

GUGULE-TOIS, IT'S THE PLACE TO BE!

**On Bodies, Sex, Respectability and Social Reproduction: Women's Experiences
of Youth on Cape Town's Periphery**

by

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Introduction

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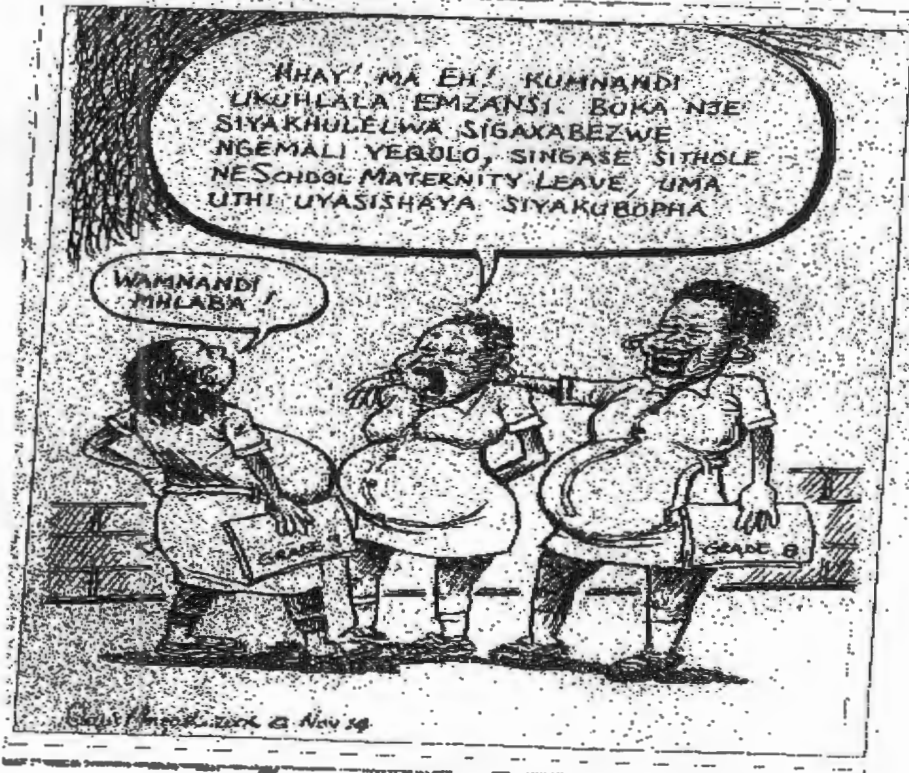


Figure one¹

"It's good to live in SA. We get pregnant, we get a grant...and now we could even get maternity leave...and if a guy hits us, we take them to jail!"

"It's good to live here!"

¹A cartoon scanned and emailed to me from a local newspaper. the attached message stated "our youth today"

Initiating this research project I reflected on the subject of popular and youth culture, gender and sexuality; which then drove me to consider an analysis of dress codes and fashion in regards to notions of female respectability.^x Through my research process, I have often thought that I had digressed considerably; yet as I begin to narrate this story I am both surprised and amazed to find that this is in fact what I have done and thankfully, I believe I have done more. This “full circle,” in thinking, doing and now presenting new knowledge was initiated in part due to a personal interest in the gendered socio-political, economic and historical meanings attached to the body surface as a whole, which I soon changed to a consideration of both the bodily surface and its interior. As stated in my research proposal, it was my contention that the female body, as opposed to the normative (or rather socially *normalized*) male body, has been discursively constructed as defiled, unclean and as reeking with sickness according to dominant paradigms of knowledge and social practice. Through the processes of conquest, colonialism, imperialism, racism and apartheid; black people and especially black women’s bodies have suffered this violence. I have an interest in dissecting the manner by which such discourses then translate into common-sense understandings about how we both dress and perform our bodies in various social spaces; about how we begin to construct the discourse of “our culture,” of good girls and social misfits, who wear the labels of “prostitute,” “lesbian,” or “rural,” (despite their true actions or conditions) within urban spaces in contemporary Southern Africa; considering the impact of the history of a geographical apartheid, a migrant labour system, the production and re/production of notions of femininity closely associated with domesticity and the very dominant narrative of female respectability.

This research project falls under the “umbrella,” of the SANPAD: “Forging Coca Cola Identities,” project that is aimed at investigating the “practices and processes of popular youth cultures of young men and women located on the urban periphery of post-apartheid South Africa [that are] used to inform the formation of gendered identities, and the sexual cultures associated with these.”² The SANPAD Project aims to examine how urban youth aged between 12 and 19 years, who are living on the social and geographic margins of Cape Town “reinstate, renegotiate, renovate, and change their identities of masculinity and femininity through their use of various urban spaces and through their selective consumptions of local and global aspects of popular culture.”³ This considered, I described my research aims as endeavouring to interrogate the shifting meanings and treatments assigned to the body, through things such as dress, skin, hairstyling or hygiene, for example; examining how such treatments function within different contexts of space and time; of and by women aged between 12 and 19 living in Guguletu.

Guiding my theoretical entry into this work was the hypothesis that the body is a site where masculinity and femininity are articulated, reified, contested and authenticated. Furthermore, notions of femininity as expressed on or through the body function in a political economy to differentiate boys from girls or girls from women for example. External expressions of femininity and masculinity also reinforce heterosexuality.^x Although they may seem trivial upon first glance, notions of beauty, fashion, hairstyling and “personal hygiene,” are all political spaces where gendered political power is contested. As I suggested earlier, in

² Salo, Elaine. 2005. SANPAD Project Proposal. Cape Town: University of Cape Town. Pg. 1

³ Ibid.

a post/colonial and post/apartheid context, where women's bodies are racially codified in various ways, this contestation intensifies. In order to better describe and theorize this proposition, I take the strong position that a historical account of the manner by which identities are formulated within certain spaces is necessary to complete this project and the strong position that a history of the construction of the space (that is, Guguletu) within which the subjective experiences of these young people have been formulated must be re/constructed.⁴ I struggled to find complete histories of Guguletu, either from the perspective of women, or from that of young people, with few exceptions that I mention later. As a result, one of the priorities of this work is to begin to document a history of women's subjective experience of residing in the "urban periphery" of Cape Town, as I believe that any attempt to begin to understand present day constructions of personhood would be superficial without it.

⁴ As a foreigner; that is, as a black, middle class, Zimbabwean woman whose only prior engagement with Guguletu involved driving past the great expanse of informal settlement on either side of the N2 between Cape Town and Cape Town International Airport; I have been most fortunate, because as soon as I had a proposal in mind I also acquired a research companion whose aid has been immeasurable and who mediated my entry into a part of her world that has shaped, re/shaped and configured my research project, enabling me to complete the task of adding to a growing body of African feminist

⁴ I am not suggesting in any way that a focus on the construction of Guguletu requires that I imagine that it exists in isolation. On the contrary, engaging myself with the history of Guguletu has required engaging with a history of apartheid, colonialism, the meanings of region labour relations as well as its relationship with the globe to put it quite generally.

knowledge. I met Ms. Toetie Madlingozi through a mutual friend who explained that Toetie had initiated a project for young women in Guguletu where she was from and perhaps I might be able to work with her. I met with Toetie soon after and joined forces with her to become a part of Project Siyenza, whose program I will elaborate on further at a later stage. Through this project, I had immediate "access" to young women, who I spent some time with before I really "jumped into," what we would consider to be the serious fieldwork. Recalling my first visit to Guguletu to meet the young women, in comparison to my last visit with them I am completely amazed first, at how much they have grown and second, how much I have grown since we all met. I walked in there overcompensating, stuttering, frightened and with a set of clever little ideas about how to do social research and what to fall back on when methods one through twenty had all failed.[^]I walk away with a healthy appreciation for simple "girl talk," as in this case I found that there is no easier way to do social research than to approach it as a conversation with your friends.[^]

During my first visit with the women, we ran a short workshop and after it I spoke to the girls about my research. I explained that I was interested in knowing what young women do to prepare themselves for "the world." They all seemed quite enthusiastic, so much so that during a break that day one of the girls approached me and asked me to speak to one of the other girls, because she needed to wear deodorant as she does not. Aside from struggling with whether to sponsor the young lady with a bottle of deodorant, or to enjoy her silent rebellion against dominant femininity, I was particularly struck by the fact that the young woman had been described as being "so rural," by her peers. Her unfortunate inadequacy with dominant ideologies about "good" smells and "bad" smells for women to

manage was a signifier of her presumed lack of acquaintance with urban social mores. This threw my research into all the right directions; that is, to consider first that locating a study in Guguletu meant locating a study at a site which is a product of a migrant labour system; this also means that I needed to think about the consumption of local and global products more historically. We often like to think about globalization as a recent phenomena (or at least one with most significance in present times), but thinking this incident through I wish to challenge this and instead insist on thinking about the consumption of said products as a result of industrialization, which of course created a migrant labour system.⁵ The relationship between constructions of femininity in the urban centre and the rural periphery come into scope and the fact that black people living in the urban space were geographically and hence socially and politically placed within the periphery of the city all create a significant and tenuous new set of social meanings and social reproduction.

Moving Beyond the Model of Spectacle

I spend a great deal of time reading and having read a lot, at the beginning of this project I was overwhelmed by the thought of how to translate my findings into word. Reviewing the literature on young people and youth cultures, particularly located in the townships of South Africa, one cannot help but see a very grim picture; one similar to what Njabulo Ndebele comments on in saying that “the history of black South African literature has largely been the history of the representation of spectacle”⁵, continuing to add that:

⁵ Ndebele, Njabulo. 1991. *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture*. Scottsville: University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press. Pg. 31

“What is on display here is the spectacle of social instability. The necessary ingredients of this display are precisely the triteness and barrenness of thought, the most deliberate waste of intellectual energy on trivialities. *It is, in fact, the ‘emptying out of interiority to the benefit of its exterior signs, (the) exhaustion of the content by the form’.* The overwhelming form is the method of displaying the culture of oppression to the utmost in bewilderment.”⁶

In Cape Town, such bewilderment is easily viewed, because of the representations of this city/space, which perpetuate an image of a city that is “dangerous,” due to its proximity to the “illegal,” informal (hence criminal) settlements of persons living on the margins of this city. People wearing black bodies, whether living in brick houses or illegal shacks on the Cape Town periphery continue to wear bodies that are hyper-dramatized as criminal in current discourse as these places are seen as both the source and often the site of the worst violence in South Africa, a country which itself continues to be scripted as one of the most violent places in the world. It is not my intention to suggest that there is no crime in Guguletu, or in South Africa, or that the conditions under which young people are constructing their lives are “just”. Instead my work intends to take on the challenge posed by Anthony Bogues, that is for those of us involved in intellectual production to shift some of “our”, “labour into understanding a new set of relationships and subjectivities,” continuing to add that he wants us “to think about the relationship of power in its “capillary forms of existence,” how power as a field of force exists in other ways than its conventional state forms and how in these ways, it becomes productive creating geographical spaces of

⁶ Ndebele. 1991: 33 (my emphasis)

violence and death while re-mapping sovereignty,”⁷ urging us to think about the manner by which geographical spaces construct our subjective experiences through an understanding of violence, as it is mapped on our bodies.

Taking this challenge on requires that first, I recognize the meaning of violence as it has been mapped on to my own body, and furthermore on to the bodies of the young women I have engaged with for the purpose of this study. Without my instigation, the girls very openly described narratives of violence which form a part of their day to day understandings of life – that of the funerals of their peers; of gangster boyfriends; of physical conflict between girls. These discussions were not surprising to me (or at least my management of the discussion was quite successful as I did not behave as though I was shocked in any way) because I could relate at times, or I could add a similar story and furthermore, I could think through these stories as part of a continuum of “violence,” often normalized as a part of female experience on a local and global scale. For the young women, to recount a story about a girl they knew being gang-raped and killed was not horrific in the sense that many of us may expect and I believe the position that Bogue offers, like that of Achille Mbembe in his essay “Necropolitics,” is useful, as he suggests that “in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living*

⁷ Bogue, Anthony. 2005. “The Politics of Power and Violence: Rethinking the Political in the Caribbean.” An Essay read at the conference on Caribbean Studies, Yale University. Pg. 3

*dead.*⁸ Gang rape and murder in the context of global “death-worlds,” enters into common-sense understandings of teenage life and community life, with each generation holding its own opinion about the degeneration of their society. As Ndebele suggests,

“We must contend with the fact that even under the most oppressive of conditions, people are always trying and struggling to maintain a semblance of normal social order. They will attempt to apply tradition and custom to manage their day to day family problems: they will resort to socially acquired behaviour patterns to eke out a means of subsistence. They apply systems of values that they know. Often those values will undergo changes under certain pressing conditions. The transformation of those values constitutes the essential drama in the lives of ordinary people. The range of problems is ordinary enough but constitutes the active social consciousness of most people.”⁹

My project intends to investigate the ordinary practices of life, as a means of overcoming an obsession with spectacle. This position arises from my own desire to attempt a narrative of youth culture that moves beyond a description of the exterior and to find a way to account for the *interior* in my own effort to describe human life.⁷ In feminist intellectual practice, we have come to understand the personal as political and to value the meaning of ordinary social life as deeply contested political practice. These practices are also deeply historically rooted, so as an aspirant Social Scientist, I have made a number of theoretical and methodological choices in shaping a narrative of social life for young women in post/Apartheid Guguletu. I take the position that interrogating popular cultures, globalization, gender and personhood within the proposed “urban periphery” of Cape

⁸ Mbembe, Achille. 2003. “Necropolitics,” in *Public Culture* 15:1. Durham: Duke University Press. Pg. 40

⁹ Ndebele 1991: 49

Town requires an engagement with a history of the creation of that space from the perspective of women. As revealed by the description of the young "rural" woman; the socio-historical meaning of space offers many clues about how people begin to construct notions of personhood and in turn, ideologies about respectability¹⁰.

Exploring Subjective Experience

Jumping from Ndebele's call for a rediscovery of the ordinary, I have selected discourse analysis as my "tool," for exploring subjective experience. Amina Mama describes discourses as:

"Historically constructed regimes of knowledge [that] include the common-sense assumptions and taken-for granted ideas, belief systems and myths that groups of people share and through which they understand each other. Discourses articulate and convey formal and informal knowledge and ideologies. They are constantly being reproduced and constituted, and can change and evolve in the process of communication. A discourse is a shared grid of knowledge that one or more people can 'enter' and through which explicit and implicit meanings are shared."¹¹

An example would be the comment about the young girl being "so rural." The people around her shared a grid of knowledge about what constitutes appropriate smell and in fact, during a group discussion this subject was further blown apart when the girls explained that there are certain kinds of deodorant that are viewed as "cool," and hence more progressive

¹⁰ The inclusion of Bogue and Mbembe's positions regarding the meaning of violence and its resultant impact on the subjectivities of all people and particularly young people in our contemporary world are crucial to this body of work. It is my contention that as I narrate this tale it is both implicit and explicitly clear that there is a continuity of violence; symbolic and otherwise, played on and through the body which is related to the manner by which gendered socio-political power is performed and enacted in our world. This suggestion does not only relate to young girls in post/apartheid South Africa and it is my intent to add to a body of knowledge that does account for these sorts of power relations as critical to understanding our contemporary world situation.

and other deodorants, which even though they themselves may have used in past times, have learned are signs of backwardness. Alternatively, one can be sure that the accused girl too shared in this grid of knowledge and whether explicitly or implicitly (depending on her personal circumstance) was providing a counter-discourse which too might have its proponents, for example a teacher at the school where some of the girls go; who they described as being smelly, but “just one of those” that you expect that from. What is both useful and interesting for me is that I too shared this grid of knowledge from my memory of growing up and being a teenager, I also understood what it means to refer to someone as “rural,” as this is a discourse that is possibly globally shared amongst people in cities. Discourse analysis allows me as a researcher to delve into such bodies of *collective memory*, as we find that in Southern Africa, where rural families often visit their generally economically privileged urban relatives this discourse is particularly strengthened as the social mores of the city, although viewed as “corrupting,” or “corrupted,” are also “modern,” “civilized,” and functioning to contribute to the impervious script of respectable behaviour.

Discourse analysis is “an interpretative technique, in which subject positions are located and the collective assumptions and shared meanings and values that have been cumulatively built up through the collective experience of the group are described.”¹² Furthermore, discourse analysis “involves a conceptualization of language as constitutive and functional,” therefore requiring that those of us using it must “adopt an orientation to

¹¹ Mama, Amina. 1995. *Beyond the Masks: Race, Gender and Subjectivity*. New York & London: Routledge. Pg. 98

¹² Ibid.

talk and text as social action.”¹³ Cresswell contends that idyllically, discourse analysis should be used to analyze “naturally occurring text and talk,”¹⁴ however there can be many ethical and practical issues with this approach and an alternative approach is to set up group discussions with pre-existing groups, like groups of friends to simulate as much as possible, a discussion that is spontaneous and more relaxed. I chose this as my primary method in data collection. I do wish to add that my engagement with the women I worked with in Guguletu is limited and I make no claims to have learned what it is like to be a woman in Guguletu in its entirety; however the tool of analyzing discourse has proved to be very beneficial in my attempt to explore subjective experiences. I elaborate further on this matter in the Methodology Section of this research report.

Power, Resistance, “Discursive Tools” and Feminist Epistemology: What is my point?

The presentation of discourse as my primary tool in elaborating a narrative of social and historical life in Guguletu arises from an interest in analysing power in a manner similar to that elaborated in Foucauldian discourse. I do this as a feminist who later (in the Methodological Section of this report) describes my methodology as one which appropriates standpoint theory; that is: an epistemological approach which sees as its primary priority a shift from a masculinist dominated/dominant discourse of knowledge, by replacing women (and other subjugated peoples) into dominant discourses as knowers/producers of knowledge and subjects of it. It has been often noted that “the use of Foucault has created a

¹³ Cresswell, John. 1998. “Discursive Psychology,” in *Qualitative Enquiry and Research Design*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. Pg. 93

¹⁴ Cresswell. 1998: 92

lot of tensions in feminist debates.”¹⁵ This has been due to “the lack of gender in his accounts, the inconsistencies in this portrayal of power and the unsuitability of his ethical framework.”¹⁶ Standpoint feminists are particularly concerned with his presentation as “this account of power appears to imply that any notion of structural power – say patriarchy – is false.”¹⁷ Feminists are not alone in their suspicion of Foucault’s presentation of power, Abiola Irele for example thinks that African writers “cannot afford the luxury of an unexerted nihilism or a morose anti-humanism”¹⁸ that Foucault’s reading of history and power suggest.

This considered many of us still recognize the usefulness of his work considering “Foucault’s theorisation of the subject as the most interesting area of his work, for feminists.”¹⁹ Others have noted his presentation of genealogy, writing:

“Foucault’s project of genealogy has multifarious ways that the female subject has been historically and culturally constructed [...] genealogy is Foucault’s suggestion for doing research. It is both a mode of reflection on the nature and development of modern power and a theoretical tool for doing research. A key insight in genealogy is that truth cannot be separated from the procedures of its production. Consequently genealogy is concerned with the processes, procedures and apparatuses, whereby truth and knowledge are produced, in what Foucault calls the discursive regime of the modern era.”²⁰

¹⁵ Tamboukou, Maria. 2003. “Writing Feminist Genealogies”, in *Journal of Gender Studies* Vol. 12. Issue. 1. Pg. 5

¹⁶ McLaughlin, Janice. 2003. *Feminist Social and Political Theory: Contemporary Debates and Dialogue*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Pg. 120

¹⁷ McLaughlin, J. 2003: 122

¹⁸ Irele, Abiola. 2001. *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa & the Black Diaspora*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pg. 81

¹⁹ Tamboukou, M. 2003: 5

²⁰ Tamboukou, M. 2003: 6

I find both theorizations useful and have had to consider a method of appropriating these theories and methods in a feminist manner, that is: in a manner that still offers a structural critique of power, while allowing for the more complex analysis of power that Foucault provides a model for.

The first method of appropriation I employ is in the selection of subject matter. Selecting a research area that involves tracing the genealogy of women's experience (of youth, the body and space) beings this process. The structure of patriarchal power (like the other structural powers such as colonialism or apartheid) are very difficult to make absent as the discourses produced by/about/surrounding black women in a township in South Africa are unapologetically connected to such structures and their histories. Simultaneously these women are co/producers, participants, resisters and manipulators of said discourse and Foucault's offering of power as fluid (that is: not just from the top down) and complex allows me to offer what I believe is a "better" feminist analysis; one that does not contribute to a dominant discourse of black women as the perpetual "beasts of burden," incapable of action or agency in the face of multiple oppressions.

Lila Abu-Lughod's theorizations of power²¹ are interesting to me in this regard. She notes that the study of resistance has emerged in recent years as "hot" research areas. In her own appropriation of Foucauldian analysis Abu-Lughod's work is interested in "unlikely forms of resistance, subversions rather than large-scale collective insurrections, small or local resistances not tied to the overthrow of systems or even to ideologies of emancipation."²² I

²¹ As presented in Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1990. "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Bedouin Women." in *American Ethnologist* Vol. 17. Issue 1.

