young people's behaviour and health are significant indicators of future risks (Cooper et al. 2015).

However, youth health is far from desirable because the burden of disease among South Africa's youth, those aged 15–34, is high as the country continues to battle a quadruple burden of disease (Ataguba et al. 2015). Yet, measuring the well-being of young people is challenging because prevalent diseases (morbidities) and death rates (mortalities)—which are objective indicators of disease burdens—differ greatly even within this group. Our aim in this chapter is to examine the bigger picture of youth health and well-being, providing an overview of the current state of health of young people in South Africa. The primary health issues affecting South Africa's youth are then covered, along

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with how young people's lifestyle choices contribute to the causes and effects of ill health.

4.2 Health profile of South Africa's youth

Young people in South Africa experience serious health issues just like their counterparts across the continent do, as the region bears a disproportionately large burden of disease (Bigna & Noubiap 2019; Bollyky et al. 2017). Many of South Africa's youth are likely to experience or be exposed to one of these conditions that will limit their development in some way, as high rates of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), maternal and child mortality, non-communicable diseases, injuries, and violence continue to wreak havoc in the country (Ataguba et al. 2015).

Currently, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) or chronic conditions such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke are causing a high disease burden among South Africa's youth, increasing their susceptibility to early death. Furthermore, according to national mortality data on the causes of young people's deaths between 2013 and 2018 (Stats SA 2022), TB and HIV continued to be the main killers of young people between the ages of 15 and 34. Recent national statistics show that TB and HIV are still the main causes of youth deaths in the country, accounting for 14.6% of all deaths among those between the ages of 15 and 34 (Stats SA 2022).

4.3 Health variations and contextualised risks

In understanding the health challenges of young people in South Africa, it is important to understand that South Africa's youth are by no means a homogeneous group. Apart from sharing the label "young", South Africa's youth vary in terms of personal traits, and exposure to social, economic, and environmental conditions factors. Just as young people differ in their biological makeup, so too do their socioeconomic contexts and environmental exposures. Therefore, even though the youth as a group may be affected by the same conditions, they do not necessarily have the same degree of vulnerability. Uneven social and cultural norms can result in unequal exposures and vulnerabilities, which can make some youth more prone to suffering from poor health. This is due to the fact that, aside from their age, some young people's underlying personal traits—often aspects of social stratification related to gender, race, and class—give them a lower chance of being healthy (Dummer 2018; Marmot & Bell 2019).

Existing research shows marked differences in the health statuses of South Africa's youth, with outcomes significantly shaped by demographic factors like sex/gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Amoateng et al. 2021; Biney et al. 2020; Khaoya et al. 2015), mimicking established social gradients in health outcomes in the general population. For instance, data on youth mortality reveals that between 2013 and 2018, there were typically more deaths among young men than young women in the country (Stats SA 2022). Similarly, the leading causes of death for the nation's young vary by gender, race, and socioeconomic status, demonstrating that well-being and health outcomes are not only biologically determined (Stringhini & Bovet 2017) but also significantly shaped by the social conditions surrounding young people's birth, upbringing, and transition to adulthood (Commission on Social Determinants of Health 2008).

For instance, due to the institutionalised racial discrimination that was engineered by the apartheid regime, black Africans, especially women, have historically been at the bottom of the social hierarchy in South Africa (Seekings 2003). Because of this, black Africans have had and still have disproportionate access to crucial social goods and amenities when compared to their white counterparts. Young black women suffer the most from the social hierarchy, which has a negative impact on their health and health-seeking behaviour. Although young people's decisions to lead healthy lives often fall outside of their control, they are still partially responsible. This is due to the personal factors that affect the well-being of South Africa's youth now and set them up for poor health in adulthood, such as poor dietary decisions, alcohol and substance use and abuse, and other risky behaviours. According to WHO statistics, adolescent behaviour is to blame for 70 per cent of all adult premature deaths worldwide (Naik & Karreda 2015).

The majority of people experiment during their adolescence and youth because this is the time when they are most likely to try out their new roles and identities (Cooper et al. 2015). But when people experiment, they tend to adopt risky or unhealthy lifestyle choices that have a serious negative impact on their health (Uddin et al. 2020) and add to the burden of youth morbidity and mortality. For instance, empirical research has connected negative trends in young people's behavioural choices and lifestyles to increased disease burdens and premature deaths among the youth (see, e.g., Kugbey et al. 2018; Lawana et al. 2019; WHO 2018).

In the following sections, we examine select diseases that afflict the country's youth and show how these disease burdens differ by the behavioural and lifestyle choices that increase these risks as well as how structural influences—cultural norms, economic, and gender inequalities—work together to influence these lifestyle decisions young people make.

4.3.1 HIV/AIDS

The HIV and AIDS epidemic has affected every country, but the South African context is somewhat unique in that it represents the largest share of the epidemic in any one nation worldwide, both in terms of the number of people living with HIV and the rate of new infections (UNAIDS 2018). The rate of HIV/AIDS has historically been highest in South Africa and continues to remain high, even though the epidemic's prevalence rates may be declining in some areas on the continent (UN DESA 2007).

According to UNAIDS' 2019 report, South Africa is home to about one-fifth (19%) of all HIV-positive people worldwide. Currently, one in five people aged 15 and older in South Africa has HIV (National Department of Health [NDoH] et al. 2019). Moreover, the country accounts for 15 per cent of new cases of HIV and 11 per cent of AIDS-related deaths globally (UNAIDS 2019). The persistence of HIV/AIDS coincides with a rise in tuberculosis (TB) infections (Stats SA 2022). The country has made great strides in increasing funding and creating public health initiatives and policies to fight AIDS and stop the spread of new infections since the era of HIV/AIDS denialism (Fassin & Schneider 2003). But, despite these efforts to halt the spread of the virus, the youth of the country are still suffering from the scourge of this relentless infectious disease.

HIV prevalence is particularly high among the country's youth as they constitute a large proportion of the national infection rate, both in terms of those living with the disease and new infections. According to national estimates, 7 per cent of young people in the country between the ages of 15 and 24 are HIV positive, and this group accounts for more than a third of all new infections (NDoH et al. 2019). When the 25–34 cohort is taken into account, the HIV incidence rises to approximately 12.6 per cent.

Even among young people, there are noticeable variations in HIV prevalence because of the varying degrees of HIV vulnerability among them. Adolescent girls and younger women aged 15–24 in South Africa, regardless of location, are particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and four times more likely to be HIV positive than young men of the same age—12 per cent vs 3 per cent (NDoH, Stats SA, SAMRC & ICF 2019). This is not just due to differences in gender-specific HIV morbidity and mortality rates because national statistics also show that HIV prevalence among South Africa's youth decreases with increasing household wealth, with those in the lowest wealth quintile at a higher risk than those in the highest quintile (NDoH et al. 2019). Despite the fact that women are more biologically susceptible to contracting HIV than men are (Cooper et al. 2015), there are many different factors that contribute to HIV/AIDS among young women in South Africa. Existing evidence indicates that a number of sociocultural factors, such as gender inequality, increase HIV risks for young women in the country (MacPhail & Campbell 2001; Morojele et al. 2006; Pettifor et al. 2004).

Although developing one's sexuality and having intimate relationships are important aspects of youth, the circumstances within which these choices are made matter. Several scholars have observed that the high rate of HIV/AIDS among adolescents and younger youth aged 15–24 years in the country, particularly women, may be due in part to the fact that South African youth, in general, are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviours and practices, such as unprotected/unsafe sex (i.e., non-use, inconsistent or inadequate condom use during sex), multiple sexual partnerships, and early sexual initiation (see, e.g. Amoateng et al. 2014; Asamoah & Agardh 2016; Morojele et al. 2006; Pettifor 2004; Seutlwadi et al. 2012).

Biney et al. (2020) studied factors that predicted sexual risk-taking behaviours among three unmarried cohorts of young people—adolescents (15–19 years old), emerging adults (20–24 years old), and young adults (25–34 years old)—and found that up to a quarter (25%) of South Africa's youth engaged in unprotected sex, while up to two-thirds (67.4%) engaged in sexual intercourse with multiple partners. Men were more likely to have multiple sexual partners than women, while women were more likely to engage in unprotected sex. Despite being aware of the associated risks, young people are increasingly endangering their sexual and reproductive health by engaging in risky sexual behaviours like unprotected sex and having multiple partners. Concerning the latter, evidence shows that the likelihood of contracting HIV among South Africa's youth increases with the number of sexual partners they have. This trend is particularly pronounced among young women; 21 per cent of young women who have had two or more partners have the virus (NDoH et al. 2019). Table 4.1 shows the bivariate analysis of multiple sexual partnerships by background sociodemographic characteristics of youth in the country. The results generally confirm that there are differences in the likelihood of youth having two or more sexual partners depending on race/ethnicity, gender, region of residence, marital status, age cohort, education, and employment status. More specifically, youth aged 20–24 years (33.4%), women (67.5%), black African youth (92.6%), youth residing in urban areas (52.3%), unemployed youth (64.3%), youth who have never been married (92.6%), youth with secondary-level education (82.8%), and youth from poorer households (45.9%) more frequently reported engaging in sex with multiple partners. Unsurprisingly, HIV/AIDS prevalence is also high among these sub-groupings.

Youth who engage in unsafe sex seemingly underestimate their risk of getting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and end up putting their health and that of their partners in danger. The results of the bivariate analysis of unprotected sex among youth aged 15–34 in South Africa support the fact that, consistent with the polarisation in the country, there are stark differences along sociodemographic characteristics (see Table 4.2).

However, youth engaging in unsafe sexual activities (mostly unprotected sexual practice) is not just a matter of personal preference or choice. This is because the high rates of risky sexual behaviour are actually caused by a number of social factors, including young men's perceived immunity to HIV, peer pressure in the form of condom disapproval, and young women's lack of control in romantic relationships (MacPhail & Campbell 2001; Morojele et al. 2006; Wood et al. 1998). As a result, young people, particularly young women, experience a disproportionately high rate of poor sexual and reproductive health. Concerning the latter, not using condoms during sex may be a result of the existing imbalance of power between the sexes, which may be more pronounced for young women than for young men. Men tend to benefit from this gender dynamic in intimate relationships, but young women are less able to negotiate for safer sex with their male partners, which increases their risk of contracting HIV (Boileau et al. 2008; MacPhail & Campbell 2001). This is especially true if intercourse occurs as a result of sexual assault or coerced sexual relations.

Table 4.1 Bivariate analysis of multiple sexual partners among youth aged 15–34

Background characteristics	*No*		*Yes*		*p-value*
	Number	*per cent*	*Number*	*per cent*	
Age cohort					<.001
15–19 years	1343	38.2	867	20.0	
20–24 years	566	16.1	1444	33.4	
25–29 years	684	19.5	1205	27.8	
30–34 years	920	26.2	811	18.7	
Gender					<.001
Male	830	23.6	1405	32.5	
Female	2683	76.4	2922	67.5	
Race/ethnicity					<.001
Black African	2956	84.1	4006	92.6	
Coloured	389	11.1	270	6.2	
Indian/Asian	62	1.8	13	0.3	
White	106	3.0	38	0.9	
Place of Residence					<.001
Urban	2009	57.2	2265	52.3	
Rural	1504	42.8	2062	47.7	
Education level					<.001
No education	34	1.0	27	0.6	
Primary	392	11.2	279	6.4	
Secondary (matric)	2801	79.7	3582	82.8	
Higher	286	8.1	439	10.1	
Employment Status					<.001
Employed	999	28.4	1546	35.7	
Not employed	2514	71.6	2781	64.3	
SES					<.001
Poorer	1547	44.0	1987	45.9	
Middle	739	21.0	1107	25.6	
Richer	1227	34.9	1233	28.5	
Relationship status					<.001
Never married	1935	55.1	4008	92.6	
Cohabiting	699	19.9	129	3.0	
Ever married	879	25	190	4.4	
Total	**3513**	**44.8**	**4327**	**55.2**	

Source: Computed from the 2019 General Household Survey ($N = 7840$).

When a sexual encounter occurs earlier than appropriate, whether forced or consensual, this unequal gender dynamic is even more obvious. This is because young people, particularly adolescent girls, who begin having sex earlier in life—before or by age 14—are more likely to have poor access to reproductive information on contraceptive use or even lack the emotional maturity required to negotiate for safer sex (Yarinbab et al. 2018). This is especially so in the

Table 4.2 Bivariate analysis of unsafe sex among youth aged 15–34

Background characteristics	*No*		*Yes*		*p-value*
	Number	*per cent*	*Number*	*per cent*	
Age cohort					<.001
15–19 years	1901	37.5	309	11.2	
20–24 years	1336	26.3	674	24.4	
25–29 years	1041	20.5	848	30.7	
30–34 years	797	15.7	934	33.8	
Gender					<.001
Male	1647	32.5	588	21.3	
Female	3428	67.5	2177	78.7	
Race/ethnicity					=.001
Black African	4558	89.8	2404	86.9	
Coloured	392	7.7	267	9.7	
Indian/Asian	48	0.9	27	1.0	
White	77	1.5	67	2.4	
Place of residence					=.384
Urban	2785	54.9	1489	53.9	
Rural	2290	45.1	1276	46.1	
Education level					<.001
No education	35	0.7	26	0.9	
Primary	399	7.9	272	9.8	
Secondary (matric)	4205	82.9	2178	78.8	
Higher	436	8.6	289	10.5	
Employment status					<.001
Employed	1408	27.7	1137	41.1	
Not Employed	3667	72.3	1628	58.9	
SES					<.001
Poorer	2205	43.4	1329	48.1	
Middle	1203	23.7	643	23.3	
Richer	1667	32.8	793	28.7	
Relationship status					<.001
Never married	4455	87.8	1488	53.8	
Cohabiting	282	5.6	546	19.7	
Ever married	338	6.7	731	26.4	
Total	**5075**	**64.7**	**2765**	**35.3**	

Source: Authors' own computation from 2019 GHS ($N = 7840$).

case where younger women are engaging in sexual relations with older men. Both circumstances increase their vulnerability to unsafe sex and, as a result, to sexual and reproductive health problems like unintended pregnancies and HIV infections (Letamo & Mokgatlhe 2013).

The transient "sugar daddy" relationship that is becoming more common in South Africa, exemplified by the "blesser-blessee" and "slay queen" phenomena, is not only emblematic of this gender inequality in sexual relationships (Biney et al. 2020). But it also highlights how risky behaviours like transactional sex, which are endangering the health and well-being of a significant portion of the nation's youth, are influenced by economic insecurity, particularly poverty (Cooper et al. 2015; Pettifor et al. 2004). It is significantly more challenging for young women who experience poverty—in all its forms—to negotiate condom use because they are more susceptible to transactional sex.

Finally, unhealthy cultural norms may be the cause of young men's perceived immunity to HIV, which may explain their propensity to have multiple partners. In South Africa, as in the majority of patriarchal African societies, multiple partnerships are a permissible, even typical, aspect of masculine sexuality (Eaton et al. 2003; MacPhail & Campbell 2001). Even though it is socially acceptable, sociocultural norms allowing for multiple partners put some young people's, especially young women's, sexual health in danger, particularly if these relationships are occurring simultaneously and without any precautions. The effect of unhealthy cultural norms on the sexual well-being of the nation's youth is epitomised by racial differences in HIV prevalence among this group (see Figure 4.1).

4.3.2 Chronic diseases

Over 85 per cent of all deaths worldwide related to non-communicable diseases (NCDs)—-cancer, diabetes, asthma, and cardiovascular disease—occur in low- and middle-income countries, of which South Africa is one. (Bollyky et al. 2017; WHO 2018). Chronic health conditions, which were once thought to be lifestyle diseases of the wealthy, are gaining ground throughout South Africa and are now one of the main causes of morbidity and mortality, accounting for over a third (39%) of all deaths in the country (Day et al. 2018;

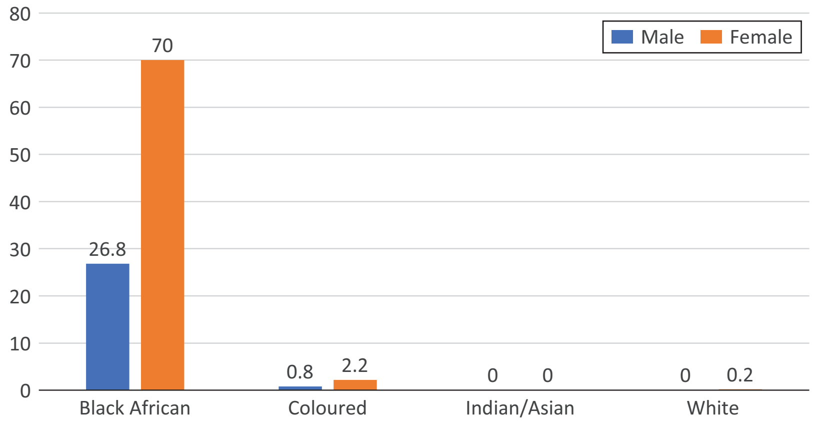

Figure 4.1 Percentage distribution of reported HIV/AIDS infection by race/ethnicity. Source: Computed from the 2019 GHS.

Nojilana et al. 2016; de Wet-Billings 2021). Amoateng et al. (2021) estimate that 17.3 per cent of South African adults aged 18 and older have a chronic health condition.

Although chronic health conditions are primarily a result of biological ageing, their effects can be seen at any stage of life as new prevalence trends indicate that young people are becoming more susceptible (Sassi & Hurst 2008; Uddin et al. 2020). A growing number of South African youth, especially those between the ages of 15 and 24, are developing chronic diseases, which are a leading cause of premature death in this group (de Wet-Billings 2021). Youth mortality from chronic illness has increased over time and is likely to keep rising if nothing is done about it soon. According to one study, preventing NCD deaths among South African youth would add between 2.2 and 10.3 years to life expectancy (de Wet-Billings 2021).

South Africa's youth generally display a wide range of chronic health issues and varying degrees of vulnerability. According to empirical research, chronic diseases are more common in women, people of lower socioeconomic status, marginalised groups, and urban residents of any population (Amoateng et al. 2021; Bollyky et al. 2017; Maimela et al. 2016; Singh et al. 2019). Similar to other groups, young people in South Africa who are most at risk of developing chronic disorders include black African women, those with low levels of education, and other socio-economically marginalised groups (Amoateng et al. 2021), with young women more likely to die from chronic health conditions than young men of similar age (de Wet-Billings 2021).

In recent decades, the major causes of death among young people in South Africa have shifted from infectious diseases to chronic diseases, many of which can be prevented or are largely treatable (de Wet-Billings 2021). This change can be attributed to lifestyle and behavioural modifications brought on by modernisation and rapid industrialisation (Amoateng et al. 2016; Nojilana et al. 2016). Young people's eating and physical activity patterns are just two of the many aspects of their behaviour that are changing as a result of the modernising influences of urbanisation (Wrottesley et al. 2020). New behaviours such as inactivity and sedentary living, unhealthy or inadequate diets, smoking and alcohol use can therefore be blamed for the rising prevalence of these "lifestyle diseases" among the youth (Gouda et al. 2019; Lawana et al. 2019; WHO 2018).

Young people in the country are becoming more susceptible to foodborne illness risks like high blood cholesterol, being overweight, and obesity, which predisposes them to other chronic health conditions like diabetes, hypertension, and other metabolic issues due to sedentary lifestyles and the consumption of unhealthy diets (de Wet-Billings 2021). In addition to this trend toward decreased physical activity, insufficient fruit and vegetable consumption and an increase in the consumption of processed foods are contributing to rising chronic health conditions among the nation's youth.

Several studies have shown that eating a healthy diet that includes fruit and vegetables is a key driver for population health and well-being (see, e.g., Sleddens et al. 2015; Wrottesley et al. 2020; Xazela et al. 2020). However, young people in South Africa are increasingly consuming Western diets that contain few fruits and vegetables and more refined carbohydrates, saturated fat, and sugar (Bradshaw et al., nd). This transition to a more Western diet is driven by the easy availability of cheap fast foods that are high in calories, salt, and little fibre, and sugary carbonated beverages. Along with this, there is insufficient regular physical activity participation as well as a tendency to drive to the majority of destinations, which was uncommon prior to rapid industrialisation.

Furthermore, some chronic conditions, such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, asthma, and chronic respiratory diseases, frequently occur with unhealthy lifestyle behaviours like smoking (tobacco use) and the harmful use of alcohol and other substances. The prevalence of these risk factors for chronic diseases among South Africa's youth, particularly young men, is alarming given the numerous efforts being made to discourage them from engaging in such vices. According to national data tracking the prevalence of these risk factors, young men aged 15–34 are five times more likely than young women of the same age to smoke tobacco (34.1% vs 5.9%) and use alcohol harmfully (16% vs 3.2%) (NDoH et al. 2019).

For instance, tobacco use is a major contributor to adult chronic diseases like cancer, heart disease, and chronic respiratory diseases. Young people who abuse alcohol not only predispose themselves to long-term liver and kidney problems but are also more likely to take sexual risks, which increases their risk of developing HIV/AIDS (Cooper et al. 2015). Alcohol misuse increases the risk of accidents and violence, while tobacco use increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, and cancer, all of which add to the overall burden of disease among South African youth.

Despite the fact that young people do have some agency over the choices and actions that directly affect their lives, healthy lifestyles and behaviours are not solely a matter of personal choice but are also, to some extent, influenced by factors outside their control. Peer pressure, boredom, high youth unemployment, and cheap and easy access to alcohol are just a few of the factors that influence young people's lifestyle decisions and social behaviours (Cooper et al. 2015; Seggie 2012). These influences have a cumulative effect on young people's present and future health.

For instance, because binge drinking is widespread in South Africa, interventions to reduce youth alcohol consumption and misuse will require addressing drinking norms and practices in the larger society. This too has systemic causes and antecedents. Alcohol was traded for labour from the non-white population during the apartheid era, which led to the dysfunctional culture of heavy and dangerous drinking that exists today in South Africa (Parry 2005). The risk and exposure of young people abusing alcohol increase when they are growing up in a culture where heavy drinking is the norm and alcohol is widely available, especially when they are not actively participating in productive activities like work or education.

4.3.3 Violence and injuries

Injury-related deaths—both accidental and violence-induced–account for almost 8 per cent of all deaths worldwide each year, and violence-related injuries account for 10 per cent of the years spent in disability globally (WHO 2021a). Young people are more likely to suffer injury and become either victims or perpetrators of violence (WHO 2021a), with injury-related deaths from road traffic accidents, homicides, and suicides being the main causes of death for youth aged 15–29 years worldwide (Leeper et al. 2019). Violence continues to be an insidious and frequent cause of disability and mortality in South Africa, making the country vulnerable to this growing public health threat. The high rates of violence in South Africa's population, especially violence against women, are well-known (Gordon 2016).

The majority of South African youth are exposed to violent acts such as homicides, intimate partner violence, and sexual assaults in their homes, schools, or larger communities (Cooper et al. 2015). Youth who are exposed to violence are more likely to engage in risky and violent behaviour, increasing their chances of becoming both victims and perpetrators of violence. According to Statistics South Africa (2022), accidental injury and assault emerged as the leading external causes of youth death in both 2013 and 2018, with young men aged 15–34 having a higher risk of dying from assault than women. However, gender, socioeconomic status, and geographic location all have an impact on how people experience violence in South Africa. The risk of interpersonal violence is highest for young men living in poor communities in both rural and urban settings (Ward et al. 2012a). This is due to the fact that violence in South Africa is more common in poor communities, where there may be few opportunities for constructive expression due to economic hardship, high unemployment, and a lack of recreational amenities (Cooper et al. 2015). Young men who are unemployed or who live in extreme poverty are therefore more likely to be drawn to gang-related activities or to use violence as a form of self-expression (Ward et al. 2012b).

On the other hand, young women and adolescent girls in the country are especially at risk of gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, and sexual violence (Ward et al. 2012a). Younger women who experience sexual and intimate partner violence are more likely to sustain injuries and develop illnesses like HIV infection, STIs, depression, and suicide (NDoH et al. 2019). Young people's involvement in violence in the nation, whether as perpetrators or victims, has its roots in a highly patriarchal culture that upholds male dominance and masculinity, including standards that call for toughness and strength and forbid showing emotion or weakness (Cooper et al. 2015; Jewkes & Morrell 2010). This construction of masculinity can manifest itself in aggressive interactions with other people, frequently with women on the receiving end. Further, instances of violence and injuries related to those incidents among young people are also influenced by the misuse of alcohol and other drugs. According to a study of assault victims aged 14–24 treated in emergency rooms in a South African township, the majority (79%) of the patients used alcohol or drugs before the assault (Leeper et al. 2019). Larger structural problems like high rates of poverty and youth unemployment may add to the conditions for violence to occur. This is demonstrated by the fact that violence often occurs in poorer or marginalised communities. Therefore, poverty may be the single biggest risk factor for violence and related injuries among South Africa's youth.

4.3.4 Mental health

Worldwide, mental disorders—depression, anxiety, and behavioural disorders—account for 13 per cent of the burden of illness among youth younger than 19 years old, with suicide ranking as the fourth most common cause of death among those aged 15– to 29 years old (WHO 2021b). In addition, 20 per cent of young adults suffer from a mental illness that makes them unable to function (Belfer 2008).

The prevalence of mental health issues or mental disorders among young people in South Africa is also very high (Kleintjes et al. 2022). These illnesses include depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and behavioural issues like delinquency and aggressive behaviour. Sex differences in the burden of mental problems exist. Adolescent boys and young men are more likely to experience behavioural issues and commit suicide, whereas adolescent girls and young women tend to suffer from depression, anxiety, and eating disorders (Bale & Epperson 2015; Hor et al. 2010). Young people's mental health and psychological well-being can be impacted by a variety of factors, some of which are caused by their poor decisions and others over which they have no control. For instance, Kola et al. (2021) found that young people who use alcohol and other drugs are more likely to report having poor mental health. A South African Medical Research Council study also discovered that a significant proportion of teenagers in the Western Cape reported using alcohol (60%) and cannabis (23%) and that over half of the sample were at high or moderate risk for mental health issues (Morojele et al. 2011). Young people who abuse alcohol and other drugs are more likely to have mental and psychological impairments, which raises their risk of acting violently or engaging in other deviant behaviours (Ward et al. 2012a). The burden of disease on young people can be increased by the interactions between mental health problems and other medical conditions.

Young people's environments have a big impact on their mental health now and throughout their lives. Firstly, young people's family or household environment plays a significant role in determining their mental health because it has the power to improve or lessen circumstances that have a negative impact on their psychological well-being (Naicker et al. 2022). This is due to the fact that the family or household milieu serves as a shock absorber and provides significant safeguards for youth, particularly adolescents. However, many young people in South Africa grow up in dysfunctional families that are marked by abuse, abandonment, neglect, or deprivation that have a negative impact on their mental health.

Youth exposure to violence, either witnessing violence or experiencing violence, whether in a family/household setting or in the larger community, can have a negative impact on their psychological well-being and result in mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and PTSD as well as behavioural issues like delinquency and aggression (Lund et al. 2022; Naicker et al. 2022). For instance, a study of 1,034 young people in Cape Town found that those who experienced violence had much higher odds of developing PTSD and that the risk increased with the level of violence exposure (Stansfeld et al. 2017). Beyond the physical environment, the emotional climate in which young people find themselves matters because belonging to a social group, especially as adolescents, is crucial for psychological well-being. Healthy family and peer relationships can therefore have a significant impact on young people's mental health and general well-being. Young people who have loving relationships with other family members and peers, as well as who feel loved and supported by their families and peers, are less likely to suffer from serious mental health issues as they are better able to handle stress and other hardships (Foster & Brooks-Gunn 2015; Lund et al. 2022).

Poorer mental health and psychosocial issues have been linked to poverty, as has been the case with the majority of health conditions (Visser et al. 2021). In general, young people from low-income families, those who are not employed, or those who lack access to other resources face not only a lack of material resources but also a higher risk of developing mental, emotional, and behavioural health issues (Kola et al. 2021; Lund et al. 2022). Thus, poverty increases young people's risk of not only experiencing a variety of mental health issues but also experiencing other adversities, such as violence and abuse.

Given the degree of structural forces working against many of South Africa's young people, which includes high rates of youth unemployment and numerous forms of poverty, it is not surprising that their mental health suffers. High levels of income inequality, exposure to violence, and a lack of opportunities (both educational and employment-related) to thrive continue to have an adverse effect on young people's mental health and general well-being in South Africa (Kola et al. 2021). In general, the persistently high rates of morbidity and mortality among young people in South Africa are not biological accidents. Young people in South Africa experience a disproportionately large number of illnesses as a result of their precarious social position. Young people's health and well-being in the country are largely compromised by structural income inequality, particularly young African women, as shown by the young and feminine profile of poverty and diseases (Buvinic et al. 2006; de Wet-Billings 2021).

4.4 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has outlined the health profile of South Africa's youth, as well as discussed, the various health concerns and highlighted the contribution of risk factors to those challenges experienced by young people in the country. In doing so, the chapter has identified important social determinants of health outcomes in understanding the social causes of poor health among young people and how best to address and promote youth health and well-being in South Africa. Young people in South Africa, like elsewhere around the world, are critical harbingers of change and growth as they represent the future. Given the pivotal position they occupy in the demographic cycle, their survival and transition into healthy adults cannot be overemphasised. The growing incidences of disease burdens among this group not only compromise the survival of young people to adulthood but also threaten the social and economic future of the country. Healthy years to diseases in the form of disability and premature death affect, among other things, the future labour force supply.

It is, therefore, imperative to understand the health risks of young people and prioritise interventions that curb youth morbidity and mortality. Fortunately, South Africa already has several policies in place covering all the major behavioural risk factors, including but not limited to a national strategic plan for NCDs, policies on alcohol and tobacco consumption, sugar tax, and salt reduction regulations (Ndinda et al. 2018). Additionally, there are some interventions to promote safer sexual practices in preventing HIV/AIDS and other STIs through life sex education and the free provision of condoms in public places (Lemoine et al. 2017). Despite these targeted policy responses, risky behaviours persist among young people. There is, therefore, a need for the government to intensify and strengthen available population-wide interventions to promote healthy choices among South Africa's youth.

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5 Youth and politics

5.1 Introduction

Social organisation in traditional African societies was undergirded by an age-graded system that ensured social order and stability. However, ironically, age grading also contained and continues to contain the seeds of social conflict between the generations in these societies. While this generational conflict goes back to antiquity, it has evolved through such forces of change as changes in the labour force and an associated increase in the importance of education. This requires a person to spend more time in school, which has turned this conflict into crisis proportions. Moreover, this crisis has been exacerbated by the failure of the largely gerontocratic leadership that rules the continent to formulate and implement policies that would help meet the youth's aspirations[1] (Abbink 2005; Cruise O'Brien 1996).

The changes mentioned above have meant that many youths have no well-defined place in society, making them vulnerable and dependent, especially in urban conditions. For example, McIntyre et al. (2002) have mentioned the lack of "constructive social incentives" in society as a key feature that narrows young people's possibilities for more or less orderly growth and development and makes them look elsewhere for survival and opportunities.

The distrust Africa's youth have in politics and politicians is evidenced by the African Youth Survey (2020) which found that only one in seven (14%) of the youth sampled has considered running for office. The top countries with youth respondents reporting wanting to run for office are Gabon (26%), Nigeria (25%), and Zimbabwe (22%). Further, the survey found that in South Africa, 69 per cent of youth indicated they do not trust the President, 61 per cent indicated they do not trust the National Assembly (Parliament), and 84 per cent were of the view that corruption had increased (Afrobarometer 2016).

While the problem of youth marginalisation by older people in authority might be more severe and pronounced in contemporary African societies, it is actually a global phenomenon. And the youth's relative disinterest in politics is a function of their distrust of politics and politicians whom they blame for the socioeconomic problems they are facing in society. The empirical evidence of youth's lack of interest in politics globally is not hard to find.[2] In a study in

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France, for example, it was found that French students have distanced themselves from participating in politics because of distrust and lack of confidence in the political system as well as the politicians (Further, Nor et al. (2011) reported that most university students in Malaysia indicated that they did not participate actively in politics, and about half of them did not feel responsible for doing so, even though the majority of respondents admitted that they voted in every general election. And in the United States, a survey reported that only 26 per cent of students entering college expressed an interest in keeping up with political affairs (Galston 2001).

Meanwhile, another study in the United States observed that since young people earned the right to vote in 1971, electoral turnout among 18–24-year-olds has repeatedly been the lowest of any age group and has been declining with each election, dropping from 42 per cent in 1972 to 28 per cent in 2000 (National Association of Secretaries of State 1999). Moreover, Teixeira (1992) notes that although turnout has declined across all age groups since 1960, it has been the most rapid among voters under the age of 24, creating a widening age gap in participation in the United States.

Several studies in the United States have shown that young people are consistently less likely to vote—or to engage in any of the other civic or political behaviour patterns that often precede voting—than are other age cohorts (see, e.g., Bratton 1999; Wattenberg 2008; Flanagan & Levine 2010; García-Peñalosa & Konte 2014), while similar findings about low political participation rates by the youth across sub-Saharan Africa have been reported (see, e.g., Norris 2002; Resnick & Casale 2011; ; Villalón 2004), despite the fact that most African youths believe in the democratic values of participation, tolerance, and freedom (African Youth Survey 2020). In two separate studies—one quantitative and the other qualitative—Amoateng (2015), and Biney and Amoateng (2019) confirmed the low participation rates of youth in South Africa and Ghana, respectively. In the qualitative study of youth at the tertiary level in Ghana, a fourth-year student summed up this attitude towards participation by the youth, in general, thus:

> I also believe that though the youth today is interested in politics, it's not as it should be. The rate or the level of interest is not high enough … they're not so much focused on politics.

Significantly, these findings by Amoateng (2015), and Biney and Amoateng (2019), which were based on samples of youth at the tertiary level, are inconsistent with the consensus in the existing body of knowledge. It suggests that education exerts an upward pressure on political participation because higher education institutions have been known to play a critical role in student engagement with politics. In fact, it has been found that college-educated youth participate more actively than their counterparts who lack a college education. For example, in 2008, 62 per cent of college-educated youth voted in the presidential election in the United States, but only 36 per cent of their non-college-educated counterparts did so (Nover et al. 2010).

Finlay and Flanagan (2009) observed that as young people advanced in education beyond high school, they increased political interest and community engagement through volunteer activity, while policymakers, educators, and researchers have highlighted the important role that higher education institutions can play in encouraging civic engagement (Galston 2001; Callan 2004; McBride 2008). In an analysis of voter turnout in the Liberia election in 2005, which produced the country's first female president, Bauer (2009) noted the significance of education when she found that educated women or literate female voters accounted for 77 per cent and 70 per cent turnout for the October election and November runoff, respectively.

Besides these observations, some scholars have noted that at the same time activities associated with traditional (party) politics have declined. Young people have also been found to display an increased interest in political issues that lie outside of conventional politics, for example, the environment, equality, human rights, and consumer politics (Atkins 2012; Dalton 2008; Stolle et al. 2005; Zukin et al. 2006). They may, in fact, be very much engaged, but in non-traditional issues and ways. They note that newer patterns of political activity are often related to lifestyle concerns and take the form of informal, individualised, and everyday activities (Bennett 2008; Fisher 2012; Harris et al. 2007, 2010; Loader 2007; Manning 2013).

5.2 A legacy of political participation by the youth

South African youth's participation in the country's politics is legendary. Before the democratic transition in 1994, South Africa's youth had always been politically conscious and active in politics as exemplified by the mainly black African-dominated student movements such as the Black Consciousness Movement led by leaders like Steve Bantu Biko in the 1960s and 1970s. While such early student movements were active at the tertiary level, cells of these movements were organised and nurtured at the second cycle institutions and the broader Black communities clandestinely. The 1976 Soweto uprising by mainly black African secondary or high school students, which led to the demise of the white minority rule in the country, exemplified how politicised the country's youth were then.

In addition to students at the tertiary and second cycle institutions, youth in the impoverished townships and communities were similarly politically radicalised by the so-called Civics or civil society organisations[3] through whom most of the Liberation Movements like the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan African Congress (PAC), and the Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO) operated from their bases in exile in the neighbouring countries. In a book that chronicles youth activism in the country at the height of the liberation struggle in the mid-1980s, Mark (2001) traces the history of youth involvement in politics in Diepkloof, Soweto, through the youth's concern about how their parents were being exploited in terms of rent; this led to their involvement in broader resistance politics at the national level. The book provides a classic trajectory of the country's youth's engagement in politics which normally started with protests over some local issues like rent, electricity, or police brutality, and ended up in their being sucked into the broader resistance against the white minority rule.[4]

However, youth political participation and activism appear to have ebbed following the democratic transition in 1994. This state of affairs has been documented in a study of the so-called *Born-Frees* by Amoateng (2015). In a study of undergraduate students at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa, he observed that the youth's political participation rate was low. Besides such empirical studies, several scholars and social commentators have portrayed contemporary youth (the *Born-Frees*) as having a completely different outlook on life than their parental generation. Unlike their parents and grandparents, the country's youth of today shy away from politics in pursuit of other activities such as education and careers. As a social commentator, Johann Redelinghuys (2013), puts it:

> Now with their eyes firmly on 2014, all political parties are vying to capture the attention of the expanding born free generation. Youth wages and tax breaks for employers who give jobs to the youth are just some of the measures. They want to mine this seam of voters who will return them to power. The courting of the youth seems to happen before every election. But if they think that promises and political ideology are going to do it, they are mistaken. People around 18 are much more concerned with their education, getting a job and getting their lives started. Yes, they are politically aware, and we know that it is the youth who are usually the harbingers of social change, but as members of the millennial generation, they too are first concerned with themselves. They need to have what is required to get onto the first rung of adult life.

Below, we take a look at the pertinent question of whether contemporary South African youth are apolitical compared to their parents and grandparents' generation.

5.3 Conceptualising political participation

Political participation, however it is defined, is an integral part of democracy of the liberal genre or the so-called "representative democracy". Historically, this mode or means of managing the affairs of mankind involved every member of the polity of Athens in Greece, where the concept of democracy was birthed. However, with the increasing population and complexity of the polity, the direct meeting and involvement of every citizen became untenable, giving way to indirect representation by a few people delegated by the mass of the people.

The end of the direct participation of citizens, however, did not mean the end of participation, as citizens participated in politics through other indirect means. Thus, scholars have stressed the unique character of *liberal* democracy by emphasising the role of ordinary citizens in political affairs, and have defined political participation loosely as citizens' activities affecting politics (see, e.g., Verba & Nie 1972; van Deth 2016).

In fact, other Western scholars have argued that such a definition ignores passive forms of participation, efforts to change or maintain the structures of power, behaviour outside the sphere of government, behaviour organised by the parliament, civil insubordination and political violence, and unintended political consequences (see, e.g., Conge 1988).

Invariably, scholars agree that political participation is an indispensable feature of democracy. This is how Verba and Nie (1972: 1) put it: *"Where few take part in decisions there is little democracy; the more participation there is in decisions, the more democracy there is"*. To these scholars, therefore, the extent and scope of political participation is important, perhaps even decisive, criteria for assessing the quality of democracy.

But, as Conge (1988) has observed, and like most social constructs, political participation as a concept has been evolving in form over the centuries since the emergence of representative democracy in ancient Greece. The rise and popularity of representative democracy and the struggle for universal suffrage in many democracies by the mid-twentieth century resulted in a rather strict understanding of political participation as election-related activities. In the United States and European countries in the 1940s and 1950s, the focus was on forms of political participation which were electoral in nature such as voting, campaigning, and party membership (Berelson et al. 1954).

Contacts between citizens and government officials were added to this repertoire, and by the early 1960s, political participation was broadly understood as voting and other civic activities in the context of statutory political institutions (Campbell et al. 1960). Following the growing relevance of community politics, forms of participation included direct contact between citizens, public officials, and politicians, as well as "communal activities" relaxing the initial strong focus on election-related activities (Verba & Nie 1972; Verba et al. 1978).

These activities became known as conventional or institutionalised modes of participation. The list of participatory activities is long, including voting, demonstrating, contacting public officials, boycotting, attending party rallies, guerrilla gardening, posting blogs, volunteering, joining flash mobs, signing petitions, buying fair-trade products, and even suicide protests. Despite the expansion of the list of actions and inactions about what constitutes political participation, scholars continue to make attempts at bringing about conceptual unity and clarity in an effort to build a theory of participation.

This concern about the need to rethink political participation has been attributed to factors such as growing globalisation, social media innovations, and the changing desire to influence policymakers more directly than in the past

(Kuenzi & Lambright 2005; Logan & Bratton 2006; Dalton 2008; Bennett et al. 2009; Isaksson 2010; Roberts et al. 2012). Thus, Conge (1988), bemoaning the fact that students of comparative politics lack agreement on the definition of political participation, has suggested that arguments over the meaning of political participation should centre upon six major dichotomised issues, namely:

(1) *Active versus Passive Forms:* Should political participation be defined in terms of action—voting, campaigning for a political party—or should it include passive forms—a feeling of patriotism, an awareness of political issues?
(2) *Aggressive versus Non-aggressive Behaviour:* Should a definition of political participation embrace civil disobedience and political violence, or should it be limited to more "conventional" activities?
(3) *Structural versus Non-structural Objects:* Should efforts to change or maintain the form of government be included in the definition of political participation, or should the definition be limited to changing or maintain governmental authorities and/or their decisions?
(4) *Governmental and Non-governmental Aims:* Should political participation be limited to behaviour directed towards governmental authorities, policies, and/or institutions, or should it include phenomena outside the realm of government?
(5) *Mobilised versus Voluntary Actions:* Should behaviour sponsored and guided by the government to enhance its welfare be called political participation, or should the term be confined to behaviour initiated in pursuit of their interests?
(6) *Individual versus Group Activity:* Does political participation have to be carried out in a group, or does individual political engagement aimed at influencing individual-level circumstances count?

Following these efforts at clarifying the concept of political participation, which essentially expands the list of forms or modes of participation worldwide, several empirical studies have noted the variety of ways through which young people engage politically beyond the traditional electoral politics such as voting (Verba et al. 1995; Beaumont et al. 2006; Zukin et al. 2006).

Within the context of the changes impacting political participation, Theocharis (2012) has highlighted the role of the Internet in mobilising protesters against tuition fee changes in England in 2010 as an example of how the Internet is becoming an important part of the political participant's toolkit. Furthermore, Bakker and de Vreese (2011) and Theocharis (2012) highlight the significant role played by the Internet in the Obama campaign in 2008, while Van Laer and Van Aelst (2010) identify a range of "Internet-specific" participatory acts that would not be available without the Internet (such as online petitions, email bombs, or virtual sit-ins). O'Neill (2010) points out that such mobilisations and other political acts can now be performed in a manner less reliant upon traditional political institutions, such as political parties, with consequences for the way in which citizens can engage with political institutions and actors.

Besides the growing influence of technology and its impact on political participation, other scholars have argued that globalisation and its corollary transnational actors like multinational and supranational corporations, and bodies such as the European Union, have rendered the nation-state weak vis-a-vis the individual (see, e.g., Peterson 1996; Van Laer & Van Aelst 2010). Thus, individuals under these circumstances are less likely to engage in more traditional, community-based forms of political participation (Sloam 2007, 2012; Dalton 2009; Norris 2002). This situation provides support for Norris's assertion that even these limited indications "point more strongly towards the evolution, transformation, and reinvention of civic engagement than its premature death", and that "studies of political participation focussing exclusively on conventional indicators ... may seriously misinterpret evidence of an apparent civic slump" (Norris 2002: 4).

In fact, Amoateng (2015) found a low rate of participation by the youth and that the youth were politically engaged through discussion of politics with parents, other relatives, and peers, and that they were an important predictor of youth participation in political activities. Furthermore, Bosch (2013), in a Cape Town-based focus group with South African youth, examined the link between Facebook use and political participation and found that youth are engaging with alternative forms of political sub-activism that work at the margins of the dominant public sphere.

An underlying notion of the pro-social view of youth is that healthy youth development entails a merger of moral and civic identity, which results in engagement with such civil society institutions as religion, politics, and civil society and community-based organisations by the youth (Lerner et al. 2002). Like most developing countries on the African continent, South Africa is faced with the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Coupled with these structural problems, the country has a heavy burden of disease amid the state's limited capacity to alleviate these problems.

In the context of such challenges, South Africa's youth have not been found wanting to complement the state's efforts in enhancing the welfare of the population through actions such as giving and volunteerism, behaviours which translates into participating in the country's politics. Indeed, the South African government has been very supportive of efforts to promote healthy youth development at the national, provincial, and local levels (South African Government 2002).

These efforts through policy and programme interventions are all grounded in empirical evidence, albeit mainly in Western contexts, which suggests that youth participation in community development is not only beneficial for the democratic project but also for the health and well-being of young people (Campbell et al. 2009). In light of the realisation that youth engagement in community development is important for the democracy project and their own health and well-being, and within the context of the expansive list of forms of political participation, the study by Amoateng et al. (2017) on youth volunteerism is worthy of note as far as youth's political participation in South Africa is concerned.

Using data from a sample of undergraduate students at a public university in the country, the study examined associations between political participation and socio-demographic factors, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, family structure, maternal education, academic performance, and perception on the importance of voluntary acts by the youth on five measured voluntary activities. It was found that youth had high rates of volunteerism with variations regarding the above-mentioned predictors. For example, it was found that black African youth were more likely to volunteer in community projects than their white, coloured, and Indian/Asian counterparts.

Among white youth, Afrikaans-speaking youth were more likely than English-speaking youth to engage in voluntary activities. Consistent with the general political participation literature, males were more likely than their female counterparts to engage in voluntary activities, while older youth were more likely than younger youth to volunteer their time in undertaking community activities. Finally, rural youth were more likely to engage in voluntary activities compared to urban youth. Yet, in the search for conceptual clarity, other scholars have criticised this bifurcation of political participation into conventional/institutionalised and unconventional or mobilised forms. For example, bemoaning the lack of a theory of political participation, Seligson (1980) argued that the implicit assumption of this bifurcation is that the two types of political participation are mutually exclusive which is not entirely true in reality. According to Seligson (1980), a person involved in riots and other forms of civil disorder cannot be involved in such conventional behaviours as campaigning and voting and vice versa at the same time. The logical outcome of such a perspective is that some people can be falsely classified as apathetic, inactive, or apolitical. Thus, a judicious blend of different modes of political participation is highly recommended as a means of advancing theory in the field.

Almond and Verba (1963) attempted a definition of political participation by suggesting four criteria. For example, they suggest that a citizen had to actively engage in a certain behaviour (p. 148), with the deliberate intent of influencing the government (p. 117), in order to be considered a political participant. They also argued that political participation is not limited to legal or conventional behaviour (p. 148), and implied that a participant can act alone or as a part of a wider group or institution (p. 148). To them, therefore, political participation was defined as active behaviour that can be individual or communal in nature, which is not limited to legal or conventional activity, and which is always targeted at the government.

The definition of political participation by Parry et al. (1992) was similar to that of Almond and Verba (1978), except that to them the target of political participation need not necessarily be the government, and that citizens may choose to interact with other institutions which influence governmental output (such as interest groups or the European Union) (p. 40), or to lobby other individuals in order to mobilise them to vote (p. 16). Within the context of the nuances of what constitutes political participation, we take a closer look at youth political participation in South Africa in the following section.

5.3.1 Youth political participation in contemporary South Africa

Within the context of the expanding list of modes of political participation which includes both "conventional or institutionalised" and "unconventional" modes, in this section of the chapter, we revisit the issue of South Africa's youth's political participation empirically, using one of the recent and reliable data on politics and governance in sub-Saharan Africa—the Afro-barometer Survey.[5] Our aim in using this data set is to help answer the question as to whether the country's youth are truly apathetic or whether their legendary low participation in politics is an artefact of conceptualisation and measurement of what constitutes political participation.

Fortunately, the Afro-barometer dataset contains measures of both conventional and unconventional political participation, which should give us a more nuanced view of youth political participation. Firstly, the dataset provides information on electoral-related behaviours such as voting behaviours. Secondly, the dataset provides information about other conventional modes of participation. However, unlike voting these behaviours are continuous in nature and thus provide a better measure of the depth of a person's interest in politics. Thirdly, the Afro-barometer dataset has information on such "unconventional" forms of participation as patriotism and involvement in community activities. The first measure of political participation in this context is the recent voting behaviour of the youth.

Within the South African context in particular, and in the context of a liberal democratic political system in general, voting occurs periodically. In the case of South Africa, elections take place every four years in the case of national presidential and parliamentary elections. In the survey, voting was measured by asking about respondents' recent voting behaviour with the following question: *"Understanding that some people were unable to vote in the most recent national election in May 2014, which of the following statements is true for you?"*. The response categories included the following:

1. *You were too young to vote;*
2. *You were not registered to vote;*
3. *You voted in the elections;*
4. *You decided not to vote;*
5. *You could not find the polling station;*
6. *You were prevented from voting;*
7. *You did not have time to vote;*

8. *You did not vote because you could not find your name in the voters' register;*
9. *Did not vote for some other reason;*
10. *Don't know /can't remember.*

These response categories were recoded to make the vote variable binary (0 = No and 1 = Yes). Table 5.1 shows the relationship between voting in the 2014 national elections and selected background characteristics of the youth in the survey. Overall, almost two-thirds of the youth (64%) reported that they voted in the 2014 general and presidential elections, while 36 per cent of youth did not vote. Further analysis of the data showed the participation or turnout rate for adults aged 36 years old and above was 83 per cent and the national participation rate or turnout was 74 per cent; thus, it can hardly be

Table 5.1 Percentage distribution of voting in the 2014 national elections by background factors

Background factors	*Vote in 2014 national elections*	
	Yes	*No*
Race/ethnicity		
Black African	67.6	32.4
Coloured	50.0	50.0
Indian/Asian	42.4	57.6
White	52.9	47.1
Gender		
Male	62.1	37.9
Female	65.5	34.5
Age cohort		
18–24	51.1	48.9
25–29	69.8	30.2
30–35	71.1	28.9
Residence		
Urban	60.3	39.7
Rural	71.1	28.9
Education		
No schooling	83.7	16.7
Primary	65.6	34.4
Middle	60.3	39.7
Matric	62.0	38.0
TVET	75.0	25.0
Tertiary	61.0	39.0
Employment status		
Not employed (not looking)	52.7	47.3
Not employed (looking)	61.1	38.9
Employed—part time	64.2	35.8
Employed—full time	72.7	27.3
Total	**63.8**	**36.2**

Source: 2016 South African Afrobarometer Survey.

said that the youth were apathetic by this criterion. In fact, 80 per cent of all new registrations for the 2014 national elections were made by persons below 30 years old.[6] So yes, compared to adults in the country, the youth political participation rate with regard to voting is low.

In terms of race/ethnicity, black African youth were much more likely than any other ethnic group to vote, followed by white youth, while Indian/Asian youth were the least likely to vote. The fact that black African youth have a higher rate of voting compared to all other youth may be inconsistent with the *resource theory* of political participation, which suggests that persons with resources such as education, employment, and higher income tend to participate more than their counterparts who are resource deprived.

What the finding about black African youth illustrates is the historical role black Africans in general have played in the country's political evolution from apartheid to democracy. Historically, because of their subordinate position in society, black African youth, in general, have been more engaged in the country's politics than their other counterparts. Specifically, 68 per cent of black African youth reported voting in the 2014 national elections prior to the survey, followed by whites with 52 per cent, coloureds with 50 per cent and Indian/Asian with only 42 per cent. As far as gender is concerned, slightly more than two-thirds (66%) of the females voted in the national general elections in 2014 prior to the survey compared to 62 per cent of their male counterparts. The significance of this finding about gender is that it is also inconsistent with the existing body of knowledge with regard to political participation, which suggests that the political participation rates of males are higher than those of females. With regards to age, Table 5.1 shows a positive association between age and voting, that is, older youth are more likely than younger youth to vote.

This finding about age corroborates what is already known about how age affects political participation in the existing political participation literature with regard to the general population. In other words, on the whole, older persons are much more likely to be engaged politically compared to younger persons. In terms of residence, during the 2014 national elections, youth in rural areas were much more likely than their urban counterparts to have voted. Specifically, whereas 71 per cent of youth from the countryside reported having voted in 2014, this was true of only 63 per cent of youth who resided in urban areas.

According to the *resource theory of political participation*, persons with resources like education, employment, and high income tend to be more engaged politically than their counterparts who lack resources. The present data seem to suggest that in the South African context, resources may be necessary but not a sufficient condition for people to be politically engaged. After all, historically, the persons who were the immediate cause of the uprising that brought the apartheid regime to its knees—high school students—were not highly educated. Moreover, the fact that rural youth are highly engaged politically is a testament to the secondary role resources might play in informing them politically. This is because rural residents in South Africa tend to be poor both in terms of educational attainment and access to employment compared to their urban peers.

Unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is a very topical issue in sub-Saharan Africa, and the data in Table 5.1 confirm this. Youth who are working full time and those who are unemployed but actively looking for work are more likely than their counterparts who are not employed but looking for employment and those who are not working to vote. The fact that youth who are not working currently but are looking for work are the most likely to vote reflects their belief that voting for a party or an individual with the appropriate policies might help alleviate their plight.

In the same vein, youth who are currently working tend to vote perhaps because of their belief or otherwise in a party's social and economic policies as far as employment creation is concerned. Moreover, this finding about employed people tending to vote compared to those unemployed is consistent with the resource theory of political participation in the South African context. Besides voting, the other "conventional" measure of participation we employed in the present analysis is what we have referred to as continuous political behaviour, which requires a person to be engaged in politics continuously. Unlike voting, which is a behaviour that manifests itself occasionally, that is, every four years, "contacting political figures to influence them in a certain direction", is a measure of an actor's depth of commitment as far as political participation is concerned.

The Afrobarometer Survey measures this form of political participation by asking respondents to answer the following question: "*During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views?*"

1. A local government councillor;
2. A member of Parliament;
3. An official of a government agency;
4. A political party official;
5. Traditional leaders;
6. Religious leaders.

The response categories were: *0 = never, 1 = only once, 2 = a few times, 3 = often*.

Because of the underlying scale to this measure, that is, a 4-point Likert scale, a new variable (*participate*) was computed as a sum of the six items shown above. The responses of all youth who reported having contacted any of these political figures were split at the mean to create a binary of "Low" and "High" participation rates for the analysis as depicted in Table 5.2. This table shows that overall the rate of political participation as measured by this form of participation is lower than participation as measured by voting in the 2014

Table 5.2 Youth political participation rates (%) by background factors

Background characteristics	*Political participation*		
	No participation	*Low participation*	*High participation*
Race/ethnicity			
Black African	47.6	49.1	3.3
Coloured	77.9	14.3	7.9
Indian/Asian	87.5	12.5	0.0
White	90.0	8.6	1.4
Gender			
Male	54.6	40.8	4.7
Female	56.1	41.4	2.5
Age cohort			
18–24	59.7	37.7	2.6
25–29	54.9	40.3	4.8
30–35	51.0	45.8	3.2
Employment status			
No (not looking)	65.9	33.5	0.6
No (looking)	50.3	45.5	4.2
Yes, part-time	53.7	43.4	2.0
Yes, full-time	57.8	37.6	4.6
Education			
No schooling	66.7	33.3	0.0
Primary	63.5	36.5	0.0
Middle	57.8	37.6	4.6
Matric/high school	53.4	42.6	4.0
TVET	56.6	39.4	4.0
Tertiary	50.0	49.2	0.8
Residence			
Urban	61.5	34.7	3.6
Rural	42.2	54.7	3.1

Source: Round 6 of 2016 South African Afrobarometer Survey.

general elections. Specifically, while 64 per cent of youth reported voting in 2014, only 55 per cent of youth contacted the specified authority figures in trying to influence governmental action.

However, the low participation rate for this criterion of participation must be put in the appropriate perspective. South Africa has a parliamentary system of government whereby the members of the National Assembly (Parliament) are elected by proportional representation with a closed-list approach. Fifty per cent (200) of the members of the National Assembly are elected from national party lists, while the other fifty per cent (200) are elected from provincial party lists in each of the nine provinces of the country; the President is chosen by the National Assembly after the election. The absence of a constituency-based electoral system means that elected representatives are accountable to their respective political parties instead of their constituents as pertains in such jurisdictions as the United States or the United Kingdom where districts or constituencies are clearly demarcated and identifiable. Thus, in the South African situation, where representatives do not represent districts or constituencies, the concept of "contacting representatives" or political figures to influence governmental action becomes untenable at best and irrelevant at worst.

Be that as it may, in terms of the variations in this form of political participation, the findings essentially mimic those pertaining to voting among the youth. For instance, black African youth are much more likely than their counterparts to contact various figures of authority to raise an issue affecting their communities.

Compared to white youth, for instance, 52.4 per cent of black African youth reported contacting figures of authority or their representatives, while only 10 per cent of white youth reported contacting such figures of authority. Also, coloured youth are much more likely to engage in this form of political participation than their Indian/Asian and white counterparts. While female youth are more likely than males to vote, males are more likely to participate in politics through contacting figures of authority who represent them, although the difference between females and males with regard to this form of participation is hardly significant statistically.

It is worth noting that voting and contacting political figures or representatives are behaviours that are very individualistic in nature, yet the culture of black Africans who are in the majority is communalist as evidenced by the fact that historically black Africans' engagement with politics in the society has been group-orientated. For instance, consumer boycotts, as well as student and community political protests against the apartheid regime, were all group-based.[7] Because of this history and cultural orientation, we tested political participation by youth with three other forms of participation that are group-based, namely, *whether they join others to request government action*, *whether they attend a demonstration or protest march*, *and whether during the last election cycle they persuaded others to vote for a particular candidate or political party.*

The data below depicts the youth's responses to the three group-based political participation questions. Only one out of ten (10%) youth reported that in the last national election, they had persuaded others to vote for a certain candidate or political party; the vast majority of them (90%) did not engage in this form of participation. On the question of whether they joined others to request government action, only 30 per cent of them answered in the affirmative, while more than two-thirds (69%) of them reported that they did not engage in this form of political participation. On the question of attending a demonstration or protest march, Figure 5.3 shows that 80 per cent of youth reported not engaging in this form of behaviour, leaving only one-fifth of them engaging in this form of participation.

Like voting and contacting figures of authority as conventional forms of political participation, the rates of group-based participation are generally relatively low among the country's youth, regardless of their background

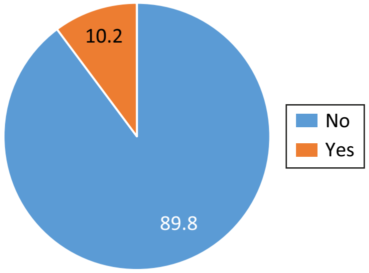

Figure 5.1 Persuade others to vote for a candidate/party.

Source: 2016 Afrobarometer Survey.

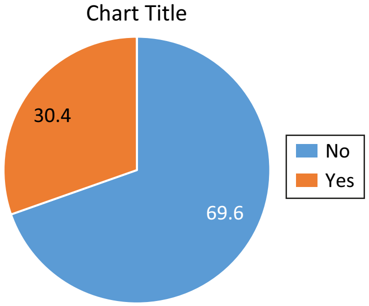

Figure 5.2 Join others to request government action.

Source: 2016 Afrobarometer Survey.

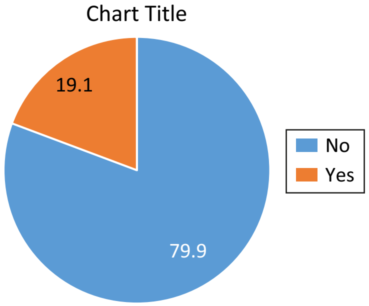

Figure 5.3 Attend a demonstration or protest march.

Source: 2016 Afro-barometer Survey.

characteristics as depicted in Table 5.3. As expected and consistent with their communalist ethos, black African youth were the most likely to join others to request government action, attend a demonstration, and persuade others to vote for a political candidate or a political party. Conversely, white youth

Table 5.3 Distribution of group-based political participation rates

Background factors	*Group-based political participation rates (%)*					
	Join others to request govt. action		*Attend a demonstration or protest march*		*Persuade others to vote for a candidate/party*	
	Yes	*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*
Race/ethnicity						
Black African	35.6	64.4	22.9	77.1	11.9	88.0
Coloured	17.1	82.9	13.5	86.5	5.0	95.0
Indian/Asian	9.3	90.7	6.2	93.8	0.0	100.0
White	5.7	94.3	2.8	97.2	2.9	97.1
Gender						
Male	33.5	66.5	21.8	78.2	12.0	88.0
Female	27.7	72.3	18.3	81.7	8.7	91.3
Age cohort						
18–24	24.4	75.6	16.3	83.7	8.4	91.6
25–29	33.4	66.6	22.3	77.7	12.1	87.9
30–35	34.5	65.5	22	78.0	10.4	89.6
Residence						
Urban	19.2	80.8	19.2	80.8	10.5	89.5
Rural	22.0	78.0	22.0	78.0	9.2	90.5
Education						
No schooling	33.3	66.7	16.7	83.3	33.3	66.7
Primary	32.8	67.2	20.6	79.4	14.1	85.9
Middle	30.6	69.4	19.0	81.0	8.5	91.5
Matric	31.7	68.3	20.8	79.2	8.3	91.5
TVET	29.1	70.9	21.0	79	14.3	85.7
Tertiary	27.5	72.5	19.4	80.6	12.1	87.9
Employment status						
Not employed (not looking)	23.6	76.4	13.8	86.2	8.4	91.6
Not employed (looking)	32.5	67.5	21.1	78.9	9.3	90.5
Employed—part time	37.3	62.7	25.0	75.0	13.3	86.7
Employed—full time	28.3	71.7	19.8	80.2	11.3	88.7

Source: 2016 South African Afrobarometer Survey.

were the least likely to engage in these forms of political participation, with the exception of Indian/Asian youth with regard to persuading others to vote for a candidate or a political party.

What is significant about the behaviours of white and Indian youth in regard to political participation is the fact that these two groups of youth are the most privileged in as far as access to the society's socioeconomic resources, such as education, employment, and higher income, are concerned. Thus, the *resource theory* of political participation as touted by some Western scholars (see, e.g., Finlay & Flanagan 2009) is hardly universal and may be context specific. In fact, in the South African context, the opposite appears to be the case, as the two most oppressed groups, black Africans and coloureds, are the most engaged politically in this instance. In fact, the participation rates of black African youth for all three group-oriented forms of participation are much higher than the rates for all others combined. This is hardly surprising because of the cultural ethos of communalism which historically had driven black Africans to resist political oppression as a group.

Like contacting figures of authority to influence them in certain directions, males are much more likely than females to engage in group-based forms of political participation in South Africa. In view of the fact that females are more likely than males to vote, the slump in participation rates with regard to contacting political figures/representatives may be due to their preoccupation with other familial responsibilities which compete with their time to be involved in such continuous political behaviours such as regularly contacting political figures/representatives and group-orientated forms of participation, which require time and financial expenditures.

Another issue that challenges the resource theory of participation thesis is education in the South African context. Specifically, educated youth are less likely to participate in politics in general compared to their less educated peers. It is plausible that as education increases, it becomes selective of apathetic youth like whites and Indians/Asians who are privileged socio-economically, as we have already noted. It is also possible that because of the uniquely "inferior" and politically motivated education the apartheid regime provided for black Africans, and coloureds to a large extent, schools and universities for these groups became ideological breeding grounds for radical politics.[8]

In fact, the only support we found for the resource theory of political participation is the case of employment whereby youth who are employed or looking for work are more likely to participate in politics than those who were neither working nor looking for work. However, again, in the South African context, it is highly plausible that these working youth are politically engaged not because they have the economic resources, but rather because historically the country's working classes were politically socialised on the shop floor in the factories where they were working because of their poor living wages.[9]

Finally, following the critiques of the conventional or institutionalised forms of political participation that have informed the existing literature since the 1940s and 1960s, we examined the issue of patriotism among the youth as a measure of political participation. The Afrobarometer survey series has information on such "unconventional" forms of political participation as concerns about the environment, equality, human rights, love for the country as opposed to ethnicity, religion, consumer politics, awareness of political issues, civil disobedience, political violence, etc. (see, e.g., ; Manning 2013). We homed in on the issue of patriotism because of the fact that today's youth are tomorrow's leaders, a fact that makes the issue of the love of the country paramount over such parochial concerns as ethnicity, race, religion, etc.