²² Abu-Lughod, L. 1990: 41

have an interest in not only describing the multiple levels of discourse narrated to me during my fieldwork on one level, but I wish to take this further by using the notion of "resistance," as Abu-Lughod does, that is: to "use resistance as a diagnostic of power."²³ This does not necessary mean that power will always be located within structures; on the contrary the location of power then becomes more complex and multi-faceted.

In my continued desire to appropriate Foucault, I also wish to think about the subject of my study in relation to the methodological approach of genealogy. Mapping narratives from those women who were among the first to enter Guguletu, to those of the "born-free" generation it is my contention that I am able to trace generational shifts in discourse that are both diagnostic of structural and capillary forms of power. The "point" or main arguments of my research project are therefore that:

1. an exploration of women's experiences of youth, "the body," and place in Guguletu will reveal a number of complex discourses that are diagnostic of a series of power relations
2. in employing Foucault's methodological approach of genealogy I am able to present the value of multigenerational narratives to trace "the processes, procedures and apparatuses", whereby the discourses of feminities and the discourses of "truth and knowledge" about social life are produced in Guguletu
3. by considering the transformations in power and resistance between the generations I am able to "diagnose" the shifts in different forms of power

²³ Abu-Lughod, L. 1990: 42

and vitally to “diagnose” this in relation to structural power formations such as “apartheid” and “globalization”²⁴

Presenting this “New Knowledge”

✧ In presenting my work, I will begin with a review chapter that will present the theoretical approaches I have taken in thinking about “the body,” in this research. This chapter will pay special attention to the impact of colonialism and apartheid in creating a particular discourse about black bodies and particularly about black female bodies and the resultant script of female respectability. I will continue to discuss the relationship between female respectability and social reproduction as they relate to such things as consumption, particularly in urban areas. This chapter will pay particular attention to the history of Southern Africa. This chapter will begin to develop the following themes: Beauty; Race; (Hetero)Sexuality; Youth Cultures; Female Respectability; Social Reproduction and Femininity.

✧ The following chapter introduces what I am calling African feminist epistemology, where I describe my methodological approach to the research question that I have posed, and in an attempt to answer it must ask how one begins to account for subjective experiences, moving past the notion of spectacle, to take on a serious study of interiority. This methodological section will be followed up in the following chapter where I will map the journey of my entry into Guguletu and I will speak here about the complexities involved in attempting to access knowledge without participating in an Othering process by imposing

²⁴ Super-structures themselves which are diagnostic of capitalism?

an imperialistic gaze. I also speak here to the fact that I worked in one particular area of Guguletu; the streets on and around NY21, where family semi-detached units can be found. This is of particular relevance, considering the meaning of “family,” and “origin,” both in regards to accessing a home in this area of Guguletu during the apartheid era and also in regards to mores of respectable behaviour. Once again, without my instigation, the “home” arose as a central theme in my work and I am confident that this is closely related to the long history of difficulties in formal housing provision in the Western Cape. Central to a critique of my entry into Guguletu is the argument I put forward of researching in Guguletu as being something akin to cannibalism – using Mzoli’s²⁵ as a metaphor for the consumption of bodies to explicate what tensions I have felt entering into Guguletu to paint a picture of how I see social life.

The next chapter offers my re-fabrication of a women’s history of Guguletu. Part of my approach was to interview a group of women who were among the first to move to Guguletu and who all moved to NY21 or the streets around it. I also did the regular library review, finding pieces from architecture conferences, government documentation and even from the University of Cape Town’s own “Urban Problems Unit.” I spent some time visiting the Cape Town archives, finding even more information ranging from personal correspondence between women in Cape Town and local government officials informing

²⁵ A Guguletu eatery, where both locals and foreigners gather to drink and eat meat. The increasing popularity of this place has caused some issues within the community, particularly with those who live close by to it. They recently forwarded a complaint to the police who soon raided it, as people drive in from the greater metropolitan region of Cape Town to eat there and basically invade and take over the space. With all the festivities, not only are the people’s homes blocked off by the traffic; their families and children are exposed to drinking adults. There are many Guguletu residents who frequent Mzoli’s and view him as a local hero and success story, as he has even launched his own brand of wine! Tourists have also taken this place on as one of Cape Town’s tourist destinations and one often sees numerous tour buses coming through the place as well.

them of their imminent move to what was previously known as “Nyanga West” and interestingly enough I even found correspondence between the local government and the national body which revealed that there was a great deal of contestation in regards to the re-naming of Guguletu. Due to the scope of this study and the focus on youth cultures, I do not enter a discussion that reveals the immense amount of thinking/reading I did in framing Guguletu in my own mind. Instead, I briefly introduce the space and I enter into a description of the sorts of discourses I encountered during my conversations with this “first generation” of Guguletu residents.

The following chapter is titled “bridging the gap” where I offer a discussion of the discourses offered by the women of my own age group – these insights are useful in making the links between the contemporary youth’s perceptions to those who were “youth” thirty or forty years ago. My findings reveal that the “first generation” has a very clear and critical view on today’s youth. The middle generation are less adamant in their elaboration of a “doomed” generation at hand, yet it was also a member of this generation that 1) invited me into the space of Guguletu as an interventionist, and 2) emailed me the picture at the beginning of this paper – the cartoon that depicts today’s young women as taking advantage of the privileges provided to them by the post/apartheid government (a sentiment clearly shared by the “first generation”).

The other side of this story is provided by the narratives offered by the young women themselves. In the next chapter I do not necessarily begin in response to the preceding discourses of current youth; instead I focus on the narratives offered by the youth themselves during which they reflect upon their own lives in the present (as opposed to the

others who spoke of the past in relation to the present). I will provide a comparative discussion in my conclusion, where I return to my initial theoretical argument, to answer the question of how these narratives are diagnostic of power, structural and capillary; and also reveal how they support my three main arguments.

Chapter 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

The "Body," Femininities, (Hetero)Sexuality and Social Reproduction

I sat in dubious amazement.

Dubious, because I was not entirely comfortable with the depictions of an inherent "African-ness;" that one who is prescribed as "African," can "feel the rhythm of the drum in their blood;" that I was supposed to find images of myself in this complex matrix of "African dance," to find "Umoja, the spirit of togetherness."

I simultaneously felt great admiration; because of the extraordinary ways the men and women were able to move their bodies.

The entire show was a myriad of performances of femininity on and through the black female body, but there was one specific moment when I thought, "there she is..."

A curvy (but slender) black woman, weighed down by a whopping afro wig and large earrings; her finger nails long and adorned in scarlet; her tiny cleavage-revealing top and mini-mini-skirt in the same shade of red – topped off with a sexy pair of red heels. The swing of her hips; her fluent use of the language of "the street," her axiomatic acculturation to the "big city": this was the rural black man's first encounter with the urban black woman:

There she was: black woman/prostitute.

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²⁶ These are my reflections after watching UMOJA, recently at the Artscape Theatre in Cape Town. Umoja is dance/theatre that traces the developments in music and dance performance in southern/South Africa from pre-colonial to post-Apartheid South Africa, revealing how shifts in the political economy affected the performance on the body. The woman I speak of here was actually meant to represent an urban woman – the first woman the rural man encountered in the big city. She was also quite clearly coded as a sex worker, a reflection of the modern, yet corrupting ways of the city.

This scene was useful for me as I began to think carefully about female respectability in relation to the performance of the body. Several themes arose, as I outlined earlier. These themes are interconnected and all serve to begin to explain the terrain of black female subjectivities, so my literature review will offer one cohesive presentation of all these themes, in conversation with each other. This review will cover the theoretical objectives of this study. Another review of past work on the subject of youth cultures, where I will locate my current study will also be included.

Considering this project, I visited some literature on the social function of the body. The first of these was Judith Butler's, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, which in its introduction aptly asks, "is there a way to link the question of the materiality of the body to the performativity of gender?"²⁷ In line with Butler's discussion; the collection of essays titled, *The Social and Political Body*, offers that "the thesis that social phenomena shape and invest human bodies is a familiar one. By itself, however, it understates the shape and import of social "constitution" for it is not bodies alone, but more crucially individuals and their identities that are constituted through the social shaping of bodies. There come to be individuals (subjects) – human beings with particular identities, genders, characters, joys, understandings, and the like, largely through bodily transformations that result from the immersion of bodies in the field of social relations and power."²⁸ They continue to introduce the four dimensions of the human body (as implied in its socioculturation,) and name the fourth one as the "surface of the body, the slate upon which is "inscribed" the marks of

²⁷ Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York & London: Routledge. Pg. 1

²⁸ Schatzki, T & Natter, W. 1996. *The Social & Political Body*. New York: Guildford Press. Pg. 2

culture, human coexistence, and social toil. *This surface is the flesh that is symbolically and meaningfully punctured, incised, decorated, clothed, done up, disguised and stylized.*²⁹ The theories presented in both works serve to first present the body as a social space and its surface as a arena where identities are not only shaped but where forms of power are also contested. What is valuable to note here is that while the performance of gendered identity on and through the body takes primary focus, there is a notable absence of “skin,” as not only a part of that performance of gender identity, but of general relevance in regards to how the body becomes a site where forms of power are contested. Skin colour is of particular relevance when one considers the body in colonial and post-colonial Africa so this critique is one my work takes very seriously.

Reflecting on this issue, Janet Berry Hess offers Butler and Timothy Burke’s input which “identifies the body surface as a uniquely important locus for the configuration of identity, sexuality and gender,” continuing to add that “the construction of both individual and social identity through the representation, regulation, and comportment of the body in South Africa is longstanding.”³⁰ Hess importantly notes, considering that the notion of “the” body in and off itself is a uniquely Western concept, citing Burke in this regard. Burke’s assertion is that “the” body is the invention of 19th century European colonialisms that were obsessed with controlling the body and more so the collective bodies of Africans.³¹ That is, what is being constructed (and has been constructed through the process of colonialism) is

²⁹ Schatzki, T & Natter, W 1996: 5. Emphasis added.

³⁰ Hess, J. 2001. “Regulating/Representing the Body: South Africa : A Syllabus,” in *Art Journal*. Spring. Pg. 61

the process of individualization, which is crucial as this is core to certain ideas about labour, which once again form a part of contemporary capitalist discourse in Africa. Questions of labour of course relate to questions about "the body." This is not to mean however, as Hess states that "the" body is a useless construct to study within an African context, as I am suggesting that a history of the introduction of capitalism and the process of colonialism have contributed to the construction of a relevant discourse of this nature.

A collection of essays edited by Hildi Hendrickson called *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa*, offer a study of treatments of the body surface in 19th and 20th century African history, and making a point which elaborates on Hess' contention, Hendrickson contends that these essays "demonstrate that Africa and the West are in a semiotic web whose implications are not completely controlled by any of us."³² The essays explore the "bodily and material engendering of women, spirits, youths ancestors, and entrepreneurs; [considering] fashion, spirit possession, commodity exchange, hygiene and mourning, among other divergent spheres of action and meaning."³³ This volume views the treatments assigned to the body as reflective of both structure and agency within cultures and also "explore the significance of the body surface in three processes central to social reproduction and representation: the authentication of social categories, the legitimation of authority, and the creation of value."³⁴ This is important for me as I consider

³¹ Hendrickson, H. (Ed). 1996. *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa*. Durham: Duke University Press. Pg 9. Also see Burke, Timothy. 1996a. *Lifebuy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe*. London: Leicester University Press. Pg.190

³² Hendrickson 1996: 9

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Hendrickson 1996: 8

femininities and the formation of social identity by young women and the literature on femininities that I will continue to pursue will offer more insight on that point.

→What these essays importantly interrogate is the creation of value, in regards to social reproduction that goes beyond the general analysis of masculine and feminine – as they “delineate the processes whereby value is created in body treatments that derive from foreign sources.”³⁵ This is of particular relevance when conducting a study as a post/colonial Black African woman, about the bodies of post/colonial African women as there is a special historical relationship between our bodies and global capitalist patriarchy. The essay by Timothy Burke in this volume “investigates how colonial bureaucrats, missionaries, travellers, and mercantilists linked order and rationality with cleanliness, defining African bodies – and African people in the process – as disorderly, depraved, and polluting,” adding that “women’s bodies in particular were scrutinized.”³⁶ Keeping this relationship in mind, the authors note^x that clothing and other treatments of the body offer important signs in regards to the performances through which modernity and history have been “conceived, constructed, and challenged” in Africa, and that the body has been a potent space on which colonial relations have been enacted and contested.

Burke’s essay in this volume “explores some of the intersections between race, bodies, and cleanliness in colonial Zimbabwe, with reference to recent scholarly models for

³⁵ Hendrickson 1996: 8

³⁶ Ibid.

recounting the social and historical role played by the human body.³⁷ This offers the presentation of the African body as a subject of considerable concern to colonial administrators, as “hygiene, domesticity and manners were only components in a larger network concerned with the bodies of colonial subjects in southern Africa.”³⁸ Although located in Southern Rhodesia, Burke’s analysis is useful for my study, as his examination begins at early European perceptions of African bodies in south-central Africa, noting the shifts in attitudes towards them. He importantly notes that “social segregation, especially the segregation of urban space, was frequently justified in colonial society for an appeal to images of disease, dirt and pollution.”³⁹

† Considering the gender dimension of body politics, Burke states that African women were especially targeted in colonial campaigns against African bodies, as “images of hygienic practice and “civilized” bodily habits were aimed at women largely through the intensive promotion of domesticity” adding that “the imagined body of the colonial subject in Zimbabwe (and presumably southern Africa) was first black *but also crucially female, especially in regard to hygiene.*”⁴⁰ In her book titled, *African Encounters with Domesticity*, Karen Transberg Hansen offers that domesticity has many meanings and “to define it is to describe a set of ideas that over the course of the 19th Century Western history have associated women with family, domestic values, and home;” ideas which in everyday life are expressed through such

³⁷ Burke, Timothy. 1996b. “Sunlight Soap Has Saved My Life: Hygiene, Commodification and the Body in Colonial Discourse,” in Hendrikson, H. (Ed) *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa*. Durham: Duke University Press. Pg. 189

³⁸ Burke 1996b: 191

³⁹ Burke 1996b: 194

⁴⁰ Burke 1996b:195

things as family, diet, hygiene, health, body, clothing, fashion, consumption, accumulation, architecture, space, labour, leisure and time; concluding that domesticity is thus concerned with gender, space, work and power.”⁴¹ This is important to note, however it is equally important to bear African agency in mind. As Burke reveals, Africans offered an equal and opposite campaign at defining the “true” African body.⁴² The gendered dimension of this campaign requires further interrogation.⁴³

Timothy Burke further explores the realm of domesticity and hygiene in Southern Africa in his book, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe*, which uses Zimbabwe as the case study once again to reveal the role that consumption played in the development and maintenance of colonial domination. Burke chooses to “focus specifically [...] on goods made for use on the body, toiletries like soap, Vaseline-type body lotions, skin lighteners, cosmetics, shampoos, perfumes, and deodorants.”⁴³ His analyses will all be useful in determining historical shifts from pre-colonial to colonial through to post-Apartheid treatments of the body in relation to shifts in the material and political economy. As Burke posits, these shifts have an important gender dimension.

Teresa Barnes has conducted some work in Zimbabwe which exemplifies such a gender dimension, for example the historical work titled, “*We Women Worked So Hard*”: *Gender, Urbanization and Social Reproduction in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1930 – 1956*, which draws

⁴¹ Hansen, Karen. (Ed). 1992. *African Encounters with Domesticity*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press. Pg. 1

⁴² Burke 1996b: 195

⁴³ Burke 199a: 4

from the oral history interviews she conducted with Everjoice Win to complete the text, *To Live a Better Life*, which recorded the testimonies of urban life for a group of early African⁴⁴ inhabitants of Harare recount their experiences of life in the city. These works attempt a history of gender and urban relations in colonial Zimbabwe, and the approach taken by Barnes falls very closely to the approach I choose to take.⁴⁵ The focus on social reproduction in relationship with urbanization and gender allows for a greater exploration of this gender dimension, as her approach, like mine places the subjective experiences of women entering into city spaces at the forefront of the work.

Returning to *Clothing and Difference*, Bastian offers an essay titled, "Female "Alhajis" and Entrepreneurial Fashions: Flexible Identities in South-eastern Nigerian Clothing Practice." In this piece, she posits that "because of what we see when we peer through the lens of popular media, we have sometimes quite peculiar ideas about how ordinary people dress and look [...] Until very recently, it has also been fashionable in Western cultural theorizing to suggest that these images oppress the clothing consumer, rather than to argue for the radical subversive possibilities inherent in dress."⁴⁵ This point alludes to Burke's point about agency in regards to treatments of the body. She is interested in asking "if so-called non-Western societies now use popular media images to convey a sense of the fashionable to their "populace," for instance, how can we be sure that non-Western

⁴⁴ And by this, I mean "Black". See, Barnes, Teresa. 1999. *We Women Worked so Hard: Gender, Urbanization and Social Reproduction in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1930 - 1956*. Harare: Baobab; and Barnes, T. & Win, E. 1992. *To Live a Better Life: An Oral Interview of Women in the City of Harare, 1930 - 70*. Harare: Baobab

⁴⁵ Bastian, M. 1996. "Female "Alhajis" and Entrepreneurial Fashions: Flexible Identities in South-eastern Nigerian Clothing Practice," in Hendrickson, H. (Ed). *Clothing & Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa*. Durham: Duke University Press. Pg. 97

readers/listeners/viewers are receiving these media images and are proceeding to practice an exactly parallel or purely Western style?"⁴⁶ As a means to this end, she presents clothing as a medium "for the transfer of substances," which could be "material, spiritual or moral, or any other combination of the three."⁴⁷ Noting that clothing is not only constituted of cloth, but that it functions in concealing and revealing bodies in what she terms as clothing practice. Although her study is located in Nigeria, it will be useful in beginning to think about cloth and clothing as it relates to the body and also as a site for subversion amongst youth.

Susan Brownmiller's classic presentation⁴⁸ of "femininity," is a useful starting point in creating a theory of how femininity is performed on and through the body surface. This text falls into a particular thread of Northern-based feminist discourse surrounding the topic and as many have noted, "appearance, not accomplishment, is the feminine demonstration of desirability and worth."⁴⁹ Betty Freedman offers a similar position stating that "because beauty is asymmetrically assigned to the feminine role, women are defined as much by their looks as by their deeds. To be womanly is to be beautiful, and conversely to be unattractive is to be unwomanly. Good looks are prerequisite for femininity and incidental to masculinity,"⁵⁰ in her book *Beauty Bound: Why We Pursue the Myth in the Mirror*, which looks into the connections between beauty, femininity, heterosexuality and the body. Like

⁴⁶ Bastian 1996: 99

⁴⁷ Bastian 1996: 100

⁴⁸ Which, like the inclusion of Freedman which follows, is a part of a whole "beauty discourse," in the thread of Northern-based feminism that include the likes of Wolff etc... that all occurred at the same historic moment. I only mention these two for the purposes of this research presentation.

⁴⁹ Brownmiller, S. 1984. *Femininity*. New York: Linden Press. Pg. 50

⁵⁰ Freedman, B. 1986. *Beauty Bound*. Washington D.C.: Lexington Press. Pg. 1

Freedman, Brownmiller looks at a number of bodily “parts”, first at the actual body, then moves to hair. On the subject of hair Brownmiller’s position is that *all* women are bound by doctrines of beauty and femininity to spend rigorous amounts of time and money on maintaining their hair, regardless of their race.

With this in mind, I found Brownmiller’s point about the performance of femininity on skin, to be quite interesting. She states that “beautiful skin – sweet smelling, lily-white, rosy-cheeked, soft and dewy and free from blemish – is a sentimental attribute of virginal innocence and aristocratic fragility, historically defined by that complex mixture of exaggerated anatomical difference.”⁵¹ In this point, it is clear that whiteness is likened to purity and virginity, and the darker skin was an indication of impurity. While Brownmiller suggests that there are examples in Egypt and colonial India of the matter, no mention is made of race, or race with considerations of coloniality/ post-coloniality and racist imperialisms. This leaves me feeling uneasy. Ingrid Banks felt the same unease following an interview for her book, *Black Looks: Beauty, Power and Black Women’s Consciousness*. One of her respondents, like Brownmiller, saw no difference in the manner by which white women and black women treat their hair, so for her, hair only “mattered,” for her as a woman with no specific issues related to her racialization as a *black* woman.⁵²

Ann Anlin Cheng, explores this dynamic in her essay titled, “Wounded Beauty: An Exploratory Essay on Race, Feminism, and the Aesthetic Question,” which explores how the collision of race and gender might have repositioned the experience of beauty. Cheng

⁵¹ Brownmiller 1984: 130

⁵² Banks 2002: 37

notes that “the idea that beauty’s adverse function in racial politics duplicates beauty’s debilitating role in gender politics, however, has been more assumed than theorized. Much of what has been written about beauty’s relationship speaks – sometimes with and sometimes without self-consciousness – to and from an exclusively middle-class white paradigm.”⁵³ Cheng continues to state that beauty for women of colour is fraught because of the intersections of race, class and gender in identity politics.⁵⁴ Cheng’s position is that black femininity has been relegated as nothing more than representation and display. bell hooks concurs in an essay called, “Selling Black Pussy: Representations of Black Female Sexuality in the Cultural Marketplace,” stating that “representations of black female bodies in contemporary popular culture rarely subvert or critique images of black female sexuality which were part of the cultural apparatus of 19th Century racism and which still shape perceptions today.”⁵⁴

Such representations, as both hooks and Cheng suggest come from the imagery of the “Hottentot Venus:” that of the exhibition of Sarah Bartman’s body in 19th Century Europe to fulfil European fascination with black women’s bodies; the icons of deviant sexuality. hooks draws on Sander Gilman’s essay titled “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth Century Art, Medicine, and Literature,” that argues that the black female body becomes the icon for black sexuality and the site for white projections of a narrative of disassociation of sexuality from whiteness.

⁵³ Cheng, A. 2000. “Wounded Beauty: An Exploratory Essay on Race, Feminism and the Aesthetic Question,” in *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, Vol. 19, Issue 2, Autumn. Pg. 192

⁵⁴ hooks, bell. 1992. “Selling Hot Pussy: Representations of Black Female Sexuality in the Cultural Marketplace,” in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press. Pg. 62

Within this discussion Gilman moves from the Hottentot Venus to the prostitute that he adds "is the essential sexualized female in the perception of the 19th Century. She is perceived as the embodiment of sexuality, disease as well as passion."⁵⁵ To make this connection he discusses the emphasis on the display of the buttocks and genitalia of the black female and thus "the Other's pathology is revealed in her anatomy, and the black and the prostitute are both bearers of the stigmata of sexual difference and this pathology."⁵⁶

A study of femininity that takes the icon of the prostitute seriously is offered by Efrat Tselon in her book, *The Masque of Femininity*, whose book is an effort to understand the presentation of feminine experience in the contemporary "West," "tracing the paradoxical existence of the woman within respect to "the quintessentially feminine" personal appearance."⁵⁷ While addressing female appearance and morality she concludes that "the archetypal features of the woman encoded in the legends of Pandora, Eve and Lilith inform Western moral attitudes towards the woman's character and personal appearance. Together they frame the woman as cunning and gullible, untrustworthy and evil. She is portrayed as disguising behind false decoration, using her beauty and finery as a vehicle to dazzle men to their destruction. [...] to counter those fears – and offer women a path to salvation, female sexuality had to be controlled. Thus, a discourse of modesty and chastity in dress came to encode female sexuality."⁵⁸ This particular point reminded me of some of my

⁵⁵ Gilman, Sander. 1985. "The Hottentot & the Prostitute: Towards an Iconography of Black Female Sexuality," in *Difference & Pathology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Pg. 94

⁵⁶ Gilman 1985: 107

⁵⁷ Tselon, E. 1995. *The Masque of Femininity: The Presentation of Woman in Ordinary Life*. London: Sage Publications. Pg. 3

⁵⁸ Tselon 1995: 12

previous research findings with conversations with black Zimbabwean women, when I concluded that “there was a general feeling that women are judged based upon what they are wearing as sluts, prostitutes, attention-seekers and whores; regardless of their actual behaviour.”⁵⁹ What is interesting to consider is how this discourse is historically founded and located in European history, yet has resonance in contemporary Zimbabwe. The way that I have accounted for this, was presented in my previous research where I examined that formation of a “national culture,” in Zimbabwean history and thinking through the creation of discourses of female respectability that begin to mirror one such as this. For me, this creates less difficulty in understanding how this ideology seemed to inform the women about the way that they dressed. To explain this phenomenon, Tseelon offers that “if clothes identify the person, they call attention to the body as well as mark it as a part of a particular social category,” and that “when it comes to clothes, whether or not one wants to conform or to make an individual statement has a sexual dimension. If identification is the text, sexuality is the subtext. This is evident from the observation that every transgression from the requirement of female modesty threatens to put her in the category of the prostitute.”⁶⁰

✕ In my previous research, I reviewed some literature on black sexualities under a chapter I titled, “Black/African Sexualities: Theorizing the Virgin/Whore,” which included the presentations of the need to break the silence offered by Audre Lorde and Patricia McFadden (for example).⁶¹ Interrogating the silences around black sexuality, Charmaine

⁵⁹ Mupotsa, Danai. 2005. *Zvimwe Hazvibvunzwe! On the Politics of Being a Black Zimbabwean Woman and a Sexual Being*. Research Project submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Social Science (Hons.). Cape Town: AGI. Pg. 78

⁶⁰ Tseelon 1995: 29

⁶¹ See McFadden, P. 2003. “Sexual Pleasure as Feminist Choice,” in *Feminist Africa 2: Changing Cultures*. Cape Town: AGI

Perreira suggests that instead of condemning silence around sexuality amongst African feminists, one must investigate the reasons for them and see how to transform such silences into more appropriate responses.⁶² Sanya Osha offers an explanation of these silences in her claim that “there was indeed a void in discourses relating to sexualities in Africa. This disturbing silence is not unrelated to the violence and humiliations of colonialism,”⁶³ alluding to the history of representations of black sexuality that I pointed to earlier. Evelyn Hammond’s summarizes this point in saying, “the construction of black women’s sexuality, from 19th Century to the present, engages three sets of issues. First, there is the way black women’s sexuality has been constructed in binary opposition to that of white women: it is rendered simultaneously invisible, visible (exposed), hypervisible, and pathologized in dominant discourses.”⁶⁴ She continues to offer descriptions of resistance to these discourses which characterized white women as “pure, passionless and sexed,” while black women were “the epitome of immorality, pathology, impurity, and sex itself,”⁶⁵ which resulted in black women’s adoption of “respectability,” recognizing that the “Cult of True Womanhood” black woman reformers (women who embraced who embraced its values and attempted to live by them)⁶⁶ as a method of resistance “by the projection of a “super moral”

⁶² See Pereira, C. 2003. “Where Angels Fear to Tread” Some Thoughts on Patricia McFadden’s “Sexual Pleasure as Feminist Choice,” in *Feminist Africa 2: Changing Cultures*. Cape Town: AGI

⁶³ Osha, Sonya. 2004. “Unravelling the Silences of Black Sexualities,” in *Agenda* 62. Pg. 93

⁶⁴ Hammonds, E. 1997. “Towards a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality: The Problematic of Silence,” in Mohanty, C. & Alexander, J. (Eds). *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. New York & London: Routledge. Pg. 170

⁶⁵ Hammonds 1997: 173

⁶⁶ And this point takes us back to notions of “civilization” and domestication, which involved the desire for white womanhood, yet in colonial contexts involved working for the white woman to become as close to her as possible... which means that this account will have to take a closer look at domestication in regards to female respectability.

black women, they hoped to garner respect, justice, and opportunity.”⁶⁷ This example is offered in a US context but is useful for an analysis of southern Africa as well. In my literature I was therefore able to look at morality and female respectability, and domesticity arose as markers of respectable behaviour. A theme that was central to my research and which cannot be ignored in this current project is the linkage between morality, respectability and mobility, particularly since I am locating my study on the urban outskirts of the city of Cape Town, that was initially created and designated for male migrant labour.

Considering beauty in a South African context, I came across an essay titled “Contesting Beauty,” by Rita Barnard that asks whether beauty has become politicized or become a part of “political correctness,” in the “New South Africa,” adding that “beauty is always political, and it has certainly been so in South Africa. The very plasticity of the concept, the way it can be bent to include and exclude, ensures its enduring ideological usefulness – a usefulness that extends well beyond the perpetuation of male dominance over women. Questions of identity, class, race, and nationality are frequently at stake in its definition and display. Involved as they are in such fundamental matters as money, sex, marriage, and work; standards of beauty function as a peculiarly dense transfer point for relations of power.”⁶⁸ Keeping in mind brunt of 19th Century racism and the impact of colonialism, her essay aims to offer an inquiry into the “national” and “customary” in regards to beauty; that a definition of beauty involves no more than a definition of an “empowered we;” and finally that “if the notion of women’s beauty has the capacity to offer

⁶⁷ Hammonds 1997: 175

human collectives and in this instance she is speaking of the nation; validation (as it has the capacity to cause collective human injury as presented by Cheng earlier on), Barnard suggests that beauty also then can spectacularize dissent, which is what she is most interested in⁶⁹. To do this, she runs through a history of the Miss South African Pageant and pageantry in South African history, taking special consideration into the nationalization of the Miss South Africa pageant and post-Apartheid depictions of beauty for women. This essay is one example which alludes to the need for a more comprehensive history of beauty and the body in South Africa, which my work attempts to contribute to.

In the same volume of essays,⁷⁰ Zimitri Erasmus offers the essay titled, "Hair Politics," which commences on the point that "scientific racism of the late nineteenth century made the body the sign of race;" adding that "next to skin colour, hair texture was regarded as one of the most reliable markers of racial heritage."⁷¹ She continues to state that in South Africa the legacy of black symbolizing ugliness was further complicated by a history of differentiated racialization of black people's bodies.⁷² Ingrid Banks' book, *Hair Matters* is designed to enter into a discussion of the issues that Erasmus points to, in an US American context. There are two main points that I found to be both interesting and central to my study.

⁶⁸ Barnard, R. 2000. "Contesting Beauty," in Nuttal, S. & Michael, C. (Eds). *Senses of Culture: South African Cultural Studies*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. Pg. 344

⁶⁹ Barnard 2000: 347

⁷⁰ Nuttal, S. & Michael, C. 2000. *Senses of Culture: South African Cultural Studies*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press

⁷¹ Erasmus, Zimitri. 2000. "Hair Politics," in Nuttal, S. & Michael, C. *Senses of Culture; South African Cultural Studies*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. Pg. 300

⁷² Erasmus 2000: 301

Erasmus examines the notion of a “natural” versus a “created” look, which Banks notices in one of her conversations with a young woman. The idea that straightened hair was more “natural,” and that “natural” hair was unnatural came up.⁷³ Contesting this notion, Erasmus points out that “there is an essentialism in this logic - assumption that there is a single, pure and natural way of wearing one’s hair, [...] Black identities remain biologized in this discourse.”⁷⁴ Within both discussions however, it is also clear that straightened hair, seen as “natural,” (before it becomes politicized/natural hence “unnatural”) is connected to whiteness which places it towards a greater sense of purity and morality. The image of the city girl in Umoja came back to me, as it was clear that her position as the loose city woman/prostitute was performed on her body through the “natural” afro hairstyle she was wearing.

In Banks’ interviews she discussed the social, cultural, and personal reasons of why hair matters and found that their responses revealed how constructions of beauty intersect between race and gender and she also found that “the idea also emerges that black women go through a socialization process in which hair is central.”⁷⁵ Erasmus makes a similar observation, noting that from a reading of bell hooks hair straightening is a significant rite of passage into black womanhood as, “young black girls wear plaits – symbols of innocence,

⁷³ Banks 2002: 24

⁷⁴ Erasmus 2000: 305

⁷⁵ Banks, Ingrid. 2000. *Hair Matters: Beauty, Power & Black Women’s Consciousness*. New York: New York University Press. Pg:22

youth, and childhood. As a particular age having one's own hair styled signifies a shift from childhood towards womanhood."⁷⁶

Using an example from American television, where a black woman sporting short hair is surprised to find that a white colleague had assumed she was a lesbian, Banks writes, "though Rebecca's femininity is marked through her shapely exterior, which is loaded with racialized images of black women's bodies, her hair becomes the ultimate marker of both her womanhood and sexuality, ideas about the relationship between hair, femininity, and sexuality, as well as images of beauty and male perceptions of femininity."⁷⁷ While noting that non-static nature of gendered identities, in her research Banks finds that when women's hairstyling practices resemble those constructed as masculine, for example a woman wears her hair close-cropped, she will be constructed as unfeminine, unattractive, masculine and lesbian."⁷⁸ This point draws me to one last theme, which arises in any discussion of femininities, but for some reason was missing in my previous research and that is of heterosexuality.

As I briefly mentioned covering theories of femininities and displays, it is clear that X the display of femininity, like that of masculinity functions to create and maintain heterosexuality. X Yet as Diane Richardson notes in the introduction to her book, *Theorizing Heterosexuality*, "although it is deeply embedded in accounts of social and political participation and our understandings of ourselves and the worlds we inhabit, heterosexuality

⁷⁶ Erasmus 2000: 306

⁷⁷ Banks 2000: 88

⁷⁸ Banks 2000: 95

is rarely acknowledged or even less likely problematized. Instead, most of the conceptual frameworks we use to theorize human relations rely implicitly upon a naturalized heterosexuality where (hetero)sexuality tends either to be ignored in the analysis or is hidden from view, being treated as an unquestioned paradigm.⁷⁹ Richardson continues to reify this point, revealing how heterosexuality is constantly produced and repeated to the point where it becomes “natural.” Considering the performance of the body, she states that “similarly, our understanding of bodies has been bounded within a “heterosexual matrix” which operates through naturalizing a heterosexual morphology [...] dominant discourses of heterosexuality organize the physical and social space of our bodies.”⁸⁰ An essay written by Sheila Jeffreys in the same book states that “gender is not an inert filing system but a vital force in constraining and maintaining heterosexuality as the scaffolding of male supremacy, “ adding that “masculinity and femininity, the genders of dominance and submission, are eroticized to create the sexuality of male supremacy which I call heterosexual desire.”⁸¹ Heterosexual desire is explained as the organizational structure around the performance of gender, through the body and the like, organized around what she terms as “eroticized dominance and submission,” or femininities and masculinities. As I venture into a study of black femininities in a post-Apartheid South African context this will be useful particularly when analyzing the modes by which femininities are defined and policed within dominant discourses of that context.

⁷⁹ Richardson, D. (Ed.) 1996. *Theorizing heterosexuality: Telling it Straight*. Philadelphia: Open University Press 1996: 1

⁸⁰ Richardson 1996: 7

⁸¹ Jeffreys, S. 1996. “Heterosexuality & and Desire for Gender,” in Richardson, D. (Ed). *Theorizing Heterosexuality: Telling it Straight*. Philadelphia: Open University Press. Pgs. 75-76

Studies of Youth Cultures and Township Life in South Africa

I have reviewed some literature on the topic of youth cultures, particularly related to township life in the post-Apartheid era. Gugu McLaren's research project on the culture of music in Langa was useful, from a methodological perspective⁸². McLaren's reflections reveal how context specific certain methods are. She also alludes to issues related to language, which she managed to cope with as she had some understanding of Zulu which she could employ in that space. Mazuba Haanyama's research on youth cultures and leisure time revealed a similar concern in regards to conventional research methods⁸³. From a theoretical perspective, McLaren's work was quite useful in regards to situating femininities into a working class urban space and she makes some conclusions from her study about "good girls" and "bad girls," as two contesting and contested femininities, which echo my reflections on the "virgin/whore" as expressed in Zimbabwean women's understandings of femininities and female respectability.

I reviewed Chapter Six of Elaine Salo's doctoral thesis, titled "Good Daughters: Incorporating Young Women into Respectable Personhood,"⁸⁴ which draws from her research in Mannenberg. According to her findings, female respectability was expressed

⁸² McLaren, G. 2005. *Oh Sweetie My Baby! Negotiation of Femininities Through the Culture of Music*. (Research Project submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Social Science (Hons.))Cape Town: AGI

⁸³ Haanyama, M. 2005. *Generations" in the New South Africa: Negotiating Constructions of Gendered Identities Through the Medium of Television*, (Research Project submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Social Science (Hons.))Cape Town: AGI

⁸⁴ Salo, E. 2004. *Respectable Mothers, Tough Men and Good Daughters: Producing Person in Mannenberg Township, South Africa*. Emory University (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis).

through dress and comportment as well as space. Women located in particular spaces were denied or allowed access to respectability. This research also highlights reproduction (and social reproduction i.e. the production of good mothers and good daughters) as a means for young girls to enter into womanhood, *respectfully*. The work on young people's lives and constructions of personhood, considering both aspects of femininity and masculinity as performed in particular social spaces forms a central theme of this work that I found very useful in framing my own study. Like the recommendation of Anthony Bogues, which I mention in the introductory chapter to this report suggests, this work too interrogates the manner by which violence enters into scope as a formative aspect of how gendered subjectivities are constructed in relation to geographical space and this too emerges in my own work.^X

Lizo Ngcokoto completed an Honours research project in history, titled "Gugulethu – A Township Created, Youth Cultures Emerge 1959 -1986,"⁸⁵ which will provide some interesting insight into the historical construction of the space of Gugulethu, with particular reference to youth cultures. Solomon Makhosana also completed a History Honours project, titled "Aspect of the Historical Development of Gugulethu, 1958 – 1987, with Special Reference to Housing and Education,"⁸⁶ which will also help in setting the scene of Gugulethu, especially when I combine the findings of this elementary research projects

⁸⁵ Ngcokoto, L. 1989. *Gugulethu: A Township Created, Youth Cultures Emerge 1959 – 1986*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town

⁸⁶ Makhosana, S. 1988. *Aspects of the Historical Development of Gugulethu, 1958 – 1987. With Special Reference to Housing and Education*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town

results with those of Mamphela Ramphele's doctoral research, which was focused on the development of youth hostels in Gugulethu. This work was published as a book titled, *A Bed for a Home*⁸⁷, which I found to not only be useful in thinking historically about youth cultures in Gugulethu and the surrounding townships, but also to consider the relationship between the rural and the urban space in formulating urban gender relations, and also to consider the meaning of the "home," as a site where gender identities are constructed, reified and contested as well.

I came across a socio-psychological study conducted by Campbell⁸⁸ explores identity formation amongst township youth. This research uses a series of conventional methods, which may be useful to consider in my research process. Initially, I thought that the model for analyzing youth culture and youth identity she offered would be helpful as well. Campbell notes intergenerational shifts between parents and youth "peer groups," in regards to identity politics and notions of "adulthood," "womanhood," and understandings of what it means to be a youth within the space of a township. This certainly formed a central theme in my work, both in regards to data collection and analysis, however the approach Campbell takes in modelling "youth culture," and "youth identity," are perhaps problematic, particularly in relation to my work, as I take the position that both geographical and historical context are vital to understanding young people's subjective experiences.^X

Ramphele's book, *Steering the Stars: Being Young in South Africa*, also offers some ideas about youth cultures and identity for what she describes as South Africa's most socially and

⁸⁷ Ramphele, M. 1993. *A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town*. Cape Town: David Phillip

economically marginalized population⁸⁹ and would be useful in setting the scene if this was the approach I was taking to thinking about young women's lives in Guguletu. Ramphele's book for me was similar to the work conducted by Karin Chubb and Lutz Van Dijk, titled *Between Anger and Hope: South Africa's Youth and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, which takes as its focus of study, the special youth hearings conducted during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The first chapter of this book is titled, "South Africa's Youth – A (Still) Silent Majority," asking the question,

"What will happen to a society which is confronted with a whole generation of young people who, though justifiably proud of their achievements in the resistance struggle, are also deeply traumatised? Can ways be found to deal with the generation after that – the younger, new majority for whom the involvement of their older peers is already history, but whose everyday reality is characterised by pervasive social deprivation of the worst kind? Is it possible to find explanations, construct meaning, formulate and achieve meaningful goals in order to stem the rising tide of disillusionment and its escalation into blanket violence and crime?"⁹⁰

As I mention earlier, I do not wish to suggest that this "rising tide of disillusionment and its escalation into blanket violence and crime," does not exist; nor do I wish to posit that it is of no relevance. My uneasiness, again is related to what a focus on this "drama," does in regards to eliminating any potential of capturing the interiority of young people and how this spectacle disables "us" as producers of knowledge from being able to capture subjective experiences and constructions of personhood as it is clearly possible to become caught up in

⁸⁸ Campbell, C. 1994. *Township Families and Youth Identity: The Family's Influence on the Social Identity of Township Youth in a Rapidly Changing South Africa*. Pretoria: HSRC

⁸⁹ Ramphele, M. 2000. *Steering By the Stars: Being Young in South Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg

describing the “horror,” and fail to see young people, living a life and conceiving themselves as persons on their own human journey. Furthermore, there lies the danger of framing a study such as this, as one which either frames the subjects as not only being “victims,” but that creates or assesses a call for intervention that is over-generalized and imperialistic. Therefore, unlike the approaches taken in these works, which function to reveal the drama of oppression that young people in South Africa face, my intention with this project is to instead attempt a reveal of the meaning of everyday life for a happy group of girl friends living in Guguletu. These women participated in my study as persons understanding that they fall under a general discursive category of “the underprivileged,” yet the drama associated with this category did not and does not result in being the only determinants of their social identities and my methodological section which follows attempts to describe my efforts in such an endeavour to capture a fuller picture.