There were five items (questions) that sought to measure the respondent's love for country or patriotism. The global item asked in the survey was thus: *"Here are some things people say about the way they feel about South Africa. There are no right or wrong answers. We are simply interested in your opinions. Please tell me whether you disagree, neither disagree nor agree, or agree with these statements".*

The five sub-items are as follows:

1. *You would want your children to think of themselves as South African;*
2. Being South African is a very important part of how you see yourself;
3. People should realise we are South Africans first, and stop thinking of themselves in terms of the group they belong to;
4. It is desirable to create one united South African nation out of all the different groups who live in this country; and
5. It is possible to create such a united South African nation.

From these five five-point Likert scales, an additive scale called *patriotism* was created by summing the responses to the five items listed above. Figure 5.4 shows the distribution of patriotism regardless of age. The scores on the scale ranged from 5 to 25, with a mean score of 21.20 (SD = 3.16). From the descriptive statistics depicted by the chart, we know that South Africans in general are very patriotic, regardless of age. In a study that essentially supports this love of country finding, Amoateng's (2016) study of undergraduate students at the University of Johannesburg found that nearly three-quarters (73%) of the students in the sample said that they belonged to the country, although only 42 per cent of them felt they were patriotic to the country.[10]

Table 5.4 shows the mean distribution of patriotism as a measure of political participation for the background socio-demographic characteristics of the youth. When it comes to love for country or patriotism among the youth, the two privileged groups, whites and Indians, are the most likely to be patriotic, while the two disadvantaged groups, black Africans and coloureds, are the

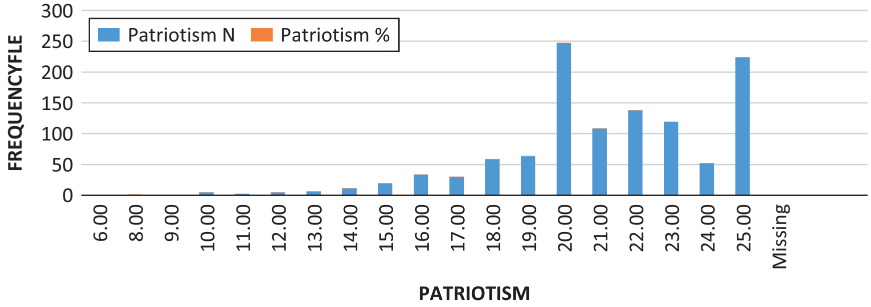

Figure 5.4 Frequency distribution of patriotism.

least likely to be patriotic. In fact, the love of country by Indian/Asian youth has been noted in Amoateng's study (2016) of undergraduate students at the University of Johannesburg, in which he found that Indians/Asians and black Africans were much more likely than coloureds and whites to have a greater sense of belonging in the country. Moreover, coloureds and Indians/Asians were much more accepting the country's diversity than black Africans and whites in that study.

Table 5.4 also shows that like every mode of political participation, with the exception of voting, males tend to be more patriotic than females. In terms of education, there appears to be an inverted U-shaped relationship between education and patriotism among the youth. In other words, patriotism scores tend to be lower among the youth without any formal schooling, rise steadily from those with primary education until those with post-matric vocational/technical education (TVET), and then drop again among those with tertiary education.

Table 5.4 Mean distribution of patriotism by background characteristics of youth

Background factors	*Mean distribution of patriotism*	
	N	*Mean (SD)*
Race/ethnicity		
Black African	878	21.25 (2.92)
Coloured	140	20.52 (3.01)
Indian/Asian	32	22.22 (2.16)
White	70	22.50 (3.54)
Gender		
Male	559	21.24 (3.09)
Female	563	21.15 (2.85)
Education		
No schooling	6	19.42 (2.62)
Primary	63	21.37 (2.99)
Middle	306	21.25 (3.17)
Matric/high school	447	21.10 (2.91)
TVET	176	21.55 (2.93)
Tertiary	124	20.88 (2.74)
Age cohort		
18–24	382	21.15 (2.30)
25–29	395	21.31 (2.90)
30–35	345	21.12 (2.06)
Employment status		
No	474	21.29 (2.96)
Yes	484	21.09 (2.91)
Residence		
Urban	763	21.09 (2.99)
Rural	359	21.43 (2.93)

Source: 2016 Afrobarometer Survey.

This finding essentially supports Amoateng's (2016) finding in the study of undergraduate students at the University of Johannesburg in which less than half (42%) of the students said they were patriotic. Why would education make the youth less patriotic? It is plausible that this finding is reflective of the inertia of the past where the country's higher education institutions became the bedrock of radical Marxist politics opposed to the apartheid state. Age is inversely associated with patriotism among the youth as shown by the fact that scores of patriotism decline among youth aged 30–35 years old. Possibly, as people age and become aware of the inherent social and economic injustices of the country, their sense of love for the country declines. But, if socio-economic injustices affect the youth's patriotism negatively, why would unemployed and rural youth have high scores of patriotism compared to their peers who are employed and live in urban areas, respectively?

5.4 Summary and conclusion

As a result of both demographic changes and the epic role South Africa's youth played in bringing down the apartheid socio-political architecture in the 1970s, the youth have occupied a pride of place in the conscience of the nation. As part of this focused attention on the country's youth, empirical and anecdotal studies have proliferated looking at various dimensions of the life experiences of the youth. This book is no exception as it looks at selected aspects of young people's lives in the country.

This chapter sought to revisit the historical role of the country's youth in the country's politics by looking at contemporary youth's political participation. We employed the 2016 series of the Afro-barometer Survey to measure four modes of political participation to test the thesis that contemporary youth are apolitical and apathetic. Four of the measures used to fall under the "conventional" modes of participation (i.e., voting in the last national elections, contacting various political figures to influence action, joining groups to demonstrate or protest, and persuading others to vote for a candidate/party), while one measure falls under the so-called "unconventional" modes of political participation (patriotism or love of country).

We found that contrary to the claim that contemporary youth are not concerned about politics, we found that the country's youth are not as apolitical and apathetic as the conventional wisdom would have us believe. Even though it is true that compared to adults aged 36 years and older, the youth participate less as measured by voting, they are actively participating in the country's politics through other more innovative means. Because the youth are in the majority demographically and are the future leaders of the country, their interest and participation in the country's politics augurs well for the country's future in terms of the effectiveness of its democratic governance system and, by implication, the viability of the neo-liberal economic system.

Future studies of political participation by the youth would do well by employing measures of both conventional and unconventional modes of political participation in recognition of the social and technological changes that are sweeping society. Moreover, since the analysis we have presented in this chapter has been merely correlational in nature, future research would do well by going beyond this to undertake more explanatory studies to help us understand youth political participation behaviour better.

Notes

1. Africa's teeming youth are confronted daily with problems of unemployment, exclusion, poor health and poverty in the family, and lack of education in society.
2. In fact, some scholars have suggested that the problem of participation is not limited to the youth. For example, Whiteley (2012) has noted that British citizens are becoming increasingly disengaged from civil society, and that this is having a detrimental impact on the effectiveness of the British government, with grave consequences for the future sustainability of liberal democracy in Britain.
3. These the so-called Civics or civil society organisations were politically aligned to the mostly banned political movements but operated ostensibly as neutral organisations to champion causes such as ensuring social justice around mundane issues such as fair rental, electricity, and water.
4. Several of the youth who were being sought by the apartheid security forces tended to cross the borders of the neighbouring countries and became ready recruits for the armies of the Liberation Movements.
5. We used Round 6 of the Afrobarometer Survey for South Africa, which was conducted in 2016. In the Afro-barometer Survey, all persons aged 18 years and above were interviewed for information on various aspects of governance.
6. The 18–24-year-old turnout was 28% in the United States in 2000 (National Association of Secretaries of State 1999).
7. During the late 1980s in the lead up to the release of Nelson Mandela from jail, "mass" meetings by students were a regular feature on the social calendars of the tertiary institutions in the country.
8. It is a truism that student organisations such as Sasco, Azapo, and the Black Consciousness Movements all came under the spell of various strands of Marxist ideologies and led to radical politics by the political Left in the country as a whole.
9. The bulk of black Africans and coloureds were employed at the lower rungs of the economic structure, with poor wages and working conditions. It is little wonder that the present powerful labour unions like the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in the country emerged through the efforts of mainly black African and coloured shop stewards around the country.
10. It is important to remember that educated South African youth participate less in politics than their least educated peers, so 42% rate of patriotism among the undergraduate students is telling of this negative association between education and political participation by the youth in the country.

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6 Youth and nation-building

6.1 Introduction

In pre-colonial Africa, kinship was the basis of political, social, and economic organisation. Kinship or the clan was a blood relationship of consanguinity through family membership, and every member of society was believed to have his or her position defined in terms of relatives on his mother's or father's side. Land, a major means of production, was owned by groups such as the family or clan. In the course of the evolution of these societies, different varieties of institutions of leadership or states[1] emerged in various parts of the continent when some families, through wars of conquest, subjugated other family groups and widened their territorial bases (Rodney 1978). Writing specifically about how human rights were treated in pre-colonial Africa, Busia (1994) has outlined a typology of what he calls social formations in pre-colonial Africa based on the structure of the social organisation and identifies four main types of such social formations that are mutually inclusive. In the first type of social organisation, there are no centralised governmental institutions that wield a monopoly over legitimate coercion for the purposes of the maintenance of law and order. This is how he describes this social formation before contact with Europe:

> The term "near state of nature" is certainly borrowed from Hobbes to depict the situation where "individual sovereignty" was transferred, under a pact or other form, to central political authority. Life in this setting was not necessarily "nasty, brutish, and short." but the people were at the mercy of nature. The whole social formation was woven around kinship and marriage ties spun into an elaborate network that constrained people to cooperate to maintain customary rules and group survival
>
> (Busia 1994: 231–232).

This was the modal social formation for nomadic tribes such as the San of the Kalahari desert, the Pygmies of modern-day DR Congo and Gabon, the Fulani of West Africa, and the Maasai of Kenya. The main occupation in this social formation was hunting and gathering and land was owned communally,

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while the society was bereft of social differentiation and stratification with the exception of a rudimentary one based on sex and its attendant sexual division of labour. In the second type of social formation, there were still no centralised political authorities but they maintained law and order and enforced political decisions through certain internal mechanisms. Moreover, over time, ad hoc political authority arose to enforce decisions. A prominent feature of this pre-colonial social organisation was the role of age grades in the affairs of these societies which included the likes of the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria, the Luo of Western Kenya, the Tallensi of Northern Ghana, and the Nuer of Sudan.

The age grades were the basis of public administration. While the notion of kinship and lineage was absent among the first type of social formation, here family and lineage were the basic units of society. Moreover, even though land was communally owned, ownership of land was through the family and lineage, and lineage elders were the custodians of the land. Agriculture was the main occupation in this type of society and kinship was the basis of production. Most of the ethnic[2]groups that lived in this type of social organisation were pastoralists. In the absence of slave ownership and communal ownership of land, social differentiation and stratification were limited. The third type of pre-colonial social formation was characterised as semi-feudal because even though, according to Busia (1994), they exhibited certain feudal characteristics as described by Bloch (1961), they were different from classic European feudalism. In any case, kinship and lineage were the basis of this type of social organisation or formation and the political structure itself, which was centralised, was organised around the kinship system which comprised the heads of the various lineages. Ethnic groups that had this form of social organisation included the Ashantis of Ghana, the Zulus of South Africa, the Ndebele of South Africa and Zimbabwe, and the Hausa-Fulani Emirates of Northern Nigeria.

The fourth and final type of social formation in pre-colonial Africa was the one epitomised by the Bugandan kingdom in modern-day Uganda, which approximated the classic European feudalism in structure. In this social formation, the social distinction between poor and rich was quite glaring, as the king created political officers such as chiefs and lords from promising peasants with a highly centralised political structure. The Kings or *Kabaka* were selected from the most powerful chiefs, and he possessed a standing army that was directly responsible to them.

Thus, the different social organisations before the inauguration of the colonial project in Africa, kinship and lineage ties were the basis of rudimentary state formations in the semi-feudal and feudal social formations as eventually, the conquering families became ruling aristocracies. This rudimentary state formation process gave birth to social and economic stratification in these otherwise communalist societies. However, through the myriad political systems that emerged with their corresponding economic and social institutions, services in the form of land allocation, lawmaking, taxes, and social and political control were delivered to the subjects of the newly formed state entities (Sakyi 2003).[3] As Bendix (1996) has observed, during this period in history, which is akin to the medieval period in European history, governmental authority was as much linked to the family as to property.

In other words, the right of rule or right to exercise authority was held by individuals based on their position as members of a family as opposed to an individual.[4] Invariably, this was the state of affairs politically in pre-colonial Africa before the colonial conquests and the eventual institutionalisation of the colonial project throughout the continent. In other words, to the extent that political and social organisation revolved around families through clans and kinship structures, there were no disparate *nations* in the modern sense of the term, since many subjects of a polity or political jurisdiction were invariably of the same ethnic background.[5]

6.2 The colonial legacy and the challenge of nation-building

Because of the cultural homogeneity that characterised most pre-colonial African societies, traditional African states functioned as cohesive administrative units on the eve of the emergence of the "modern" state which was engendered by the inauguration of the colonial project. Since the institutionalisation of the colonial project entailed the establishment of a rival political authority, the colonialists were confronted with the question of the accommodation or otherwise of traditional political authorities and the way the colonial powers dealt with this question varied depending on which colonial power was involved in the decision-making, and to a large extent, on geography.

While the French colonial policy virtually jettisoned traditional political structures through the policy of *Assimilation,* the British colonial policy opted to rule the colonies in some instances, especially in Tropical Africa, through the existing local political structures through their policy of *Indirect rule.* In the preface to his book, *The Dual Mandate*, this is how Lord Lugard (1965), the one-time British Colonial Administrator in the Emirates of Northern Nigeria, explained the nuanced British colonial local government policy at the time:

> in the second place, in discussing these problems I have ventured to make some few suggestions, as the result of experience, in the hope that they may be found worthy of consideration by the "men on the spot"—in so far as the varying circumstances of our Crown colonies and protectorates may render them in any in so far as the varying circumstances of our Crown colonies and protectorates may render them in any degree applicable.

Compared to the rest of Africa, South Africa is unique in the sense that it essentially has a triple heritage of colonialism as a result of colonial rule under the Dutch, the British, and the Afrikaners for over three centuries between 1652 and 1991. Nevertheless, there is a commonality of colonial experience with the rest of Africa in the sense that the policies of each of these three colonial powers invariably deepened the social, mainly ethnic, cleavages in the pre-colonial society.

For example, the British under their *Indirect rule system* manipulated the institutions of traditional leadership by bolstering the existing stratification by supporting the ruling clans and their related aristocracies against the ordinary people or subjects of the conquered territories. Meanwhile, in South Africa, after 1948, the Afrikaner colonialists, through their "internal" colonialism,[6] deepened these social divisions by introducing yet another dimension of inequality in the form of a racial hierarchy which disadvantaged the non-white ethnic groups in the society.[7] In fact, in South Africa under apartheid, the white minority state was so concerned about building the white "nation" that they limited the obligatory military conscription to only white youth in the polity.

The common thread that runs through all the colonial policies in Africa is the fact that, to the extent that the colonial powers were concerned about social control of the "restless natives", they all sought to manipulate and control the existing indigenous peoples through control of the social and political institutions, especially the institution of chieftainship, to further their interests. Needless to say, the ultimate aim of this social control mechanism was to ensure political quietism and the economic exploitation of the colonies.

6.3 Conceptualising nation-building

Stephenson (2005), has argued that even though the terms nation-building, democratisation, modernisation, political development, post-conflict reconstruction, and peacebuilding are often used interchangeably because of their evolutionary interrelationships, they are distinct. Although historically these related but distinct terms have been conflated, the term nation-building has been defined differently by different scholars over the years. For example, Falode (2019: 181) defines nation-building as "the processes of national integration and consolidation that led up to the establishment of the modern nation-state as distinct from various form of traditional states, such as feudal and dynastic states, church states, empires, etc".

Gellner (1995: 1) believes that "Nation-building is the process whereby ruling political elites attempt to make the political and the national units overlap", while to Bendix (1996), the extension of citizenship to members of ever-larger groups as the very hallmark of successful nation-building. Greenfeld (2001: 18), in defining a *nation*, associates it with "popular sovereignty and equality, where it becomes an engine for the provision of individuals' dignity in a modern society", while Anderson (1991) argues that a nation is an imagined political community and is imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. Arguing that nationalism is "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deemed to constitute an actual or potential nation", and therefore assists in building and sustaining a nation. Smith (2002: 15) defines a nation as "a named community possessing a historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs".[8]

While some earlier accounts of nation-building were heavily influenced by nationalist assumptions and hence appeared deterministic and even mystic, some accounts appear to be congruent with the realities of modern Europe and the Third World (see, e.g., Smith 1986). This so-called "activist" or "political" approach acknowledges that there are more patterns of nation-building, and moreover acknowledges the prior formation of ethnic communities which influence and condition the success of attempts to "make states and build nations" (Smith 1986: 241).

Seton-Watson (1977) has summarised these later conceptualisations based on the realities between the "old, continuous nations" of Europe and the new, designed or imposed nations of Asia and Africa. He does this with four main mutually-inclusive historical patterns or routes of state-and-nation formation:

(1) *The Western*: Under this type, the state and nation emerge simultaneously with dynastic and territorial states being built up around a definite ethnic core, to which other ethnic and regional groups and communities are successively attached by alliance, marriage, coercion, and administrative intervention;
(2) *The Immigrant*: This is where small part-*ethnie* are beneficiaries of a state of their own, with or without a struggle, and they then seek to absorb and assimilate waves of new immigrants from different cultures into what becomes increasingly a territorial nation and a political community, as exemplified by America, Argentina, and Australia;
(3) *The Ethnic*: This type involves where *ethnicity* exists in varying degrees of completeness and self-consciousness prior to the advent of the modern, rational state and of nationalism, which then demands the upgrading and transformation of these *ethnicities* to fully-fledged nations with their own territories, economics, legal rights, and education systems. This gives rise to a drive for autonomy and statehood, as a means for creating the nation and giving it a protective shell;
(4) *The Colonial*: This is where a modern, rational state is imposed from above on populations that are divided into many different ethnic communities and categories, which band together to achieve independent statehood under the aegis of a state-wide nationalism, and then try to use this territorial state and its 'nationalism' to create a unified nation out of these divergent *ethnie*.

Several scholars have argued that because much of the Third World where *nations* hardly existed, these countries fall into the category of the *colonial* route to state-and-nation-building. In other words, according to this viewpoint, nationalism or nation-building in these societies or countries became a Marxist ideological tool to mobilise the diverse ethnic groups in the "new" states to achieve political independence from the colonial powers (see, e.g., Amin 1981; Hobsbawn & Ranger 1983).[9] For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, the first generation of post-independence African leaders essentially used the states to create *nations* through "political action", as opposed to the situation in Europe where nations existed prior to the emergence of the modern state. Thus, in the African context, nationalism became subsumed in the struggle for national liberation and anti-colonialism generally.

Young (2004: 4) has observed that in the African context, the ideational elements of nation-building "innumerable rituals of state drummed the national idea into the public consciousness: national holidays, national anthems, and daily flag-raising ceremonies at all administrative headquarters". Nation-building also includes the creation of national paraphernalia such as flags, coats of arms, anthems, national days, national stadiums, national airlines, national languages, and national myths. The instrumentalist dimension of the type of nation-building occasioned by "political action" appeared to have been the various socioeconomic projects these leaders undertook to unify the ethnic groups into a nation, so to speak. Such concrete socioeconomic projects which sought to reflect the new national identities included the establishment of trusted institutions of national government, education, military defence, elections, land registry, import customs, foreign trade, foreign diplomacy, banking, finance, taxation, company registration, police, law, courts, healthcare, citizenship, civil rights and liberties, marriage registry, birth registry, immigration, transport infrastructure, and/or municipal governance charters.

Without a doubt, some of the nation-building policies adopted by some of the early post-independence African nationalists like Kaunda, Obote, Nyerere, Nkrumah, and Banda ranged from the more banal—such as changing the name of the state, capital, or currency—to more profound changes such as the declaration of a one-party state, the nationalisation of land, and the introduction of obligatory military conscription or national service.

Writing specifically on the subject of identity in Southern Africa, albeit with implications for the broader issue of the *National Question*, Mandazza (2001) has argued that one of the enduring legacies of colonialism is that the colonial enterprise introduced two main contending world views as far as the African experience is concerned. The first world view introduced by colonialism is what he calls *Caucasian*, and this has been the prism through which contemporary Africa, and Southern Africa, has been viewed and appears to be the dominant perspective. The second world view engendered by colonialism is the *African nationalist* (or Pan-Africanist) identity. This perspective seeks to reassert itself in the course of the struggle against European domination in its economic, social, cultural, and racial manifestations.

Within the context of these two contending world views, Mandazza (2001) has noted the intersection between the historical and socio-economic exceptionalism of Southern Africa and the rest of Africa on the one hand, and the international forces that are at work to maintain the continuity of these social relations of production, on the other hand. In other words, while Africa as a whole manifests certain common characteristics because of its colonial experience, there are certain features that are peculiar to Southern Africa, especially

South Africa. However, according to Mandazza (2001), these peculiarities of Southern Africa notwithstanding the claim about the region's exceptionalism, especially that of South Africa's, is false, negative, and at worst, anti-Pan-Africanism. While he admits that Southern Africa is a magnified version of the neo-colonial African state which the White settler colonialists sought to turn into White Dominions similar to those in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, he berates this exceptionalist identity as ahistorical and not based on a critique of the incompleteness of the liberatory process; but on the contrary, an attempt to project the African Renaissance as a new vision for Africa.

6.3.1 The postcolonial state and nation-building in Africa

The creation of the modern state out of the pre-existing pre-colonial states meant the severing of the link between a governmental authority and inherited privilege in the hands of families of notables. As we have noted, one consequential outcome of the process of modern state formation was the fact that the process introduced ethnic and racial diversity to otherwise mainly homogeneous ethnic traditional states that existed prior to this period.

Specifically, through the colonial military conquests, different traditional states based on ethnic hegemonies were integrated into the so-called colonies under single central administrative units that operated practically through existing local leadership structures. Thus, the divisive ethnic and racial policies of the colonial administrations only succeeded in elevating the limited social cleavages and their attendant conflicts in society to new heights. Even though ethnic cleavages and conflicts existed in pre-colonial African societies, this problem became more acute following the colonial enterprise because of these colonial policies of divide-and-rule.

Thus, to the extent that nation-building entails a process of formation of a nation having a common territory, common race, common religion, common language, common history, common culture, this task began in earnest in the post-colonial era. Specifically, the task of unifying the diverse ethnic and in some instances, racial groupings who lived in the colonies became the main preoccupation of Africa's post-independence leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Milton Obote of Uganda, Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and of course, Nelson Mandela and other leaders of South Africa.[10]

6.3.2 The nation-building agenda in South Africa

A common feature of the South African society on the eve of the democratic transition in 1994 was the myriad social divisions in the society. The ethnic cleavages that characterised almost every African society on the eve of colonialism had been accentuated in South Africa when the Afrikaner nationalists swept into power in 1948. In the subsequent years, the introduction of a racial hierarchy through the grand apartheid system sought to favour the minority white population group at the expense of the Black majority. Moreover, the so-called *separate-but-equal* policy under apartheid further divided the Black population group into the so-called Bantustans, which were essentially *Black nations* or more appropriately, “Homelands”.[11]

This is the country the first democratic government inherited from the minority White regime. It was against the backdrop of this crucible of ethno-racial cleavages and tensions on the eve of the political transition that the new Black elite assumed the mantle of leadership of the country. The first test of the new leadership was, without a doubt, how to build a country that would engender the harnessing of its resources, both human and material, for the needed socio-economic reconstruction of the society. As the first Black democratically elected leader, Nelson Mandela was faced with the task of navigating this journey of building a new nation out of the old, ethnically and racially unwieldy one by providing a shared vision and a common destiny.

Because of the immediate circumstances of the political transition in 1994, especially with the threat of a civil war from both White and some Black nationalists, it was quite predictable that Mandela would opt for the most important determinant of identity in Southern Africa, race, as a basis for the nation-building task at hand. In other words, Mandela tackled the task of building a united country by the *non-racialist world* approach as a guidepost. Specifically, Mandela took the peculiarities of South Africa into consideration. Specifically, Mandela, egged on by other influential civil society leaders like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, embraced the so-called “rainbow nation” route to realise the non-racialism ideal enshrined in the African National Congress’s (ANC’s) Freedom Charter to build one united South African country.

This *non-racialist* approach was symbolised by the adoption of the most colourful new national flag and the popularisation of such mantras as the so-called “Mandela magic”, etc. Without a doubt, these slogans and symbols had the effect of creating a feeling of euphoria and a sense of nationhood among the country’s people, even momentarily, especially after the country won both the Rugby World Cup and the African Nations’ Cup in 1996.

When Thabo Mbeki assumed the leadership of the ANC and the country after the one term of Mandela’s rule, the nation-building agenda continued but the process was, to all intents and purposes, underwritten by some kind of *African nationalist* worldview as inferred from the attendant *African Renaissance* philosophy. Consistent with the *African Renaissance* agenda, South Africa began to play a more prominent and visible role in African continental causes, including the housing of the first Pan-African Parliament in the country, and bankrolling the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a governance assessment programme by the African Union (AU).

The conventional wisdom is that Mandela and Mbeki pursued divergent nation-building philosophies on the basis of the conceptual dichotomy suggested by Mandazza (2001). Specifically, one would be tempted to conclude that Mandela, by using the non-racial principle of the “all-who-live-in-it” mantra, employed the so-called *Caucasian worldview* to build a united nation, while Mbeki’s Africanist approach would put him in the camp of the *African* *nationalist* worldview; in fact, the basis of Mbeki's adoption of this approach was the critical importance of prioritising the socioeconomic advancement of black Africans who have been disadvantaged in access to the country's socioeconomic resources because of past racial discrimination against them.

For instance, Blaser (2004) has argued that the problem with the nation-building agenda since the democratic transition appears to lie in the ideological inconsistency in the leadership of the country. According to this line of reasoning, while consistent with the ideals enshrined in the Freedom Charter of the ruling ANC, the Mandela leadership adopted the *non-racialism* approach to unite the disparate social and economic groups in the country, and the Mbeki leadership adopted the *African nationalist* world view which prioritised issues of concern to the black African majority.

However, it bears emphasis that the focus on the recognition of group rights such as language and culture was not a creation of the Mbeki leadership as this was a dominant discourse during the Convention for Democratic South Africa (CODESA)[12] talks which ushered in the settlement that presaged the political transition in 1994. During this period, the country was tethered on the brink because of the demands of the Afrikaner and Zulu Nationalists for separate homelands.[13]

It is within this context that we disagree with the attempt to put Mandela and Mbeki in opposing ideological camps with regard to the nation-building agenda. Firstly, we do not think that when the ANC adopted the principle of non-racialism in the Freedom Charter, they sought to equate the concept of *non-racialism* to the geo-political concept of Africa with which the *Caucasian worldview* had defined the entire African continent prior to dominating it, according to Mandazza's (2001) definition of this world view; in other words, neither Mandela nor any ANC leader saw Africa or African peoples as inferior to their European (Caucasian) conquerors.

Secondly, the *African nationalist worldview variant* (*African Renaissance)* Mbeki adopted on the basis of a claim of a new vision for the continent has been criticised by several Africanists over the years (see, e.g., Moyo 1998; Vale & Maseko 1998). Here is Jonathan Moyo on the African Renaissance (1998: 9):

> Stripped of the feel-good pretences about the destiny of Africans beyond their ill-fated past, prevailing notions of the *African Renaissance* are no more than [a] little political nonsense … One of the major reasons why this alleged *renaissance* has acquired the status of political nonsense is that, it is now a catchall phrase full of promise without signifying anything important or new.

Thus, both Mandela and Mbeki, far from following any particular pre-existing ideological precepts, were pragmatic about their respective approaches to nation-building based on the peculiar socio-political problems that confronted them during their times in office. Be it as it may, whatever gains that appeared to have been made under these two leaders with regard to nation-building, almost three decades into the so-called "new" South Africa, the process of nation-building appears to have stalled, especially after Thabo Mbeki left office.

In place of the intellectual discourses that characterised the Mbeki era with regard to nation-building, the country has witnessed the resurfacing of the ethnic-racial tensions of yesteryear in different manifestations. For instance, in recent years, the challenge of nation-building has been manifested in the higher education sector where these ethno-racial tensions have been in the form of calls for the decolonisation of educational curriculum and the defacing and removal of the statues of "colonialists" in public places, service delivery protests, and the continuing xenophobic attacks on non-South African black nationals from other African countries.

It is needless to say that all the above-mentioned problems have thrust the crucial issue of nation-building, the *sine qua non* of a country's social cohesion, into the social and political centre stage as far as the country's future trajectory is concerned. However, despite these challenges, very few empirical studies have been done to document some of these challenges facing the country, especially studies among the younger generations. One of the few studies that have been conducted that is relevant in this instance is a study by Amoateng (2016) that examines the issue of social cohesion among the younger generations of South Africans given the incessant incidents of racial and ethnic tensions in the society in recent years. In this study, Amoateng (2016) used a sample of undergraduate students from a major public university to gauge students' attitudes towards and perceptions of social cohesion in the country.

He found that even though almost three-quarters of the students felt that they belonged in the country, there was no uniformity in the students' sense of belonging in the country; less than a quarter of the students felt that they were included in the country's democratic processes, while less than half of them said that they were patriotic to the country. Moreover, the level of students' acceptance of the country's diversity was rather low. However, while the students' sense of belonging in the country was higher than their acceptance of diversity, both measures of social cohesion were highly racialised. The importance of race was evidenced by the fact that on the issue of acceptance of the country's diversity, coloureds and Indian/Asian South Africans were much more accepting the country's diversity than black Africans and whites. On the issue of belongingness in South Africa, Indians/Asians and black Africans were much more likely than coloureds and whites to have a greater sense of belonging in the country.[14]

In another study, Amoateng and Kalule-Sabiti (2014), examined the effects of two social settings, namely, the educational and religious settings, on students' attitudes towards interracial relationships among a sample of undergraduate students at a major metropolitan university in South Africa. The study failed to find empirical support for the hypotheses that higher levels of education and religious settings would engender favourable attitudes towards interracial relationships. However, they found that in the secondary educational setting, being African and having intimate interactions with people of different racial backgrounds positively influenced students' attitudes towards interracial relationships.

6.4 Youth and nation-building in contemporary South Africa

As the above brief review of the literature has shown, the empirical evidence on the role of the youth in the crucial issue of nation-building in South Africa is at best very thin. So, in this chapter, we use the Round 6 of the Afrobarometer Survey data on South Africa to examine select aspects of nation-building as a basis for future and more detailed studies with regard to the issue of nation-building. Specifically, we employ this data set to examine two main dimensions of the nation-building concept, namely, "the need to build a united South African nation" bereft of ethnic and other non-rational considerations, and "the acceptance of diversity" which is the defining characteristic of the South African society as a result of its history and culture.

6.4.1 Desire for a united South African nation

We measured nation-building with two main indicators, namely, "Desire for one united South Africa" (*ProSAScale*) and "Acceptance of diversity" (*DiversityScale*). For the "Desire for one united South Africa" variable or concept, the indicator was a composite scale comprising five statements measured on a five-point Likert scale based on a question on respondents' views about statements regarding the following issues: (1) Children to think of themselves as South African, (2) being South African is a very important part of how you see yourself, (3) South Africans first, stop thinking of themselves in terms of groups they belong to, (4) create one united South African nation from all the different groups, and (5) Create such a united South African nation.

The responses to these statements ranged from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither disagree nor agree, 4 = agree to 5 = strongly disagree.

The "Desire for a united South Africa" scale or indicator was our measure for the preference of the citizens of the country for one united country with shared values and vision. As indicated early on, during the first democratic administration under President Nelson Mandela, the ideal was a "rainbow nation" that recognised the role of every citizen "that lived in the country" consistent with the non-racialism ideology enshrined in the Freedom Charter of the ruling ANC. Figure 6.1 reflects the attitudes of contemporary youth with regard to this ideal of a united nation.