⁹⁰ Chubb, K. & Van Dijk, L. 2001. *Between Anger & Hope: South Africa's Youth and the TRC*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press. Pg. 21

Chapter 2

METHODOLOGY

I spend a great deal of time retelling stories from my childhood to my mother, who as I am learning, did not view my early life as dramatically as I did. The general theme of my tales is trauma; the grand trauma's of a not-so-lengthy life. The other day we laughed about an incident that happened when I was thirteen. We traveled to my mother's rural home in Muchena, close to Mutare in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe, for the unveiling of my uncle's tombstone. It was summer time and as any normal person would do (so I thought) I packed my suitcase full with skirts and shorts (all of which were knee length). On the first day I wore what was then popular amongst my peers; a pink summer dress with spaghetti straps and sandals. In my estimation, I was not inappropriately dressed by any stretch of the imagination, besides; I was thirteen, completely flat-chested bearing what I believed to be the body of a child. This considered, I was unpleasantly surprised when my aunt pulled me aside and told me that I needed to wear different clothes in the rural areas. She explained that even though I could get away with all sorts of things in the city, like wearing trousers, and summer dresses; this was inappropriate there. She pointed towards my father who was sitting with a large group of men and she said that they were all probably talking about my dress and my father was probably very ashamed because the men at the festivities would all be looking at me. I was horrified. I remember being too ashamed to talk to my mother about what this woman had said to me and when I asked my cousin about it and she said

that Gogo, (our grandmother) had already warned her, so she had packed all of her “respectable” clothes. I was completely confused, because I was thirteen and my cousin was eleven – how could men my father’s age be looking at us and thinking about us sexually? We were children.

On the following day, I wore another now-fashion-faux-pas, skorts: that is, shorts in the back, a skirt in the front (this was again, in vogue at that time ☺). I wore this with a long sleeved shirt, having considered my cultural faux-pas from the previous day. Sometime during that day, I had sat on bench where someone had spilled Coke. This soon dried, but it left a light brown stain on the back of my skorts. I was immediately self-conscious about the stain, as I had recently “gotten” my period and this did look like an old period stain. I was not alone in this paranoia, because the same aunt pulled me aside again and asked if I realized that I had a period stain at the back of my skirt. She again explained that I was going to need to realize where I was, because men in the rural areas did not compromise for “us city girls,” and now realizing that I had a period and therefore, I am a woman, these men would not be to blame if they came and slept with me. Her exact words escape me now, but I left that conversation, not only in fear of rape, but also thinking that I was a very dirty and disgusting girl and that everyone was looking at me in such a disgraceful way. This considered, it is no wonder that I fell ill and by the next day I was bed-ridden and unconscious due to the medication I had received. I slept through the unveiling and the ceremonies that followed and I slept in my uncle’s house, along with my then three-year old cousin who cried very loudly. He woke up that afternoon and cried for attention for a long

time and even though he was sleeping next to me, I did not hear him because of the medication I was on. This frightened me.

For the next two or three weeks, while I waited for my period to come I was convinced that while under medication and unconscious, so much so that I failed to hear Mufaro crying; surely someone must have come in and raped me that afternoon. I was convinced that not only had I been raped (and deserved it) but that I was also probably pregnant and that I would only know when the evil monthly period never came back. I sat in the bathtub crying for those weeks, thinking about how ashamed my parents and my family would all be. I thought about all of the “potential,” they all saw in me, and I thought about how I had thrown it all away by being such a dirty, disresponsible little girl who could not even manage her own period. My period did come and what followed was probably the height of my practicing Christian life, because I honestly felt like God or someone equally exciting had delivered me and that I had another chance at respectability. I had my life back again.

My mum laughed when I told her this story, and I offer no blame to persons who agree with her – it is a funny story, in retrospect. But as I grew up and I thought of all the ridiculous worry imposed upon me by persons such as my aunt in this case, I grew increasingly frustrated by these impositions. Being a woman is hard! I find it no wonder that it is precisely my struggle with learning appropriate female behaviour in my teenage years – in the years of transition between girl and woman, where I found my road to feminism; that becomes the subject of my study. During this small trauma, as I sat in the bathtub weeping I

was formulating my own theories which today I can recognize as resonating with those of Patricia McFadden when she says,

“A fundamental premise of patriarchal power and impunity is the denial and suppression of women's naming and controlling their bodies for their own joy and nurturing. In all patriarchal societies, women and girls are taught, consistently and often violently, that their bodies are dirty, nasty, smelly, disgusting, corrupting, imperfect, ugly and volatile harbingers of disease and immorality. **The redemption of the pathologised female body is seen to come through males of various statuses:** fathers, who protect and defend the family honour through them; priests, who experience holiness and godliness through them; brothers, who learn through women and girls how to become authoritative and vigilant; husbands, who realise their masculinity through sexual occupancy and breeding; and strangers, who wreak misogynistic vengeance upon them for an entire range of grievances, imagined and otherwise. **A denied right, misinformation, a frown, a disapproving scowl, a raised voice, an angry reprimand, a verbal insult, a shaken fist, a shove, a slap, a punch, rape, a slit throat** - these are part of the routine processes of socialisation and gendered identity construction through which girls and women are persistently reminded that they are the chattels of men in our societies.”⁹¹

It is from this position that I enter into my study – that is, from personal reflection – that is, from the perspective that we live in a society that has constructed women's bodies and especially black women's bodies, through a process of violent, racist and imperialist patriarchy as pathologised – that is, from the position that the canon's of

⁹¹ Mcfadden. Patricia. 2003. “Sexual Pleasure as Feminist Choice,” in *Feminist Africa 2: Changing Cultures*. Cape Town: AGI. Pg. 53

intellectual production remain deeply masculinist and racist – and from a perspective that adopts an African feminist standpoint to begin to consider a methodology to construct a narrative of social life about young women in Guguletu.

It is important for me to state that my articulation of an African feminist consciousness which I express most vehemently through intellectual practice arises from my personal experience and access to academic practice; something many African women do not possess. Therefore in locating myself as a feminist researcher, I also locate myself as middle class, Zimbabwean, English-as-a-first-language speaking, engaged-in-heterosexual-practice, aspirant radical black intellectual. My personal/political location is perhaps more complex and less stable than this presentation as it shifts in different time/space contexts – but that elaboration of it directly relates to how I would situate my entry into this research area. Furthermore, the exercise of constantly locating my personal/political location during the process of elaborating this research is crucial in providing a more holistic and situated product of knowledge.

An African feminist standpoint?

Ways of knowing have been at the forefront of feminist debates, nothing that “every theoretical and methodological framework of knowledge production has implicit values and assumptions about the nature of society, and will be resisted by those who do not have the

same position.”⁹² In an essay titled “Engendering African Social Sciences: An Introduction,” Ayesha Imam continues to note that in an African context the notion of an “objective” truth or knowledge has always been under scrutiny as “there had always been those who made anti-imperialist and class critiques in full recognition of their political implications,” in contrast however, “the gender political implications of the sorts of knowledge produced has been almost studiously ignored and rejected by many African social scientists.”⁹³ These omissions are important to note, considering that quite simply put, half of human society is constituted of people gendered as feminine and as Imam so aptly states, a social science that does not recognize gender as an critical category is “an impoverished and distorted science, and cannot accurately explain social realities and hence cannot provide a way out of the present crisis in Africa.”⁹⁴

Northern-based proponents note that traditional philosophies had, central to their imagination the notion of objectivism which presupposed that “knowers must detach themselves from their embodiment and their various beliefs,”⁹⁵ but as Assister offers “feminist epistemologists have gone further, therefore and have argued that value-neutrality in science is a myth, because the descriptions, interpretations and explanatory phenomena in science inevitably involve social values. [And as] we are embodied and embedded creatures [...] these facts about us matter when making claims to know something.”⁹⁶ Marjorie

⁹² Imam, Ayesha. 1997. “Engendering the African Social Sciences: An Introduction,” in Imam, A., Mama, A., Sow, F. (eds). *Engendering African Social Sciences*. CODESRIA, Dakar. Pg. 2

⁹³ Imam 1997: 14

⁹⁴ Imam 1997: 2

⁹⁵ Assister, A. 2000. Feminist Epistemology and Value,” in *Feminist Theory, Vol. 1(3)*. Pg. 329

⁹⁶ Assister 2000: 330

Mblyini offers an African-based entry into discussions of feminist knowledge production in which she states that:

"I believe that African-based critical feminism provides the following unique contributions to the general body of critical feminist work:

- The analysis of imperialism embedded in class/gender/race-ethnicity;
- A more coherent critique of 'the' state, including the African nation-state and donor agencies
- A critique of class relations among women within the same and different ethnic and national locations."⁹⁷

Feminist epistemology for her, asks who is doing the research, and about whom; what methods or procedures are used; who owns the tools or assets used in the research production; who defines the problem being studied, constructs the research instruments, interprets the information acquired and writes up the final report; who finances the research; (critically) who is the audience; what forum will be used to present and reproduce the findings (and are the written in a language which is accessible to the larger public); how accessible the findings will be to the population under study; what will be done with the findings and finally, who are the real beneficiaries of the research.⁹⁸ These questions are central to feminist epistemology, particularly because they directly challenge positivist notions of objective knowledge. They also make it clear that the researcher is a living, breathing and participating part of the world which is being studied.

Establishing an African feminist standpoint is an intervention in method which attempts to accomplish such goals by placing the "body," into research and thus challenging

⁹⁷ Mblyini, Marjorie. 1994. "Research Methodologies in Gender Issues," in Meena, R. (ed) *Gender in Southern Africa: Conceptual and Theoretical Issues*. Harare: SARIPS. Pg. 33

⁹⁸ Mblyini 1994:33

the notion that objective knowledge can be achieved. The choice of an “African feminist” standpoint,” arises from what I wish to suggest is a shared common and unique experience amongst women who “wear a black (African) body,”⁹⁹ through the lived experience of what patriarchal pre, post and colonial discourses about women, their bodies and sexuality have embedded into what are now routine social processes such as bathing and dressing, quite similar to the description of the socialization process described by McFadden that I presented earlier. McFadden’s concern is that this socialization has depoliticised “our” discussions of sexuality when they do occur and most often they do not. McFadden is commenting on the maintained silence on the subject of sexuality within discourse on Africa which only in turn re/produces the sort of sexual policing that patriarchal power imposes upon women’s bodies. The standpoint I posit refers to a unique “black” experience, because of the nature of colonial and imperial discourse on blackness and black women, which continues to function in a manner that as Osha contends continues to either romanticize the colonized subject by virginising him/her, which involves a powerful process of de-agentilisation and objectification. On the other hand, the colonial agent hypersexualized him/her “employing tropes of excess, unrestrained carnality, irrationality and violence.”¹⁰⁰

This African feminist standpoint can risk re/creating mimetic representations of black women that are universalistic and essentialist, so while enthusiasts add that “the position of a politically marginal grouping can open the eyes of all to blind spots in

⁹⁹ That is “strategic essentialism”, essentialism being the assumption that groups of people have one or several *natural* defining features exclusive to all members of that group. Strategic essentialism involves an acknowledgement of the usefulness of essentialist formulations in struggles for liberation.

¹⁰⁰ Osha. 2004: 92

science,”¹⁰¹ Uma Narayan complicates this view in stating that she would “like to balance this account with a few comments about the “dark side,” the disadvantages, of being able to or of having to inhabit two mutually incompatible frameworks that provide differing perspectives on social reality.”¹⁰² Her reasons involve the fact that the researcher who inhabits these two frames may dichotomize her life, using one frame in a particular context and the other in another. Another reason is that the person may also attempt to reject the practice of her own context in favour of that of the dominant context, attempting to adopt as much as the dominant group’s practice as possible. Without overanalyzing, these complications are blatantly clear, for me perhaps because I am an African woman attempting social science research. Having located my study in a “foreign” space, not only nationally or geographically, but in regards to “class” position as well, and coming from the position of a “social scientist” this relationship with dominant culture becomes even more contested. While my subjectivity may mean that I will be asking different questions and I may have a different “entry point,” into the research process, as a western/educated person conducting academic research I am functioning in a highly hegemonic space, whose language I must use to mediate this “othered,” context and be as fluent, or more so in than member of that dominant group to have such research taken seriously. This can cause great confusion and as an attempt at a solution, Narayan offers that “this sense of alienation may be minimized if the critical straddling of two contexts is part of an ongoing critical politics,

¹⁰¹ Assister 2000: 331

¹⁰² Narayan, Uma. 1989. “The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Non-Western Feminist,” In Jagger, A. and Bordo, S (eds) *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. Pg. 266

due to the support of a deeper understanding of what is going on."¹⁰³ My personal engagement with mediating the language of the academe and the language of "the body," that I share with those who wear the "black body," I do is one I have been embroiled in for a great portion of my not-so-long life. This is a challenge which must translate into a shift in the discourse of the academe that accounts for different presentations of theory.

Speaking in regards to the alienation felt by "non/western" feminists conducting research, Marnia Lazreg says "some Third World women find comfort in acquiring a Western-style feminist identity that presumably dissolves their cultural selves and enables them to take their distance from those who resist looking at themselves through Western feminists' eyes. The problem for Third World women is that their writing is constrained by the existence of an imperious feminist script. This, instead of being emancipatory, writing for them is often alienating."¹⁰⁴ For Narayan, this alienation stems from the fact that "some themes of feminist epistemology may be problematic for ["non/western"] feminists in ways that they are not for western feminists," as she believes that feminism has a much narrower base in most nonwestern countries and in her understanding, feminism is primarily of importance to *some* urban, educated middle class, and "hence relatively westernized women, like [herself]."¹⁰⁵ Her contention is related to the role of tradition in nonwestern contexts and how one then begins to speak of women's experiences in a context which is totally different to a "traditional" frame.

¹⁰³ Narayan 1989: 266

¹⁰⁴ Lazreg, Marnia. 1993. *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question*. London and New York: Routledge. Pg. 11

¹⁰⁵ Narayan 1989: 258

My response to this would be similar to that offered by Patricia McFadden and Molokomme, who offer discussions of African feminism. The notion that feminism is “unAfrican,” because it does not fit into prescribed notions of “African traditions,” (or “non/western,” ones as Narayan suggests,) is built upon dominant imaginations of what it means to be an African man or woman. McFadden defines feminism in Africa “as being fundamentally the struggle by women against patriarchal control and exclusion. Most importantly, it is a struggle which African women have engaged in, as individuals and now as collectivities of women for millennia,” continuing to add that “the struggles of particular groups of women – in this case white, middle-class, northern women – may have been hegemonic and dominant in terms of the discourses around notions of women’s freedom from patriarchy, and there are very good historical reasons for that, amongst which colonization and enslavement are high on the list.”¹⁰⁶ She notes the hostility that Africans hold towards feminism, but also importantly notes that this antagonism is also harboured by European and other northern men and women towards African feminists, which she understands to be as a result of the fact that they “themselves were intent upon studying African women as peculiar and different from the Europeans they left in the cold north.”¹⁰⁷ This position brings us back to the power of knowledge production, as she notes a part of western feminist agendas was to conduct studies of African women that reproduced dominant masculinist and imperialist paradigms. This also highlights the importance of African women describing themselves and each other as yet another feminist

¹⁰⁶ McFadden 2000: 2

¹⁰⁷ McFadden. 2000:2

epistemological strategy, although for me this must be complicated further. "Conducting research," as a means of accessing academic achievement is something which is done from a particular class position and the "power-play" between "researcher" and "researched" persists and it must continue to be interrogated

Harding enters into a discussion of a feminist method in stating that her point is "to argue against the idea of a distinctive feminist method of research." She does so on the grounds that obsession with method confounds "what have been the most interesting aspects of feminist research processes."¹⁰⁸ What one must first acknowledge is significance of subjectivities in men and women's experience, for example. Offering one distinctive subject matter of feminist social analysis, Harding says that "while studying women is not new, studying women from the perspective of their own experiences so that women can understand themselves and the world can claim virtually no history at all."¹⁰⁹ However she continues to add that "the best feminist analysis goes beyond these innovations in subject matter in a crucial way: it insists that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results for research. That is, the class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviours of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint."¹¹⁰ This sets the stage for me in regards to considering a feminist standpoint (from my social positioning as an aspirant radical black intellectual) who

¹⁰⁸ Harding 1987: 1

¹⁰⁹ Harding, S. 1987. *Feminism and Methodology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Pg. 8

¹¹⁰ Harding 1987: 9

is interested in the particular violence that the black female body has endured in hegemonic intellectual traditions.

Returning to the fear of committing a universalist and essentialist feminism, which as Blunt and Rose argue, claims “to know for absolute certain the true nature of all women, depends on and produces a space in which essence of femininity is immediately accessible and transparently obvious”¹¹¹ and they offer the plotting the politics of location imagine “an insistent, simultaneous, nonsynchronous process characterized but multiple locations”: a space that is fragmented, multidimensional, contradictory, and provisional.”¹¹² This requires that the feminist standpoint I speak from must be constantly located, relocated and interrogated. What this also allows is a critical lens into history and space as it relates in terms of the construction of particular subjectivities, in this case I am speaking of a black female subjectivity located in Southern Africa. Considering the histories of urbanization and migration in Southern Africa, with a focus on bodies re/writes as history which as Ballantyne and Burton posit when they say, “Why the focus on bodies as a means of accessing the colonial encounters in world history? Quite simply, we are seeking a way to dramatize how, why, and under what conditions women and gender can be made visible in world history – a challenge on many levels. Women do not tend to enter the primary source materials that remain from imperial and colonial archives because, for the most part, they did not hold positions of official power. This absence has meant that it is difficult to see

¹¹¹ Blunt, A. & Rose, G. 1994. *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*. New York & London: The Guildford Press. Pg. 6

¹¹² Blunt, Rose. 1994: 7

them, and to understand their historical roles, in world civilizations.”¹¹³ Considering the body as “the most intimate colony,” and the black female body as the most intimate of these, I wish to engage in a critical review of the politics of space in relation to bodies to begin to establish a case for my standpoint.

A Chat with My Friends: Using the Oral Interview as a Research Method

I am conducting multigenerational qualitative research, employing the oral group interview as my primary research method. I have also spent a great deal of time as a participant observer, which I elaborate further when I speak about “researching Guguletu”. I also conducted some extensive archival and literature research which were useful for me in revealing the need to locate my oral discussions within a historical discourse. As a result, I have completed group discussions with three different generations of “Guguletu women”.

The three groups that I worked with were:

1. A group of women who were among the first to move to Guguletu, some having arrived with their parents, others who arrived alone or with their husbands. They all have lived in the semi-detached housing in Section II of Guguletu on, or around NY21 during the majority of their time spent living in Guguletu. This group of women included Toetie’s mother and aunt, as well as some of their closest neighbours and friends.
2. A group of women who were not “born-free” having been teenagers in the 1990s when democracy emerged in South Africa. These women are of “my”

¹¹³ Ballantyne, T. & Burton, A. 2005. *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. Pg. 4

generation and constitute the group that I can most fairly describe as my “friends.” This definitely impacted upon my approach to the research method, as it was much easier to construct a “naturally occurring conversation” with them in which I myself could be included as a member of the group discussion itself.

3. A group of young women, aged between 14 and 21 years, although the final group involved in the oral interview was constituted of girls aged seventeen or eighteen. These women are included in Project Siyenza’s work due to their proximity to Toetie’s childhood home. She has watched them all grow up and has a relationship with their families and they are all located on or around NY21, so this group of women are perhaps the most affectionately-held group that the Project has ever worked with.

All of the women selected live on or around NY21, in semi-detached brick-housing originally designed for habitation by African families granted permission to reside in the Cape Town Metropolitan area, at that time a very privileged position indeed. It did not take me long to realize the relevance of where one was geographically located in Guguletu, as people often refer to each other as being “of NY13” or some other street and each street or region carries a set of stereotypes of its own. NY21, not only comprises of original family brick-housing, it is also in Section Two of Guguletu, famed for its “upper class” position in relation to sections one and three. It was therefore important to me that these women all originated on or around the area although the manner by which all of their biographic

narratives turn out do to the circumstances of life, they may not have all resided there for all of their lives.

x The structure of the interview I chose was the semi/unstructured interview, which I find helpful because of its informal nature that allows the researcher to not only create a degree of rapport with the respondents, they also allow for a reciprocal relationship to foster between the two as the interview can take the shape of a conversation. This is beneficial when one attempts to discuss subjects that can be quite sensitive, such as sexuality, the body and life histories in space. I recognize that on the other hand, structured interviewing “involves exposing every informant in a sample to the same stimuli,”¹¹⁴ but this was not necessary for the purpose I intended for this conversation, especially since this was a group discussion. The purpose of this interview was to^x begin to compile an archive of “life history,” about what it was like to[✓] grow up in Guguletu. Importantly, this was an oral interview, which “provides an opportunity for the researcher to hear the participant talk about a particular aspect of their life or experience,”¹¹⁵ as feminist proponents of the interview technique such as Dana Jack and Kathryn Anderson note the potential of oral interviews in uncovering women’s experience but also offer that “to hear women’s perspectives accurately, we have to learn to listen in stereo, receiving both the dominant and muted channels clearly and tuning into them carefully to understand the relationship between them.”¹¹⁶ x Listening carefully requires that I instead of pursuing a particular point of

¹¹⁴ Russell, Bernard. 1994. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. New York: Rowman Altamara. Pg. 237.

¹¹⁵ Willing, C. 2001. *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Theory and Methods*. Pg. 22.

¹¹⁶ Anderson & Jack: 11

set of questions strictly, only listening for a specific answer to that question; I need to follow the direction that the women I speak to take me.

A semi-structured nature of this interview arose from the fact that I was particularly interested in knowing about what "being young," was like so I had some specific questions; yet the unstructured approach did allow for a conversation. Bernard Russell offers some useful advice on interviewing, which I employed. Upon initiating my conversation, for example; I explained that I was interested in hearing what they think and what their observations were. I also explained that I may take notes during the interview and that I would be recording the conversations. I video-recorded my interviews, so my video camera was already set up and by the time I finished what upon reflection was often quite a long introduction, everyone¹¹⁷ seemed generally comfortable with the camera-presence. The interview conducted with the oldest generation of women was slightly different, as they all came in at various parts of the interview depending on what personal things they had to do that do. At some times I was asked to repeat my introduction and at others they elected to explain the interview to each other themselves.

Something Anderson and Jack suggest in their article, "Learning to Listen," is that special considerations should be made when interviewing women, because women's discussions of reality arise on two planes which are often conflicting; one is structured within a hegemonic patriarchal system, especially in relation to men's dominant position to them and the other is informed more closely by women's personal experience. Due to the nature of my project, I was quite sensitive to this point. I was interested in hearing women's

investments in “dominant discourse,” but more so in their articulations of counter-discourse which occurs on this particular plane. Anderson continues to offer her thoughts noting the great distance there is between what women are willing to say at times and the questions a researcher wishes to ask. There are unwritten rules of conversation about appropriate questions and topics, which will hinder a researcher from encouraging women to make explicit the range of emotions surrounding the events and experiences they relate.¹¹⁸ Besides the fact that I want to extract information out of these women that women may or may not be interested in “giving up,” a power dynamic arises between the researcher and the “researched,” and this is problematic. Not only is it problematic; there also stands the possibility that in defence, the “researched,” may exercise their agency and offer a performance, rather than to allow the researcher to extract from them. There were certainly points in my discussion, primarily with the youngest group of women when I felt these tensions arise. I asked them to begin to tell me about being young and two of them immediately entered a discussion of teen pregnancy and sex. Later during the discussion they explained to me that they said those things because this is what older generations see them as and generally want to hear about.

My primary method in overcoming such a dynamic was to make it clear that I would not ask them anything that I personally would not answer; I also encouraged them to answer back to me. Due to the conversational nature of this interview and the fact that it was conducted amongst a group of friends, I found that they were all asking each other

¹¹⁷ With one exception, although she later enjoyed the camera and spent a substantial amount of time speaking to it.

¹¹⁸ Anderson, Jack 1991: 13

questions and at times questions were directed at me, so I was not necessarily the only “researcher” in the room. In fact, there was even a time when I was faced with a group of young girls grilling me about the status of my body piercing and I definitely felt a shift in this power dynamic. The negotiations of “research power” were also explicitly available during my interview with the oldest generation: one of the women is the mother of one of the infamous “Guguletu Seven,” and after reluctantly participating she later explained that she conducts up to three interviews a week because of this. She is quite tired of being interviewed. I was yet another UCT student coming in to ask her a series of questions in relation to a life that is long past. On the other hand the other women in this group loved the opportunity to reflect on the past in fact, since I am a “child” in their eyes this process was less grating. By the end of the process, my status as a child was really in full force, as they went on to not only advise me, they asked me about my own life, and sent me off with a series of errands to run, including finding them a supplier of black hair dye! This took the shape of a participatory research process that completely shattered the power dynamic between “researcher” and “researched,” in a very organic sense.

Anderson explains what was happening, when she says, “if we want to know what women feel about their lives, then we have to allow them to talk about their feelings as well as their activities. If we see rich potential in the *language*¹¹⁹ people use to describe their daily activities, then we have to take advantage of the opportunity to let them tell us what that language means.”¹²⁰ This had a very obvious application, when the women preferred to

¹¹⁹ Emphasis added

¹²⁰ Anderson, Jack 1991: 15

actually explain something to me and the other women in isiXhosa first and then in English. There were also instances when particular frames or language were repeated, for example the trope of “strength” as prominent part of respectable femininity, which I was not expecting or aware of and I could have missed it entirely as I did not actually ask any questions in that regard, had I not recognized that very frequently, some woman was being described as “strong,” for example.

I elaborate further on each of these interviews in the individual chapters that follow. The following chapter is a further elaboration on Methodology, where I speak about my entry into Guguletu and what it means for me to negotiate my positionality as a outsider/researcher in a site where I believe that the outsider/research is “cannibalistic”.

Chapter 3

RESEARCHING GUGULETU = CANNIBALISM?

As I stated earlier, prior to my research project, Guguletu was a far away place with which I had little experience. I was fortunate to have met Toetie, as I was given a pair of insider eyes with which I could mediate my own entry into the space. The premise of my research entry into Guguletu was "Project Siyenza." This project is directed by my friend Toetie, who grew up in Guguletu. Toetie and a group of her friends thought that there was a lack of space where women could dialogue with each other about ideas concerning women's roles in 21st century South Africa. She was particularly concerned with the lack of diversity of women in "leadership" that women in Guguletu had been offered. With this in mind, she made a plan to gather friends and small amounts of resources to start a program aimed at creating such a space. When I joined Project Siyenza, the central premise of it was to organize bi-monthly leadership programs for young women in Guguletu. The idea was that at the beginning of the month, a group of women would be identified (either through a school, or other social grouping; or from previous leadership programs that Siyenza's shareholders have been involved with) and a day-long program would be provided.

The program involves a wide variety of workshops and a keynote address from a community leader who is a woman. The idea is to present the many different forms of "leadership," available to women and to identify the anxieties that young women face in viewing themselves as leaders or pursuing "leadership" roles and then offer ideas about

overcoming such concerns. Siyenza asks the women to coordinate an event, of their own imagination. Siyenza's coordinators are available for guidance, and say for example the young women need to rent out a hall for the afternoon, Siyenza will assist with such a task. Two weeks after the program, the event is presented to Siyenza's coordinators and any other parties who the women invite.

Toetie approached me in November 2005, to see if I would be interested in being a shareholder. The women involved with Siyenza are all involved in other "work," but offer their expertise in varying degrees for the Project. Toetie thought that with my background in gender I could offer another dimension. We both agreed that this would also be a useful opportunity for me to conduct my research as the research topic is certainly something of relevance for the Project. Since I joined Project Siyenza, our focus has shifted – having realised that we need financial support to sustain such a system - and also that we need to think more clearly about the sorts of interventions we aim to make in these women's lives. As a result, we have primarily focused our strengths on one group of women; that is the group of women who grew up on or around the street that Toetie grew up on. She knows these girls' families and has a generally good impression of what life is like for these girls. Additionally, we thought that working with this specific group would place us in a better position to assess the needs of this community's young women in order for any future proposals for Project Siyenza to have a better defined structure and method of practice.

Entering into the space I was uncertain as to what exactly to expect. My first visit was for the first Project Siyenza seminar to which I would be privy to. I had only experienced the Siyenza concept on paper and it seemed to be this foreign and difficult

business of standing in front of a group of teenage women and trying to make an impression; well of course not just any impression, this had to be a good impression. I was quite frightened actually. That morning I had scuttled to CNA with Toetie to purchase some sticky-stuff and a large booklet of paper, along with some markers. She seemed so calm preparing to "facilitate," as she calls it; this is her day-job so such performances now come as second nature to her. Toetie's boyfriend, Damien gave us a lift to Gugs in his car and I was intrigued by the degree of comfort he had driving further and further into a space popularly constructed as dangerous to anyone, let alone white foreigners. He parked outside Vuyani Primary School and Toetie explained that this is where she had gone to school as a child, pointing several metres forward to indicate where her childhood home was. Her mother and sisters still live there and for all intensive purposes, she too can still call that house on NY21 her home. In retrospect I am a little embarrassed, for I am certain that I must have looked like a wide-eyed tourist, trying to scope everything out. I walked very delicately around the school and barely said one word to anyone, fearful that I would "out" myself as the foreigner I most certainly felt I was. It was as though I had been trained by dominant culture so vigorously that I could not help but assess the grounds upon which the school was set, or the girls themselves.

Only two of the young girls where there when we arrived; two sisters whose father is the caretaker of the grounds. He seemed less that happy to see us and Toetie explained that he was not a happy man. I did not want to get in the middle of it; so while Toetie told the young woman, Isanda to go and collect the others; she also told the old man to open up the classrooms and telephoned one of the school teachers who is a friend of hers to confirm

that we were in fact allowed to use the premises. I stood there, confused. It was drizzling a little bit, which I found quite sympathetic to my mood. I was horrified, uncomfortable, confused and staring at everything and everyone. In the meantime, Toetie mumbled crossly about how “rural” the old man was, also calling him evil and filling me in on local rumours that he dabbled in witchcraft. It all seemed to be a bit much. Damien was with us during this chaos, helping us set things up and as we decided whether or not we would need the laptop. As soon as the classroom was open, he drove off to enjoy his Saturday morning, and I was confronted with my new role as a youth facilitator. What horror!

I stood around in a classroom with Noxolo, (who graciously allowed me to call her Pasi as most of her friends do) and Zandile. I very nervously said hello to the two and we all looked to Toetie for instruction. The chairs in this classroom were quite small, so even though the three of us had anxiously put some in a half-circle for us to sit on, Toetie complained about the room and arranged for a class for older children to be made available to us so that we could actually sit on the chairs. I feel silly remembering all of this, because I was so amazed by Toetie’s confidence in dealing with the matter. I also think back and remember Zandile that day, compared to the young woman I last saw some weeks ago and it is amazing how quickly people grow. She is most certainly a very different woman.

Toetie ran this workshop and asked me to participate as a means of “getting closer” to the girls, while introducing me to the process. We introduced ourselves and I remember really emphasizing that I am a Zimbabwean. It is almost as though I was trying to make sure that I was excused for the way I spoke and for the fact that they were all required to primarily communicate in English because of me. I laughed awkwardly and

overcompensated for my linguistic inadequacy by making strange jokes about speaking in Shona and trying to learn Xhosa, which I am certain only solidified in their minds that I am actually just not cool! I can be such a fool! The first exercise was for us to draw a diagram about ourselves that we would share with the others. This diagram would include all the things that we thought described or defined us. I drew my family, I might have even drawn a map of Zimbabwe and I spoke some about being shy. This process was quite enlightening, because the girls were also supposed to speak a little about what they want in life. I remember Pasi immediately spoke of the impact of HIV/AIDS in her life and this would be where she would want to direct her efforts as an adult. Babalwa who was an instant favourite for me, like Thozama explained that she loved to be the centre of attention and said she wanted to be an actress. Buyiswa very interestingly drew a pair of jeans and affectionately explained that these were a sign of independence and freedom for her and no matter what anyone said about women wearing pants, she thought they were an excellent reflection of her. I became more at ease during this process and as the discussion progressed I added my own questions and was open to being asked questions which was great, because their own interest in the new stranger soon emerged.

I will not go further in elaborating the grand details of this particular process; I merely wish to make the point that upon entry to Gugs, I was a mess. My brain was full of X conflict about how to conduct this research – about researching young women that I theoretically framed as the “same” as me, yet in full contact in their home space I certainly experienced as “other” to myself (or experienced myself as “other”). A part of this was the

manner by which I entered the space – an imposing big sister¹²¹, a foreigner – someone akin to a “white person” as I came to Guguletu to study the people there as though there were no people to study where I was coming from. This reference to “whiteness” was made during my final meeting with the girls. It was at this point in our relationship when a truly reciprocal dialogue had been established between us. They asked me if I was rich and what kind of black women “study other women” for a living, as in their experience, this was something that foreigners did.

I am not surprised that this was the impression that they had and I was expecting it. I started every interview with an explanation of the importance of having women and especially black women documenting black women’s histories – but I too was aware of how phoney this explication could be: I was travelling to Guguletu to study black women, who have been framed in national and global discussions as particularly impoverished and particularly in need of intervention^x. I was also entering the research space as a social interventionist of sorts, so this role presented “double trouble” – on the one hand, I present yet another imperialist other, probably capable of reproducing monolithic and problematic representations of people in Guguletu – on the other hand, I come in to “save” the same people I wish to study, emphasising the imperialist metaphor again. This was a difficult position to navigate and I really made a major effort to try and constantly explain that yes, it

¹²¹ I use this particular metaphor again, only with a positive meaning – I feel that it best describes the way that I felt I entered into the situation, yet it can simultaneously embody positive or negative meaning, depending upon the delicate management one makes of that relationship and the authenticity of its construction (one day, six months? How long have you been playing this role?)

is important that the histories of the “often ignored” enter into text; but also that I did not wish to enter and run away to spread disempowering misrepresentations.

In an attempt to become more accustomed/acculturated to Cape Town township life, I signed up as a volunteer for TeachOut and Inkanyezi; which are both UCT based interventionist programs that aim to provide tutoring and mentorship to young people in some of the Black¹²² townships of Cape Town. The programs I was involved in were located in Samora Machel, which is a much newer settling of persons and we would only be in schools for two hours a week, so I quickly grew sceptical of this approach as one that would help in acquaint me with the mores of township life. This program is predominantly operated by white students¹²³ (whose volunteers are often study abroad US-American) – which created another problematic for me. Watching the particular relationships between the so-called “disempowered” Africans in the townships, in opposition to the knowing white interventionists based at the university was unsettling. I appreciate the sorts of social transformation that those organisations are advocating them and the people who work to

¹²² While I provide some suggestions of how to define race/racism in the glossary which follows this report, for the working purposes of this report I will use the terms “African,” “Native” and “Black” (mostly Black as this is the contemporary functional term) to describe the subjects of my study as this socially/historically constructed identity (fluid as it may be, and as my research reveals) is crucial to the placements of their bodies within that space in Cape Town’s history, therefore, while race may be a social construct – there are historically Black townships, and Guguletu is the one that is the main focus of my study.

¹²³ I have to think about whether my position as a black person means that I am 1) in a better position to view the need for critique of such models; 2) make me a better candidate for outreach programs into black neighbourhoods, despite their actual difference to my own background. My unease with the situation and the exit which followed were not related to the fact that I felt any “natural” connection to black brothers and sisters in Samora Machel; but rather to my recognition that there was a power relationship in play and the unevenness in power was surely related to a real (though socially constructed) history of inequality and oppression based on racism. I applied strategic essentialism to come to the conclusion that I would not be a black person replicating a model of such power relations (without making a substantial enough intervention in my estimation – we weren’t really improving lives or dramatically challenging the dubious reality in front of us).

sustain them work very hard on a volunteer basis to coordinate these programs, but I did not feel comfortable continuing with their program as a part of my quest for knowledge.

I then decided to stick to Toetie – quite literally, and do things with her, to experience her “life in Guguletu,” as an entry point. This process was initiated by my attendance to her book club, during which I found myself in a space where I was excitedly “gathering information” as a participant and observer, yet I was not caught in an explicit and implicit relationship of power in relation to the people I was with. We were all researching each other and we were equally committed to learning more about each other. This is when I discovered the value of the group discussion as a method for unearthing data. I also met some of Toetie’s friends and we initiated communication.

This was the beginning of a lot of stalking, with permission of course! I spent some time going home with Toetie; attending shows and dance performances; going to NY13 to have Toetie’s hair braided; visiting her family; going to parties and Mzoli’s; I even attended a family memorial service. Instead of being driven into Guguletu, I used my feet; using public transportation to Guguletu and learning the various routes and tricks to getting around. Through this process I stopped feeling so “foreign,” not only because I was much more familiar with the space, but also because I could locate myself within the local discourses because they were discourses I was familiar with, from my own family back home. When we went to the memorial service for example, the process of sitting in a particular room and being given meat in a certain way by the daughter-in-law (who happened to be Toetie’s older sister in this case) was so familiar to me, I felt like I was with my own family. I was familiar with the process of trying to get someone to do your hair, of meeting up with your friends,

of all sorts of very ordinary things which to be honest, I had not been able to recognize as a part of my life in Observatory. I was finding connections to my life in Zimbabwe in Guguletu that I did not recognize in Observatory, it was great! It would be problematic to suggest that I now know life in Guguletu and I make no such claims. However, I certainly experienced that awful acculturation process that feminists are sceptical of, with a different twist. I found myself a niche within the space by locating myself within the realm of the familiar. I was Toetie's friend and as she is the youngest child in her family; in that sense I was adopted as a child, and this was certainly clear in the manner by which Toetie's mother looked after me. Toetie's older sisters would drop us off at home if we were in Gugs too late at night to take public transportation and I could not help but feel like I had just been on a play-date!

I must add however that the area of Guguletu that I familiarized myself with is the location where Toetie grew up: that is, Section II, which was identified by Toetie and her friends as being the "middle class" area of the township where historically, semi-detached housing constructed for families who qualified to remain in Cape Town during the period of Influx Control: that is, "the rights of Africans to reside in urban areas have depended on conditions defined in Section 10 of the Urban Areas Act. The basic qualifications for such rights are that a person must either have been born in an area and lived continuously there since; or must have worked continuously in the area for 10 years for one employer or lived continuously there for 15 years with official permission. Under Section 10(1)c of the Act, wives and dependant children of men qualified either of these ways are also qualified,

provided they are ordinarily resident with them.”¹²⁴ As my conversations with Toetie’s mum and her friends revealed – the persons living here constituted a population of long-time residents of Cape Town who had invested in a “middle class” life in a place where they have made meaning of their lives for a number of decades. Many of these homes have been extended and vastly improved since meagre production in the 1950s and 60s. While “Black housing at that time varied considerably,” according to D.M. Calderwood, cited in *Our Building Heritage: An Illustrated History*, “some standards and plans were very good. But in general terms, the wastage of space and pack of privacy was extreme.” Furthermore, although there was a set of minimum standards for black housing adopted by the National Housing and Planning Commission in 1947, “the white political scenario dramatically affected black housing, however.”¹²⁵ During my interview with Toetie’s mum and her friends, her sister Linda commented on this in saying:

“During the early 60s, is the time when we all moved here when I was young. And this is the time that we were teenagers. When we arrived in Guguletu the homes were not complete. We were given homes that were structured for horses. They were stables. No ceilings, no flooring. The toilets were the bucket system. And the structural house was built in a row of eight. And the nicest house was to have was the one at end because one could then have access to a garden of some sort. But with the bucket system was terrible. When the stuff was collected it had to move from the toilet to the kitchen through the lounge and you wouldn’t believe the smell. And if you dared to hold your nose away from that smell. You didn’t hat is your poo.”

She later continued to state that:

¹²⁴ IDAF. 1981. *Women Under Apartheid in Photographs & Text*. London: IDAF Research, Information and Publicity. Pg. 25

¹²⁵ Hartolegen, P. 1988. *Our Building Heritage: An Illustrated History*. Rylls Publishing. Pg.

"I salute Baba Mandela. I worship him as he has done a lot for us. If it were not for him, we would not have gotten these homes automatically after the change in government. And you can see the change, after then people have started reconstructing their homes. We have been happy to build mansions here. Let me tell you African people to not care where exactly their homes are, we don't care that it is Guguletu, or in Camps Bay, we are happy here. We have access to everything now, so that is why we vote every four years so that we can have access to those things where we are staying. We need beer halls, we need cinemas, and we need good transport systems. We don't care to have a neighbour who is a white. And there is no life there in Camps Bay. It's just that the problem in the crime. That is why you see people resale and got to somewhere where it is safe. But the townships have turned out to be risky because of crime. If only we could find a way of solving poverty and crime. But we would want to stay here, and these homes are sentimental to us, these were our first homes and we made them what they are."



(Two of my favourite people: Toetie's nieces standing outside of Toetie's mother's home on NY21)

As I became a more familiar face in Gugs, the Siyenza girls and I started to share a different type of relationship. At this point in time I had already given them a disposable cameras and I was waiting for them to finish taking pictures so that they could be developed and we could plan to meet up and discuss the pictures some time afterwards. Initially I harassed them about the cameras over the phone (often in a shy non-productive manner). In due course, I was able to enter into a role more similar to that which Toetie has with them – an older sister figure; which still involves a certain degree of mentoring per se – only now I could also be more confident in my approach to them. I could for example go to their homes and ask how they were doing and ask how far along they were with the cameras – I could invite them to go out with me or to meet with me, without the certain feeling that they were there because Toetie had insisted. What a breakthrough! At the same time, I was still a foreigner who did not want to only speak with them, but I wished to video-record the conversations, which conversely acted to my advantage – I was not threatening to them in the same way an older sister can be. They were not for example afraid to tell me things that they thought that Toetie would judge them about. As Toetie was obviously more socially integrated, they also feared that she might tell others their secrets if they knew, so they requested that we conduct the interview in her absence and then she or anyone else came by during the process there was a marked silence.