This figure shows the distribution of this scale among the youth in the country. The scale, which was a composite scale that measured this attitude, ranged from a minimum score of 2 to a maximum score of 5 with a Mean of 4.26 (standard deviation = 0.574). What Figure 6.1 shows is that the desire to have one united South African nation is very strong among the country's youth. And not only does the youth feel strongly about this desire by seeing it as part of their own identity at the expense of their ethnic and other identities, but they also want their children to identify with the same desire.

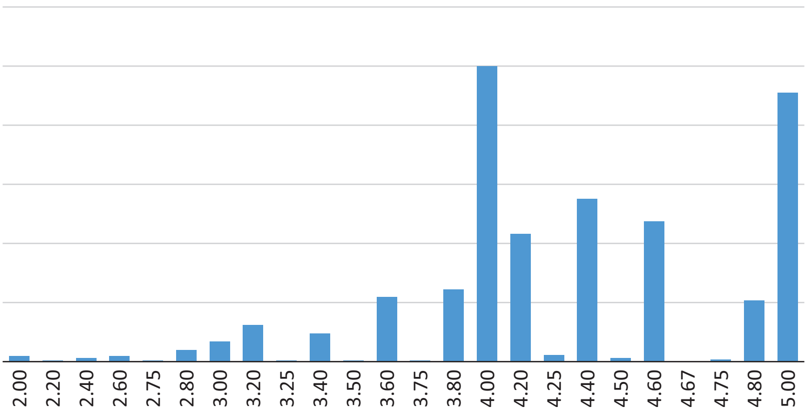

Figure 6.1 Pro-South African scale.

Source: Round_6 of Afrobarometer Survey (2016)

But, the youth of the country is not a homogenous category as we have emphasised throughout the present book. Because of this diversity, we compared the youth across social and demographic characteristics, and Table 6.1 shows the differences in their desire for a united South African nation in terms of these background socio-demographic characteristics. Table 6.1 shows that on the issue of the desire to build a united South African nation, Asian/Indian and white youths are the most likely to express a preference for this united nation, while coloured youth are the least likely to prefer this united nation; black African youth are not significantly different from their white peers in their preference for a united nation.

This situation is similar to what we found with regard to political participation of the youth in Chapter 5, where the two groups with socioeconomic disadvantages—black Africans and coloureds—were the least likely to be patriotic compared to white and Asian/Indian youths who have had relatively better access to the country's socioeconomic resources. It is possible that because of the discrimination suffered by black Africans and coloureds in this society, their loyalty to and love of the country have been affected, while their white and Asian/Indian counterparts have reasons to be grateful for what the country has to offer them.

Table 6.1 shows that there is no difference between males and females as far as their preference for a united South African nation is concerned; however, education appears to affect the preference for a united South African nation among the youth. Specifically, this preference increases steadily from among youth with primary school education until it reaches the tertiary or higher education level when the preference falls again. In a similar vein, the preference for a united South Africa increases among adolescents and young adults (aged 18–24 years old) and then decreases among emerging adults (aged 30–35 years old) who are either at the tertiary level or have just completed

Table 6.1 Distribution of mean scores preferences for a united South African nation by socio-demographic factors

Background factors	*N*	*Mean*	*Standard deviation*
Race/ethnicity			
Black African	878	4.28	.558
White	70	4.30	.704
Coloured	140	4.11	.602
Asian/Indian	32	4.47	.432
Gender			
Male	559	4.26	.597
Female	563	4.26	.550
Education			
No schooling	6	3.88	.524
Primary	63	4.36	.470
Middle	306	4.26	.626
Matric/high school	447	4.25	.555
TVET	176	4.32	.573
Tertiary	124	4.18	.547
Age group			
18–24	382	4.25	.578
25–29	395	4.30	.539
30–35	345	4.23	.606
Residence			
Urban	763	4.23	.593
Rural	359	4.33	.525
Province			
Eastern Cape	116	4.03	.720
Free State	62	4.38	.586
Gauteng	292	4.28	.559
KwaZulu-Natal	182	4.38	.533
Limpopo	115	4.43	.411
Mpumalanga	100	4.29	.465
North West	93	4.15	.565
Northern Cape	35	4.38	.563
Western Cape	126	4.06	.6053

Source: Round 6 of Afrobarometer Survey.

this level of education. So, the question becomes: why do older youth and/or those at the tertiary level have a lesser desire for a united South African nation?

Rural youth are much more likely to express a preference for a united South African nation than their urban counterparts (mean scores of 4.33 vs. 4.23, respectively). It is plausible that rural folk still embody the shared African values of communalism which enjoins people to be “each his brother’s keeper” (the *ubuntu* ethos), while urban youth have become “detribalised” and individualistic in orientation because of their exposure to the cosmopolitan lifestyle of cities.

Finally, youth in the Eastern Cape Province are the least likely to express the desire for a united South African nation (mean score of 4.03), followed by those in the Western Cape Province (mean score of 4.06), while their counterparts in Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Northern Cape Provinces are the most likely to prefer a united South African nation (mean scores of 4.38, 4.38, and 4.38, respectively). This finding about the Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces, respectively is very interesting within the context of the country's politics and leadership since the political transition in 1994.

As we noted earlier in this chapter, the country's first democratically elected President, Nelson Mandela, had sought to avoid the predicted bloodshed following the relinquishing of power by the white minority, by embracing the ideal of uniting the entire country under the one so-called "rainbow" nation. However, after Mandela exited politics and Thabo Mbeki took over, the latter championed the *Africanist* approach to nation-building on the basis of the sheer numbers of Blacks in the population and their marginalised socioeconomic position in the country.

As Blaser (2004) has observed, this *Africanist* approach to nation-building became suspect as it was construed as a Xhosa-ethnic group hegemony by several local leaders, especially the Zulus under Mangosuthu Buthelezi and the Afrikaner elites. However, this claim is untenable because of the fact that, while both leaders were ethnic Xhosa, Mandela had embraced the ideal of a united South African nation, while Mbeki, for the purpose of advancing the socioeconomic status of the Black majority, had preferred the Africanist approach to nation-building. But the fact that the Xhosa ethnic group is the largest ethnic group in the Eastern Cape, and the second largest ethnic group in the Western Cape appears to lend credence to the fact that as a group, the Xhosas may have very little trust in any "nationalist" political agenda.

6.4.2 Acceptance of diversity

The second dimension of nation-building we examined in the chapter is "Acceptance of diversity". Like the desire for a united South Africa dimension, our measure of the acceptance of diversity scale was similarly a composite scale of five questions or items measured on a five-point Likert scale in the Afrobarometer Survey. The general question the respondents were asked in the survey was: *For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like to have people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care*: (1) People of different religion, (2) people of different ethnicity, (3) homosexuals, (4) people with HIV/AIDS, and (5) immigrants and foreign workers. T*he responses to each question ranged from 1 = strongly dislike, 2 = somewhat dislike, 3 = would not care, 4 = somewhat like to, and 5 = strongly like.*

Figure 6.2 shows the properties of the composite scale. The scale was the mean of all five items under the question. It ranged from a minimum score of 1 to a maximum score of 5, with a mean score of 3.35 and a standard deviation of .023. The mean score of 3.35 suggests that overall the acceptance of

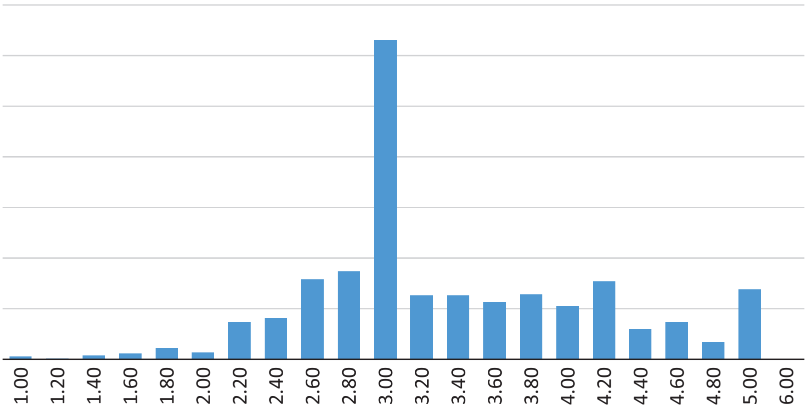

Figure 6.2 Acceptance of diversity.

Source: Round 6 Afrobarometer Survey (2016).

diversity by the youth was lower than their desire for a united South African nation (mean score of 4.26). Given the fact that the defining characteristic of the South African society is its diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, class, religion, and any stratification criterion imaginable, the low level of acceptance of diversity is cognitively challenging.

Table 6.2 shows the distribution of the mean scores of acceptances of diversity among the youth by their background socio-demographic characteristics. Asian/Indian South African youth are the most accepting of having a society which is diverse (3.46 mean score), followed closely by coloured South African youth with a mean score of 3.41, while white youth are the least likely to accept a diverse society with a mean score of 3.23 which is below the average score of 3.35. Asian/Indian South African youth appear to be consistent with the kind of society they want South Africa to be; a united nation with shared values and vision, while white South African youth appear to be ambivalent about the kind of society they want for South Africa. Specifically, white youth desire a united South African nation but are less accepting of the diversity that will help deepen the democracy the country is striving for in terms of equal opportunity to all citizens in the country. It is plausible to assume that white youth see diversity as a zero-sum game, that is, they are apprehensive of the erosion of the historical privileges they would have become accustomed to if every citizen were granted equal opportunity.

A similar ambivalent situation is observed with regard to youth with higher educational attainment. Youth who are well educated are less accepting of the ideal of a united South African nation but more accepting of diversity with a mean score of 3.50 on this measure. Our expectation was that education, especially higher education, would have exposed youth to the benefits of democracy which, at least in the liberal sense, includes a united nation with shared values, a common vision, and recognition and respect for the rights of a diversity of citizens. However, contrary to this expectation, we found that

Table 6.2 Distribution of mean scores for acceptance of diversity by background socio-demographic factors

Background factors	*Acceptance of diversity*		
	N	*Mean*	*Standard deviation*
Race/ethnicity			
Black African	878	3.35	.789
White	70	3.23	.673
Coloured	140	3.41	.885
Asian/Indian	32	3.46	.602
Gender			
Male	559	3.31	.770
Female	563	3.40	.809
Education			
No schooling	6	3.34	1.222
Primary	63	3.41	.855
Middle	306	3.29	.801
Matric/high school	447	3.35	.767
TVET	176	3.35	.741
Tertiary	124	3.50	.854
Age cohort			
18–24	382	3.33	.798
25–29	395	3.39	.789
30–35	345	3.33	.785
Residence			
Urban	763	3.40	.814
Rural	359	3.26	.730
Province			
Eastern Cape	116	3.71	.799
Free State	62	3.18	.959
Gauteng	292	3.50	.837
KwaZulu-Natal	182	3.30	.655
Limpopo	115	3.28	.647
Mpumalanga	100	2.90	.282
North West	93	3.13	.740
Northern Cape	35	3.72	1.020
Western Cape	127	3.32	.862

Source: Round 6 of Afrobarometer Survey (2016).

youth who are well educated have some kind of antipathy towards a united nation, but are accepting of diversity due, perhaps, to their exposure to the diverse student populations at the tertiary level in the education system.[15]

Young South African women are more likely than young South African men to be accepting of the country's diversity, a situation which is different from the ideal of a united South African nation where there are no differences between males and females. This could be reflecting the educational differences between young men and young women in the country, whereby young women are slightly ahead of their male counterparts in terms of educational attainment; the country's higher education system exposes students to a considerable degree of diversity because of the tertiary student populations which come from all over the world. While urban youth are less accepting of the ideal of a united South Africa, they are very much accepting of diversity with a mean score of 3.50 as against a mean score of 3.26 for rural youth. As we conjectured earlier, the preference for a united South African nation by rural youth could be a reflection of a lag of the time-honoured African communalist ethos as far as rural residence is concerned. Thus, the tendency for urban youth to accept diversity is a function of their exposure to the urban milieu whose population, by definition, is diverse in its composition. Youth residents of the Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, and Gauteng Provinces are all accepting of diversity, while those in the Mpumalanga Province are the least likely to accept diversity, followed by the North West and Free State Provinces in that order. The capital of the Northern Cape Province, Kimberley, is the heart of the diamond mining industry and thus attracts a large number of nationalities in the Southern African region, while the Gauteng Province, besides being the financial hub of the country, is also the heart of the gold mining industry, contains the national capital city, Pretoria, and therefore attracts a large number of not only different South Africans but also other nationalities around the world.

6.5 Summary and conclusion

Despite the fact that South Africa inherited a triple colonial heritage, the country was not different from other sub-Saharan African countries with regard to the nation-building challenges it faced. On the eve of the country's democratic transition in 1994, the racial and ethnic cleavages that existed in the society had been accentuated by over three centuries of colonial and apartheid rule, so the task of wielding these disparate social, political, and economic groups into one united nation fell on the shoulders of the newly elected democratic leaders, especially Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki. While some scholars have attempted to put Mandela and Mbeki into different ideological camps in their respective pursuits of the nation-building goal, a critical analysis reveals that essentially both leaders were pragmatic in the quest to achieve this goal based on the peculiar socio-political problems of the country. The country's youth are desirous of building on the foundation that these two pioneering leaders laid in regard to the nation-building agenda for the country based on several indicators we examined in this chapter.

First, on the issue of the youth's desire for one united nation, we found that the desire to have one united South African nation is very strong among the country's youth. And not only does the youth feel strongly about this desire by seeing it as part of their own identity at the expense of their ethnic and other identities, but they want their children to identify with the same desire. Secondly, overall, the acceptance of diversity by the youth is lower than the youth's desire for a united South African nation, a finding which is surprising in view of the diverse nature of the South African society.

In conclusion, the country's youth appear to be the harbingers of the social and political changes that will usher in a united and more diverse nation even though their desire for the former ideal supersedes the latter. The problem of accepting diversity among the youth suggests the lingering ethnic-racial tensions in the country, a situation which calls for a policy intervention to address the problem as the youth are the future leaders of the country.

Notes

1 It is significant to note that these "traditional" jurisdictions are still referred to as "states" in some modern African countries such as Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria.

2 Bloch (1961) identified five (5) main features of feudalism as: 1. Fief, usually but not essentially land; 2. The personal nature of the bond of dependence; 3. The dispersal of authority; 4. A specified military class; and 5. The survival in some form of the idea of the state.

3 The heads of these political entities were called variously in different African societies, e.g., Amakhosi/Nduna, Kgosi, Captain, Paramount chiefs, Emirs, etc.

4 This is the essence of the time-honoured communalist ethos or *Ubuntu* in African culture as opposed to the individualist ethos associated with Western culture. In African culture, the individual derives his or her identity from the group.

5 With the exception of a few cases where conquests were so extensive as to become an "empire" in the case of the Ashantis of Ghana, the Zulus of South Africa, etc., most of these conquered territories involved peoples of the same ethnic group as the conquerors which rendered the populations essentially homogeneous in nature.

6 Some have argued–especially, in "White leftist" circles–for a South African "exceptionalism" on the basis that South Africa was not a conventional colonial case like the rest of Africa (see Mandazza 2001). According to this argument, the permanent settlement and sheer numbers of Whites in Southern Africa, especially South Africa, raise the question as to whether racial groupings should be treated as ethnic groups with their mythologies in the nation-building process (e.g., Bekker 2001).

7 When the Nationalists took power in 1948, they institutionalised racism with the introduction of the policy of "*apartheid*" which sought to develop the ethnic groups ostensibly equally but separately along their cultural lines.

8 After independence in 1957, Kwame Nkrumah re-named the Gold Coast "Ghana" on the basis of the belief that the majority Akan ethnic in that country migrated from the ancient Ghana Empire to the north somewhere in the Sahel region after the fall of that empire. Thus, the majority of the people in the country shared a common history and culture.

9 It is not by coincidence, therefore, that almost invariably all the post-independence African leaders professed one form or other of Marxist ideology, leading many of them to turn their newly independent countries into one-party states at some point in their evolution.

10 Thus, while the colonial powers engaged in *state formation* following colonial conquests, postcolonial African leaders engaged in *nation-building* to unite their diverse populations for the task of socio-economic reconstruction of the postcolonial societies through shared visions created by myths.

11 Unlike other sub-Saharan African countries on the eve of political independence, South Africa could be said to have *nations*—the most prominent of which were the Afrikaners which subsumed all other groups and Zulu—and of course, other less

prominent but nevertheless influential ethnic groups which the Bantustan policy had elevated to the status of *quasi-nations.*

12 Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) was the multiparty team established between 1990 and 1993 to negotiate the political transition. It completed its work in 1993 and produced the country's interim Constitution in 1996.

13 The name "KwaZulu", part of the KwaZulu-Natal Province with the largest concentration of the people of the Zulu ethnic group, signifies the political concession the Zulu Nationalists wrought from the democracy negotiations that led to the political transition in 1994.

14 Following affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), whites have felt left out, while coloureds have persistently complained that under apartheid they were not "white enough and under democracy, they are not black enough", hence this sense of alienation from the "new" South Africa.

15 It is significant to note that the concept of a "united nation" is not the same as whether a country is a unitary or federal system. For example, Nigeria is a federation but it is a united nation in the sense that it is one country under one national flag with shared values and a common vision.

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7 Youth education and skills acquisition

7.1 Introduction

Due to the additional challenges they face in their attempts to benefit from democracy and live better lives, young people in contemporary South Africa feel more and more cut off from the rest of society and deeply betrayed by the government. In fact, in a study of undergraduate students at a public university, Amoateng (2016) found that less than one-half (42%) of the students were patriotic. It is a truism that even though today's youth, who are aptly nicknamed the "Born-Frees", did not take part in the struggle against the apartheid regime, their parents and grandparents were in the vanguard of the Soweto uprising which eventually brought the regime to its knees. Nearly three decades into democracy, there is a concern that the government is not doing enough to improve unrestricted access to the economy and job opportunities.

Millions of young people remain unemployed despite extensive government efforts to assist in human capital development across the life cycle. The fact that two out of every three young people in South Africa (under 35) are unemployed or underemployed, with black African youth and younger youth aged 15–24 more likely to be unemployed or underemployed, makes unemployment one of the most serious socioeconomic challenges the nation's youth face (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA] 2022). Considering young people constitute the largest group of new and primary job seekers as they move through their lives, South Africa's high youth unemployment rate is especially troubling. No society can expect to advance or flourish if the overwhelming majority of its youth are idle.

Paradoxically, and perhaps more concerning, is the fact that a substantial number of these youth, a sizable viable untapped labour pool, are neither in school nor at work (Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) 2022). South Africa's youthful bulge—with over a third of the country's population between the ages of 15 and 34—may be turning into a demographic time bomb because many disgruntled young people are bearing the brunt of a failing society.

Discussions about youth livelihoods and labour force participation cannot be separated from issues about providing proper opportunities and investments for the development of the necessary knowledge and skills for full participation

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in a globalised world, especially when formal education remains germane to eligibility, participation, and success in the increasingly technical nature of the modern South African economy. In fact, economic growth in the increasingly industrialised economy depends on the workforce's abilities being in line with market demands.

Even though there has been significant progress in opening up opportunities for young people since the end of apartheid, rising youth unemployment is occurring concomitantly with rising economic performance and development, leading to a situation where there is an excess of mostly unskilled and low-skilled young job-seekers. Youth unemployment in the nation and related issues are not just a result of a lack of jobs or the government's inability to create enough jobs to keep up with population growth but instead reflect an imbalance between the formal education and skills required by the labour market and those that the available labour force possesses. It becomes necessary to address structural issues underlying education and skill development challenges if the nation is to combat the scourge of youth unemployment (Stats SA 2022).

Fundamentally, the educational system has been a crucial institution in developing young people's capacity to drive economies and societies into new growth trajectories and preparing them for their transition into the workforce. According to empirical research, formal education or schooling (training and skills development) is significantly correlated with higher employment rates or labour market participation (Kyllonen 2012). South Africa nevertheless maintains one of the most unequal school systems in the world, despite the fact that it is acknowledged that young people's educational attainment is crucial to their employment chances.

Unsurprisingly, a lack of quality education is a major factor in the country's current youth unemployment crisis. This is largely due to historically low levels of investment in black Africans' education; arguably, the exclusion of black South Africans from the educational system and skilled jobs during apartheid still impacts the high rates of unemployment in the country today.

Although those with little to no formal education or training are disproportionately affected, youth unemployment is not exclusively a problem for the uneducated. For instance, according to national statistics, young South Africans with less education (who have not finished their basic schooling) and/or foundational education (who have only obtained a Matric qualification) are more likely to be unemployed than their peers with some level of post-school training or education (Figure 7.1).

Despite significant reforms to the education system, the majority of South Africa's youth are still being failed by the current system since it is not providing the necessary skills, thus leaving the youth with insufficient skills relevant to the labour market. This is demonstrated by the proportion of young graduates who hold tertiary qualifications but are still unemployed. Given the significant role that education and training play in gaining access to the labour market, a strong education system is not only essential for addressing youth unemployment and related issues but may also hold the key to solving some of

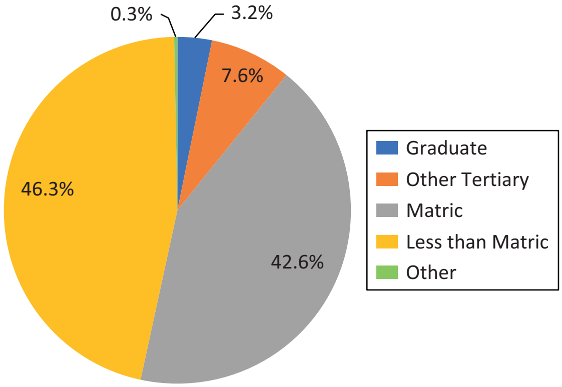

Figure 7.1 Percentage of unemployed youth (15–34) by highest education level, 2021.

Source: Extracted from analysis of Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q3: 2021 (Stats SA 2022).

the nation's social issues, including poverty, crime, violence, and social unrest. In order to better understand the socioeconomic challenges of South Africa's youth, specifically in relation to employment, this chapter offers a broader picture of the match between education and employment.

7.2 Youth education context in South Africa

South Africa's youth is affected by considerable skills shortages due to persistent inequalities in access to education, training, and the labour market. The challenges facing the youth in South Africa today must be viewed within the wider context of the country's socio-political history. Undoubtedly, the legacy of South Africa's past continues to wreak havoc in all areas of life, especially as it pertains to the skills and readiness of black African and coloured youths for the labour market. Like all aspects of this society, education was used as a political tool during apartheid to promote the underdevelopment of young black and coloured people in the country. Thus, South Africa's crisis of unequal education, and resultant high youth unemployment, is steeped in its colonial and apartheid histories.

7.2.1 Apartheid education

Children of all races in South Africa received the same missionary-sponsored schooling during the early stages of interaction with Europeans, prior to British control. In those days, everyone learnt from the same teachers using the same curriculum or textbooks in schools staffed by missionaries from various parts of Europe. However, with the implementation of the "Native Education" policy around 1920, which ensured the compulsory education of white children while excluding black children, the British slowly started introducing segregated education and skills development (Dube 1985).

Undoubtedly, the British system of differentiated schooling was intended to stunt the intellectual growth of black people, which also served to reinforce the perception that white people are superior. For instance, the policy required that black students spend an average of 13 years in school before being qualified for tertiary admission, but white students only had to spend an average of eleven years in school. While whites received this foundation in primary grades, the system failed to adequately equip black Africans in mathematics and physical sciences. Generally speaking, black adolescents were subjected to inferior curricula, poor learning environments, and incompetent teachers (Dube 1985).

While racial segregation in the educational system was first introduced by the British, it was well-articulated, organised, and rigorously legislated by the apartheid regime. The 1953 Bantu Education Act was one of many pieces of legislation that the Nationalists passed after taking power in 1948 in order to carry out their grand apartheid goal of dividing the races. Prior to the enactment of this legislation, the government set up a Commission on Native Education under the chairmanship of Dr W. W. M. Eiselen with the following main terms of reference:

> The formulation of the principles and aims of education for Natives as an independent race, in which their past and present, their inherent racial qualities, their distinctive characteristics and aptitudes, and their needs under ever-changing social conditions are taken into consideration.

While the British “Native Education” strategy was more covert, the 1953 Bantu Education Act was successful in explicitly racialising educational institutions and restricting the amount of knowledge and skills that were imparted to black people. The government had complete control over every facet of black education, including funding for black schools, the appointment of teachers, and the development of curricula, and thus resulting in notable disparities in school quality between racial groups (Dube 1985).

For instance, by the 1970s, government investment in black education had fallen to a tenth of that in white education (Byrnes 1996). Black schools also had inferior facilities and teachers. For the latter, primary school teacher-to-pupil ratios ranged from 1:18 in white schools, 1:24 in Indian/Asian schools, 1:27 in coloured schools, and 1:39 in black schools (Byrnes 1996). Furthermore, only 15 per cent of teachers in black schools had teaching certifications, compared to 96 per cent of all teachers in white schools.

The racial disparity in quality school access was epitomised in performance rates where black youth’s secondary school pass rates were less than half of what they were for their white counterparts (Byrnes 1996). By denying them access to the same resources and opportunities as their white counterparts, Bantu Education, as it was envisioned by the Nationalist political elite, diminished black people’s intellectual prowess and prevented the development of their skills (Nkabinde 1997).

Although primarily focused on primary and secondary schooling, the policy was an uneven system created to prepare black people for a particular type of employment as the system's education became more vocational in nature (Nkabinde 1997). Schooling then was not intended to equip the black race with an education that would prepare him or her to participate meaningfully in the emerging technical economy, but rather to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" as the then Minister in charge, Hendrik Verwoerd, put it. Since Bantu Education engineered the severe marginalisation of non-white youths, it is possible that it is the root cause of the stark disparities in skills that exist today among racial groups in South Africa (Nkabinde 1997).

Subsequently, the 1959 Extension of University Education Act, which guaranteed separate higher education institutions for the various racial groups in the country, ensured that the control over black skill acquisition that was achieved at the foundational levels through Bantu Education was largely sustained in the post-school or tertiary sector (O'Malley 1959). The same training and educational opportunities and resources that the privileged white minority enjoyed were not available to non-white youth, particularly young black Africans and coloured South Africans (O'Malley 1959).

The majority of the population, primarily black African and coloured youths, was subjected to low-quality education and prevented from accumulating the necessary cultural capital (formal skills and knowledge) for socioeconomic development as a result of apartheid educational policies, which were implemented at all levels of education. Apartheid education not only resulted in a structurally divided, isolated, and uneven system but also ingrained severe disparities in educational access, resources, and outcomes among South Africa's youth that have been challenging to reverse even today (Terreblanche 2002). In essence, apartheid education effectively shielded white South Africans' interests from any competition from their black counterparts.

7.2.2 Post-apartheid youth education

Since the democratic transition in 1994, the post-apartheid government has worked to correct and mend the inequities the broken apartheid educational system produced through a range of initiatives. It established education as a protected constitutional universal right in its commitment to inclusive and equal education at all levels after abolishing draconian legislation like the Bantu Education and the Extension of University Education laws. The country's education system has undergone significant change as a result of the post-apartheid government's initiatives, especially for young black African students. Firstly, efforts to promote universal education and the removal of apartheid education laws have significantly increased access to school and, in some circumstances, decreased racial disparities in young people's attendance at educational institutions. For instance, the most recent national data available demonstrates improving trends in young people enroling in educational institutions at all levels (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Distribution of youth educational enrolment (2014 and 2020)

	2014 (%)	*2020 (%)*
Schools (Grade R-12)	77.4	74.7
Tertiary institutions	20.9	23.6
Other	1.7	1.7

Source: Stats SA (2022).

7.3 Challenges in youth education

Post-apartheid government's reform initiatives unquestionably have played a significant role in the substantial increases in educational enrolment rates. For instance, the number of young people enroling in tertiary institutions has increased significantly during the past 20 years or so. Despite the progress, South Africa continues to have one of the most unequal school systems in the world, resulting in difficulties in youth education. South Africa still has a very uneven distribution of quality education. This is due to the system's continued deep-seated historical inequity and its predominant infrastructure issues, both of which contribute to gaps in the educational attainment of the nation's youth (OECD 2015). In light of this, we examine some of the significant progress, challenges, and underlying factors in youth education in the following sections.

7.3.1 Schooling

Schooling in contemporary South Africa has seen a reassuring transformation along nearly all the major internationally recognised dimensions: access, redress, equity, and quality. The desegregation and racial integration of schools have resulted in more mixed-ethnicity schools as more young black Africans, who were the most neglected under apartheid, now attend former whites-only schools. Progressive policies such as the 1996 South African Schools Act (SASA) have been instrumental in improving youth school enrolment or access to a near-universal level, with primary and secondary school enrolment presently at 99 and 90 per cent, respectively (Stats SA 2020). For instance, an analysis of enrolment trends since 2009 shows steady growth in schooling access, suggesting that almost all children who are of school-going age who are meant to be at school are enroled in an educational institution (see Figure 7.2 below).

The government has ensured that many of South Africa's youth have increased primary education by making attendance at school mandatory for all young people up through Grade 9—which is thought to be the minimum level required to participate in society. Although Grade 9 in South Africa is the conclusion of compulsory schooling and does not involve secondary education, enrolment or attendance at the secondary level is still high, which is laudable educational progress. In fact, national data shows that young black

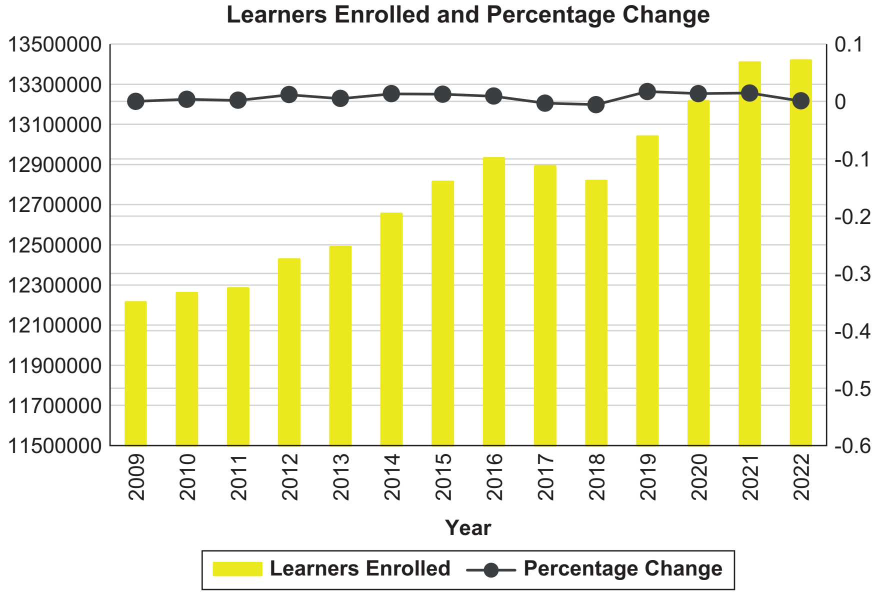

Figure 7.2 School enrolment trends vs percentage change from 2009 to 2022.

Source: Own computation using data extracted from the DBE's school realities reports.

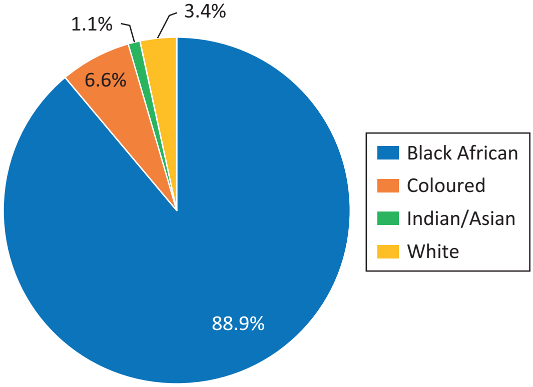

Figure 7.3 Percentage distribution of youth attending school by race, 2020.

Source: Stats SA (2022).

Africans account for over three-quarters of the total enrolment in primary and secondary schools in the country (Stats SA 2022; see Figure 7.3).

Improvements in school attendance rates, though progressive, are not without difficulties. The majority of black adolescents still attend township and rural schools, despite the fact that the educational system has been desegregated and young black Africans are now able to attend previously whites-only schools. These schools frequently lack the necessary resources, have poor facilities, are overcrowded, and have little to no access to necessities like water, electricity, and basic sanitation.