(Girls sitting outside Toetie's mother's house looking at the photographs they took)



These reflections are useful, as they offer a narrative of how I approached the conflicts with entering into this research based on my own positionality, however I have not yet

addressed the problematic of researching that which has been constructed as the ultimate other – the “Cape Town urban periphery” itself has become a site for social inquiry in recent years. The frame of these studies has varied from the grim images portrayed in the explications of the likes of Mamphela Ramphele¹²⁶ on the one end – and over generalized coffee-table reading such as Telschow’s book, *Townships & the Spirit of Ubuntu*.¹²⁷ I attended the launch of a text co-produced by a fellow researcher who I met through the African Gender Institute on township fashion and style. This was off course of interest to me, and the text is a beautiful visual presentation of young people expressing the sorts of things I hoped to capture with oral conversation. Sitting at Mzoli’s for this book launch I was struck

¹²⁶ For example, *A Bed for a Home*, which provides a crucial gender critique of life in the migrant labour hostels of Cape Town’s historically black townships, however in my estimation the overall image presented is that of a situation of morose and complete disempowerment for women living in these places, which I believe is perhaps too general.

¹²⁷ Telschow. M. 2003. *Townships & the Spirit of Ubuntu*. Cape Town: Clifton Publications

by the number of tourists being bussed in and out of the place and also by the fact that as the performances occurred, those people “gazing” at them and paying particular attention to the space around them (besides me) were all foreign and white. I wish to elaborate on this point to elucidate my argument that researching Guguletu is akin to cannibalism and to consider how I managed to think about my research in Guguletu as being different to this model.

Mzoli's; A Site/metaphor for the consumption of Guguletu wo/men

As I have just noted, while sitting at Mzoli's I was particularly struck by the consumption of this model of “township life” by a number of non-Guguletu persons. Nina, one of my research participants who grew up in Guguletu commented that when one comes to Mzoli's they have to admit that “Black people are not poor,” as one sees a series of the latest BMW, Audi and Mercedes Benz cars lined up for kilometres around the eatery. These are almost all former Guguletu residents, who like Nina and Toetic, are still connected to Guguletu and this does represent a site “at home” where they can socialize. At the same time, this has become a curious site for tourists. My own interest in researching Guguletu arose from an interest in Mzoli's. It is part of Cape Town initiation to go there at some point for us Zimbabweans – there is Cape Point, Table Mountain and kwaMzoli! This appears to hold true for other foreigners, as I noted there are often countless tour busses coming through the property. During this last visit, I noticed a newspaper clipping at the pay station for meat that read:



The popularity of this eatery is being framed in this sense as a signifier of the de-racialization of particular urban spaces – Guguletu, traditionally a black township that begins to embody the imagined “New South Africa,” because of its appeal to a variety of consumers. This is not the only way that Guguletu has been framed in such a way – as “cool” in this sense. There are other examples, for example the popular Craig Native¹²⁸ t-shirts that simply read: GUGULETU. This idea of Guguletu being a cool place was idyllically presented in the song by local rap artist Lungelo when he sang about “Gugule-tois” as the place where all the cool people are from. The relationship between Guguletu and local and global products is made explicitly clear in these elaborations and complicate any suggestions to frame Guguletu as the “urban periphery” within contemporary discourse.

Mzoli’s, especially being located in proximity to NY1 (Guguletu’s fashionable street), make it an even more complex site for social analysis. For young women from Guguletu,

¹²⁸ A South African designer

this certainly represents a site for the elaboration of femininities strongly associated with current modes of fashion, for example:



The meaning of walking across Mzoli's in the manner that these girls are doing in this picture reminded me of the Siyenza girls, who were quite upset with me when I met up with them later that day, as I had not taken them with to Mzoli's. It is a cool place to go and it appears an interesting site to think about bodies in Guguletu, yet I found myself feeling uncomfortable as a researcher within this space. I saw numerous foreigners (like me only whiter) taking photographs of small children, sometimes picking them up and playing with



them. I also shared a table with a number of Scandinavian postgraduate students who were all in South Africa to complete their research and I^x was reminded again of the pervasive foreign presence of researchers – is this really *that* interesting a place that we should all need to be there? >

Eunice, one of the “first generation” participants in my research came into our group discussion very tired and also very sceptical. I spent some time speaking to her only, instead of the group discussion so we had the opportunity to get to know each other a little better. Once this relationship was forming, she explained that she did not want to come to this meeting as she was really tired of being interviewed. Her son Godfrey was one of the Guguletu Seven¹²⁹ so given the deep interest in such cases following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Eunice has been harassed constantly to participate in numerous research projects. She is also diabetic, so her energy reserves are low. She said to me, “you do not know how many of these interviews I do every month.” I like Eunice a lot (she has the same name as my mother). And I took her reflections very seriously. I apologized to her and she asked me not to, because she was glad that I was doing the kind of research I was doing. She explained that many times when people speak to her they are mostly interested in hearing about her son and the trauma. It was a relief that someone wanted to hear about what she thought about her own life and that of today’s youth. I think she also liked me 😊 and she even interviewed me back along with the other women, so the situation was not disastrous.

χ What I mean to call into attention is the problematic obsession with researching township life. There is a particular fascination with Guguletu because of its cosmopolitan, fashionable appeal and even the women who are from there themselves acknowledged it (with Nina reminding me that Gugule-tois is the place to be) yet I was made particularly

¹²⁹ The “Guguletu Seven” were seven young boys who were killed by police officers in Guguletu, during the struggle against Apartheid.

aware of myself as a researcher. This is why I have taken such pains in framing my theoretical and methodological approach to researching Guguletu, because it is my intention to produce a body of work that does not add to what I view as a growing body of cannibalistic research on township life. Gayatri Spivak addresses these particular issues in her infamous essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" where she problematises the possibility that for those of us engaged in such intellectual work to begin to represent knowledge, particularly knowledge about historically marginalised. Representation is her key concern and she is stating that "between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third world woman' caught between tradition and modernization."¹³⁰ In this view, one must wonder what the possibilities are for black women located in the urban periphery to be given a voice – one that is authentic and unproblematic and one whose representation is not evidence of a process of one human (the writer/describer/represent-er) consuming the described. In my methodology section I argue that I believe my subject position as a black woman is useful in addressing some of these issues. The presentation of strategic essentialism that I offer earlier in this section is also useful, as it is the response that Spivak herself offers, speaking "of the need to embrace a strategic essentialism, in an interview in which she acknowledged the usefulness of essentialist formulations in many struggles for liberation from the effects of colonial and

¹³⁰ Spivak, G. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Nelson, C. & Grossberg, L. (Eds). *Marxism & the Interpretation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan. Pg. 102.

neo-colonial oppression.”¹³¹ It is from this position, of strategic essentialism, with the standpoint theory I elaborated earlier that I have negotiated this fear of cannibalism, while researching in and about Guguletu.

¹³¹ Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin. 1998. *Concepts in Postcolonial Studies*. London: Routledge. Pg. 79

Chapter 4

GUGULETOIS – A BRIEF HERSTORY

revised
This study is one of locating subjectivities and studying the subjective histories of black women raised within “peripheral” urban space from which I could begin to identify discourses. I have worked with the definition of “discourse,” as “historically constructed regimes of knowledge,” which “include the common-sense assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas, belief systems and myths that groups of people share and through which they understand each other.”¹³² Continuing with Amina Mama’s definition,

“[Discourses,] exist within and transmit networks of power, with dominant discourses exercising their hegemony by echoing the institutionalized and formal knowledges, assumptions and ideologies of a given social and political order. On the other hand, subaltern discourses also exist in contradiction to hegemonic ones, which subvert the dominant symbolic order and empower oppressed groups through their resonance with alternative ideologies and cultural practices.”¹³³

Discourses therefore serve as tools of analysis from which I can draw from individual subjects as historical archives; and whose narratives through which I can sieve through other historical materials to begin a re/writing of this narrative of human life.

I have argued in support of the genealogical approach to framing subjective experience and I have cited the meaning of space within an apartheid/post-apartheid

¹³² Mama 1995: 98

¹³³ Ibid.

context as crucial to the historical elaboration of subjectivities and discourses. This chapter serves as an entry into constructing a history of that space. I begin in offering a short narration of the history of the establishment of Guguletu, and the frame within which young people then were entering into the space. I will then follow with a number of themes which arose in my conversations with the "first generation," about their early move to Guguletu and what life has been like for them since. I conducted a three-hour long, video-recorded group discussion, which was fashioned very much as a conversation amongst friends. In the beginning there were three of Toetie's mother's closest friends present, but as the day wore on, a number of women from the community, including Toetie's mum's sister, Linda, came through to add to the conversation. I asked questions to prompt the dialogue, although I did not prepare a specific set of questions. I did prepare an interview schedule in preparation in regards to what thematic tangents I wished to pursue and you will find a copy of this schedule in **Appendix One**. I brought food and beverages along with me and the women sat and talked about the things our conversation brought up long after I left. Toetie's mum later told me this when I returned to her home a week later, adding that it was nice for them to have a chance to reflect on the past. This sentiment was similar to those shared by the women whose views form the shape of the following chapter's discussion.

Constructing Guguletu – home is where the heart lives

It was been noted that “Post-apartheid south Africa is faced with the effects of a distorted urbanization process.”¹³⁴ African migration has been male-dominated due to the migrant labour system as well as influx control legislation, therefore “female migration was actively discouraged” and women in the urban setting being constructed by such legislation as “illegal”, “were forcibly re-located in the rural areas.”¹³⁵ Mamphela Ramphele argues that the “hostels of the Western Cape are the logical outcome of a deliberate system pursued by successive white South African governments, to discourage urbanization of Africans in the Western Cape in particular, and to reserve the area mainly for use by whites and ‘Coloureds’. Africans were only allowed to reside there on a temporary basis in single-sex hostels.”¹³⁶

We already know that this was not necessarily the case at all times, as the site of my study begins to prove. However, I think that Ramphele’s insights are useful as they provide an entry point for us to begin to think about the legacy of apartheid in relation to the framing of the “home” for Africans in the city. Ramphele’s sentiment is that the primary site of the “home” considering the migrant hostels of the urban areas, would be the “bed.”¹³⁷ This site as one where “homes” are produced is already a counter discourse to that which is dominant, yet it is not in isolation. In my brief experience of Guguletu I recognized the importance of the “home” as a site where family life, femininities, respectability as well as

¹³⁴ Pick, W. & Obermeyer, C. 1996. “Urbanisation, Household Composition & the Reproductive Health of Women in a South African City,” in *Soc. Sci. Med.* Vol. 34, Issue. 10. Pg. 1431.

¹³⁵ Pick & Obermeyer. 1996: 1432

¹³⁶ Ramphele, M. 1989. “The Dynamics of Gender Politics in the Hostels of Cape Town: Another Legacy of the South African Migrant Labour System,” in *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 15, Issue. 3. Pg. 396.

articulation of the illegalised¹³⁸ and structurally undermined practice social reproduction within this space was crucial. Although the women involved in my study were involved in such a process within semi-detached housing built for families; this was not an easy task and it too provides a solid counter-discourse to the then-dominant dogma that located the “home” for Africans in the so-called Bantustans, or homelands. As Linda already revealed, the homes that these women received were designed for animals and the resuscitation of these homes, to make them spaces that people could live in with pride provides an explicit response to power. However, this articulation is not the only one, as there are many other layers in regards to the articulation of power. The following offers a small entry into discussions which resonate with this point.

The meaning of the home and home life were strongly articulated within this discussion.¹³⁷ As I alluded to earlier, quoting Linda on her views of why people choose to not only stay in Guguletu, but also to produce beautiful and “sentimental” homes there, is that due to the historical denial for people to own homes, a shift in the law has resulted in a sense of pride within homes. Reviewing popular literature from the past, such as the popular magazines like *Drum*, *Zonk!* or *Bona*; despite their variations in content, the advertisements for example, universally present the idealised middle class African home within the urban areas. Women as an audience were really directly catered to in regards to their consumption of household goods such as the Dover stove, or particular a starching powder for clothes, for example. On the other hand, soaps, lotions, toothpaste and other cosmetics too were

¹³⁷ We see this most explicitly in the book, *A Bed For a Home*.

¹³⁸ In that, African families were meant to reproduce in the rural areas

presented in a manner that suggest a female or family as the primary audience and consumer. This elaboration of the modern urban African family as a consumer of modern goods and as one who was able to make some semblance of “middle class, “respectable” home ideals stood in opposition to the legal definition of “home life” for black South Africans, and particularly black women at that time, as the government was particularly interested in placing African family life in the rural Bantustans. I therefore find the longstanding discourse of home life and family life within the urban areas an interesting counter discourse to the prevailing historical climate.

The women themselves offered more insight in regards to the meaning of the home for them, being young in Guguletu. They were all young when they arrived there, but were brought by different things. Despite the strict Influx control regulations, Eunice for example explained:

“My name is Eunice. I am form Bloemfontein and I am here from 1959, and I came here when I was about 17 years old.”

D: Did you come here by yourself?

E: Yes, I came by myself.

D: Did you have family here, or family coming with you?

E: No I came here and I was coming here to get married. So I got married in 1960.

Eunice's primary aim in coming to Guguletu was to participate in the formulation of a family unit within the urban space, which she managed despite the strict regulations, according to which she should have been sent home. Eunice continued to add "I live n NY 26, but when I came here in 1969, there were camps. I lived in the emergency camp; they had these camps here when they were establishing the township" offering some clues in regards to how it was possible that she negotiated a space at a site exclusively designed for so-called "long time" black residents of Cape Town. Marriage, it seems offered one powerful means of counteracting the legal issues.

On the other hand, there were a number of women who had lived in Cape Town for several generations before; including Toetie's mother and aunt, and three of their closest friends. These women all came to Guguletu from Athlone or Cape Town together so they share a long history. The concerns in regards to mediating family life once in this new place also focused on the family, however in their cases they spoke to this experience as young women who arrived there under the protection of mothers and fathers. For example, this comment about how difficult it was for their parents to get to and from work after the move:

Linda: We grew up here with our parents leaving these homes at 4.30am and coming back at night not knowing what we had to eat there. But we children were trained to prepare quick fix meals.

This retrospective approach is fairly different to those who were at the time of entry were perhaps less legally settled, (although one cannot make any concrete judgments on the degree of "legally settled," as the government's pass system placed *all* women at risk of so-called "repatriation" to the rural areas.)

The women who grew up in Cape Town and were moved to Guguletu also placed great emphasis on family values that were not only depictive of urban social mores, but also reflected an "African way" of some sort, for example"

Vuyelwa: We were brought up the African way. Strict. The morals were very good, we would try by any means to keep to the principles given to undertake for us by our parents. If we were told to wake up and 6, we did it. We did not have electricity in our homes in those days so we had to wake up and start up the Dover oven stove in the morning.

Matutu: Some of us were cooking on a fire.

Linda: Paraffin was luxury in our homes. And those who were less fortunate would use candle. Or otherwise, primus stoves, it was about what you could afford. And we were scared of a gas stove, you didn't.

[^] I really enjoyed this exchange. At this moment, like many during my discussions I was witness to long-time friends recounting forgotten lives and the smallest thing ignited the greatest debate.[^] There is certainly nothing romantic about waking up at 6am, yet pursuing this family value made the memory romantic in a sense. I used the "stove" as an example of a consumable site of an urban African "culture," merely out of my own fascination. Following a review of the literature as I mentioned I was surprised to find how powerful the discourse of respectable femininity was linked to not only the kitchen, but specifically to the stove. The "Dover" and other stoves also feature prominently in my own family's history in Zimbabwe so I feel quite sentimental about that issue. Furthermore, I can recall similar debates being held by my mother and her sisters about growing up as second generation

urban residents in Harare, during what was a similar time for us. The ideals often expressed here mirror each other quite nicely.

Another means of accessing Guguletu, or permanent stay in Cape Town overall was alluded to: that of using ones "colouring" and cultural capital such as speaking Afrikaans, as a means of acquiring residence. An example of this was Vera who originally came from Kimberly:

Vera: Growing up in Kimberly I went to Coloured schools not knowing that I was not Coloured because our grandparents wanted us to have the best, so I went but our lives were so full of ups and downs. And me and my brother were raised in Coloured school, so I was fortunate, so when I came to Cape Town I was fortunate I got a job very quick I was fortunate

Linda: And you were also light, you were light enough to pass

Vera: Yeah, I was light. I was lucky.

This vignette is useful as an entry into the next theme⁴, that is in regards to physical appearance and standards of beauty.

Beauty, Beauty, Beauty

Ribane's recently published *Beauty: A Black Perspective*, enters into the history of beauty for African (Black) women in South Africa. This formed a central focus of my research project and it was possibly the easiest topic of conversation. Similar to the "bridging the gap" conversation, beauty and beauty pageantry arose as being central to social

life for this generation of Guguletu women. Ribane offers an explanation of this phenomenon in stating:

“But throughout all the years of hardship, despite the intense political and cultural oppression, black South Africans managed, amazingly, to keep spirit and self-respect alive. As the political stranglehold tightened its grasp, people sought evermore inventive ways to ‘beat the system’ it was against this backdrop that beauty in all its forms came to flourish. Art, music, dance and theatre offered creative escape from the depressing realities of the day and an outlet for self expression. Beauty contests and fashion were popular pastimes. Because of the restrictions on black property ownership, dressing up was one of the few things that people could spend their money on.”¹³⁹

This point certainly resonated with the women’s narratives as a number of them had themselves participated in pageants during their “youth” in Cape Town. We see this explicitly in this exchange:

Fern: Yes, like miss teenager

Vuyelwa: I was the first miss teenager.

Fern: I was miss teenager, I came up number four. Because there were many different girls and I was short. That time they used to look for slender tall girls and all. I was the shortest, but I made it and still came number four.

D: So Miss Teenager was in Guguletu?

Fern: No, well there were others it was also in Guguletu but there were others. I was in the Woodstock competition.

Vuyelwa: Mine was here. I was the first Guguletu Miss Teenager. The first, first one! In 1961 and we were a lot about 20 of us. You know there was

¹³⁹ Ribane, Nakedi. 2006. *Beauty: A Black Perspective*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press. Pg. 2

excitement; we were all excited being here, the first time we had done this here. I was number 1.

D: and who used to organize these?

Vuyelwa: Community organizations. Just to keep us away from the streets. And these other ones were also there. But they wanted to keep us from the street.

D: what kind of girls won the pageants?

Fern: they were more concerned about how you walk and the way you dressed, what dress you had. And the way you answered the question. They emphasized how you walk. As a result when you watch the TV and you see these people on the catwalk, this is what you did

Vuyelwa & Fern: Yes, the way you turned your self, how you took the corner, your pose.

Vuyelwa: they taught you all about that.

These women, like Toetie and her generation; participated in various community-based competitions but once again, being “black” in Cape Town impacted upon their visibility and Cape Town. Ribane speaks of the exclusion of “African, Coloured and Indian contestants” from the “bigger, more prestigious pageants, such as Miss South Africa” however the first Miss Black South Africa which was open to the aforementioned was held in 1955.¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately, such competitions were not as accessible to these women; which offers another commentary on racialized history. The women added:

Vuyelwa: We were also beauties, but we didn’t go there. We were beauties in the townships. They didn’t compete with other racial groups.

¹⁴⁰ Ribane 2006: 3

Fern: There was Miss Black SA in Johannesburg, underground. Or Miss Africa South, the same.

Matutu: Johannesburg was more recognized, but here Coloured were more dominant. And the Coloured were used to keep an eye on us.

A conversation about beauty and attractiveness soon led to the much discussed issue of skin lighteners, which Ribane introduces in saying “as if it was not enough to make Black feel ugly about their brown skins, millions of rands were made out of them by the skin lightening trade. There is much to be said about the suffering and damage that these ‘miracle’ creams and lotions did physically and psychologically to our African sisters... and brothers.”¹⁴¹ The women spoke of such damage, at times in humour and others less so, for example:

Vuyelwa: There was Lemon lite and high-light – that lotion

Matutu: You had many lotions, many names. But the ambi, the ambi was the super one. Almost everyone used. I used it, and not my skin is ruined, you cannot see it now because I cover it with make-up everyday.

Vuyelwa: I used to go to Station road, and this white gentleman; the owner of the store, he used to say “you are looking for ambi, no that is for horse skin.” Was selling it and he was telling me it was for horse skin.

Fern: You changed colour very quickly with the lotion. You first– you first put the lotion, that lotion took off the top layer of your skin and then you

¹⁴¹ Ribane 2006: 3

put that one. And then you know that you are going to be white like this (pointing everywhere on and around the face)

Fern, Vera & Vuyelwa: And your hands and your legs and elbows are black.

Ramphele, still commenting on her research in the emigrant labour hostels of Cape Town, offers her perspective on the skin-lightening trade is stating that

“there is competition between single women for the attentions of the potential partners. Attractiveness becomes a matter of survival. Central to one’s look is the colour of one’s skin. Women feel, that, even if they run the risk of damaging their skin, it would be suicidal to stop using skin lightening creams. ‘You are regarded as a woman who doesn’t care about her appearance and you are dumped in favour of those who are nice and pink’. When questioned on the problems of long term skin damage, the retort is: ‘Let that day come when it comes, as for now I can’t stop and take the risk of losing out... in any case it might happen with I am too old to bother about my looks.’”¹⁴²

It is my contention that a more complex reading is necessary, as it most certainly involved more than this. She continues to add that:

“The issue of skin lightening raises two important points for analysis. Firstly, it is a product of a racist environment that devalues those without ‘white’ skins. Lightness of skin colour is thus equated with beauty, or alternatively with higher socio-economic status. This perception is vigorously promoted by advertising in all media. It can thus be inferred that Africans are at the bottom of the rung because of the colour of their skins.

¹⁴² Ramphele 1989: 409

Secondly, it is a reflection of the sexual objectification of women's bodies, turning them into playthings owned by men. Women end up experiencing their bodies in ways dictated to by those monitoring and interpreting the changes over time of their body processes."¹⁴³

This is certainly true, however again, I wish to suggest a more complex reading of power in such analyses. First, to consider the skin lightening trade in the Western Cape as being driven by a mode of competition for male attention or the use of men for self-sustenance is over simplistic. The diagnosed power in this sense is exclusively male. The women I spoke with diagnosed a different source of "power," speaking about how such creams offered the opportunity of job security for example in this exchange:

Linda: The reason behind it is because in the Western Cape is that if you are black you feel unacceptable and you've got to be and you can live if you are lighter in complexion it is easier for you to get a job, to get a place to stay, whatever privileges that were set for the whites and Coloured. Were treated as third class citizens. So many people, to obtain an ID during our times, the green card – well, the term ID was used for whites and Coloured and for us there was the Dom pass.

Fern: So we didn't carry any ID, per se, we had a special book.

Matutu: In order to avoid carrying that book as Africans, we wanted to carry those IDs as Coloured, we had to use those Ambi's to change the colour of our skin and straighten your hair and take out the front teeth. And speak Africans and then you will be accepted in the community of Coloured.

Fern: I remember it like yesterday. I used to play as a Coloured, just for work. My first work was at a biscuit shop in Woodstock, they only wanted Coloured people there, besides the men, black men that used to do hard labour. I went there looking for a job. They asked who I was and I said I am Miss dev Vrain. I didn't get the job right away they tested me to see how fast I was. There were things that they had to test you, for packing and your hands. I was a very fast worker then and then I got the job. And then look, I was employed as Ms. der Vrain. I was very light in complexion with very

¹⁴³ Ramphele 1989: 409

long hair. And I was a makoti – a young bride and you have a doek and a scarf. I went to work, my mother in law wanted me to go with my scarf and my head scarf, so I went to work and when I got to the train station in Woodstock I used to take it off. I worked and I worked and I worked. And I was selling too much and one time, you know we used to clock in, time ourselves and when I wanted to put mine, thee was this Coloured girl and we had a fight over this and she knew.

Even when I come back from work, I work with them, they are friends. I speak lots of Afrikaans, and in the train the black people would make remarks “she thinks she’s Coloured,” I used to ignore them. I would tell them that I know that I am black. I am working there for a living. You don’t call me that.

Now with this Coloured lady we had a fight and then she called me “hey you kaffir” and then we were called to the office and then this white man why did you smack her, if you not a kaffir, why did you smack her. And I said because I don’t like to be called like that. What he did, the white man was that he dismissed us both.

Vera: That is how we used to get jobs. If you were fluent in Afrikaans you could get the job. Speaking or reading Afrikaans. If you are looking for work, the column in the newspaper, you had Coloured, Coloured Coloured, nothing for blacks.

Vuyelwa: And if even if you can speak nicely. You needed to be Coloured.

D: so do you think beauty standards were like that?

Linda: Yes. Light skin and the language. That is why were all so excited about Basestana and Jacqui, because if at all it wasn’t for democracy, they wouldn’t have even stood a chance. The beauty queen was a white.

These reflections diagnose apartheid and racism as the primary sources of power which lead to women using these creams, not patriarchy alone. Additionally, there are multiple levels of self-reflection going on here that I believe are useful in considering ways with which we can understand such phenomena without overgeneralizing the manner by which humns negotiate social life.

“Laws,” “Rules”, Young Women and Public Bodies



(A woman being arrested for a pass offence)¹⁴⁴

The women spent some equal time speaking of their experiences of pass laws and the constant surveillance of their bodies by the state. Matutu recounted a story where she was sent home to get her brother's pass after he had been

arrested for a pass offence. As she stepped outside to show the officer his pass, she was arrested for not having hers on her and her father had to go and save her. There were more dramatic stories, like of how police officers would rape women for pass offences for example. Additionally, there were off course stories of women being repatriated to the rural areas, of which Katie shared such reflections. I only wish to mention this briefly as this is not the main point of this thematic area. I am more interested to think about the manner by which these women then view today's young women. The discourse of which reveals a powerful desire for things to be “the way they used to be” in regards to the movement of women's bodies within public space. Eunice's reflections revealed this right away when she started to tell me of her horror “at the youth” and how she feels particularly hurt by the way

¹⁴⁴ IDAF 1981: 61

her children have come out in comparison to herself, adding that “they don’t care for the future some of them, they just want something now. Our children, how can a teenage girl go and sleep out and she doesn’t even tell her parents. Our children really hurt us now” Eunice continued her reflection, thinking back on her own youth to state that: “When we were young it was difficult. We carried passbooks; our lives were under watch all the time and we were moving” and almost immediately, “They just want to drink these children today. At 16 years, you drink and you sleep out?”

There was a general consensus about the way these women felt about young girls today; that are mothers they were stuck because despite the amount of time and love and care they put into their children, these children did not listen or care about them. In fact, there was even a call for a parental protection board and they asked me if I could help them to arrange such a meeting. The concerns with today’s youth were summed up quite aptly by Eunice when I asked her “What changed?” and in response she said:

“I think is because they are so free. We had the fear the police, the state our parents. The children today do what they like because they are so free.”

I wish to pursue this thought further in my concluding chapter as I believe that between this “first generation” and the current there is one key similarity; that is, they are both generations where radical social reengineering occurred. I wish to then explore this dissonance from that perspective in my concluding thoughts.

Chapter 5

BRIDGING THE GAP – THE PRE/BORN-FREE GENERATION

The “easiest,” conversations of my research process were those which I conducted with my girl Toetie and her friends Nina, Ukhona, and Andiswa (who I too consider to be my friends as well!) We have communicated via email; at coffee shops and book club; attending dance performances and even enjoyed meals together at each others’ homes. The initial group discussion I had with these women was inspired by a similar chat we had at the first book club meeting I was ever invited to by Toetie, where we started off by telling each other about ourselves. One by one we shared our life stories in a fairly undirected, yet highly productive manner. I could not help but wear my “researcher” cap, being the only member of the group who was not from Guguletu; and also having an interest in what life was like for young women in Gugs, I was unexpectedly sitting in research-heaven! I then asked Toetie if we could all meet again and talk about growing up in Guguletu and we waited for a weekend when everyone was available. Some time afterwards, Toetie prepared a delicious dinner of roast lamb and salad, I brought some wine and we talked and dined for hours!

Toetie, my main Guguletu contact and friend is a 25-year old woman, who grew up in Guguletu. She currently works at the Sports Science Institute in Cape Town as a Life Skills trainer and she lives in Rosebank with her partner, while she completes an Honours Degree with the University of Cape Town in Adult Education. Toetie is also the director of Project Siyenza, a small youth-empowerment project in Guguletu, through which in my

capacity as “trainer,” and “researcher,” on behalf of Toetie, I have been conducting research with young women.

Nina is also 25 and she grew up in Guguletu as well. Nina is in the financial sector and she is a very busy woman, always travelling between Cape Town and Johannesburg. She too has left Guguletu, and this departure is informed by, and informs a great portion of her life history. Very early in the conversation Nina exclaimed, “girl, Gugu-le-tois¹⁴⁵ is the best. All the cool people are from Gugs!”

Andiswa was 28 when the interview was conducted, and has since turned 29. She is an occupational therapist, completing her Master’s Degree in Early Childhood Development. She has always lived in Guguletu and she lives on the same street that Toetie grew up on with her three-year old daughter. She also works in Guguletu. At the time of the interview, Andiswa had recently broken up with her boyfriend of many years, so relationships with men easily arose as a topic, as it was quite “current.” Andiswa was also very active in beauty pageantry as a child and teenager, so this offered a new angle to explore.

Finally, Ukhona is a 23-year old woman, who grew up both in the Eastern Cape and Gugulethu. She moved to Guguletu in her early teenage years and now lives there with her husband and her young son. She works for an Arts and Performance agency in Cape Town, and attended the University of Cape Town a couple of years ago. Ukhona is recently

¹⁴⁵ The “French-ification of Guguletu was first done by a local hip hop singer, Lungelo who is from Guguletu. This song was precisely about how “cool,” Gugulethu is and I’m convinced that there is something more to this, in terms of what it means about Guguletu’s so-called peripheral status in Cape Town. Guguletu’s “coolness,” was also aired by local fashion designer Craig Native, who designed a series very popular t-shirts that simply say “Guguletu,” and the local and very famous eatery “kwaMzoli” has become central to a full “Cape Town experience” as well.

married, which has come up prominently in many of our conversations since we are the same age.

The conversation lasted about three hours on tape and I began by asking them to introduce themselves. This was uneasy at first, except with Nina, because the others are in the same book club as I am, and we had already conducted such a process. I elected to start here, because when we did this exercise with the book club, I sat there anxiously wishing that I had my tape recorder on, simply because the way many of the women chose to describe their lives was fascinating. Nina was not present during this book club, so she on the other hand was quite detailed in her explication. Right away, the theme of absent fathers arose and the women went around, essentially interviewing each other, and discussing topics which they may not have discussed with each other in the years they had known each other before. We spoke about mothers and grandmothers and what it was like "growing up," on the "streets" of Gugs, so to speak. The "teenage years," took many interesting spins, and Andiswa who had spent a great deal of time being the subject of nasty gossip had an opportunity to speak about this. While the other women did not necessarily confess to participating in such gossip, they "knew" about it and they had lived to this point with their own opinions about it, but I am not certain that this had been addressed in group setting like this. After talking about "men," and the like, I picked up on the conversation about Andiswa's modelling career, which then became an interesting discussion of beauty standards, after which our conversation came to a close.

I am interested in locating the voices of women in a history of apartheid, migration, industrialization, social change, the body and sexuality, and what this involves is listening "in

stereo,” as Jack and Anderson posit, to women’s investments in dominant discourse and their articulations of multiple levels of counter-discourse, whether they arise as narratives of survival, or as those of defiance to structures of power. This interview was intended to construct a narrative of social life for young women, not necessarily “born-free,” but certainly bearing the fruits of it, as Nina noted in our conversation. This conversation was not set in time and the reflections jumped between time constantly, providing a new way to think about history that accounts for the fact that we live the past through the present as well. The following are some discursive themes which arose in this three-hour discussion, which I will be further analysing as I draw closer to the end of this research process.

I am from Cape Town

Beginning a conversation with “tell me where you are from; about your life,” I immediately noticed that all of the women, except Ukhona understood their “roots,” to lie in Cape Town, which falls directly in opposition to dominant discourse that paints the picture that black people are recent migrants and constantly arriving and shifting between the Eastern Cape and Cape Town.¹⁴⁶ I then asked where their parents were from and they said “Cape Town,” except Andiswa who said that her mother and father were from Johannesburg, but her grandmother was from Cape Town. So then I asked all the women about grandmothers in Cape Town; I asked if they had always been here and I was faced with very strong responses that yes, they were from Cape Town. I suspected that since all the women lived in brick houses that were built and designated for families (and therefore permanent city dwellers?) when Guguletu was constructed as the older black townships like Nyanga and

¹⁴⁶ Although with the influx of us foreigners into the Western Cape, this is changing.

Langa became “overpopulated,” there would stand the possibility that their grandmothers were probably not first-generation city dwellers, as they would have had legal permits to reside in the city, in order to be granted family homes. I did not; however expect such a strong insistence on a Cape Town home base.

When one reads the literature, it is easy to come to the conclusion that people will have a history of travel between space, but particularly between the Eastern Cape and Gugulethu, but what came out most prominently was a history of dislocation from what then became white and coloured neighbourhoods during forced removals, for example Nina explained that her grandmother had been relocated from what is now a coloured neighbourhood to Gugulethu. The powerful discourse of belonging to Cape Town and being derived from Cape Town from as far back as four generations ago came through very prominently – which is interesting, considering that the politics of not belonging is one that is equally powerful; first in relation to those closely associated to the “rural,” by their ineptitude with urban social practice, like the young woman needing deodorant in my first discussion; and second, coming out of people who grew up in an area that was constructed as both temporary and permanent. Temporary, in that as a black township, constructed to serve as a temporary bed-space¹⁴⁷; and permanent, in that they grew up in brick housing built by the state for families, i.e. for social reproduction in the city, which would suggest the permanent residence of women and children in the urban space. This discourse of belonging in the “Cape Town space,” while residing in the “urban periphery,” is one which must surely

¹⁴⁷ As Mamphela Ramphele so aptly describes in *A Bed Called Home*, describing life in the urban migrant labour hostels like Gugulethu, Nyanga and Langa.

become a central theme in my research, as I find it interesting that amongst the youngest group of women, who presumably too come from families with a long history in Cape Town (as they reside in the same or similar spaces the women interviewed in this instance), there lies the possibility that identities of outsidership and belonging are still being formed around the urban centre, versus the rural periphery.

Strength as a trope of respectable femininity

As I mentioned before, the women kept speaking of “strong women.” Nina, (who from my constant return to her narrative was definitely quite dominant in the discussion) first referred to herself in this manner, stating:

“I was raised by my grandmother, I come from a family of strong women, and I think I have never really had strong male influence in my life. And I think that, I, yo! Growing up I was a tomboy, I was the only child on my mum’s side, and I always was a strong willed child. I loved hanging out with other kids, but I always loved to be the leader and I was very bossy. And I loved always making a difference in other peoples’ lives. I think watching my grandmother as a role model, she was always helping people”

This ideal, as passed on between generations resonated quite dominantly in all of the narratives as something they learned from their grandmothers in the case of Andiswa and Nina and from their mothers in the case of Ukhona and Toetie. When then women spoke about other women, they also spoke of strength as a redeeming factor, so say for example when talking about who was “cool,” in high school “Thato” was cited as having been cool and many not-so-polite comments about her followed because she came from one of those

families that was curiously rich during apartheid.¹⁴⁸ Soon after, someone else added, “she was strong that girl, very strong.” This was followed by an echo of approval. Women who are viewed as leaders within communities and young girls who are “strong,” in their capacities to take care of themselves, but also to take care of the greater community was read in this light as a model of respectable femininity – one that maintains social reproduction under what seemed to be difficult conditions, for example as Nina later explained, her grandmother used to feed nearly forty people a day.

Nina’s characterization of her mother reinforced this ideal of female respectability as strength that centres on self sacrifice and mothering or motherhood. Such motherhood involved mothering, not only your own children, but other people’s children. Nina was raised by her grandmother as her mother was only twenty years old when she had Nina. She was at a point when she had to make a decision whether to attend school to train as a teacher, or as a nurse, which were the only choices that black women had at this time and she could only train for these things in the Eastern Cape. Nina’s mother therefore took care of Nina for six months and then passed her on to her grandmother who raised Nina until she passed away when Nina was 14. Nina says that it was only at this time that her mother realized that she was a mother and for a long time she struggled to come to grips with this woman, as she had always viewed her grandmother as embodying this role. What this role represented was that of a leader, in fact Nina said retrospectively that “she [her grandmother] was a leader, like me.” While Nina herself is not a mother, the leadership

¹⁴⁸ The women explained that there were some families that were very wealthy in Gugulethu when they were growing up and these families were usually rich because they sold illegal drugs and this was something that everyone sort of knew and understood.

capacity that her grandmother had revealed to her was in her mothering so many that were not her own children. In contrast, Nina described her mother as “selfish and self absorbed.” I wish to also add that Nina did add to all this that she respects her mother and has come to terms with what has happened, so her reflections in this regard were in no way bitter or resentful.

Another discourse of strength came from the narrative of Ukhona who viewed her mother as a symbol of strength. Ukhona’s mother had left her step-father because he was in an abusive relationship. During the time of her departure, she had engaged in a relationship with a *maholo*, which is how the men who resided in the migrant labour hostels were described. Ukhona is the product of this relationship, but her mother later returned to her husband, with this child. Now, according to her family, this was a travesty as Ukhona’s mother had set aside her role in social reproduction for her own needs. Thinking this through, Ukhona explained that at her mother’s funeral the speakers all exclaimed that they were happy that at least all of “her children were married,” during which time, Ukhona herself was not married. The speakers said this, because according to their understanding of that family, Ukhona was not a child of that family and would not be formally referred to. In responding to this, she said:

“My mum and the *maholo* were like Romeo and Juliet! I am that kid! Don’t pity me, I don’t pity myself. We respect her courage for being able to go. She was like I don’t deserve to be treated like this so I will go. A lot of people are still passing judgment on her in her grave, but maybe her kids respect her, because as women we are told to put our feelings aside, it will improve and she was like no, no, I am going to do this. What’s the moral of the story? I guess I am that kid”

This constructs a new model of strength based on a woman's courage to leave an unhealthy situation. Ukhona understands this to have arisen from the fact that while her mother was trained and working as a teacher and her husband was working as a security guard, he had a "complex," about this and this translated into domestic violence. This discourse of strength is rather one of direct defiance, which did not correspond with any formal structures of knowledge. Having said that, I do not wish to suggest that the previous discourse of strength that I described was hegemonic either, because while ascribing to hegemonic notions of femininity that reconstruct the woman as self-sacrificing martyr to social reproduction, also stands in defiance to the dominant paradigm of apartheid, which systematically undercut the survival of African families in the city.

Skeletons in the Closet: Romeo and Juliet, the Maholo Men and other stories

Ukhona was the first to speak of "skeletons in the closet," when she talked about her mother and father's relationship. This spurred an interesting conversation, during which Nina and Andiswa joined in to speak about their father or grandfathers and the sorts of skeletons about their pasts which were only revealed to them in their adult lives. An important theme was that of the *maholo* men, those where the men living in the migrant labour hostels. When talking about her own battle with discovering her grandmother's secrets, Nina stated that these men where:

"emaXhoseni¹⁴⁹, who came from Eastern Cape to work, the charming men from emaHolweni¹⁵⁰ - handsome, charming they provided some TLC! When you go

¹⁴⁹ Xhosa men from the Eastern Cape, which during apartheid was either Transkei or Ciskei

¹⁵⁰ From the Hostels, or "of the hostels,"

down that journey of discovery yourself, you find these things out. I don't want my grandmother's skeletons to be exposed."

Interestingly, these men were characterized as single, or unmarried "kind of," although most people are aware that most likely they were not as they left wives and families behind in the rural areas. Nina herself had two levels of skeletons, as her grandfather was an unidentified *maholo* and her father was absent and a *kitsa*.¹⁵¹ Nina actually described hers as "the most dramatic father story." Her mother was nineteen when she realized that she was pregnant with Nina. At this time, his father's plan for him was for him to work "for a white man as a clerk," and he did this for one day, after which I realized that he did not wish to participate in apartheid in this way and he quit. As a result, he was kicked out of his parents' home and he then moved in with a "sugar mummy," who ran one of those rich homes that were in the drug business and the sugar mummy became her step mum. At this point, he broke up with her mum. Now Nina did not necessarily feel as though she was missing anything as she states,

"It was normal for black kids not to have fathers, but when I went to a Coloured and then a white school, everyone was like my daddy, my daddy, my daddy"... "I would say that my dad was self-employed and when all the white kids would ask what that meant and I would say he sells clothes."

Nina understood why her father was absent and why he made the choices that he did, because of the conditions which he was facing she said.

The skeletons of unknown fathers were fairly prominent and this led into a discussion about relationships and the kinds of men that they all dated. Nina was quite

insistent that her only models in life were a series of strong women, while Toetie had both mother and father at home and could see elements of both in her partner Damien. Ukhona had spent little time with her own father, grandfather and step-father and quite innocently asked, "Where am I modeling my men from?" Andiswa's story was one that they all were really happy to hear, one of a missing father who reappeared. Andiswa's mother was very young when she discovered that she was pregnant and her parents decided that they were too young to marry. Because he was not going to marry her, the traditional payment he made to Andiswa's mother's parents denied him the right to a relationship with Andiswa. Now this discussion was quite interesting, because Andiswa explained how her father called her during her teen years to initiate a relationship. She said that he said he has always wished for one, but could not because he had paid for damages. This spurred debate, because the way that I understand it, when a man pays damages to the woman's family for impregnating their daughter (in how I understand Shona cultural practice,) he has the option to "top it up," and pay for *lobola*¹⁵² at the same time (or at least begin negotiations) so that he marries the woman as well. If he does not pay *lobola* this means that he does not want anything to do with the mother, but not necessarily the child. Ukhona and Andiswa understood it to mean that the payment in damages not only included an apology for tarnishing the soon-to-be mother, but was also for the child, making the child the property of her mother's family. Debate aside, as far as Andiswa was concerned, she was not able to have a relationship with

¹⁵¹ A criminal so to speak; someone involved in the drug trade which was earlier discussed. Nina grew up in section one, characterized as being where all the criminal activity was located in Gugulethu.