For instance, despite clear legal obligations to provide adequate and proper school infrastructure—as outlined in the 2013 Regulations Relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure—many schools still contend with deplorable infrastructure conditions and/or lack vital facilities that aid quality learning. According to the latest available data—the 2021 National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS) report—more than three-quarters of South Africa's 23,276 public schools do not have a library, and 85 per cent of them lack science laboratories (DBE 2021). Insufficient or poor infrastructure conditions impact not only young people's schooling experiences and ability to learn but also their performance and school attainment.

In addition to the obvious variances in school infrastructure, there is also a great deal of variety in school quality. Since the educational system continues to be plagued by structural inequalities that lead to class and racial differences in educational achievement and performance, improved schooling access or expansion has not translated into success for many of the nation's youth (Khumalo & Mji 2014; McKay 2016; OECD 2015). Many young people in the country do not complete their education, for various reasons, exacerbating their social and economic vulnerability. Research suggests that only about 60 per cent of young people who enter the system successfully complete secondary schooling (Grade 12), meaning the remainder drop out or are forced out of school (Grossen et al. 2017). According to the latest available data by Stats SA (2022), less than a fifth (19%) of South Africa's youth attained a National Senior Certificate (matric qualification) in 2020.

There are still significant racial disparities in young people's educational attainment, with Indian/Asian adolescents being over-represented among those with matriculations despite being a minority group (see Figure 7.3). Unsurprisingly, black African and coloured youth are more likely to have less than matric as their highest level of education.

The low or poor educational attainment rate among this group of youth cohorts is perhaps unsurprising as both dropout and retention rates tend to be much higher for them as they advance to higher grades—Grades 10–12 (Hartnack 2017; Spaull 2015). The reality is that black African and coloured adolescents continue to play catch-up with their white counterparts as they are likely to be retained at least once before they reach Grade 10 (Grossen et al. 2017).

Those who manage to enter the system, do not drop out prematurely, complete the schooling cycle, and exit with a qualification (National Senior Certificate) are not much better off because inequality is also evident in measures of how young people actually learn. Despite efforts to improve equity, the reality is that young people in South Africa experience a dual education system dictated by their socioeconomic circumstances or class. This is because the quality of education remains poor for the marginalised

Table 7.2 Provincial and national NSC examination pass rates from 2016 to 2022

Province	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*	*2019*	*2020*	*2021*	*2022*
Eastern Cape	60 (19)	65 (22)	71 (27)	77 (32)	68 (30)	73 (34)	77 (37)
Free State	88 (36)	86 (35)	88 (38)	88 (39)	85 (40)	86 (40)	89 (43)
Gauteng	85 (36)	85 (36)	88 (44)	87 (45)	84 (45)	83 (44)	84 (43)
Kwa-Zulu Natal	66 (25)	73 (29)	76 (33)	81 (38)	78 (38)	77 (37)	83 (43)
Limpopo	63 (18)	66 (21)	69 (24)	73 (27)	68 (29)	67 (27)	72 (30)
Mpumalanga	77 (23)	75 (23)	79 (30)	80 (33)	74 (30)	74 (32)	77 (34)
North West	83 (28)	79 (27)	81 (33)	87 (37)	76 (32)	78 (34)	80 (34)
Northern Cape	79 (26)	76 (25)	73 (26)	77 (30)	66 (28)	71 (30)	74 (31)
Western Cape	86 (41)	83 (39)	82 (42)	82 (44)	80 (44)	82 (45)	81 (43)
National	**73 (27)**	**75 (29)**	**78 (34)**	**81 (37)**	**76 (36)**	**76 (36)**	**80 (38)**

() Percentage of Bachelor-level passes.
Source: Extracted from the DBE's NSC Examination Report 2019 and 2023

or disadvantaged, mostly in rural communities and densely populated urban areas like townships. This means that schools in these settings, which are predominantly black schools, generally perform poorly relative to their privileged counterparts.

For instance, trend analysis of performance (pass) rates in the Grade 12 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations from 2016 to 2021 shows significant geographical variations, with rural provinces often clustered at the lower end of provincial performance rankings (see Table 7.2). These provincial variations reflect racial variation in schooling performance to a great extent because rural provinces serve predominantly black African schools. This means that young black Africans are more likely to experience academic failure and lower performance compared to their white counterparts. The relatively poorer performance of black African adolescents can be attributed to many factors, including insufficient readiness, inadequate didactics, and lack of support.

From a pedagogical perspective, it is arguable that the Department of Basic Education's (DBE) "progression" policy, which allows students who do not meet the requirements for promotion in their current grades to still be advanced to the next grade, is a factor in some young people's lack of readiness and subsequent poor performance at the secondary level (Grossen et al. 2017). However, differences in educational attainment, especially at the schooling level, are more structural than mere outcomes of pedagogical hiccups. Thabo Mbeki's 1998 "two-nations" characterisation best illustrates the structural effects on school quality and attainment, where he described South African society as:

> [o]ne of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication, and other infrastructure. The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor, with the worst

> affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled. This nation lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication, and other infrastructure. It has virtually no possibility to exercise what in reality amounts to a theoretical right to equal opportunity.
>
> (cited in Seekings & Nattrass 2004: 3)

Undoubtedly, some young people in the country are subjected to inadequate schooling backgrounds characterised by under-resourcing and/or poor teaching and learning methods (Swartz et al. 2017). While differing school characteristics and experiences relating to facilities, services, and pedagogical resources explain some of the inequalities in schooling outcomes in the country, the role of the family is equally important. Due to how these structures affect the distribution and acquisition of essential resources that facilitate academic growth and achievement, the family or household context—including its structure and socioeconomic resources—becomes crucial to adolescents' school achievements. The family or household surroundings of the young are significant because, according to the human capital theory, "parents are uniquely positioned to invest their own socioeconomic resources in the skills development of their children" (Gottfried & Ream 2014: 688).

In South Africa, the family or household shapes the schooling trajectory of young people in two main ways: through its structure and its available resources. The latter effect is relatively universal as family/household resources and socioeconomic status have been shown to affect educational access, retention, and outcome because affluent parents may spend more money on their children's development, including providing them with a high-quality education (Ginsburg et al. 2010; Heaton et al. 2014; Sibanda 2004). Therefore, structural economic inequality in South Africa is widening the attainment gap between the wealthy and the poor, while restricting some young people's access to high-quality schooling.

Although South Africa's spending on schooling (in terms of national budget allocations) consistently constitutes a significant proportion of the government's expenditure, coupled with its policy on free basic education, investments in schooling are still not addressing the educational needs of adolescents. The reality is that funding policies after 1994 have not truly led to equity between resourced and under-resourced schools. In fact, the government has adopted austerity budgeting or reduced public social spending over the years, leaving systemic underinvestment in important social areas to the detriment of the poor. This is demonstrated by the declining spending on schooling over time if the expenditure is adjusted for inflation (see Table 7.3), which indicates a change in the government's investment priorities in the area.

In addition to financial resources, education is a valuable asset in and of itself, as young people from families where the head has a higher level of education perform better academically (Nimubona & Vencatachellum 2007). This is so that educated parents or other adult caretakers can favourably affect

Table 7.3 Spending trends on school education (2009 to 2023)

R million	*2009/2010*	*2010/2011*	*2011/2012*	*2012/2013*	*2013/2014*	*2014/2015*	*2015/2016*
Nominal spending	7854	8678	13346	14886	17011	19529	20796
Nominal % change		10.5	53.8	11.5	14.3	14.8	6.5
CPI Deflators (2022 base year)	0,53546595	0,5558624	0,58690035	0,61955071	0,65534519	0,69210708	0,728143404
Real spending	14668	15612	22740	24027	25957	28217	28560
Real annual % change		6.4	45.7	5.7	8.0	8.7	1.2

Table 7.3 Continued

R million	*2016/2017*	*2017/2018*	*2018/2019*	*2019/2020*	*2020/2021*	*2021/2022*	*2022/2023*	*2023/2024*
Nominal spending	21476	22932	23912	24377	24323	28484	29560	30388
Nominal % change	3.3	6.8	4.3	1.9	−0.2	17.1	3.8	2.8
CPI Deflators (2022 base year)	0,77377329	0,81029333	0,84794202	0,88349464	0,90937307	0,9569378	1	1,044
Real spending	27755	28301	28200	27591	26747	29766	29560	29107
Real annual % change	−2.8	2.0	−0.4	−2.2	−3.1	11.3	−0.7%	−1.5

Source: Authors’ own computation from national treasury annual budgets.

their children's or wards' educational experiences. Young black Africans and coloured adolescents in the country are at a disadvantage since their parents often do not assist them in their academic endeavours. This is due to either the fact that their family lives and/or living arrangements are not ideal or the fact that their parents also suffer from low educational achievement as a result of apartheid education.

Since family or household structure influences how resources are acquired and distributed (Sibanda 2004), it has been empirically observed that the family or household structure of young people in South Africa greatly influences their schooling outcomes (Anderson 2000; Case & Ardington 2006). Children from female-headed households, for example, have lower levels of educational mobility (Nimubona & Vencatachellum 2007), and those living without biological parents complete fewer grades overall (Anderson 2000). Most young people today, especially black Africans and coloureds, grow up in households headed by a single adult, often female, or a large extended household because of the devastating effect of apartheid and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. As a result, family life or living conditions may have a role in the significantly lower schooling outcomes, such as grade repeat, dropout, and poorer performance, recorded among black African and coloured adolescents in the country.

Some young people in the nation lack equal access to quality primary and secondary education, which has an impact on their mobility throughout the rest of the educational system. It is becoming increasingly clear that young black Africans' early learning and skill development fall short of adequately preparing them for effective participation in tertiary education. Due to current skill gaps or learning deficits acquired at the school level, which serve as the foundation for socioeconomic possibilities and growth, these young people's learning trajectories are likely to shape their prospects throughout their life course. They may also be unable to transition into further education or training successfully.

Although the total youth school enrolment has increased considerably since 1994, the high repetition rates, high absenteeism rates, and poor academic performance of a significant proportion of school-going youth are indicators of persistent systemic quality issues that run deep in the sector.

7.3.2 Post-school or tertiary education

Despite considerable progress in expanding educational opportunities post-apartheid, education access to South Africa's youth has been somewhat uneven, and many obstacles remain. Although today more young people are attending schools (primary and secondary educational institutions), the situation with respect to tertiary access has been more difficult for young people as post-secondary education remains a challenge. While the share of younger youths aged 15–19 who are enroled in an educational institution has generally increased over time, the rates of tertiary access, enrolment, or participation remain low despite the country boasting a vibrant higher education sector (Swartz et al. 2017).

Millions of young people are not enroled in further education or training after receiving their Matric certificate in a nation with 25 public universities, about 100 private higher education institutions, and about 50 accredited Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) colleges (Stats SA 2022). At the tertiary or post-school level, educational inequality—a legacy of apartheid-era policies—persists, making post-secondary education an unlikely dream for many young South Africans.

Generally, many young people in the country face unique barriers to accessing post-school education stemming from structural, institutional, and cultural norms, including insufficient preparation or poor performance to meet admission criteria and affordability. Below, we take a closer look at some of these structural, institutional, and cultural norms that militate against optimal performance to meet admission criteria and affordability.

Firstly, poor basic education substantially restricts certain youth's ability to take advantage of additional training opportunities since impacted youth are unlikely to achieve entrance requirements for postsecondary entry. This is due to the fact that a Matric certificate alone does not guarantee entry to post-secondary institutions, particularly for students who attended underfunded schools. Due to capacity issues, many higher schools have strict entry requirements, which means fewer South African youth have the chance to continue their formal education after completing secondary school. The lack of opportunity to acquire more skills at this level greatly affects the employability of affected youths. Currently, there is a significant proportion of youths who are not in education, employment or training.

Secondly, tertiary education remains expensive for the average individual/household in the country. As a result, many of the nation's youth cohort cannot successfully transition to or complete tertiary education—a major avenue for greater economic and social mobility, particularly for previously marginalised youths. While the number of young people enroled at tertiary institutions has increased substantially in the last two decades, there are still some racial disparities in tertiary access as post-school education remains limited for some young people (see Table 7.4). The participation rate of young black Africans is disproportionately low compared to their white and Indian/Asian counterparts, notwithstanding an increase in enrolment among black African youth over time (Stats SA 2022).

The series of student-led protests that rocked the country in 2015—what became dubbed the "MustFall" (#RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall) movements—is emblematic of the frustrations young black Africans encounter in their

Table 7.4 Distribution of youth tertiary enrolment by race (2002 and 2020)

	2002 (N = 613,359) (%)	*2020 (N = 1,040,715) (%)*
Black African	60.2	73.9
Coloured	6.6	6.2
Indian/Asian	5.8	5.4
White	27.5	14.5

Source: Stats SA (2022).

quest for tertiary education in the new South Africa. The "RhodesMustFall" campaign originally called for the removal of colonial and other oppressive colonial artefacts from university campuses across the nation, but it later expanded to address institutional racism, a lack of transformation, and the necessity of "decolonising" education. On the other hand, the "FeesMustFall" movement was a backlash by young people against rising tuition costs at South African universities. The "RhodesMustFall" and "FeesMustFall" campaigns were not just millennials trying to dispel the stigma that they are an apathetic generation or simply trying to mimic the history of their 1976 forebears.

The "MustFall" movements go beyond protesting colonial vestiges or fee increases; at their core, they are concerned about the legacy of apartheid, which continues to limit educational opportunities, affordability, and accessibility for many young people, and what it means for a nation still working to reverse 40 years of apartheid education.

It is clear that formal education and skills development in the new South Africa are not reaching all youth as intended because many young black Africans still struggle with education access because of affordability. While policies like the quintile system[1] adopted at the schooling level have improved and expanded access and participation in primary and secondary education for many marginalised and vulnerable (poor) young people, participation gaps in tertiary or post-school education are wide. The likelihood that many young people will enrol in postsecondary institutions and stay there for the length of time necessary to earn a degree is limited by the sector's growing neoliberal policies, attitudes, and ideologies (free-market thinking). Because of the expanding influence of free-market principles in education, tertiary education is priced in accordance with perceived quality, with higher-quality institutions having a higher cost (McCowan 2012).

Tertiary access has turned into an expensive and exclusive good available exclusively to the privileged classes as education and skill development are becoming more and more monetised and students are viewed as consumers in a business-like environment (Sader & Gabela 2017). When there are issues with accessing, maintaining, and achieving education due to a lack of financial resources, the possession of economic capital (i.e., money, income, or wealth) becomes salient (Forsyth & Furlong 2000; Swartz et al. 2017). Since poverty is intimately linked to academic exclusion for disadvantaged adolescents in South Africa, wealth or economic status determines tertiary entry, participation, and graduation (Motala & Dieltens 2010).

Although public tertiary education in South Africa is subsidised by the state, investments at this level are comparatively lower. Even with state financial assistance mechanisms like NSFAS[2] intended to ensure equity and prevent exclusion (McKay 2016), affordability remains an issue for many young people, compromising their access. The reality is that NSFAS often does not cover the full costs of studies, owing to the sheer number of students in need, which means that youths who are academically gifted but cannot raise funds are forced to drop out or are financially excluded (Swartz et al. 2017). In some instances, some young people who finish secondary school miss out entirely on entry because they are not considered financially needy enough for support but are not wealthy enough to cover the costs.

In a society where wealth/income and race are intricately linked, with predominantly rich whites and poor black Africans, the high financial costs associated with the increasing commodification of knowledge constrain many young black South Africans' opportunities for development. Young people in the country today, especially those of colour, have less access to and lower educational attainment for a variety of reasons, but poverty is undoubtedly the main one. Thus, even when opportunities are available, educational attainment is still constrained by a lack of financial resources. Young people who are unable to continue their education for financial or other reasons may not find the jobs they seek because they do not possess the skills the modern South African economy needs.

As with the schooling system, expansion at the tertiary level has not led to improved capabilities as training has not produced the expected outcomes. Many youths who do not drop out or are forced out of tertiary education are exiting the system with very little prospect of successfully transitioning into the labour market. This is evident from the proportion of unemployed young people with tertiary qualifications. In fact, education economists have observed the greatest increase in youth unemployment for this group among all education cohorts (Spaull 2013).

7.4 Summary and conclusion

Indeed, worldwide, education remains a protected human right and a fundamental tool that yields important benefits far beyond individual empowerment or the acquisition of vital knowledge and skills required for leading productive lives (Barrett et al. 2019; World Bank 2018). Moreover, education is required to have access to and the fulfilment of other rights, and a path by which any society can achieve development and economic growth (World Bank 2018). The right to education is made possible through expanding access or opportunities for quality skills development (Ngwaru & Oluga 2015).

There is very little doubt about the fact that given the increasingly technical nature of the South African economy, the acquisition of skills through formal education or schooling is germane to successful participation in the economy. In this respect, coupled with its human imperative, the post-apartheid government, through policy reforms and the introduction of free basic education, has made great inroads in making education, training, and skills development accessible, which has seen an increase in young people in the education system. However, despite considerable progress in expanding educational access and opportunity at all levels, particularly for black youths, challenges in youth education persist. The inertia of the dysfunction created by apartheid education continues to haunt efforts by the state, as evidenced by young people in South Africa still fighting for their human right to education.

While factors such as family structure explain differences in educational outcomes for young people in the country (see, e.g., Amoateng et al. 2017; Blanc & Lloyd 1996), national spending on education by the state remains the largest single culprit in the observed variances in education and its outcomes in South Africa. In fact, the case of educational differences in the country essentially challenges classical economics' assumption that knowledge or skills are a free good to individuals.

This is because historically the apartheid government had intervened to ensure that knowledge or skill acquisition, which is required to successfully perform in the economy, was rigged in favour of whites and, to some extent, Indian/Asians, while black Africans and coloureds have been disadvantaged in fundamental ways in the acquisition of education and its eventual impact on their performance in the mainstream of the economy.

Notes

1. All public ordinary schools in South Africa are categorised into five groups or quintiles based on the economic status (poverty) of both the community and the school, ranging from the poorest or most impoverished (Quintile 1) to the least poor (Quintile 5). Schools in quintiles 1–3 are no-fee paying or cannot charge fees, while quintiles 4 and 5 are fee-paying and can charge fees.
2. NSFAS is a state-provided financial support for deserving but financially poor students.

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8 Youth and the economy

8.1 Introduction

A country's economy refers to the complex activities concerned with the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of goods and services. Because sociologists in general see the economy of a country as one of the many institutional orders functioning to ensure the welfare of the whole, there have been several sociological perspectives on the economy. However, the perspective that is relevant to our present purpose is the one that has become popular across disciplines over the years and was formulated by Karl Marx in his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.* In this work, Marx (1904 observes that the economy constitutes "'the real foundation' of society and on this foundation, and dependent on it, the legal and political superstructure is based" (1859: 20–21).

The implicit assumption is that successful performance in the economy determines success in other spheres or domains such as health outcomes, quality of family life, participation in politics, etc. One of the key assumptions classical economics makes about the economy, which, in the context of the West, is the realm of the *free* market system, is that individuals engage in transactions based on information at their disposal. Although it does not specify what constitutes information, one cannot discount the importance of technical and other skills acquired through the educational order or system. Our aim in this chapter is to examine the performance of the youth in the economy of the country since for all intents and purposes the South African economy mimics the free market system.

8.2 Africa's economic conundrum

Conventional economic wisdom, at least in the Western sense, has long emphasised a strong relationship between output as measured by real gross domestic product (GDP) and employment generation in the economy which in turn affects the general well-being of the population.[1] Because of the relationship between economic output and the welfare of the citizenry, worldwide at the centre of social and economic policies by governments is employment creation.

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The importance of employment in an economy is further illustrated by the fact that besides the contribution it makes to economic growth via the GDP, employment contributes to the reduction of poverty. For example, the ILO (2003) recognises “decent work” as the foundation for poverty reduction, and within that framework, points out the importance of employment, while Squire (1993: 381), observes that “economic growth that fosters the productive use of labour, the main asset owned by the poor, can generate rapid reductions in poverty”.

Despite the pivotal role played by employment in a country’s economy, poverty reduction, and the psychosocial well-being of the participants in the labour force, the creation of employment remains one of the most elusive goals of governments worldwide, especially employment for the youth in developing economies like sub-Saharan Africa. This problem of employment generation for the youth in the region has been compounded since the 1990s following the extended recessions caused by the various currency and debt crises when the phenomenon of youth employment entered the mainstream of economic development discussions (Fox et al. 2016).

One clear indicator of how these crises of youth employment has occupied the centre stage in the economic literature for sub-Saharan Africa is the proliferation of reports on the issue since 2011 by multilateral organisations such as the African Development Bank (in conjunction with the Organisation for Cooperation and Development (OECD), UNDP, and the African Union), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the World Bank, the ILO (as part of their annual series of reports), and multiple think tanks. Besides these efforts by the multilateral organisations, governments too have devoted increased budgets and issued strategy papers about this problem (Fox et al. 2016).

Indeed, the ILO (2003a, 2003b) put the spotlight on the global nature of youth unemployment in a study in 2004 that found that youth (aged 15–24 years old) made up nearly half (47%) of the world’s unemployed; 88 million out of 186 million, even though youth were only 25 per cent of the world’s working-age population. Of the world’s 550 million working poor who could not lift themselves above the US $1 per day poverty measure, 150 million were youth (ILO 2004). Meanwhile, the World Bank (2003) has estimated that males and females aged between 15 and 24 years accounted for about 41 per cent of the world's unemployed, that is roughly 74 million people. It is needless to say that state policies which seek to create employment to usher in optimum living conditions for the citizenry do not exist in isolation since they act in concert with other factors in the environment to ensure this state of affairs. For instance, the social and economic policies that aim at employment creation are fundamentally informed by social and demographic changes, such as a sharp decrease in the birth rate (with implications for the dependency burden), the increase in school enrolment, popularisation and the simultaneous decline in the quality of tertiary education.

As far as the problem of job creation in sub-Saharan Africa is concerned, many scholars have identified several factors that have militated against these efforts since the era of decolonisation. For example, there is a general consensus that employment creation has been hampered by a range of challenges such as the volatile economic cycles in the world economic system, increasingly strong technological winds of change, sub-Saharan Africa's weak educational systems which produce poor employment outcomes for the teeming youth, and the failure of African economies to transform structurally from low productivity agriculture to higher productivity non-agricultural sectors (Fox & Ghandi 2021; Fox et al. 2016).

On the specific problem of education, some scholars have observed that even though educational attainment is rising in the region, many sub-Saharan African youths entering the labour force today lack certain critical skills such as cognitive skills that are needed for successful employment (see, e.g., Cloutier et al. 2011; Filmer & Fox 2014),[2] while they also suffer from deficits in the area of non-cognitive skills (Filmer & Fox 2014). On the issue of the transformation of the economy, one fundamental problem that faces the structural transformation of economies which is the sine qua non of economic growth in the region, is the fact that the region has the fastest-growing labour force in the world. This means that every year many young people struggle to enter employment to find a livelihood.[3]

As we observed in Chapter 1, this problem of the growing labour force is fundamentally a function of the demographic situation in the region. Essentially, youth are a demographic majority in most populations of the region because invariably, half of the population is currently under the age of 18 years old, and those in the age group 15–25 years old constitute almost 30 per cent of the population today (Fox et al. 2016).

While population growth is not necessarily negative because there are certainly benefits to it, the relatively high levels of fertility and low infant mortality in Africa make the reaping of the benefits of this population bulge (the so-called *demographic dividend*) nigh impossible and further exacerbates the problem of employment creation (see, e.g., Bongaarts & Casterline 2013; Filmer & Fox 2014).

However, despite the belief that developing countries, especially sub-Saharan Africa, are characterised by unemployment, particularly among the youth, some scholars think otherwise. Specifically, these scholars have argued that this is hardly the case because, in actual fact, real unemployment in low-income Africa is only 3 per cent; even in middle-income countries outside of Southern Africa, unemployment is not high (Fox et al. 2016; Filmer & Fox 2014). According to this line of reasoning, most youths in lower-income Africa live in rural and peri-urban areas and are not unemployed; many of these youth are engaged in the informal sectors of the economy since they cannot afford to be unemployed because of widespread family poverty.[4]

8.3 The formal economy sector and employment outlook

It is within this context of the employment creation conundrum and the counterclaims of unemployment not being an intractable problem that the specific problem of youth employment and/or unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa, in particular has occupied the attention of policymakers and the public at large. In South Africa, Bhorat et al. (2016), have observed that 25 per cent of the population was without work, and the unemployment rate among youth aged 15–29 was 42 per cent compared with 18.3 per cent of adults aged 30–65 years old.[5]

According to this estimate, out of the total of 3.3 million unemployed youth, this category of youth constitutes 70 per cent. Graham and Mlatsheni (2015) have observed that during the first quarter of 2015, the official youth unemployment rate in South Africa was 37 per cent for youth between the ages of 15 and 34 years, a figure which equates to approximately 3,646,000 young people. According to them, this rate had increased from 33 per cent in 2008.

For the present analysis, we used the 2019 General Household Survey data set to examine the latest situation with regards to two related indicators in the formal economy, namely, unemployment (UR) and labour force participation rates (LFPR) of the youth to assess their performance in this sector of the economy. The unemployment rate is the percentage (%) of the total labour force that is unemployed. Mathematically, the unemployment rate is the ratio of the number of unemployed persons to the number of persons in the labour force (15–65 years old), i.e., the number of both employed and unemployed multiplied by 100. This is expressed as:

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{Unemployment Rate} &= \frac{\#\,\boldsymbol{Unemployed}}{\#\,\boldsymbol{Labour\ force}} \times 100 \\
\text{Unemployment Rate 2019} &= \frac{6{,}823}{6{,}823 + 19{,}979} \times 100 \\
\text{Unemployment Rate 2019} &= 25.46\% \\
\text{Labour Force Participation Rate}(LFPR) &= \frac{\boldsymbol{Labour\ force}}{\boldsymbol{Eligible\ working\ population}} \times 100 \\
\text{Labour Force participation Rate } (LFPR)2019 &= \frac{26{,}802}{45{,}381} \times 100 \\
\text{LFPR 2019} &= 59.06\%
\end{aligned}$$

The labour force participation rate is the ratio of the number of the economically active population (eumployed and Unemployed) to the eligible population (persons aged 16 years and above, multiplied by 100). The labour force participation rate gives an indication of the size of the economy by measuring the proportion of the population that is working or is actively looking for work. According to the 2019 General Household Survey, therefore, slightly over one-quarter (25.46%) of the working-age population in South Africa was unemployed, an estimate which is consistent with the 25 per cent unemployment rate estimated from the 2014 Quarterly Labour Force Survey by Bhorat et al. (2016).

Table 8.1 Distribution of unemployment rate by selected background factors

Socio-demographic predictors	*Employment status*				
	Employed	*Unemployed*	*Total*	*UR (%)*	*LFPR (%)*
Education					
No Schooling	474	87	561	**15.01**	**38.0**
Primary	2114	637	2751	**23.16**	**45.0**
Middle	6427	2988	9415	**32.0**	**49.0**
Matric	6674	2519	9193	**27.4**	**72.0**
TVET	1763	377	2140	**18.0**	**80.0**
Tertiary	2171	150	2321	**6.4**	**89.0**
Gender					
Male	10794	3220	14014	**23.0**	**66.0**
Female	9185	3603	12788	**28.0**	**53.0**
Race/ethnicity					
Black African	15614	6171	21785	**28.0**	**58.0**
Coloured	2066	519	2585	**20.0**	**59.0**
Asian/Indian	498	58	556	**10.4**	**63.0**
White	1801	75	1876	**4.0**	**73.0**
Age group					
15–19	148	348	496	**70.0**	**8.0**
20–24	1402	1549	2951	**52.0**	**49.1**
25–29	2644	1561	4205	**37.0**	**72.3**
30–35	3859	1392	5251	**27.0**	**78.3**

Source: Computed from the 2019 South African General Household Survey.

Thus, for the five-year period between 2014 and 2019, the country's total unemployment rate remained steady at 25 per cent. Our estimate from the General Household Survey was that almost four out of ten (38%) unemployed people in South Africa in 2019 were youth aged 15–35 years old, a figure which shows a slight upward trend compared to the 37 per cent estimated from the 2014 Labour Force Survey by Bhorat et al. (2016). As far as the labour force participation rate is concerned, what we find is that 59 per cent of the adult population of South Africa is economically active.

Table 8.1 shows the disaggregated unemployment and labour force participation rates respectively for the country's youth by education, gender, race/ethnicity, and age cohort of the youth. Like everything South African, the variations in unemployment and labour force participation rates along educational, gender, racial, and age lines are evident.

Education is clearly negatively associated with the unemployment rate and positively associated with the labour force participation rate among the youth. Specifically, youth who are highly educated are less likely to be unemployed and more likely to have higher rates of labour force participation and vice versa. While on the whole, female youth in the country tend to achieve higher educational levels, their male counterparts have slightly lower unemployment and higher labour force participation rate This is plausibly a function of the patriarchal nature of South African society, where women face discrimination in the labour market. The inertia of past racism is still evident in South African society more than a quarter of a century after the democratic transition.

As expected, black African and coloured youths have higher unemployment and lower labour force participation rates compared to white and Asian/Indian youths. This may be consistent with the latter groups' relatively superior educational achievement but also largely because of the institutional racism the former groups have faced in society historically. Adolescents have higher unemployment and lower labour force participation rates compared to young and emerging adults possibly because many adolescents may still be in educational institutions at this stage in their lives.

8.4 The informal economic sector in South Africa

Because of the claim that real unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa is low because of the involvement of the majority of the region's working-age populations in the unregulated informal sector of the economy, any objective analysis of the youth's performance in the economic sphere requires a critical appraisal of the informal sector of the economy of South Africa. In its conceptualisation of informal work, the ILO (2013) defines it as any activity that is not covered by formal arrangements, own account work, employment in the informal sector, and employment in the formal sector that is not regulated or protected. Following this conceptualisation of informal work by the ILO, Statistics South Africa (2022) defines informal employment as "employment in precarious work situations with no written contract and no benefits". This includes the self-employed in informal enterprises, workers in unregistered enterprises and wage workers in informal jobs, many of whom fall into what has been referred to as the "survivalist" category of workers.[6]

According to the ILO (2000), the share of informal economy employment in the non-agricultural workforce ranges from 55 per cent in Latin America to 45–85 per cent in different parts of Asia to nearly 80 per cent in Africa. Specifically, 47 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa, 51 per cent in Latin America, 71 per cent in Asia, and 72 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. In Africa, according to Chen (2014), over the past decade or so, informal work accounts for almost 80 per cent of non-agricultural employment, over 60 per cent of urban employment, and over 90 per cent of new jobs. In South Africa, according to one estimate, excluding agriculture, informal sector employment increased from 0.97 million to 1.83 million between 1997 and 2004, expanding strongly up to around 2000 and then levelling off, while formal employment increased from 6.4 million to 7.8 million (Devey et al. 2006). Recent estimates of the relative sizes of the formal and informal sectors in South Africa have been anything but certain. According to Stats SA (2022), the Quarterly Labour Survey for the first quarter of 2012 showed that there were 13.4 million people employed in South Africa.

Out of this total number of employed people, 9.5 million people worked in the formal sector, while 2.1 million worked in the informal sector. However, according to the Adcorp Employment Index (2011), 12.7 million people were employed in the formal sector in South Africa, which comprised 8.9 million workers engaged in "typical employment" and 3.8 million in "atypical employment" According to this report, 6.2 million people worked in the informal sector, which it identified as the fastest-growing sector.

The HSRC (2007) noted that even though the informal economy in South Africa had grown considerably since the democratic transition, unlike most other developing countries, it continued to be small, with high levels of unemployment.[7] The finding by the HSRC (2007) regarding the relative sizes of the formal and informal sectors of the country's economy is supported by our own analysis of recent data from the General Household Surveys as shown in Table 8.1.[8]

In fact, the HSRC (2007) found that a significant number of South Africans were not working in formal jobs. Specifically, the study found that in absolute terms, four million informal economy workers were recorded at the national level in 2000 and 3.7 million in 2005 for the informal economy, constituting 34 and 31 per cents of the labour force in 2000 and 2005, respectively.

The bifurcation of the labour market in Africa with regard to the formal and informal sectors of economic activities underscores the "dualism" that characterised the colonial enterprise. The essence of the dualist views by the colonial apologists was that less developed countries were characterised by two different sectors, or societies. One was typified as capitalist in its mode of production—"modernising", dynamic, progressive, and perhaps capital intensive. The other, the "subsistence" or "peasant" sector in societies dominated by agriculture, was characterised by pre-capitalist modes of production, often depending on family labour, was unsophisticated in its operations and production patterns, used low technology, and had low levels of productivity (see, e.g., Potts 2008).

As far as the informal sector is concerned, the phenomenon has been increasing in many African countries following the pressures of economic crises and structural adjustment following the failure of the socialist central planning experiments in many sub-Saharan African countries in the 1960s and 1970s (Brand et al. 1993; Meagher & Yunusa 1993; Van Dijk 1992).[9] Since structural adjustment entailed both the elimination of institutions capable of responding to the demands of labour and erosion of material and social bases of the reproduction of labour, informalisation became a mechanism to relieve the formal sector firms and the state of the costs of the reproduction of labour and thereby provide the urban workforce informal systems of support and informal means of livelihood (Grey-Johnson 1992).

Indeed, as part of the impact of these crises, some countries de-industrialised rapidly. For instance, the manufacturing industry in Zimbabwe, which had accounted for 25–27 per cent of Gross Domestic Product in the 1980s, was reduced to 17 per cent by 1998 after the implementation of SAP in 1991 (Hawkins 2001; Stoneman 2004). This so-called global restructuring has resulted in social exclusion at the periphery of the capitalist world system through the erosion of much of the social contract, collective responsibility, and welfare state "safety net" programme upon which millions of people in the global South who had hitherto depended on state provisions now rely on their own initiative to survive.

In relative terms, the urban informal sector is new and relatively undeveloped in South Africa and other "settler" countries in the sub-region such as Zimbabwe and Namibia vis-a-vis many less developed countries (LDCs) in sub-Saharan Africa. This was due to the restrictive segregationist and apartheid legislation surrounding African urbanisation, housing, and employment which affected rates of in-migration and the types of work possible, strongly discouraging self-employment in this sector (Potts 2008).

Thus, the informalisation of the economy was consistent with such grand apartheid-induced legislation as the Influx Control and Group Areas Acts, which not only sought to restrict the permanent settlement of non-whites in the country's emerging cities and towns, which were deemed to be the abode of whites, but also exploited this army of Blacks that came into the country from the neighbouring countries in the sub-region.

Table 8.2 shows the distribution of employed youth by sector of the economy. The table shows that while 80 per cent of the youth were employed in the formal sector, only 20 per cent of them were employed in the informal sector in 2017. In 2019, there was a marginal decline in the proportion of youth employed in the formal sector from 80 per cent in 2017 to 79.1% (0.9%). It appears that the 0.9 per cent loss in the formal employment sector was gained by the informal sector since the latter sector increased by 0.9 per cent between 2017 and 2019. Our analysis also showed that youth who indicated that the question about the sector of their organisation/company "did not apply to them", which we considered to be those who were unemployed, increased from 65 to 70.3 per cent between 2017 and 2019.[10]

This recent analysis of the performance of the South African economy with regard to employment appears to be consistent with developments in the broader economy, according to figures reported by Stats SA. According to

Table 8.2 Distribution of economic sectors in South Africa by year

Economic sector	*2017*		*2019*	
	Number	*per cent*	*Number*	*per cent*
Formal sector	6,458	80.00	15,597	79.1
Informal sector	1,611	20.00	4,126	20.9
Total	**8,069**	**100.0**	**19,723**	**100.0**

Source: Computed from the 2017 and 2019 General Household Surveys.

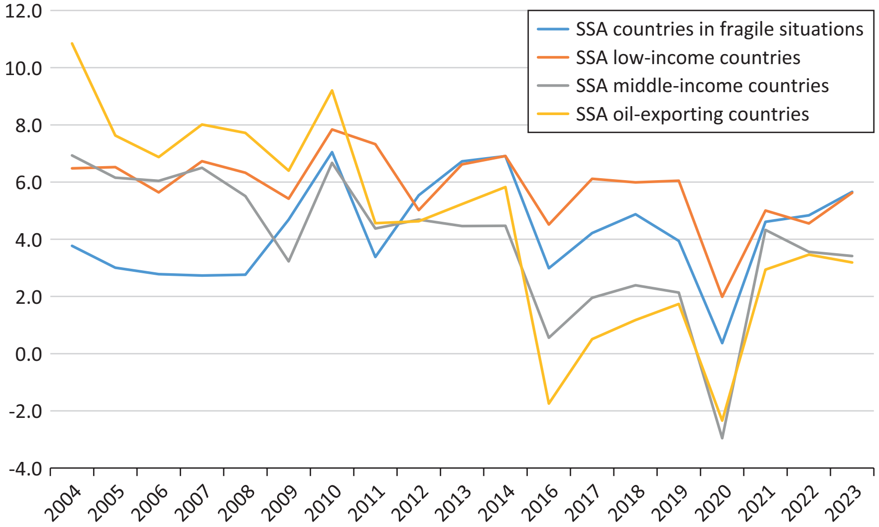

Figure 8.1 Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA): Real GDP growth.

Source: IMF (2022)

Stats SA, the Covid-19 pandemic and other "external shocks" have largely been responsible for the poor performance of the economy in recent years. Firstly, according to Stats SA, after two consecutive quarters of positive growth, the country's real GDP decreased by 0.7 per cent in the second quarter of 2022, a situation which was attributable to devastating floods in KwaZulu-Natal and load shedding, developments that had weakened an already fragile national economy that had just recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

Secondly, like almost every country in the world, the South African economy took a beating from the Covid-19 pandemic as its GDP reached its weakest level during the second quarter of 2020. In fact, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2022), compared with 51 other nations, South Africa's recovery has been very sluggish. Figure 8.1 depicts the economic predicament of sub-Saharan African economies in 2020/2021 as a result of the national economic shutdowns following the outbreak of the pandemic.

8.5 Distribution in the formal and informal sectors

In this section, we take a look at the participation of youth in both the formal and informal sectors of the South African economy in an effort to show, consistent with our analytical approach throughout the book, that the youth are not a homogeneous demographic category. Table 8.3 shows the bivariate analysis of the participation in the formal and informal sectors by background sociodemographic characteristics of youth in the country, while Table 8.4 shows the multivariate analysis results.

Table 8.3 Distribution of youth by economic sector and background factors

Background factors	*Formal sector*		*Informal sector*		*Total*	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Race/ethnicity						
Black African	11419	74.7	3861	25.3	15280	100.0
Coloured	1883	91.2	181	8.8	2064	100.0
Asian/Indian	470	93.6	32	6.4	502	100.0
White	1825	97.2	52	2.8	1877	100.0
Gender						
Male	8565	80.3	2107	19.7	10672	100.0
Female	7032	77.7	2019	22.3	9051	100.0
Education						
No schooling	249	49.6	253	50.4	502	100.0
Primary	1212	57.9	881	42.1	2093	100.0
Middle	4455	71.1	1810	28.9	6265	100.0
Matric/high school	5698	86.6	880	13.4	6578	100.0
TVET	1621	92.4	133	7.6	1754	100.0
Higher	2133	97.8	49	2.2	2182	100.0
Residence						
Metro	7527	83.5	1487	16.5	9014	100.0
Non-metro	8070	75.4	2639	24.6	10709	100.0
Marital status						
Ever-married	10709	79.6	2438	20.4	11970	100.0
Never-married	6065	78.2	1688	21.8	7753	100.0
Age cohort						
15–24	1185	80.1	294	19.9	1479	100.0
25–29	2095	81.5	474	18.5	2569	100.0
30–35	3093	82.0	678	18.0	3771	100.0
Province						
Western Cape	2472	90.9	247	9.1	2719	100.0
Eastern Cape	1460	72.8	546	27.2	2006	100.0
Northern Cape	744	84.9	132	15.1	876	100.0
Free State	775	73.9	274	26.1	1049	100.0
KwaZulu-Natal	2462	80.8	585	19.2	3047	100.0
North West	814	74.7	276	25.3	1090	100.0
Gauteng	4553	81.4	1041	18.6	5594	100.0
Mpumalanga	1185	74.2	411	25.8	1596	100.0
Limpopo	1132	64.8	614	35.2	1746	100.0

Source: 2019 General Household Survey.

Overall, Table 8.3 supports the fact that, consistent with South Africa's diversity, there is differentiation with regard to participation in both sectors of the economy in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, residence, marital status, age cohort, education, and the province of residence. The structural relationship between the two sectors is underscored by the fact that there is an inverse

Table 8.4 Logistic regression analysis of employment in the economic sectors

Socio-demographic predictors	*Informal sector*		*Formal sector*	
	B	*Exp(B)*	*B*	*Exp(B)*
Race/ethnicity				
Black African	1.491(.270)	4.44***	-1.491(.270)	.225***
Coloured	.405(.314)	1.49	-.405(.314)	.667
Asian/Indian	.902(.381)	2.47*	-.902(.381)	.406*
White (RC)				
Gender				
Male	.002(.065)	1.002	-.002(.065)	.998
Female (RC)				
Education				
No schooling	3.316(.454)	27.53***	-3.315(.454)	.036***
Primary	3.558(.312)	35.00***	-3.558(.312)	.028***
Middle	2.818(.297)	16.77***	-2.818(.297)	.060***
Matric/High school	1.949(.298)	7.02***	-1.948(.298)	.142***
TVET	1.446(.321)	4.25***	-1.446(.321)	.236***
Higher (RC)				
Residence				
Metro	-.083(.089)	.921	.083(.089)	1.086
Non-metro (RC)				
Marital status				
Ever married	-.141(.068)	.868*	.141(.068)	1.152*
Never married (RC)				
Age cohort				
15-24	.227(.087)	1.254**	-.227(.087)	.797*
25-29	.048(.072)	1.05	-.048(.072)	.953
30-35 (RC)				
Province				
Western Cape	-1.445(.174)	.236***	1.445(.174)	4.240***
Eastern Cape	-.389(.132)	.678**	.389(.132)	1.476**
Northern Cape	-1.171(.211)	.310***	1.171(.211)	3.226***
Free State	-.356(.153)	.700*	.356(.153)	1.428*
KwaZulu-Natal	-.679(.122)	.507***	.679(.122)	1.972***
North West	-.612(.154)	.542***	.612(.154)	1.844***
Gauteng	-.712(.131)	.490***	.712(.131)	2.030***
Mpumalanga	-.434(.131)	.648**	.434(.131)	1.544**
Limpopo (RC)				

() = Standard error; RC = Reference category; *$p < .01$’ **$p < .001$; ***$p < .0001$. *Source:* 2019 General Household Survey.

relationship between participation in the two sectors; higher participation in one sector is associated with lower participation in the other.

Table 8.3 shows that black African youth have the lowest participation rate in the formal economy (75%), followed by coloured youth (91%), while white youth have the highest rate of participation (97%) followed by Asian/Indian youth (94%). Conversely, the second panel of Table 8.4 shows that slightly over one-quarter (25.3%) of black African youth are engaged in the informal sector of the country's economy, followed by coloured youth (9%), Asian/Indian youth (6.4%), while white youth have the lowest participation rate in the informal sector.

Are black African youth participating less in the formal economy and more in the informal economy because they have lower educational attainment, or they are selectively resident in rural areas, or because of peculiar sociodemographic characteristics associated with the two economic sectors?

The above questions about the relationship between the background sociodemographic factors such as race/ethnicity on the one hand, and participation in the economy on the other hand, are best answered by an analytical approach that is able to deal with the confounding effects of the largely "sociological" variables in Table 8.3. We dealt with this mainly "statistical" issue with a multivariate analysis in the form of a binary logistic regression technique, the results of which are presented in Table 8.4. Table 8.4 shows the relationships between the set of socio-demographic background factors on the one hand and participation in the formal and informal sectors on the other hand. The first panel of Table 8.4 shows the results of participation in the informal sector, while the second panel shows the results of participation in the formal sector.

The first panel of Table 8.4 shows that the relationship between race/ethnicity and participation in the informal sector of the economy persists even after taking the effects of all the other sociodemographic factors in the model into account. Black African youth are 4.4 times more likely than white youth (the reference group) to participate in the informal sector of the economy of the country. Contrary to our expectation, Asian/Indian youth are 2.47 times more likely than their white counterparts to work in the informal sector of the economy, while there is no difference between coloured and white youths with regard to their participation in the informal sector.

Conversely, the second panel of Table 8.4 shows that the odds of black African youth participating in the formal economy decrease by 23 per cent compared to their white counterparts. Also, the odds of Asian/Indian youth participating in the formal sector decrease by 41 per cent compared to white youth. The relative participation of Asian/Indian youth in the informal sector of the economy and their relative lack of participation in the formal sector is curious with regard to the characteristics of the informal sector in South Africa compared with the informal sector in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.

Under apartheid's racial hierarchy, Asians/Indians were favoured over black Africans and coloureds with regard to access to the society's socioeconomic resources and therefore were similar to whites in terms of educational attainment, occupational status, and income levels. Because of this "superior" socioeconomic profile of the Asian/Indian group in the country, and the conventional wisdom that the informal sector is the preserve of the poor and unskilled, we expected Asian/Indian youth to participate exclusively in the formal sector of the economy like their white counterparts.

As Table 8.3 clearly shows, Asian/Indian youth participate actively in the formal sector of the economy consistent with their high educational level and skill set (94%). However, their participation in the formal sector does not detract from their participation in the informal sector of the economy as well. In fact, the participation of Asian/Indian youth in the informal sector supports the claims of some scholars that contrary to conventional wisdom, the informal sector is not the exclusive preserve of the poor and unskilled (see, e.g., Meagher 2005; Potts 2008).[11]

Arguing in favour of differentiation in the informal sector, Portes et al. (1986) use the example of income levels and warn against the misleading tendency to treat the informal sector as an essentially undifferentiated pool of entrepreneurs (and/or employees). They note that the practice of calculating informal income data as an average across the whole sector disguises the existence of two distinct strata within the informal sector: a stratum of employers and middlemen, and a stratum of employees, apprentices, family laborers, and marginal owner-operators, who constitute an "informal proletariat".

In South Africa, Asians/Indians are not only known for their high socio-economic status in terms of educational and occupational achievements but also for their entrepreneurial talent. In fact, they dominate the informal retail trade, especially in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape provinces, and are equally present in other provinces. In our view, the involvement of Asian/Indian youth in the informal sector is not only consistent with the entrepreneurial drive of the broader Asian/Indian population group, but it also corroborates the view that within the informal sector there is a dominant stratum that is increasingly composed of members of the middle class who have greater access to capital and skills to exploit the more profitable opportunities which have been created by crises and deregulation (see, e.g., Meagher 1995).[12]

Indeed, Meagher (1995) has argued that if informal actors are to be classified by their income levels rather than by their ideological status, then African informal sectors become distinctly bottom-heavy with the informal proletariat comprising an average of about 80 per cent of the sector as a whole. The upper 20 per cent, who can be classified as genuine entrepreneurs, include owners of enterprises in more skill- and capital-intensive subsectors, such as informal manufacturing of modern goods, modern services such as vehicle repair and restaurants, and trade at or above the level of retailing.

The participation of Asian/Indian youth in the informal sector in South Africa is therefore hardly surprising and in fact, may well be part of the upper 20 per cent in Meagher's (1995) study. In fact, in our analysis, 61 per cent of actors in the informal sector indicated that they do not receive any kind of remuneration compared to only 39 per cent in the formal sector. It is plausible that the 61 per cent who do not receive a wage, commission, or salary are the "entrepreneurs" who are driven by the "profit" motive.

Given the fact that in many African societies women are confined to the domestic sphere within the context of differential gender roles, we expected the dominance of women in the informal sector of the economy relative to men and vice versa with regard to the formal sector. In fact, in our analysis, 14 per cent of the informal workers indicated that they were not receiving a wage, commission, or salary as opposed to 86 per cent of workers in the formal sector who received some form of remuneration.

On the basis of this gender-based division of labour, we assumed that the 14 per cent in the informal sector who does not receive any form of remuneration would reflect family labour, the bulk of whom would be women. However, as both Tables 8.3 and 8.4 show, contrary to our expectation, there were no significant differences between women and men with regard to participation in the two sectors of the economy.

Education is an important predictor of participation in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy, albeit in different directions. The bivariate analysis in Table 8.3 shows that there is a positive association between education and participation in the formal sector of the economy, while education has an inverse relationship with participation in the informal sector. For example, almost all youth with a higher educational qualification (98%) are working in the formal sector of the economy, while only half (50%) of youth who have no formal schooling work in the formal sector. Conversely, while less than 3 per cent (2.2%) of youth with a higher educational qualification work in the informal sector, slightly over half (50.4%) of youth with no formal schooling work in the informal sector.

Not unexpectedly, the relationship between education and participation in the economy is not only confirmed by the multivariate analysis as depicted in Table 8.4, but it also happens to be the most important factor in determining in which sector of the economy a youth works, as evidenced by the sizes of the education coefficients (expB) relative to the other variables in the model. For example, according to panel 2 of Table 8.4, the odds of youth with no formal education/training working in the formal sector of the economy decreased by 4 per cent compared to youth with higher educational attainment.

Also, the odds of youth with Matric/High school and TVET/trade/technical school educational qualifications working in the formal sector decrease by 14 and 24 per cents, respectively compared to their peers with higher educational qualifications. Conversely, youths who have no formal education/training are 27 times more likely than their peers with higher educational/training qualifications to work in the informal sector of the economy. It is a truism that the South African economy is not only one of the largest economies on the African continent but also the most sophisticated in terms of technology and highly skilled jobs. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the formal sector, which is technologically more advanced, will be selective of youth with better educational and training qualifications, and vice versa.

Marital status is a predictor of participation in the economy and both Tables 8.3 and 8.4 confirm this relationship. Ever-married youth tend to work more often in the formal sector than their single, never-married counterparts. According to Table 8.3, 80% of ever-married youth work in the formal sector compared with 78% of youth who are single and never married. Specifically, the second panel of Table 8.4 shows that ever-married youth are 1.15 times more likely than their never-married peers to work in the formal sector. On the flip side, the odds of ever-married youth working in the informal sector decreased by 87 per cent compared to their single, never-married peers.

Adolescents are more likely than young adults and emerging adults to work in the informal sector of the economy. For example, adolescents (youth aged 15–19 years old) are 1.25 times more likely than emerging adults (youth aged 30–35 years old) to work in the informal sector, while the odds of adolescents working in the formal sector decreased by 80 per cent compared to emerging adults.

The positive association between age and employment in the formal sector may be due to the fact that younger people could still be acquiring the level of education and training that equips them to work in the technologically advanced formal sector and vice versa.

Finally, the province of residence affects the chance of youth working in either the formal or informal sector of the national economy. Ninety-one per cent of the youth who reside in the Western Cape Province work in the formal sector, while only 9.1 per cent of them work in the informal sector (Table 8.3). The Western Cape is followed by the Northern Cape (85%), Gauteng (81%), and KwaZulu-Natal (81%), while over one-third (35%) of the youth in Limpopo are employed in the informal sector.

The relationship between the province of residence and type of employment is confirmed by the multivariate analysis, as shown in Table 8.4. For instance, youth who reside in the Western Cape and the Northern Cape are 4.24 and 3.23 times, respectively, more likely than youth in Limpopo to work in the formal sector of the economy (Panel 2 of Table 8.4). On the contrary, the odds of youth residing in the Western Cape and the Northern Cape working in the informal sector decreased by 24% and 31%, respectively.

The Gauteng Province houses the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria—the commercial and administrative hubs of the country, respectively—so the fact that youth who live in the province are two times more likely to work in the formal sector of the economy compared to youth who live in the Limpopo province is hardly surprising.

While the 2019 General Household Survey did not ask a direct question about whether the youth reside in a rural or urban area, this regional variation could serve as a proxy for rural/urban residence. The Western Cape, Gauteng, Northern Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal are all heavily urbanised provinces, while Limpopo, the Eastern Cape, and Mpumalanga are relatively rural provinces with large concentrations of poor and unskilled populations who are heavily involved in the informal sector of the economy.

8.6 Summary and conclusion

Our aim in this chapter was to examine the performance of youth in the country's economy. We did this by looking at the challenges facing sub-Saharan

African countries in general with regard to the structural characteristics of their economies. Among the key challenges identified are the volatilities that characterise these economies, weak higher educational systems, and the annual oversupply of labour as a result of the very high fertility levels that prevail in the region.

South Africa is similar to most of the rest of sub-Saharan Africa inasmuch as its economy is characterised by the juxtaposition of both formal and informal sectors of the economy. However, unlike the rest of Africa, the country has a relatively large formal sector and a small but growing informal sector. While about four out of ten (37%) of the youth are unemployed, there are variations in the unemployment and labour force participation rates based on race/ethnicity, marital status, educational attainment, age, and province of residence.

Black African and coloured youths are much more likely to be unemployed and participate less in the economy than Indian and white youths. Educated youth are much more likely to be employed and participate more in the economy than youth with less education. Participation in the informal sector of the economy is similarly affected by these same stratification factors. Black African and Indian youths are much more likely than coloured and white youths to participate in the informal sector of the economy, although Indian youth are much more likely to be employers and entrepreneurs in this sector compared to their black African peers because of the former's entrepreneurial talent and skills set. Adolescents and younger youth are more likely to be employed in the informal sector of the economy, while older youth are more likely to be employed in the formal sector.

We started this chapter with the Marxian view that control of the productive forces of society or the economy (infrastructure) automatically leads to control of other aspects of life in society (politics, religion, art, etc.) or the superstructure. In South Africa, historically, control of the economy became the basis of the racial hierarchy that formed the architecture of apartheid policies, which created the imbalances we have uncovered in the contemporary economy of the country.

Notes

1 Some scholars have argued that the relationship that has been characterising the US economy over the two decades after World War II has been weakening since the mid-1980s (see, e.g., Basu and Foley 2011).

2 According to these scholars, measurement of the effectiveness of educational systems in building the non-cognitive skills needed for successful youth development is in a rudimentary form in the region.

3 It has been noted that the labour force in sub-Saharan Africa continues to grow rapidly—about 3 percent per annum, which poses economic development and labour absorption challenges (Fox & Ghandi 2021).

4 The International Labour Organisation (ILO) provides a wider conceptualisation of informal work and covers all work that is not covered by formal arrangements—own account work, employment in the informal sector, and employment in the formal sector that is not regulated or protected.

5 Other middle-income resource-rich countries show similar rates; in Gabon, for example, the youth unemployment rate was 35% in 2013, while in Namibia, it was 34% in the same year.

6 The adjective "survivalist" reflects the earlier Marxist critique of informalisation as peripheral to the capitalist mode of production and engenders the exploitation of poor and unskilled workers in this sector of the economy.

7 Among the factors militating against the growth of the informal economy are licencing and restrictive by-laws; the large size of South African firms; labour legislation which is often extended to non-parties in the small medium and micro-sized enterprise (SMME) sector; poor access to capital, land, and credit; crime; the risk of business failure; and high transport costs.

8 This gradient decline in the employment rate in the country is supported by data from Stats SA because according to the Quarterly Employment Statistics (QES, Q2:2022) survey released by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), total employment in the formal non-agricultural sector decreased by 119 000 in the second quarter of 2022 or 1.2%, bringing the level of total employment to approximately 9,9 million.

9 Wage employment was a product of colonialism, the institutionalisation of which deepened the capitalist mode of production following the discovery and exploitation of the mineral wealth of the colonies. Before the onset of colonialism, African economies were agrarian, producing for domestic consumption and were bereft of the bifurcation into formal and informal sectors.

10 We take cognisance of the possibility that this group could include youth who were still in some educational institution, those who were disabled and in the South African definitional context, those who had been discouraged from seeking employment because of persistent unemployment.

11 In fact, the crux of the argument is that a certain level of skill and capital is required to start an informal enterprise and poor people hardly have access to such resources, so the claim that the informal sector is the sole preserve becomes untenable.

12 Some scholars have argued that this stratum of informal wage workers is more prevalent in Latin America and that they comprise on average only about 25 per cent of informal labour in Africa (e.g., Trager, 1987).

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9 Youth substance use and sexual-risk behaviours

9.1 Introduction

Even though there were studies that examined the problems of mental health of South Africa's youth, especially their alcohol and other drugs use prior to this period, the 1990s and subsequent decades saw a proliferation of studies that examined these youth behaviours in more systematic ways. These efforts to accumulate data on youth substance use and sexual-risk behaviours were a product of the work of a community of scholars—mainly psychiatrists, psychologists, and public health experts—that gathered at the Medical Research Council (MRC), the University of Cape Town, and the University of the Western Cape.[1]

What was significant about the work of this community of scholars was not only the sheer volume of data they churned out on the incidence of alcohol and substance use and sexual-risk behaviours it churned out in a very short space of time but also the timing of this development in the country's history. It would be recalled that barely two decades prior to this period, the youth of the country had been thrust into the political limelight of the country by challenging the apartheid socio-political juggernaut in what became known as the *1976 Soweto uprising.*

This singular political event birthed a new category of youth, the so-called "lost generation" because of their truncated education, lack of skills and unemployability as they were released into the broader society. The logical outcome of such a life of hopelessness was a life of drinking, substance use, risky sexual behaviours, and crime in general. These behaviours of the youth, especially the majority black African and coloured segments of the youth population, became the rallying cry for this community of mental health researchers in the country whose empirical research sought to accumulate knowledge as a basis for policy in an endeavour to solve this growing social and public health problem the country was confronted with.[2] The methodologies used for this genre of research ranged from national surveys, and surveillance information from multiple sources, including specialist treatment centres, trauma units, high school students, rave party attendees, to arrest data collected by law enforcement officers.

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From the research undertaken by this community of scholars, the public and policymakers were made aware of some of the negative implications of alcohol and drug use for the health and well-being of the individual which included increased risk for injury and death from interpersonal violence, motor vehicle accidents, and drownings (Flisher et al. 1996; Miller et al. 2001); increased probability of engaging in high-risk sexual behaviours (Flisher et al. 1996); and increased risk for suicidal ideation and behaviour (Stoelb 1998).

These studies also noted an association between adolescent substance use and co-morbid psychiatric disorders, such as conduct and mood disorders (Gilramy 2000). Moreover, some of these studies elucidated the association between adolescent substance use and academic difficulties, declining grades, absenteeism, truancy, and school drop-out (Sutherland & Shepherd 2001), while youth substance use was also linked to involvement in crime, with some studies reporting high prevalence rates for substance use among juvenile offenders (Zhang & Wieczorek 1997).

Indeed, alcohol abuse is regarded as a major concern and a source of social and economic problems in many developing countries (Monteiro 2001; WHO 2014). Commenting on the problems created by alcohol abuse, South Africa's Minister of Social Development, the Hon. Bathabile Dlamini (National Drug Master Plan 2013–2017: 2), said:

> The emotional and psychological impacts on families, the high levels of crime and other social ills have left many communities under siege by the scale of alcohol and drugs. Alcohol abuse places a burden on the social, economic and health well-being of drinkers as well as their social support networks.

9.2 Studies on youth alcohol and substance use behaviours

In general, research on youth alcohol and other drug use in South Africa has been of two main types. Many of the pioneering studies in the early 1990s were descriptive in nature, mainly describing the incidence of these behaviours. However, over time, such studies have become explanatory in nature and theory building has become a central feature to them. As an example of the first genre of research, in a study of secondary school students in the Cape Peninsula, Flisher et al. (1993) found that 30 per cent of youth from both advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds were currently drinking alcohol, while Rocha-Silva et al. (1996) found that 34 per cent of black African high school students in Soweto were current drinkers.

In a study of Specialist substance abuse treatment centres from January 1997 to December 2001, Parry et al. (2004) found that the proportion of patients who were under the age of 20 years increased from 5.5 to 24.1 per cent and from 7.0 to 22.0 per cent in Cape Town and Durban, respectively; in the Gauteng province, the proportion of patients who were under the age of 20 years increased from 9.9 to 23.4 per cent of the total number of patients in treatment for alcohol and other drug-related problems. Moreover, Parry et al. (2004) observed that cannabis or marijuana was the most common primary drug of abuse of adolescents in substance abuse treatment, while they observed marked geographic differences in the treatment demand for methaqualone-related problems.

In addition, alcohol was the second most frequently reported primary substance of abuse among adolescent patients in Durban, while from the beginning of the surveillance, the proportion of female adolescents in treatment for most substances of abuse ranged between 13 and 23 per cent of the total number of adolescents in substance abuse treatment. For the substance use surveillance in high schools' component of the study, Parry et al. (2004) found that 36.5 per cent of male and 18.7 per cent of female students in grade 11 reported binge drinking in the two weeks prior to the study.

The 1998 study involving a representative sample of 38 schools in Durban found that 53.3 per cent of male and 28.9 per cent of female students in grade 11 reported binge drinking in the two weeks prior to the study. In a study of 35 state schools in Pretoria in 2000, 40 per cent of students reported drinking to intoxication occasionally during the course of a typical month. Cannabis was the illicit drug with the highest lifetime prevalence rate among high school students in Cape Town, Durban, and Pretoria. At the study sites, inhalants (e.g., benzine) were the second most common drug of use, followed by methaqualone, ecstasy, and crack cocaine. Lifetime and past month use of illicit drugs were more frequently reported by male students in comparison to their female counterparts.

Ramsoomar and Morojele (2012) sought to understand alcohol use trends and alcohol-related harm among youth in South Africa between 1998 and 2008 by reviewing four national prevalence and two sentinel surveillance studies. In this study, they observed that lifetime alcohol use remained stable but high at between 25 and 49.1 per cent and 49.6 per cent according to the South African Demographic and Health Survey (SADHS) and Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) data, respectively. Furthermore, the age of initiation remained stable; 12 per cent of adolescents had initiated alcohol use prior to age 13 years, while significant gender differences existed with more males having ever consumed alcohol, engaged in binge drinking, and driven or walked under the influence of alcohol (DUI and WUI, respectively). Moreover, they found that binge drinking among females increased significantly from 27 per cent to 36 per cent (SADHS) and 18 per cent to 27 per cent (YRBS). DUI and WUI increased, while homicide/violence, suicide, and unintentional deaths were significantly associated with blood alcohol concentration (BAC).

As we have noted above, studies became focused on theory building by paying more attention to factors that predicted such behaviours. For example, in a study of high school pupils in the Cape Peninsula in which the effects of selected aspects of family life were controlled for, Amoateng et al. (2006) corroborated Flisher et al. (1993), when they observed, among other findings, that the mean tobacco and alcohol consumption levels were higher amongst coloured and white youths compared to black African youth. But, consistent with the emerging concern about theory building, Amoateng et al. (2006) went beyond the description of the incidence of alcohol and tobacco use by identifying three dimensions of parenting (parental connection, parental behavioural control, and parental psychological control), while controlling for family interparental hostility and family stress, to examine how these parental behaviours were related to the alcohol and drug use behaviours of the pupils in their sample. In this study, Amoateng et al. (2006) found that youth who reported strong parental connections were less likely to use alcohol and other substances.

Specifically, youth from all three racial groups who reported parental knowledge of their activities and more parental limit-setting also reported lower levels of substance use. Furthermore, while parental connection was associated negatively with alcohol and substance use by coloured youth, parental psychological control was hardly significant in predicting alcohol and tobacco use by any of the groups. Moreover, all the positive parenting variables (e.g., parental knowledge and limit-setting) were negatively associated with alcohol and tobacco use and vice versa.

In a similar effort to advance theory building in the area of alcohol and other drug use among the youth, a decade after the study by Amoateng et al. (1996), Brook et al. (2006) examined the association between the frequency of illegal drug use with five groups of factors among South African adolescents, namely, environmental stressors, parental drug use, parental child-rearing, peer drug use, and adolescent personal attributes. Brook et al. (2006) found that personal attributes and peer substance use explained the largest percentage of the variance in the adolescents' frequency of illegal drug use, while both parental factors and environmental stressors contributed to the explained variance in adolescent drug use above and beyond the two more proximal domains.

More specifically, all of the maternal drug use variables were significantly related to the adolescents' frequency of drug use. Paternal drinking and marijuana use were also related to the adolescents' use of illegal drugs. The correlations between the maternal child-rearing variables and adolescent drug use were larger than those between the paternal child-rearing variables and adolescent drug use. Moreover, adolescents with higher levels of drug use reported greater peer smoking, drinking, marijuana use, and other illegal drug use.

In a similar study, Amoateng et al. (2017) used multidimensional measures of religion to assess religion's influence in engendering positive behaviours as measured by alcohol and tobacco use among a sample of undergraduate students at the North-West University in South Africa. Zero-order correlations showed that measures of religion not only correlated positively with each other, but they correlated negatively with both current use of alcohol and tobacco. Religious affiliation was insignificant, but self-rated religiosity was positively associated with drinking among females who reported that they always drank alcohol. Frequency of church attendance increased the odds of drinking among females who reported that they never drank compared to those who reported that they drank occasionally. Social class, as measured by father's education was negatively associated with both alcohol and tobacco use, and consistent with theoretical expectations, on the whole, religious commitment acts as a protective factor against these two anti-social behaviours of the youth.

9.3 Youth's current alcohol and substance use behaviours

Throughout the present book, we have been using empirical data collected in recent years (2014 to 2019) to support or refute claims about the lived experiences of youth in contemporary South African society.[3] The oldest and youngest persons in our youth age band in 2014 (35 and 15 years old, respectively) were born between 1979 and 1999. Moreover, we have indicated that the 1990 to 2000 decade—about a generation since the Soweto political upheavals—witnessed the height of the empirical studies on youth drug use and sexual-risk behaviours, especially alcohol and drug use behaviours in the country.

There has been a steady production of empirical studies since the 1990s and early 2000s which show that to all intents and purposes, the use and abuse of alcohol and other substances by the youth continues to be a problem for individuals, families, and communities across the country. For example, in a qualitative study in the North West Province, an educator informant observed:

> Alcohol abuse is a real problem in schools. The learners stay away from school because they drink alcohol during weekends. They leave school during the day to drink alcohol. Even though parents are poor, the government has no-fee school, therefore, they are provided with an opportunity to learn.
>
> (Quoted in Setlalentoa et al. 2015)

It is therefore imperative that we show evidence of the persistent problem of substance use by the youth in contemporary South African society. However, the General Household Survey data set does not have any information on alcohol and other drug use,[4] while the Demographic and Health Survey data set has information on only the incidence and frequency of cigarette (tobacco) use.

9.3.1 Tobacco use (cigarette smoking)

In this section, we take a look at the cigarette use behaviours of the youth using the 2016 South African Demographic and Household Survey data. Two items were used to measure the cigarette use behaviours of the respondents in the survey. This item, which measured the incidence of this behaviour, asked the respondents to indicate whether or not they smoked cigarettes. (*The response categories were: 0 = No and 1 = Yes.)*

Table 9.1 shows the relationship between smoking cigarettes and the background socio-demographic characteristics of the youth, while Table 9.2 shows the multivariate analysis (Logistic regression) of the relationships between these variables and smoking of cigarettes. Overall, the incidence of cigarette use among the youth is relatively low as only 12 per cent of the youth reported cigarette use. Even though youth who are unemployed tend to smoke more than their employed counterparts, after controlling for all the

Table 9.1 Distribution of youth who smoke cigarettes by background factors

Background factors	*Incidence of cigarette smoking*	
	N	*%*
Race/ethnicity		
Black African	789	10.9
Coloured	177	25.6
Asian/Indian	12	15.4
White	21	13.7
Gender		
Male	805	35.1
Female	194	3.3
Education		
No schooling	8	11.6
Primary	120	16.9
Secondary	807	12.3
Higher	64	8.3
Employment status		
Employed	497	9.2
Unemployed	502	18.5
Age group		
15–19	152	6.9
20–24	286	14.2
25–29	280	14.8
30–35	281	13.9
Province		
Western Cape	104	19.7
Eastern Cape	149	14.6
Northern Cape	111	17.8
Free state	111	13.9
KwaZulu-Natal	128	9.4
North West	87	10.6
Gauteng	103	12.5
Mpumalanga	126	11.7
Limpopo	80	7.4
Residence		
Urban	644	14.5
Rural	355	9.7
Total	**6,991**	**12.3**

Source: 2016 South African Demographic and Health Survey.

relevant socio-demographic factors, employment status is statistically insignificant in predicting smoking by the youth.

Young men are more than ten times more likely than their young female counterparts to smoke cigarettes after all the relevant factors have been taken into account. For instance, being a youth in the 15–19-year-old band decreases the odds of smoking by 27 per cent compared to youth in the 30–35-year-old age band, while males are 21 times more likely than their female counterparts to smoke cigarettes.

There is a very strong regional effect with regard to youth substance use in South Africa. Youth in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and the Free State provinces are respectively more than twice more likely to smoke cigarettes than their counterparts in the Limpopo province, while the odds of smoking increase by 83, 12, 35, and 57 per cents, respectively for residents in the Northern Cape, Free State, and Gauteng provinces compared to residents in the Limpopo province.

One of the consequences of the growth of towns and cities which spurred urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa, was the rural-to-urban migration that resulted from this development. However, the one unintended consequence of these mainly youthful participants in the city-ward movement, was how the liberalising influences of the city would render them rudderless compared to the constraining role of the broader family. The one clear indicator of the individualist and liberalising value system in urban areas is the variation in the smoking behaviours of the youth with regard to place of residence as evident in Tables 9.1 and 9.2. As the Tables clearly show, youth in urban areas are more likely than those in rural areas to smoke cigarettes as found in both Tables 9.1 and 9.2. Specifically, being an urban resident increases the odds of smoking by 25 per cent compared to youth living in rural areas.

Ethnicity reflects the cultural traditions, beliefs, values, and norms of a group of people who share these traditions and beliefs. For example, the communalist ethos generally identified with African cultures means the influence of the group over individual behaviours, whereas the individualist ethos identified with Western cultures means the relative autonomy and independence of the individual. These cultural differences more often than not manifest themselves in behaviours exhibited by the youth who are socialized in these cultures.

As Tables 9.1 and 9.2 show, such cultural differences are evident in the smoking behaviours of the youth as far as race/ethnicity goes. Coloured youth are the most likely to have reported that they smoke cigarettes compared to their Asian/Indian counterparts. In fact, coloured youth are almost three times more likely than Asian/Indian youth to smoke cigarettes, while there are no significant differences between black African and white youths on the one hand and Asian/Indian youth with regards to smoking on the other hand. This finding about the smoking behaviours of coloured youth corroborates the finding by Amoateng et al. (1996) when they found among high school students in the Cape Peninsula that the mean tobacco use was higher among coloured and white students than black African students.

Table 9.2 Logistic regression analysis of youth cigarette smoking

Socio-demographic Predictors	*B*	*Sig.*	*Exp(B)*
Employment status			
Employed	-.053(.092)	.562	.948
Unemployed (RC)	0	0	0
Age cohort			
15–19	-1.304(.134)	.000	.271
20–24	-.155(.111)	.165	.857
25–29	.034(.109)	.752	1.036
30–35 (RC)	0	0	0
Gender			
Male	3.071(.096)	.000	21.560
Female (RC)	0	0	0
Province			
Western Cape	.734(.220)	.001	2.083
Eastern Cape	.718(.167)	.000	2.051
Northern Cape	.605(.202)	.003	1.833
Free State	.750(.189)	.000	2.117
KwaZulu-Natal	.301(.169)	.075	1.351
North West	.140(.184)	.440	1.150
Gauteng	.452(.190)	.017	1.571
Mpumalanga	.531(.173)	.002	1.701
Limpopo (RC)	0	0	0
Residence			
Urban	.226(.096)	.019	1.253
Rural (RC)	0	0	0
Race/ethnicity			
Black African	-.287(.377)	.446	.750
White	.001(.464)	.999	1.001
Coloured	1.095(.404)	.007	2.990
Asian/Indian (RC)	0	0	0
Education			
No schooling	.512(.449)	.255	1.668
Primary	1.070(.194)	.000	2.916
Secondary	.843(156)	.000	2.323
Higher (RC)	0	0	0
Constant	-4.473(.430)	.000	.011

Source: 2016 South African Demographic and Health Survey

Formal education is a modernising influence as far as the influence of the authority of the family or kin group is concerned. Specifically, apart from bestowing knowledge which engenders individual autonomy and independence from the constraints of such primordial groups as family and kinship ties, education endows individuals with socio-economic resources which make substances like cigarettes and drugs accessible to the youth. This impact of education is clearly discernible in Tables 9.1 and 9.2 which together show that educational attainment significantly affects the smoking behaviour of the youth. Table 9.1 shows that youth with primary and secondary school education tend to smoke more than their counterparts with either no formal schooling or those with higher educational attainment. In fact, youth with primary and secondary educational attainment are 2.92 and 2.32 times respectively more likely to smoke cigarettes than youth with higher educational attainment.

9.3.2 Frequency of cigarette smoking

As we have shown above, the rate of tobacco (cigarette smoking) use among contemporary youth in the country is quite low as only 12 per cent of youth indicated that they smoked cigarettes. However, given the fact that smoking is a health hazard, the pertinent question to ask at this juncture is: how frequently do the youth who smoke engage in this unhealthy behaviour? For those who reported that they smoked cigarettes, they were asked to indicate how often they smoked cigarettes and a three-point scale was employed as response categories, namely, *0 = does not smoke, 1 = everyday, and 2 = some days.* Table 9.3 provides some answers to this question about the frequency of cigarette smoking among the youth in the country.

On the whole, about 80 per cent of the youth who smoke cigarettes do so every day, while about one-fifth (20%) of them smoke occasionally. Asian/Indian youth smoke more frequently with 93 per cent of them smoking daily, followed by coloured youth among whom 88 per cent some every day, followed by white youth in that order. Black African youth are the least frequent smokers with only 77 per cent smoking daily and 23 per cent smoking occasionally. Males are not only more likely to smoke cigarettes compared to females, but they do so more frequently than females, while consistent with the tendency to smoke, younger youth smoke less frequently than older youth. Specifically, only two-thirds (66%) of adolescents (aged 15–19 years old) report smoking daily, while 85 per cent of youth aged 30–35 years smoke daily.

As far as the province is concerned, youth who live in the Western Cape province tend to smoke more frequently with 87 per cent of them reporting that they smoke every day, while youth in the Eastern Cape tend to smoke less with only 70 per cent of youth smokers there smoking daily. There is a gradient decrease in the frequency of smoking as educational attainment increases. Specifically, 87 per cent, 82 per cent, 79 per cent, and 77 per cent of youth with no formal schooling, primary education, secondary education, and higher education, respectively, reported smoking every day.

9.4 Youth sexual-risk behaviours

Because alcohol and drug use are generally antecedent to such social problems as juvenile delinquency, sexual-risk behaviours, and crime in general, historically empirical research has paid much more attention to alcohol and drug use behaviours. However, in South Africa, studies of youth alcohol and drug use

Table 9.3 Frequency of smoking by youth and background factors

Socio-demographic factors	*Frequency of smoking (%)*	
	Everyday	*Occasionally*
Race/ethnicity		
Black African	77.1	22.9
White	85.7	14.3
Coloured	87.6	12.4
Asian/Indian	91.7	8.3
Gender		
Male	80.0	20.0
Female	76.3	23.7
Age cohort		
15–19	65.8	34.2
20–24	76.6	23.4
25–29	83.2	16.8
30–35	85.4	14.6
Residence		
Urban	80.9	19.1
Rural	76.3	23.7
Educational attainment		
No schooling	87.5	12.5
Primary	81.7	18.3
Secondary	79.1	20.9
Higher	76.6	23.4
Province		
Western Cape	86.5	13.5
Eastern Cape	69.8	30.2
Northern Cape	82.9	17.1
Free State	84.7	15.3
KwaZulu-Natal	84.4	15.6
North West	81.6	18.4
Gauteng	76.7	23.3
Mpumalanga	85.7	14.3
Limpopo		

Source: 2016 South African Demographic and Health Survey.

behaviours have been done almost in tandem with those of youth sexual-risk behaviours because of the close association between the two sets of behaviours. This has especially been the case within the context of the spread of the HIV/Aids epidemic and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) that have been ravaging the country in recent decades.

Among the most visible studies that have been conducted in the country to accumulate data on sexual risk behaviours of the country's youth is the one by Pettifor et al. (2004), in which they found that among the sexually experienced youths aged 15–19 years, 9 per cent of the females and 73 per cent of the males had sex in the 12 months preceding the survey. Similar studies during this period observed that unprotected sex and risky sexual behaviours of adolescents often resulted in problems such as unwanted pregnancies and infection with sexually transmitted diseases, such as syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia, and AIDS, which eventually led to pregnancy-related school drop-out and greater risk of adopting backstreet or clandestine abortions (see, e.g., Kunkel 1999; Zabin & Karungari 1998). Meanwhile, Kunkel (1999) found that 27 per cent of high school-going females and 17 per cent of high school males reported having had four or more sexual partners.

Meanwhile, several studies during this period in the country's history had demonstrated that condom use did not only reduce the risk of sexually-transmitted infections but also predicted successful sexual behaviour (see e.g., Hendriksen 2007; Reddy 2000; Steiner & Cates 2006; Steiner 2007; Takkura 2007). found that many of the country's youth underestimated their risk for contracting sexually-transmitted diseases and HIV by practising unsafe sex. Specifically, she found that condom use among the country's youths who reported having had sex in the past 12 months was found to be only 56 per cent and that consistent condom use was reported by only one-third of the youths in her sample.

Over, Simbayi et al. (2006) observed that alcohol intake among South African adolescents was a major concern and had been linked to other sexual-risk behaviours such as unsafe sex, teenage pregnancy, truancy, delinquent behaviour, and school dropout. In a study of eighth-grade pupils in South Africa, Palen et al. (2006) found that during their most recent sexual encounter, 39 per cent of the adolescents in their sample reported using alcohol or marijuana; among those who used these substances, 23 per cent reported that substances influenced their decision to have sex, and 26 per cent reported using substances in order to feel more comfortable with their partner; youth who had ever used alcohol or marijuana in their lifetime were significantly more likely to have ever had sexual intercourse.

Shisana and Simbayi (2003) identified a similar trend towards earlier sexual debut among younger respondents, where the median age at first sex for respondents aged 15–24 years was 16 years. They found in particular that sexually active boys typically engaged in sexual activity at an earlier age than females. Meanwhile, Nikula (2009) observed a positive association between age and sexual experience despite the fact that older adolescents have better knowledge and experience and are more likely to use condoms consistently at their first sexual encounter than younger adolescents (e.g., Khan 2002).

Like studies of youth alcohol and other drug use behaviours, studies of youth risky sexual behaviours have evolved into becoming more concerned about theory building by going beyond a mere description of these behaviours to "explaining" such behaviours. Kaufman et al. (2004), found that adolescents who lived in communities that endured high levels of crime, high residential turnover, extreme rates of poverty, elevated unemployment rates and low educational levels were more likely to take sexual risks. Also, in light of the theory that the living arrangements of adolescents affect their sexual behaviours, Kirby (2002) conducted a study and found that living in a non-traditional family structure (i.e., families with parents who are divorced, separated, or were never married) served as a risk factor for initiation of sex.

In another study of the timing of first sexual intercourse by Upchurch et al. (1999), they found that adolescents living in a traditional family structure (i.e., families with both biological parents) reported later median age of first intercourse than youth living in any other family situation, including stepfamilies with two parents in the home. Moreover, McGrath et al. (2009) found that the hazard of first sex was statistically significantly higher for women and men whose mother or father had died, while on the other hand, they found that the hazard of first sex was statistically significantly lower for women whose mother or father was a co-member of the same household.

In a similar study of adolescents' sexual experiences in the North West Province, Amoateng and Kalule-Sabiti (2013) largely corroborated Pettifor's (2004) study when they found that 44 per cent of the adolescents (61 per cent male) in their sample were sexually experienced. In their study of adolescents in the North-West Province of South Africa, Amoateng and Kalule-Sabiti (2013) found that 42 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had sex in the past 12 months; of these, more than a quarter (26%) of the respondents reported that they did not use a condom. And while 84 per cent of the Grade 11 pupils had used a condom, only 62 per cent of the Grade 9 pupils had done so. In this study, adolescents who reported strong religiosity were less likely to report lifetime sex compared to those who were less religious.

Also, Amoateng et al. (2014), in a study of black African adolescents in a poor community in the North West province, examined individual and contextual factors that affected their sexual-risk-taking behaviours. They found that individual and contextual factors, such as gender, grade, religiosity, peer influence, parental value of children, parent-child communication, school attachment, and the use of alcohol and substances like tobacco and marijuana all affected sexual risk behaviours like lifetime sex, recent sexual activity and involvement with multiple sexual partners. In terms of peer influence, it was found that adolescents who had strong ties to their peers were four times more likely than those with weak ties to their peers to report lifetime sex, while adolescents who reported strong religiosity had 54 per cent less chance of reporting lifetime sex compared to those who reported weak religiosity. Moreover, the use of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and drugs such as marijuana were all positively associated with lifetime sex by adolescents. Specifically, the odds of adolescents who had ever smoked a cigarette having lifetime sex were more than three times higher than those of adolescents who had never smoked a cigarette.

Meanwhile, Amoateng et al. (2014) found that the odds of adolescents who had ever drunk alcohol were 2.64 times higher than those of adolescents who had never drunk. Adolescents who reported lifetime marijuana use also reported lifetime sex; the odds of those who use marijuana having lifetime sex were 2.42 times higher than those who do not use this substance. Baruwa and

Amoateng (2019) studied the problem of the effect of early sexual experiences on South Africa's youth using the 2016 South African demographic and health survey data.

They found that female youth with secondary education had a lower hazard risk of early sexual experience compared to those who had no education and primary education. Moreover, young adult female youth between the ages of 25 and 34 years had hazard lower risk of early sexual experience compared to those from poor backgrounds. Coloureds, Indians, and whites had lower risks of early sexual experience among female youth compared to black Africans. Moreover, when parents knew about where their children were and set limits on their activities (e.g., hours of TV watching), children used alcohol and tobacco less frequently. However, Amoateng et al. (2006) observed that when there was marital conflict and stress in the family, the youth used substances frequently.

Finally, Biney et al. (2020) examined the factors that impacted the sexual risk-taking behaviours of unmarried persons aged 15–34 years, using a national sample. The study sought to examine the effects of selected socio-demographic factors on condom use and sexual partnership behaviours of three age cohorts: 15–19-year-olds (adolescents), 20–24-year-olds (emerging adults), and 25-34-year-olds (young adults). The results showed that being male, living in a household with a higher wealth index, and living in an urban area generally protected against sexual risk-taking behaviours among the youth, while early sexual debut, province of residence, and unemployment were found to be risk factors for unsafe sexual practices among the youth.

9.5 Current youth sexual-risk behaviours

Risky-sexual behaviours continue to be a social problem in contemporary South African society as far as the youth are concerned. To this effect, empirical studies of this problem continue to be undertaken to uncover new information about the magnitude of the problem with regard to its incidence and predictors for purposes of policy formulation and interventions by policymakers at the national and local levels. Following this tradition, in this section, the 2016 South African Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data are both used to examine the incidence and predictors of selected sexual-risk behaviours by the youth in contemporary South African society.

For the measures of *sexual risk behaviours,* two indicators in the DHS are used, namely, non-condom use during last sexual intercourse, and multiple sexual partnerships. A youth was said to be engaged in sexual risk behaviour if he/she was involved in one or both of these practices. Regarding non-use of condom respondents were asked to indicate whether they used a condom during their last sexual encounter. The response categories were *"0 = No" (non-use of condom) or "1 = Yes" (use of condom)*. For ease of interpretation, non-use of condom was recoded as "1", while condom use was recoded as "0".

Multiple sexual partners refer to the number of sexual partners in the last 12 months a respondent had sexual encounters with. Two questions on multiple sexual partners, namely, *"number of sexual partners, including your spouse", and "number of sexual partners, excluding your spouse"* were asked in the survey. We used the former question in our analysis so *one or less sexual partner* did not constitute sexual risk behaviour for a married person or even for an unmarried person. The response categories were: *"1 = One or less"; "2 = Two"; and "3 = Three or more"*. For the purposes of the present analysis, the variable was dichotomised by recoding *one or less partners* as "0", while *two or more partners* were recoded as "1".

Table 9.4 shows the bivariate relationships between non-use of condom and the background socio-demographic characteristics of the youth. This table shows that nearly half (48%) of the youth in the survey reported that during sexual intercourse with their last sexual partner they did not use a condom. In terms of ethnicity, Asian/Indian youth were the most likely to report the non-use of a condom during their last sexual intercourse with a partner; 69 per cent of them reported this behaviour, followed by white youth (68%), coloured youth (62%), while only 46 per cent of black African youth reported non-use of condom during their last sexual encounter. More than half of the females (52%) in the sample reported non-use of a condom during their last sexual encounter compared to slightly more than one-third (36%) of their male peers. As far as place of residence goes, slightly less than half (49%) of rural youth reported that they did not use a condom during their most recent sexual encounter with a partner, while this was true of 47 per cent of their urban counterparts.

As far as educational attainment is concerned, it appears that youth with lower levels of education tended not to use a condom during their most recent sexual encounter for example, 59 per cent and 62 per cent of those with no formal schooling and those with only primary education respectively reported non-use of a condom, while only 46 per cent and 47 per cent of youth with secondary and higher education respectively reported this behaviour. Older youth were less likely to use a condom during their last sexual encounter. Specifically, slightly under six out of every ten youths (59%) aged 30 to 35 years reported not having used a condom during their last sexual intercourse compared to only one-third (34%) of adolescents (aged 15–19 years) who reported the same behaviour.

Marital status impacts the non-use of a condom or its use among the youth. This is evidenced by the finding that youth who are currently married, living together and those who are divorced appear to be the ones who did not use a condom during their last sexual encounter. Specifically, 78 per cent, 67 per cent, and 54 per cent of the married, cohabitants, and widowed, respectively, reported not having used a condom during their last sexual intercourse. Finally, and this relates to the finding on marital status, youth who reported having one or less sexual partners reported not having used a condom during their last sexual encounter; 78 per cent of youth with one or less sexual

Table 9.4 Distribution of non-condom use by background factors

Socio-demographic factors	*Percentage of condom used during last sex with the most recent partner*	
	No	*Yes*
Race/ethnicity		
Black African	45.9	54.1
White	68.2	31.8
Coloured	62.0	38.0
Asian/Indian	69.0	31.0
Gender		
Male	35.8	64.2
Female	52.4	47.6
Residence		
Urban	46.8	53.2
Rural	48.8	51.2
Education		
No schooling	58.5	41.5
Primary	62.2	37.8
Secondary	46.3	53.7
Higher	47.0	53.0
Employment status		
Unemployed	45.8	54.2
Employed	50.6	49.4
Age group		
15–19	34.3	65.7
20–24	40.3	59.7
25–29	49.6	50.4
30–35	59.4	40.6
Marital status		
Never married	37.0	63.0
Married	78.4	21.6
Living together	67.3	32.7
Widowed	54.2	45.8
Divorced	25.0	75.0
No longer living together	36.2	63.8
Multiple sexual partners		
1 or less	74.1	25.9
2+	38.0	62.0

Source: 2016 Demographic and Health Survey.

partners reported that they did not use a condom compared to 38 per cent of those who reported having two or more sexual partners.

These findings are based on the bivariate analysis reported in Table 9.4. In other words, the findings in Table 9.4 are mere correlations and therefore cannot be used to say for example, that gender, ethnicity, residence, education or for that matter, any of the predictor variables are the “causes'' of the non-use of a condom by the youth. Did white and Asian/Indian youths not use a condom because they tend to have higher marriage rates than black African youth? Did females not use condom more often because they have fewer sexual partners than males? Or do females have a higher marriage rate than males? These and other related questions naturally arise from bivariate relationships as reported in Table 9.4 and they are best answered by a multivariate analysis as presented in Table 9.5.

The statistical technique we employed in this analysis is Logistic Regression. This choice of statistical technique was dictated by the fact that our dependent variable (use or non-use of a condom during a recent sexual encounter), was a

Table 9.5 Logistic regression analysis of non-condom use among youth

Socio-demographic predictors	*B*	*Sig.*	*Exp(B)*
Race/ethnicity			
Black African	-.552(.374)	.140	.576
White	.020(.436)	.963	1.021
Coloured	.040(.386)	.918	1.040
Asian/Indian (RC)	0	0	0
Gender			
Male	-.576(.065)	.000	.562
Female (RC)	0	0	0
Residence			
Urban	-.304(.056)	.000	.738
Rural (RC)	0	0	0
Education			
No schooling	.358(.311)	.250	1.431
Primary	.756(.136)	.000	2.130
Secondary	.158(.092)	.086	1.171
Higher (RC)	0	0	0
Employment status			
Unemployed	.063(.063)	.317	1.065
Employed (RC)	0	0	0
Age group			
15–19	-.386(.099)	.000	.680
20–24	-.241(.079)	.002	.786
25–29	-.121(.075)	.106	.886
30–35 (RC)	0	0	0
Marital status			
Never-married	.245(.195)	.209	1.278
Married	1.536(.236)	.000	4.642
Widowed	1.050(.228)	.000	2.857
Divorced	-.738(.515)	.152	.478
No longer living together (RC)	0	0	0
Multiple sexual partners			
1 or less	.351	.021	1.421
2+ (RC)	0	0	0
Constant	.047(.430)	.912	1.048

Source: 2016 South African Demographic and Health Survey.

binary, or had two categories, and therefore, amenable to this statistical technique which allowed us to put all the "predictor" variables (background factors) into one model to hold each other constant while examining their effects individually.

The results of this analysis showed that ethnicity was invariant, or ethnicity did not affect a youth's chance of not using a condom during sexual intercourse. However, knowing a youth's gender helped to predict whether they will use a condom or not during sexual intercourse. According to the bivariate findings in Table 9.4, more females reported not having used a condom than males, and the multivariate findings confirmed this as males were less likely to report non-use of a condom. Specifically, the odds of not using a condom during sexual intercourse by males decreased by 56 per cent compared to their female peers. In other words, males were more likely than females to report condom use during a sexual encounter.

This finding makes more sense heuristically, given the nature of a condom as a contraceptive. In other words, even though there are now female condoms, the male condom is the more conventional one and therefore makes the male the responsible partner as far as its use during a sexual encounter is concerned. Youth who were residents in rural areas were more likely to report that they did not use a condom compared to those who live in urban areas. For example, the odds of urban youth not using a condom decreased by 74 per cent compared to their rural counterparts. It is a truism in the South African context that people in urban areas have more knowledge about and access to contraceptives than people who live in rural areas. Thus, the fact that urban youth tend to use a condom more often largely reflects this rural-urban disparity in the knowledge of and access to contraceptives.

In terms of educational attainment, the only statistically significant finding was that youth with only primary school education were more likely to report that they did not use a condom during their last sexual encounter. In other words, having education as little as primary school education increases a youth's chance of not using a condom during sexual intercourse. In fact, youth with only primary school education were 2.13 times more likely to report non-use of a condom compared to their peers with higher educational attainment. Education is known to equip people with knowledge and life skills that are vital for adequate functioning in society, including reproductive health in this instance, so it is hardly surprising that highly educated youth would use condoms more than those who are less educated.

Marital status was significantly associated with the use of a condom during a sexual encounter by the youth. According to Table 9.4, youth who were married, widowed, and cohabiting had the highest rates of non-use of a condom. This relationship persisted after controlling for all the other factors in the model; youth who were currently in a marital union or those who were widowed were the most likely to report that they did not use a condom during their last sexual encounter compared to those who were currently not living with anyone. Specifically, youth who were married and those who were widowed were about five and three times, respectively more likely to report non-use of a condom during their last sexual encounter with their partners compared to youth who live alone. In other words, marriage or being attached to someone acts as protective factors against the use of a condom during sexual intercourse. This finding about marriage makes more heuristic sense as people who are in a union and or live together cannot be expected to protect themselves against any infection or pregnancy for that matter. Finally, having one or less sexual partners increased the chance of a youth not using a condom during sexual intercourse with that partner for the same reasons as those who were married and or lived together. Indeed, youth who had one or less sexual partners were 1.42 times more likely not to use a condom during sexual intercourse than their counterparts who had two or more sexual partners.

As indicated early on in the chapter, having multiple sexual partners is deemed to be a risky sexual behaviour and this behaviour is defined as any youth who reported that they had two or more sexual partners in the DHS. Table 9.6 shows the distribution of this behaviour by socio-demographic characteristics of the youth, while Table 9.6 shows the results of the logistic regression analysis. On the whole, more than half (55%) of the youth in the study reported having two or more sexual partners, while only 45% reported having one or less sexual partner. According to the bivariate results in Table 9.6, almost six out of 10 (57%) black African youth reported having two or more sexual partners, followed by coloured youth (40%), while only 17 per cent of Asian/Indian youth reported having two or more sexual partners, followed by 27 per cent of white youth who reported having two or more sexual partners.

The multivariate results are shown in Table 9.7 and they show that the relationship between race/ethnicity and the number of sexual partners persisted after taking every possible socio-demographic factor into account. Black African youth remained the most likely to report multiple sexual partners, followed by coloureds while there was no difference between white youth and their Asian/Indian counterparts who were in the reference category. Specifically, black African youth were about six times more likely to have multiple sexual partners compared to their Asian/Indian counterparts, while coloured youths were 4.1 times more likely to have multiple sexual partners compared to their Asian/Indian peers.

As far as gender is concerned, the correlations observed in Table 9.6 show that gender is associated with multiple sexual partners in that whereas 63 per cent of males reported having multiple sexual partners, only slightly over half (52%) of females have two or more sexual partners, regardless of all relevant socio-economic factors; in fact, males were two times more likely than females to have multiple sexual partners. Youth who were residents in rural areas were more likely than those who resided in urban areas to have multiple sexual partners; the odds of youth who live in urban areas decreases by 68 per cent compared to their rural peers. While education significantly impacted multiple sexual partners, employment status did not.

In terms of educational attainment, there was a gradual increase in the proportion who reported multiple sexual partners as education increased. This

Table 9.6 Distribution of multiple sexual partners by background factors

Socio-demographic factors	*Number of sexual partners*	
	1 or less	*2+*
Race/ethnicity		
Black African	42.7	57.3
White	73.2	26.8
Coloured	59.7	40.3
Asian/Indian	83.3	16.7
Gender		
Male	37.4	62.6
Female	48.2	51.8
Residence		
Urban	47.4	52.6
Rural	42.4	57.6
Education		
No schooling	58.0	42.0
Primary	58.1	41.9
Secondary	44.1	55.9
Higher	40.4	59.6
Employment status		
Unemployed	47.6	52.4
Employed	40.1	59.9
Age group		
15–19	60.8	39.2
20–24	28.2	71.8
25–29	36.2	63.8
30–35	53.2	46.8
Marital status		
Never-married	32.2	67.8
Married	93.9	6.1
Living together	84.6	15.4
Widowed	43.8	56.3
Divorced	11.1	88.9
No longer living together	28.3	71.7
Recent condom use		
No	41.8	58.2
Yes	13.3	86.7

Source: 2016 Demographic and Health Survey.

relationship remained after controlling for all the relevant socio-demographic factors. Specifically, the odds of youth with only primary education having multiple sexual partners decreased by 62 per cent compared to youth with higher educational attainment. Age appeared to have the biggest effect on multiple sexual partners as shown by the multivariate results in Table 9.7. According to the bivariate results in Table 9.6, only 39 per cent of adolescents (those aged 15–19 years old) reported having multiple sexual partners, while 47 per cent of youth aged 30–35 years old reported having multiple sexual partners.

Table 9.7 Logistic regression analysis of multiple sexual partners among youth

Socio-demographic Predictors	*B*	*Sig.*	*Exp(B)*
Race/ethnicity			
Black African	1.706(.401)	.000	5.505
White	.408(.462)	.377	1.504
Coloured	1.413(.414)	.001	4.100
Asian/Indian (RC)	0	0	0
Gender			
Male	.738(.085)	.000	2.092
Female (RC)	0	0	0
Residence			
Urban	-.387(.070)	.000	.679
Rural (RC)	0	0	0
Education			
No schooling	-.514(	.112	.598
Primary	-.478(.150)	.001	.620
Secondary	-.047(.103)	.653	.955
Higher (RC)	0	0	0
Employment status			
Unemployed	-.046(.072)	.520	.955
Employed (RC)	0	0	0
Age group			
15–19	2.936(.187)	.000	18.877
20–24	1.636(.092)	.000	5.134
25–29	.754(.077)	.000	2.125
30–35 (RC)	0	0	0
Condom use			
Use	1.339(.070)	.000	3.814
Non-use (RC)	0	0	0
Constant	-1.927(.418)	.000	.146

Source: 2016 South African Demographic and Health Survey.

However, after we considered all the relevant factors, this relationship reversed significantly. In fact, adolescents were about 19 times more likely to have multiple sexual partners compared to youth aged 30–35 years old. This is followed by youth aged 20–24 years old and those aged 25–30 years old who are 5.1 times and 2.1 times more likely than youth aged 30–35 years old to have multiple sexual partners, respectively. Finally, youth who use a condom during sexual intercourse are four times more likely to have multiple sexual partners compared to their peers who do not use a condom.

9.6 Summary and conclusion

In the 1990s, two decades after the epic political events that culminated in the Soweto student uprising, there was a proliferation of empirical studies on the mental health of South Africa's youth, especially youth alcohol and other drug use studies. In a similar vein, there were studies that looked at the sexual-risk behaviours of the youth because of the close association between alcohol and drug use on the one hand, and sexual-risk behaviours on the other hand. Together, these studies accumulated literature that showed the prevalence and predictors of these behaviours with regard to variations among the youth with regards to race/ethnicity, education, residence, class, etc.

This chapter has not only reviewed these pioneering studies about alcohol and drug use on the one hand, and risky sexual behaviours engaged in by the youth on the other hand, but it has also used recent survey data to show that these substance uses and sexual-risk behaviours continue to plague the country's youth as they navigate life in contemporary society. While for the purposes of the present analysis, we could not access any recent data on the alcohol-drinking behaviours of the youth, we used the 2016 South African Demographic and Health Survey data set to examine the youth's use of tobacco products, especially cigarette smoking and found that only 12 per cent of the youth smoke cigarettes now, the few that smoke cigarettes, smoke more frequently.

Unlike smoking, however, sexual-risk behaviours in the form of non-use of condoms during sexual intercourse and possession of multiple sexual partners were found to be widespread among the country's youth. These findings suggest that while modernising forces such as education are fuelling the variations with regard to these behaviours, one cannot discount the inertia of cultural values as evidenced by findings related to rural youth and black African youth.

Notes

1. *The Journal of Child and Adolescent Mental Health,* which was founded and housed at the University of Cape Town's Department of Psychiatry, became the main medium through which the works of these scholars were disseminated to the broader scientific community.
2. It is worth noting that in subsequent years, scholars at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and the National Department of Health contributed to the burgeoning literature on youth mental health, especially alcohol and drug studies.
3. Specifically, we have employed the 2014 and 2019 General Household Survey datasets on the one hand, and the 2016 South African Demographic and Health Survey data set, on the other hand.
4. In fact, there is one item on alcohol/drug use in the 2019 General Household Survey; however, only 42 cases report use of this "twin" substance. Besides the limited number of cases of use, the measure of the substance itself is of poor quality since one does not know whether they are measuring the use of alcohol or any other substance because of the wording of the question.

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10 Youth and technology

10.1 Introduction

In the course of human history, mankind has witnessed three major industrial revolutions, and each of these revolutions has been marked by technological developments that have propelled societies to new heights in terms of economic growth, the creation of employment, the elevation of living standards, and increased urbanisation, among other things (Stearns 2018). As a result of the mechanisation of production brought about by the First Industrial Revolution, which got underway in 1760 with the development of the steam engine, agrarian and feudal societies were replaced by ones that were dominated by industry and machine manufacturing (Xu et al. 2018).

This revolution paved the way for later, more advanced forms of production in addition to giving rise to the mechanised factory system. The Second Industrial Revolution, which started in 1900 with the invention of the internal combustion engine (Xu et al. 2018), involved the use of electric power to create mass production, which sped up changes and further industrialised newly transformed agrarian and feudal societies. Finally, the Third Industrial Revolution, which started in the middle of the 20th century, ushered in electronics and information technology to automate production (Roberts 2015).

While all three industrial revolutions have been impactful with regard to societal advancement, the Third Industrial Revolution was the most outstanding in the modern era because of its successful introduction of the digital revolution, which laid the foundation for this next new technological revolution. Since the introduction of electronic technology, new technologies that have the potential to drastically improve lives have been developed, used, and adopted quickly in recent decades.

In some ways, the technological revolutions of the previous century have been intensified by the 21st century because technology has permeated almost every aspect of modern life. The use of mobile devices actually increased significantly at the turn of the century. As a result of rapid technological development and innovation, the digital revolution, and various emerging technological trends like a greater emphasis on information and communication technologies (ICTs), artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning,

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societies around the world are said to be moving toward a Fourth Industrial Revolution (Schwab 2016; Xu et al. 2018).

The rapid economic growth and increased global interconnectedness brought about by these technological advancements, particularly the proliferation of the information and communications technology (ICT) sector, are expected to positively impact livelihoods, social interactions, and economies (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa [UN ECA] 2014). For instance, Schwab (2016: 12) has noted that, in terms of its impact on society, this new revolution is "characterised by a much more ubiquitous and mobile internet". Or, to put it another way, new technological developments can act as a bridge across nations and continents (Xu et al. 2018). In fact, according to Manuel Castells (2001), the development and prosperity of any society will depend on its ability to adapt to and make use of the opportunities created by newly developed ICTs.

Within this context, conventional wisdom suggests that youth are well-positioned to greatly benefit from and even drive this new revolution because they have more exposure to digital media than older generations do (Hargittai 2010). Young people also appear to be naturally savvier, more at ease with, and more knowledgeable about these technologies than other demographics like the elderly. Therefore, the youth population, in general, is perhaps the most suitable so-called "digital natives" with the necessary digital skills to drive upcoming changes in this modern era (Prensky 2001).

Despite the fact that young people use and adopt ICT, the Internet, and other digital communication technologies more frequently and faster than any other population cohort, (Oyedimi 2015; Shava & Chinyamurindi 2018), this does not mean that they will successfully adapt to and participate in emerging digital economies. Even though the youth cohort may possess the same elementary digital experience—what is known as "mental access" (Fuchs & Horak 2008; Van Dijk & Hacker 2003), some young people are better placed than others to make a smooth transition into these new possibilities.

In fact, Ayentimi and Burgess (2019) contend that the continent of Africa may be less able to take advantage of the impending technological changes the Fourth Industrial Revolution promises due to its young population profile and emerging skill shortages in important sectors. In fact, on the specific problem of education, several scholars have observed that even though educational attainment is rising, many sub-Saharan African youths entering the labour force today lack certain critical skills, such as cognitive skills, that are needed for the increasingly technical nature of the labour market, hence the problem of youth unemployment (e.g., Cloutier et al. 2011; Filmer & Fox 2014). That is not to wholly discount the continent's youth from the looming change, that is technological societies.

10.2 Youth and the digital economy in Africa

According to Easton-Calabria (2019), the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is characterised by the quick adoption and use of digital technologies, will convert existing economies into digital economies through (i) the digital enabling infrastructure required for computer networks to exist and operate, (ii) the digital transactions that happen over the platform, and (iii) the content that users of the digital economy produce and access. Thus, in the near future, digital spaces will not only be the primary method for gaining access to information and services but also one of the last remaining platforms for social interactions, business transactions, and leisure and educational pursuits (Beaunoyer et al. 2020).

Even though this emerging revolution is more prominent in developed countries of the global north, it has the potential to transform developing economies like South Africa by boosting productivity, expanding access to current and new markets, promoting financial inclusion, and accelerating cross-border trade (African Development Bank [AfDB] 2019; Nyagadza et al. 2022).

Yet some academics, including Ayentimi and Burgess (2019), have questioned the applicability of the impending Fourth Industrial Revolution to sub-Saharan Africa given that the continent, including South Africa, has a sizable informal economy, scant public infrastructure, low levels of technical skill, and a select few sectors with advanced technology. This is because there are persistent digital inequalities that restrict some sectors' and populations' access to digital technologies, impeding innovation and raising concerns about Africa's readiness and ability to successfully transition into a digital economy (Fuchs & Hora 2008), similar to those raised by Ayentimi and Burgess.

These digital inequalities—which refer to differences in actual access to technology as well as in levels of digital literacy[1]—are deeply ingrained in social, economic, cultural, and global contexts (Beaunoyer et al. 2020; Büchi et al. 2018; Hargittai 2010). In fact, the COVID-19 global health pandemic may have made some digital inequalities worse in some areas of the world and for some subpopulations, in addition to drawing attention to the gap that already exists between and within regions, countries, and populations. Digital spaces became particularly essential when the COVID-related global lockdown in 2020 forced the majority of people into isolation. The virtual world, aided by Internet access and use, served as the primary means of accessing information and services and one of the last remaining platforms for social interaction, economic activity, and leisure pursuits (Beaunoyer et al. 2020).

However, as has already been mentioned, access to technologies (e.g., computers and the Internet) and possession of the necessary skills to efficiently navigate computerized spaces are skewed in favour of the elite and privileged in society, as well as the global north. Africa may have been more affected by digital exclusion than most other regions, even though the COVID-19 pandemic caused massive, abrupt, and unprecedented changes in how people use digital technologies and media worldwide (Guitton 2020). Thus, the majority of the region's socially and economically disadvantaged people, particularly youth, were left isolated by the pandemic, both physically and technologically, due to the disparities in access and digital literacy that disproportionately affect Africa.

In the global context, Africa's youth lag behind the rest of the world because Africa remains the continent with the lowest Internet penetration rate. For instance, less than half (46.8%) of Africa's population is estimated to have consistent internet access, compared to 80 per cent or more in Europe and North America (Beaunoyer et al. 2020), far below the global average of about 69 per cent. As Table 10.1 shows, the African region accounted for slightly more than a tenth (11.9%) of the total world Internet users in 2022, although it is the second most populated region (Internet World Statistics 2022). In the same year, the Internet penetration rate in the region was 43 per cent, about 25 per cent lower than the world average (Internet World Statistics 2022). Africa's Internet penetration rate and proportion of global Internet users indicate that there are significant gaps in digital infrastructure and skills on the continent.

Moreover, the region is actually regarded as one of the least computerised regions in the world because of pervasive issues like a lack of, inadequate, or deteriorating communication network infrastructure as well as unstable basic infrastructure like electricity (Bornman 2012). Similarly, according to the African Development Bank (2022), there is a significant divide between investments made in digital infrastructure in urban and rural areas of Africa, with only 6 per cent of rural areas, which is where the great majority of African youth reside (UN ECA 2014), having some level of connectivity to the Internet. Insufficient or weak infrastructure restricts young people's Internet exposure and access, which they need to acquire basic digital skills germane to the new revolution (Fuchs & Horak 2008).

Similar to this, existing social inequalities, such as those in income, education, and ethnicity, hinder some young people's participation in and access to the technological economy (Fuchs & Horak 2008). For instance, income distribution has an impact on affordability, which further affects access to technology and data. Empirically, a case study examining Internet access in Africa corroborates the "problem of affordability" in the region, as it found that the costs of Internet use in Kenya and Nigeria are extremely high (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka & Nyaki Adeya 2004).

Thus, a significant portion of Africa's youth is cut off from digital space and access to crucial information technologies that are the pinnacle of this modern era as a result of the continent's gaps in digital infrastructure and persisting structural inequalities. Digital inequality has a negative impact not only on young people's current opportunities, information access, and social connections but also on their future life trajectories and courses (Robinson et al. 2015).

10.3 Youth and technology in South Africa

While there are differences between the global north and south with regard to access to and use of digital technologies, there are also differences between and within nations, even on the same continent, in terms of their access to

Table 10.1 Internet usage in Africa and on the globe in 2022

Region	*Population (2022 Est.)*	*Share of world population*	*Internet users, latest data (June 2022)*	*Internet penetration (% population)*	*Users in world (%)*
Africa	1,394,588,547	17.6	652,865,628	46.8	11.9
Asia	4,352,169,960	54.9	2,934,186,678	67.4	53.6
Europe	837,472,045	10.6	750,045,495	89.6	13.7
Latin America/Caribbean	664,099,841	8.4	543,396,621	81.8	9.9
North America	374,226,482	4.7	349,572,583	93.4	6.4
Middle East	268,302,801	3.4	211,796,760	78.9	3.9
Oceania/Australia	43,602,955	0.5	31,191,971	71.5	0.6
World total	7,934,462,631	100	5,473,055,736	69.0	100

Source: Internet World Statistics: https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm those technologies and their capacity to benefit from using them. Thus, the youth digital divide in Africa is not limited to a sub-region or any one country. In this regard, some African nations are better prepared or more ready for the new revolution than others.

According to Shava and Chinyamurindi (2018), South Africa's road and telecommunications networks are almost identical to those of highly industrialised nations. Similarly, South Africa is identified as one of the top five African nations with the necessary human capital—defined as "the knowledge and skills people possess that enable them to create value in the global economic system"—relevant to this modern change (AfDB 2019: 59). The country's Internet penetration rate is much higher than that of the region, as more than half (57.5%) of South Africa's population have access to the Internet (Internet World Statistics 2022; see Table 10.2).

In spite of being one of the continent's most information-integrated societies (Bornman 2016), South Africa suffers from a severe digital divide, or unequal access to and usage of digital technologies, including ICTs and, in particular, the Internet (Fuchs & Horak 2008). That is to say, despite the fact that phone, mobile, and Internet connections are readily available, not everyone in the country has access. The socioeconomic structure of South Africa's digital apartheid is similar to that of other African nations. Because of this, the majority of people who are socioeconomically disadvantaged are systematically denied access to cyberspace and the advantages it can bring, making access to and use of digital technologies a privilege of the well-off and highly educated elite.

In fact, according to a 1999 study by the South African market research firm Webchek, only 0.1 per cent of black African men and women, 35.6 per cent of white men and 7.4 per cent of white women had access to the Internet at home. A year later, a follow-up study revealed that there had been no increase in the number of black Africans in South Africa who had access to the Web, while white male and female usage had risen to 37.4 and 10.6 per cents, respectively (Webchek 2000).

Table 10.2 Internet usage in South Africa and on the continent 2022

Region	*Population (2022 Est.)*	*Share of Africa population*	*Internet users, latest data (Dec. 2021)*	*Internet penetration (% population)*	*Users in Africa (%)*
South Africa	60,041,994	4.4%	34,545,165	57.5 %	5.9%
Rest of Africa	1,313,444,520	95.6%	555,750,998	42.3%	94.1%
Total for Africa	1,373,486,514	100%	590,296,163	43.0 %	100%

Source: Internet World Statistics: https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm

More recent national statistical data from the 2021 General Household Survey showed that only about a tenth (10.4%) of South African households had access to fixed Internet at home, with home Internet access being highest among households in urban provinces of the Western Cape (25.9%) and Gauteng (16.4%), and lowest in mostly-rural provinces like Mpumalanga (1.7%) and Limpopo (1.9%) (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA] 2022). Also, access to the Internet overall is highest in urban provinces like the Western Cape (89.1%) and Gauteng (86.7%) compared to mostly rural provinces like Limpopo (63.7%) and the Eastern Cape (64.7%).

Despite having a relatively higher potential for access, South African youth are similar to their counterparts on the continent in that their access to and use of technologies are influenced by their demographics. In a study examining the pattern of Internet use and online activities among a sample of university students in South Africa, Oyedemi (2015) found that many young people's Internet use (frequency of use and number of online activities engaged in) was impacted by various forms of inequality, including types of Internet access, condition of access, cost of access, family income, race, and geography, compromising their full experience of participation and citizenship through digital means. It was also discovered that in South Africa, white and urban youths had a racial and geographic advantage when it came to home Internet access.

For the purposes of this chapter, we analysed Internet usage among the country's youth, using the 2016 round of the Afrobarometer data set. Table 10.3 shows the results of this analysis of Internet usage among young people in the country, aged 18 to 35 years. As expected, and in line with national statistics on Internet access, urban youth (50%), white youth (80%), employed youth (54%), youth with tertiary level education (70%), and those aged 18–24 years (51%) are more likely to use the Internet with more frequency (i.e., every day or a few times a week). This could be because these cohorts of youth are more likely to have readily accessible Internet at home or have the economic means to purchase mobile Internet or Internet cafes.

Black African and rural youths in South Africa are typically least positioned to benefit from the potential of the Internet because they have the least access to household Internet and, like the majority of people from low-income households, they use the Internet the least for many social and economic activities (Oyedemi 2015). Since they are more likely to lack the necessary financial, material, and technological resources, people at the bottom of the social hierarchy are invariably disproportionately affected by the digital divide in the country.

Since black Africans and women have historically had the highest rates of poverty while at the same time, they make up the majority of the population, it is clear that most South African youth lack even the most basic access—"material access" (Fuchs & Horak 2008). So even if all the country's youth population possesses the same elementary digital experience, or "mental access", they do not all have the same access to critical hardware such as computers and ICT infrastructures like network connections (Fuchs & Horak

Table 10.3 Percentage frequency of Internet use by selected factors

Predictors	*How often use the Internet*				
	Never	*Less than once a month*	*A few times a month*	*A few times a week*	*Everyday*
Age cohort					
18–24 years	18.6	2.1	8.9	18.9	51.4
25–29 years	28.8	2.5	9.6	15.2	43.9
30–35 years	34.5	3.8	9.9	16.7	35.1
Race/ethnicity					
Black African	29.7	3.4	9.4	15.3	42.2
Coloured	25.5	0.7	12.1	24.8	36.9
Asian/Indian	12.5	0	6.3	40.6	40.6
White	2.9	0	5.7	11.4	80
Gender					
Male	26.4	2.7	9.5	16.7	44.6
Female	27.8	2.8	9.3	17.1	43.1
Employment status					
Not employed	34.5	2.8	10.0	16.0	36.6
Employed	17.1	2.5	8.8	18.1	53.5
Residence					
Urban	19.5	1.6	9.6	19.3	50.1
Rural	43.4	5.4	9.0	12.1	30.1
Education level					
No schooling	60	0	0	0	40
Primary level	60.3	1.6	3.2	14.3	20.6
Secondary level	32.5	3.5	10.1	18.7	35.2
Tertiary level	6.0	1.0	9.3	13.7	70

Source: Round 6 of Afrobarometer Survey, 2016.

2008). A sizable portion of the youth population is still excluded due to persistent socioeconomic differences in material access.

The reality is that Africa and its youth are not prepared for the impending digital revolution, and may take longer to adjust to the concomitant changes underscoring this modern age. The lack of technological infrastructure and information-related products and services on the continent is not the only factor contributing to the youth of Africa's lack of readiness. The transformation of skills is pertinent to inclusion, participation, and successful integration into the increasing information society that is the global village. This is because being prepared for or succeeding in the new revolution will require a combination of crucial abilities and competencies, or so-called "21st-Century Skills", which include foundational literacies (literacy, numeracy, scientific literacy, ICT literacy, financial literacy, cultural and civic literacies), as well as soft competencies (critical thinking/problem solving, creativity, communication, and collaboration) (AfDB 2019;).

The ICT/network infrastructure development process alone cannot solve or close Africa's youth digital divide. This is because even if infrastructure development in Africa were to significantly improve or everybody had a computer and a network connection, the question is whether the continent's youth have access to enough or the appropriate cultural capital (skills) that define this modern age. From a technical perspective, greater skill levels will be essential for the inclusion as well as the effective use, adoption, and development of digital technologies in Africa's participation in the global digital economy.

According to Swingler (in Swaniker 2022), Africa will have 40 per cent of the world's population by the end of the century but only 2.6 per cent of software engineers. This suggests that, in addition to disproportionate material access, African countries may also be hindered from fully integrating into the information society by a lack of skills access—the information-related capabilities and technical knowledge required for operating ICT hardware and applications, producing meaningful online content, and engaging in online communication and cooperation (Fuchs & Horak 2008).

Swinger's anecdotal observation reflects the general educational and skill barriers to youth digital participation on the continent due to the high skill levels needed. Many young people in Africa, including those in South Africa, will find the technical nature of digital economies to be difficult. As we observe in Chapter 7 on youth education and skills acquisition, levels of skill among South Africa's youth are rather low. For young people in the country to have a chance at thriving in this modern age, they will need serious training, upskilling, or reskilling in key digital areas such as IT and software engineering.

According to Chetty and Pather (2015: 5), "new technological advancements can be used as a bridge to close the gap between the rich and the poor and between different races" in South Africa. However, digital equality must be achieved before technologies can play a role in addressing issues of social exclusion; otherwise, new technologies will only serve to exacerbate existing structural inequality in South African society. Therefore, social inequality continues to produce various forms of youth digital apartheid along gender, race, income, and educational lines, while Africa, particularly South Africa, struggles to harness the talent of its bulging youth population and reap the benefits thereof.

10.4 Youth and mobile technology: patterns of use

Although there are differences in physical access to and use of technologies among the youth, there are material access opportunities for closing this digital divide. Firstly, young people can connect to the global village through mobile-friendly digital platforms thanks to the widespread availability and use of mobile devices like cellular phones in Africa (Calandro et al. 2010). For nstance, the per centage of mobile phone subscribers in sub-Saharan Africa in 2021 was 46, and the region's smartphone adoption rate was 64 per cent (GSMA 2022). It is also estimated that 40 per cent of adults in sub-Saharan Africa are now using mobile Internet services; this includes a sizable proportion of youth (GSMA 2022). Mobile phone technology is driving digital inclusion in the region as it is the primary way most of Africa's youth access the Internet. Even though increased usage does not necessarily always translate to phone ownership due to phone sharing in the region, mobile connectivity has the potential to speed up Africa's digital revolution.

In the South African context, the prevalence of mobile/cellular phones is near-universal, ensuring that rural communities partake in the increasing information society. For instance, a large proportion (90.8%) of South African households exclusively use cellular phones, with the exclusive use of cellular phones being the most common (9.2%) in rural provinces like the Eastern Cape (Stats SA 2022).

Therefore, access to a mobile or cellular phone is no longer exclusive to the elite due to widespread network coverage and high mobile phone ownership in rural South Africa (Shava & Chinyamurindi 2018). In contrast, fixed Internet connections or computers are only available to the wealthy. For instance, a study conducted by the Pew Research Center showed that mobile access penetration in South Africa as of 2018 was 95% (Silver et al. 2019). This suggests that nearly everyone in South Africa has access to a cell phone, with 91 per cent of all phones in the country being smartphones[2] in 2019 (ICASA 2020).

Mobile access penetration rates in the country are still high even though using mobile Internet connections, the most common form of Internet access in South Africa (Stats SA 2022), is expensive for the majority of people (Oyedemi 2015). There are no significant socio-demographic differences as far as mobile phone ownership among the youth is concerned, as shown by Table 10.4. Thus, cell phones have become a crucial tool for digital participation and inclusion for the majority of the country's youth and a form of digital technology that is relatively more accessible.

Africa's youth, South Africa included, are able to use mobile technology in a variety of ways to connect to the global village thanks to the proliferation of cell phones and, with them, mobile Internet connections, including texting, tweeting, chatting, online gaming, and posting through various Internet portals (Joshi et al. 2019). Youth in the region use social media and networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in large numbers, just like young people in the rest of the world.

Apart from less serious activities like online gaming and dating, young people in Africa also use social media for more serious ones like political expression, civic engagement, and bringing about social and political change (Barrons 2012; Chatora 2012; Oginni & Moitui 2015). As a result, mobile technology and mobile Internet usage through social digital platforms have become effective socio-political tools for young people on the continent. For instance, social media and consequently mobile technology helped the well-known uprisings in North Africa known as the "Arab Spring" (Bohler-Muller & Van der Merwe 2011).

In South Africa, despite the associated costs, usage of these web-based and mobile services that enable people to connect with one another, track

Table 10.4 Percent distribution of mobile phone ownership by background factors

Background factors	*Own mobile phone (n = 1122)*	
	Yes	*No*
Race/ethnicity		
Black African	93.3	6.7
Coloured	87.9	12.1
Asian/Indian	100	0
White	97.2	2.8
Gender		
Male	93.3	7.7
Female	97.8	6.2
Age cohort		
18–24	92.7	7.3
25–29	92.2	7.8
30-35	94.8	5.2
Residence		
Urban	94.5	5.5
Rural	89.9	10.1
Education		
No schooling	40	60
Primary level	79.4	20.6
Secondary level	92.4	7.6
Tertiary level	98.7	1.3
Employment status		
Not employed	89.4	10.6
Employed	98.1	1.9
Total	**7.0**	**93.0**

Source: Round 6 of Afrobarometer Survey, 2016.

progress, and create or manipulate text, audio, photos, and/or video (i.e., social media) has increased dramatically in the country (Joshi et al. 2019). For instance, according to Internet World Statistics 2022, about two-fifths of South Africa's population (24.6 million) had a Facebook account as of April 2022. Undoubtedly, young people, particularly those younger than 30 years, in the country are increasingly looking to social media, as this is the easiest and most accessible ICT platform across sociocultural gradients, albeit in varying degrees of intensity (see Figure 10.1).

However, what Van Dijk and Hacker (2003) refer to as "usage access" or "meaningful usage opportunities" is crucial to inclusion in the information/network society, regardless of the medium used. The current rise in mobile phone ownership overall and social media use, in particular, is thought to present new opportunities for young people to speak more freely online (finding one's voice or community), learn new things, interact with others, and express themselves creatively (Joshi et al. 2019). Empirical studies have found that the majority of South Africa's youth use their mobile devices to socialise and share

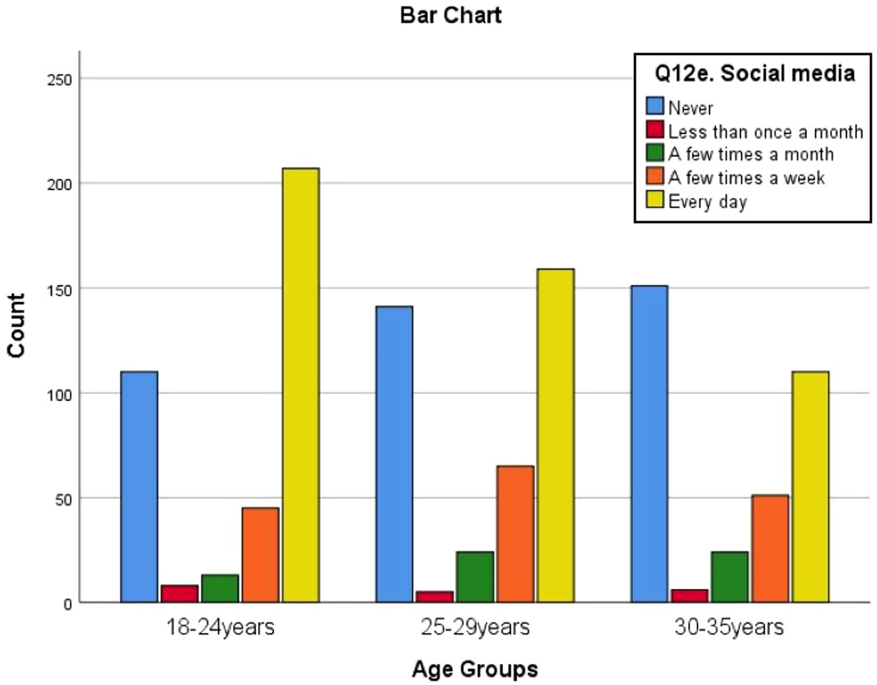

Figure 10.1 Social media use among the youth.

Source: Round 6 of Afrobarometer Survey, 2016.

knowledge, which provides many learning opportunities for young people (see e.g., North et al. 2014; Shava & Chinyamurindi 2018).

However, research has shown that the positive aspects of mobile technology for youth are equally uneven (see e.g., Porter et al. 2020; Sefton-Green 2006). For instance, Oyedemi's (2015) study of 1,044 university students in South Africa found that black African youths are typically the least qualified to benefit from the Internet's potential for enhancing participation and citizenship as they use it the least frequently for many social and economic activities.

Technology and ICT platforms like social media can give African youth fantastic opportunities to learn fundamental digital skills and participate in the expanding global network society, but they can also pose challenges and be disruptive to youth development. Along with the substantial opportunities the digital age brings come a range of disruptive effects of technology on young people, including everything from addictive behaviours, abuse and exploitation, and online bullying to cybercrimes (see, e.g., Mitchell et al. 2016; Van Belle et al. 2007). For instance, a study looking at online bullying among South African youth on Facebook discovered insults, threats, and sexting are popular forms of bullying among young people in the nation (Rachoene & Oyedemi 2015). In addition to the rising antisocial behaviours aided by anonymity on social media, these evolving technological and digital advancements have now made it simpler for predators and dishonest people to evade detection, leaving young people, especially adolescents, vulnerable to all types of victimisations and exploitation.

No matter the nature of the online activities carried out, it is evident that mobile technology, specifically cellular phones, is essential for connecting African youth to the global village, with South Africa being no exception. Mobile connectivity and technology are assisting in bridging some of the region's and South Africa's particular digital apartheid. For instance, Dalvit and Strelitz's (2013) study in rural South Africa's Keiskammahoek found that 91% of the respondents had access to network coverage. Mobile Internet access is still much more common in rural areas than it is anywhere else, even though its use there (59.2%) still lags behind that of urban areas (73.7%) and the nation as a whole (69.4%) (Stats SA 2022). Thus, youth in rural South Africa can now participate in the information society just as easily as their urban counterparts, thanks to mobile access to the Internet.

10.5 Summary and conclusion

No work on youth in contemporary society would be complete without an examination of youth’s access to and use of technology because of the fact that the world is on the cusp of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In this last chapter of the book, this is exactly what we tried to do, namely, briefly examining the youth’s interaction with technology in contemporary South African society. We have demonstrated that South Africa's socioeconomic structures are such that its digital divide mirrors the patterns of social polarisation. The majority of young people in South Africa are still offline, despite having a higher Internet usage rate than other African nations.

Young people living in rural areas and those from low-income households are particularly affected by limited access to ICT and digital infrastructure. The uneven patterns of social inclusion through digital means in the country include more than just skewed youth access. Even though mobile technologies like cellular phones and mobile connectivity are becoming more common, most of the nation’s youth are still unable to take advantage of the significant opportunities that the digital age offers due to issues of affordability and a lack of digital skills and literacy.

The emerging global phenomenon that is the Fourth Industrial Revolution has serious implications for youth development in the country and the region broadly. The emerging digital economies and the concomitant rapid innovations in technology are not only going to change the nature of work significantly but also the types of corresponding skills needed to enter and thrive in the digital economy.

Technological innovation and digitalisation, though unavoidable for economic development in this post-modern era, present unique opportunities and challenges for young people in the region, especially in South Africa. However, given the extent of social polarisation in the country, unlocking new digital possibilities for the nation's youth will necessitate significant and coordinated efforts from all sectors of society.

Since South Africa's youth differ considerably along sociodemographic indicators, various forms of structural inequalities will need redressing to ensure that the country's youth take full advantage of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. At the most fundamental level, training is required to equip young people with the necessary ICT and digital skill set to participate in the increasing information/network global village. At the most advanced level, young people will require more targeted capacity building and institutional empowerment to be able to engage in digital work or enter emerging competitive digital markets. Either of the interventions requires bridging the skillset and socioeconomic divides seen in the broader population to harness the unique potential of the digital age for the country's youth.

Given the challenges in the education sector (see Chapter 7 on youth education and skills acquisition), a starting point will be reimagining how education in the country is transformed to prepare, equip, and deliver skilled individuals who can partake in and drive the new revolution. For young people with low socioeconomic backgrounds, for example, specific class disadvantages—such as a lack of access to ICT and digital devices, tools, and infrastructure like computers and the Internet—create barriers to their inclusion and participation in the digital economy.

For these youth, the impact of their class extends beyond material access, as it has serious implications for their abilities to enter the digital space and succeed. These youth often lack the necessary capabilities—the technical skills and abilities—for successful digital inclusion and participation. Therefore, the education system will play a vital role in helping young people gain skills that match the evolving demand of the technologically driven labour market.

Notes

1. Digital literacy is the degree to which people have the capacity, knowledge, motivation, and competence to access, process, engage, and understand the information needed to benefit from the use of digital technologies, such as computers, the internet, mobile devices, and applications (Beaunoyer et al. 2020).
2. A smartphone is a mobile phone with advanced features: it has Wi-Fi connectivity, web browsing capabilities, a high-resolution touchscreen display and the ability to use apps. The majority use one of the following mobile operating systems: Android, Symbian, iOS, BlackBerry OS, and Windows Mobile.

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