¹⁵² What is traditionally referred to a "bride price," I will not get into the political debate of what this now-monetary exchange means in contemporary Gugulethu or Zimbabwe for that matter at this point in time.

her father, but he resurfaced in her teen years and she has since been very close to him. The language she used about fathers and fatherhood was that of “responsibility,” and I thought this was poignant. I will end here with the discussion of the relationship between these women and fathers, but I am certain that there is more to be found thematically in this area.

The Teenage Years

The final theme I will explore in this paper is that of the teen years, which were characterized as being very difficult and much less fun than the childhood years. I echoed this notion with my own narratives of the difficulty with this particular time in my life. Andiswa too had a very difficult time, particularly because of the treatment she received from her peers. From the narratives of this time in their lives, it was clear to me that there were at least two sets of people policing femininity and sexuality which I will explore in this portion of my discussion.

As Andiswa and I both explained, gossip played a powerful role in shaping our teenage years, as we were both victims of it. Toetie and Nina recalled a time when everyone they knew was talking about Andiswa’s supposed-abortion, the rumour of which had been started by one of Andiswa’s closest friends. In actual fact, when Andiswa had “discovered,” her father, she took a trip to Johannesburg to meet him and her family. Before the trip, she joked with her friends that people were already saying she was travelling to have an abortion, but she did not realise how serious a rumour it would become in her absence. Andiswa eventually had to go to school with her grandmother and speak with the principal, to address the rumours. Now, from what the women were saying, Andiswa was disliked because she was beautiful and participated in many beauty pageants during her childhood and teenage

years. Additionally, she was going out with a man who was presumably quite famous in Guguletu at the time and a man considered to be quite a “bad boy,” coming out of Section One, which was the “rough section.” Nina noted that from what she remembered the gossip happened, “if you were beautiful or you were popular or if you were involved in many things.” And reflecting on the stories spread about Andiswa, Toetie concernedly asked, “Are you ok? Because the stories were wild!”

In my estimation, what was happening here was that gossip was being used amongst women as a means of policing femininity that called women back into the dominant script of respectable femininity.¹ Andiswa’s respectability was put in question by her relationship with a man who came out of the part of Guguletu that was viewed as disrespectful – and while they all agreed that the Section Two¹⁵³ girls always liked the Section One boys, Andiswa’s engagement with one called for a degree of policing from her peers. Additionally, she was made visible by her participation in beauty pageants, which while in and of itself is a performance of dominant femininity, was still placing her respectability in question as such a performance made her both sexual and sexually available to a male and female gaze.

Mothers or those in mothering roles also played a role in policing respectable female behavior; so for example, Toetie’s mother once caught her leaning on a car with her then boyfriend uMadhodha and responded by taking her to Athlone Hospital for a pregnancy test without asking any questions. It is clear that what Toetie interpreted as a harsh judgment by and from her mother continues to shape her behavior and relationships

with men, because she says that it was not until recently that she was able to speak to her mother about it and even now they awkwardly joke about it. By taking her daughter to the hospital, she made sent a clear and rather traumatizing message to her daughter. Toetie commented that she received most of her "policing," from her mother, as this was who told her when and where she could go out. Nina on the other hand said that her grandmother was not a strict, so her experience of this period in time was that of more freedom.

¹⁵³ Described as the middle class portion of Gugulethu and therefore the "respectable" part of the neighborhood

Chapter 6

BEING YOUNG IN GUGULETU



The girls and I, standing outside Toetic's mother's house on NY21 in Guguletu, after a group discussion. In order from top left to right: Me, Thozama, Thembela, Zandile, X, Rari. From bottom left to right: Thembisa, X, and Sibongile on 10 December 2006.¹⁵⁴

The relationship I share with the youngest group of women I “worked with” in Guguletu is complex. I entered into my relationship with them through my liaison with

¹⁵⁴ Please note that the date on the photograph is incorrect. This picture was taken with my personal camera, which to this date is incorrectly dated.

Project Siyenza. The main premise of Project Siyenza is to provide young women with the tools with which they can begin to uplift themselves and in turn, to become “youth leaders,” within their communities. Using the rhetoric of “leadership,” Siyenza is essentially an empowerment project. This placed me in a curious position as a feminist researcher and this type of “action-based research” perhaps conflicted with my attempts to conduct feminist research that is critical of the power relationships between the “researcher” and the “researched,” because I played the primary role of a “mentor” and “interventionist” to the young women. I therefore become the “knower” in this relationship which is problematic.

This was made explicitly clear during that first interview, when I presented my research question and in response I was asked to intervene and help a girl deal with body odour. Research is much more complicated when conducted in regards to human relations because while I am able to cleanly present that scenario intellectually, I was terribly conflicted. First, how was I going to confront the situation? I know what it is like to be sixteen and I know what it felt like when I had adults or people I looked up to telling me those kinds of things about being a girl – as the personal reflections included in my Methodological section suggest – I believe that even when the best intentions are at heart, telling a young girl what is “appropriate” and what is not is deeply traumatising to the recipient of that information – it is a process of policing femininity. I did not want to be yet another policing figure in this young woman’s life. Simultaneously, having access to the knowledge of deodorant, or *access to deodorant itself* (as my conversation with the girls later reveals) grants one access to a discourse which is powerful. It would therefore be an act of

empowerment to give this woman a chat about deodorant and perhaps a supply. I elected to leave it alone because I suspected that the girls themselves had probably (and undiplomatically) expressed such sentiments to her before. I did not believe that my intervention would have been helpful to what I view as this young woman's strong self-esteem. This young woman did not participate in the final recorded discussion, but her initial presence is important. I was able to be witness (as I was as a teenager myself) to the processes of inclusion; exclusion and policing that young women impose on each other. These observations were quite painful for me, and recognizing this is intrinsically connected to a process of self-reflection – I remember how intricate the processes of power were at that age – to be “in” (power) required that one participate in constructing the discourses of power themselves, while simultaneously constructing the rigid structures of exclusion as well. While at times you yourself could join the “cool” (powerful) group, it was a balancing act that requires close mediation. I enter the discussion here by analysing the meaning of friendship and the tactics of inclusion and exclusion as they relate to discourse of the body and constructions of the body. Please note that some of the conversations we had were surrounding particular photographs; others were inspired by the photographs, and others were unrelated to the pictures. I have selected a number of themes and I discuss the multiple subjectivities and layers of discourse made available for analysis by the manner by which these young girls describe their lives. As indicated in the first photograph, there were eight women present for this discussion. I had spent a considerably longer amount of time with Thozama, the twins Thembela and Thembisa and Zandile as they had participated in Project Siyenza's project more consistently, however they did not always dominate the conversation.

Friendship as a model for exclusion?

Although I had given each of the girls a camera of their own, the girls had taken pictures of each other and their groups of friends instead of focussing primarily on themselves. There were many pictures of the girls in groupings, dressed up to go out. In fact, at the beginning of the conversation Sibongile began by introducing herself and her group of friends, stating:



“My name is Sibongile and I am from this town of Guguletu and these are my friends. I’ve known them since we were young. And here I have a photo of us, not all of us, but, well... We went to a party at Khayelitha and we all dressed in the fashionable things the things that are in – the jeans, the blazer and the Barbie-dolls!”

Danai: “Barbie dolls, what is that?”

Sibongile: “You know when you do that sort of pony tail to your hair – pony tails, like that.”

(The whole group laughs)

The women spoke of their primary relationships as being in regards to their peers, their groups of friends. These initial descriptions, often relating to what was in fashion at the moment, were stated in great universals “we all do this and we like that,” much like Sibongile’s initial statement. While the “Barbie-doll” hair style was identified (amongst other things) as being a current trend they all shared, not all of them are currently wearing it. The consensus came when the whole group laughed in agreement, while describing these things to me. This consensus in understanding – in agreeing on what is cool or not cool – was a

running theme in this discussion. Of course the notion of “cool” was related to local, greater Cape Town, national and global models of consumption; however I was intrigued to see how within the local space of this street or this community, these girls had formed their own particular discourse – their own language to describe particular phenomena and also their models of inclusion and exclusion and in my estimation particular displays of femininity functioned as the negotiating tools for inclusion. This is the model which I will use to consider the narratives offered by these young women, as there are a number of dominant discourses about appropriate behaviour to remain within the “know,” and presumably within the clique of friends, yet there are also multiple means of still accessing the “clique,” while deviating from the set of expectations. This narrative of friendship will also hopefully reveal the embedded meanings of femininity and respectability and how they are mediated.

Drinking good, drinking bad

Drinking emerged as one of the first areas with which a young woman could mediate her status as either a “good girl” or a bad one. When I asked them to describe such a thing, Sibongile responded in saying:

“We are good girls. Our reputation is very good. We don’t go to shebeens, stay in one place. When we drink we drink in one place. You don’t go out in the street. Stay in one place, you don’t do like on backstage.”

D: what happened on backstage?

Thozama: that girl drank and made a fool of herself.

Drinking clearly emerges as one of those things that requires careful moderation within particular spaces. One example of “good drinking,” was this picture was

introduced by Lala, as a picture of her friend Thozama. They all laughed as we talked about this particular photograph, because she is obviously holding an alcoholic



beverage. I asked them what she was holding and with laughter all around Lala responded: "She was so excited. She passed a test. Her mother bought her a cell phone. And she's holding a bottle of wine to celebrate." To which Thozama herself added: "Yeah, Celebration!"

Yet there was still an uneasiness about being identified as a drinker, as Rari notes when showing me a picture of her visiting a friend on a cold day. She says: "Here is I a picture of me that we took on a Saturday. It was a boring Saturday and it was cold so I decided to wear this. And we were staying at my friend's house here in Guguletu. We were listening to music. R'n'b and house. But we weren't drinking!" I then asked her what was wrong with drinking, to which she responded "Nothing wrong! But we weren't drinking that day!"

There was one particular girl, who they called "Shortie" and they had taken several pictures of her. She came to epitomize the "bad girl" in our conversation and there were few exceptions when she was not used an example of "things they do not do". In regards to drinking, she is described as the "bad girl" that is, one who as Thozama described it "is a person that does not have respect for herself and the way she acts to other people," with Sibongile adding, "and she drinks everyday! And is drunken." Pointing to the photographs

of Shorty, that added that "She drinks every weekend. We drink occasionally. Wine and ciders!" The girls then turned to Thozama, exclaiming that "You like the stuff," to which she responded "Yes, Jack Daniels is my friend." So clearly there was some room again to negotiate one's status within this discourse of drinking. What there was no room for was beer. It was stated quite clearly that:

"It is for men. Women's who drink beer, they are wrong. Women who drink beer sleep around, have many boyfriends. They fight a lot. They have usually got scars on their face, the scars that they get on their face from their fight.

And they don't wear billabong. They wear second hands, fong kongs!"

Beer drinking in this sense indicates not only that someone is a "bad girl", one has in indication too of your sex life, that you are violent and also that you cannot afford the latest in fashions and labels. It is a class demarcation, and from this articulation one can identify a strong discourse of respectability that is linked to access of a "middle classness". For young people, this is less related to Dover stoves and more so to one's access to these consumer goods which I thought was fabulously interesting as this is too the case in my experience in Zimbabwe.

Where you drink is another indicator of class position in relation to others and not being seen while you drink is another indicator of respectable behaviour. We see this in photographs that they took of people at shebeens, which they themselves would not go to, because they are too young and also because they said that they prefer parties and drinking in the privacy of their own homes. However, this does not mean that they themselves do not go against the grain at times either. They recounted the story of a friend of theirs being raped, for example. On that same night, Zandile too was out and drinking. The girl who was

raped was apparently drinking in public and then she left the place to go home. She was attacked on this journey, raped and killed. The girls all thought that this had happened to Zandile, because she too had been out drinking and she fit the description of the young girl who was murdered. They were all quite thankful that it was not Zandile, yet it brought home the dangers of engaging in such behaviours for them; one does not merely risk losing respectability, there are the dangers to ones life.

Bodies and consumption

That is an interesting point from which to enter the next thematic area, which is in regards to bodies and consumption. The girls attended the funeral of the girl who was murdered and Zandile showed me a picture of her, with Sibongile after the funeral stating:



Zandile: “This is a picture of when we went to a funeral of our friend who passed away – this is picture of me and Sibongile, we went to the funeral so we dressed very well.” She continued to explain that they were dressed up because funerals are the kinds of events when everyone is looking to see what people are wearing. They look at your reputation. Adding, “the funeral was “too... full of speedance” speedance means when people go all out of their way to show off nice clothes, like billbong, sissy boy – and funerals are like a fashion show.”

Zandile and the other girls laughed as they explained “speedance” to me, as it did represent something which to an outside ear may sound strange – dressing up for funerals, and funerals as fashion shows? – Yet at the same time, with critical reflection. I did not find the idea ridiculous myself, I too engage in societies where ones social performance at such events as funerals is crucial; but they did, perhaps because it was the funeral of someone who was a friend. The girls also explained that particularly when young people die, one sees a great deal of such “speedance,” so perhaps it is something that happened especially when there were many young people present at funerals. In this view, it is young people’s love for contemporary fashions of a particular kind that come to the fore in terms of the performances of femininities and masculinities as well.

The girls themselves described their own clothes as fashionable. As I mentioned earlier, many of the pictures were pictures of them, in groups as they travelled to particular places or events and they were quite fashionably dressed in pose for the camera. “Good girls” in this regard were described as “fully dressed fully dressed! You don’t have to show your cleavage out! And a bad girl would wear hotpants and sika la cake – they show off, there is no need to show it all or stand out!” At the same time, a particularly “feminine” dress (think of the reference to Barbie doll hairstyles) seemed to predominate, with few exceptions, for example Babalwa:

“And this is our ganster friend, Babalwa. Look at her pose. She is not really. She dresses like a gangster, but she’s a really nice person. She was coming from a dancing contest.”



Other issues arose in regards to bodies and consumption. The girls talked about some of the fights they have at school and besides boys, very often these fights involved such things as girls making fun of each others' clothes, or cell phones; for example

"You always get people you don't like at school. People gossip about everything at the school. The "K's" if you are dating someone at their school they attack. And they talk about your clothes. At the school some people can't afford to buy all the label clothes and then you fight"

Outdated cellular phones have all sorts of interesting names like,:

"If you buy a Motorola 3160, they call it furniture, it is big like furniture, so they call it that. My friend has a phone, they call it a shaman. It is huge. And the famous, "Student card", because students have it. It is like a rock, the 3210. There are phones you need and want, these are not the ones."

Being a "good girl" is a full time job. This was made explicitly clear when they told me all the "body work" and products one needs to complete the task of being one, as they Rari said: "Hygiene is important to be a good girl." It is not hygiene alone that constitutes access to a good performance of femininity in this regard, but the correct consumption of products, so for example it is good to use "Dark & Lovely, Optima or Emerald" to relax ones hair; however, if you use SoPn'Free or Sunsilk "which are cheap, people make fun of you." Similarly, considering deodorant, "if you wear expensive deodorant, you make fun of those who use the cheap ones." It was quite clear that the management of the body was crucial to constructions of respectable femininity for these young women; yet there was definitely a link to material goods. "Better" management of one's body was gauged by one's access to particular goods. At the same time, while the girls explained these things to me, they made it

clear that they do not all have access to the same things, nor do they all participate in the same patterns of behaviour in regards to their bodies (besides wearing *Shield* deodorant, which they consider to be the best). They are not all bullies and while they offered social commentary of the things girls fight about at school, they do not all participate in such. One form of violence which they did seem to partially accept links directly to the final theme, - regarding sexuality and dating – as it was somewhat okay to fight with a girl (and her friends) if she was sleeping with your boyfriend.

On boys, dating & Sex

Most of the girls interviewed were currently involved in heterosexual, sexual relationships. They all said that they “slept out” of the house, with their boyfriends on occasion and in fact, when they came by for our “chat,” the entire clique was delivered by another entire clique of young men. The girls had a few things to say about dating, starting off with some comments about the things that adults are constantly telling them to do – not to drink too much, not to stay out too late and also not to get pregnant. The girls had varying opinions of these topics and some strong opinions on marriage, many of them being entirely opposed to it because they generally believed that when men marry women, they leave them at home where they later infect with HIV/AIDS. That theme alone could form an entire research report of its own, so I have elected to focus my attention on the discussions surrounding three particular photographs.

The first photograph is of a friend of theirs carrying her baby. Zandile showed it to me, staying “Yeah, teen pregnancy. It is everywhere.” I suspect that the enthusiasm in

showing this picture arose from the fact that people are often talking about young women in South Africa today in terms of teen pregnancy, particularly those in townships. The cartoon I alluded to earlier suggests this particular current discourse that many people hold about young women. This too was a particular bone of contention with the "first generation," with

Linda stating;

"And during our teen years there were rules for us put on the table. You were allowed to go to functions but they must be school orientated functions and they usually happen in the day, end by 7 latest and if you are going to be late, you must explain before and why. And if other visit your place, your parents mine know who they are and if you visit you must also know their backgrounds and your parents always knew.

Otherwise there was some naughtiness off course; we were not all the same. Even in those times there were girls who fell pregnant and during those times. There was nothing like abortion. It was a disgrace to abort. So for our elder sisters, once the got pregnant it was their way, their exit from school."

With these new freedoms, as the cartoon itself suggests, teenagers seem to be running free without rules. The way that these girls talked about teen pregnancy was in response to those discourses in my opinion. They actually asked me about the things that I think, of how to "judge" behaviour. Thozama seemed to me to be judging their friend with the baby when she made her statement and they all laughed in the background. The also once again gave the example of Shortie, who also happens to be bisexual according to their accounts. Thozama admitted that she too was once taken in by the idea, but now she knows better; so they only judge Shortie. Shortie is too guilty of having sugar daddies, while dating the "young bloods," so there are a great deal of crimes she is committing according to these girls. In any case, what I got the sense of was that these young women are living their eyes under

judgment – when one is a teen mother, they all are. When another sleeps with older men, presumably again, they all are. Due to this “judgment” they are also quite aware of what the “right thing” is to say, particularly in relation to sexuality. I was able to hear about other things beyond the lens constructed for the view of “adults” per se, but I think that this is crucial.

This does not mean that they only behave in ways depictive of women constantly under surveillance, as they all individually negotiate their romantic lives. The twins Thembela and Thembisa, for example were cited as dating “gangsters,” described by Zandile as “amaPalestina.” They are the “bad girls” and their boyfriends are the “bad guys.” In this sense, they are participating in a discourse that embraces the “bad girl” discourse and reframes it as something positive, although one cannot necessarily argue that it is any less harmful to them than the previous one. There is also a shift from the use of “traditional” alternatives or counter discourse within female spaces, to the use of young men and relationships to them to begin to articulate new meanings. Although there are many other stories, I will end here as this is a useful point with which I can enter into a concluding discussion.

Conclusion

Mampela Ramphele posits that "the problems of ordinary people cannot be seen in isolation. Oppression has to be seen as a totality that impinges on the lives of people. In addition, the very existence of a complex of forces in the form of race, class and gender calls for a more holistic approach to the effective analysis of the processes at work and the strategies utilized by people both as individuals and groups to deal with oppressive conditions."¹⁵⁵ This is her attempt to reveal that women in the migrant hostels of the Western Cape are not merely victims of systems of oppression, as they function as agents of their own survival. While I appreciate this view, the perspective of oppression and power is over simplistic, as the modes with which power relations take shape, particularly in relation to constructions of femininity are often multiple, located and unfixed.

Abu-Lughod's presentation of "resistance" as a site where by power can then be diagnosed is a useful one here. In using this theory, I have selected female respectability as well as the constructions of femininity (and the associated role in social reproduction) as the sites for analysing resistance and power with these three generations of Guguletu women. What we find is that the dominant discourse is not always easy to locate as it shifts between locations at all time. The directions to which modes of resistance themselves are directed are also often not clear. What the narrative I am reading suggests, is that there has perhaps been a shift from the use of female respectability as a discourse of resistance, mediated by and

¹⁵⁵ Ramphele 1989: 394

through women, to and for each other – to a new era where by young women are seeking various other sites with which they can locate a discourse of resistance.

Eunice made a comment alluding to this notion, stating that:

“The young girls. The main thing – what they respect more than their parents, they respect their boyfriends. If I was to go out and tell my mother I was to go out, she would say I must be back at 6 o’clock, now you are lucky if they tell you where they are going these young girls. And they will go for 2 or three days. I am telling you about a child of 16 years! And when they are 21, they expect you to give them a key.”

There is an obvious dissonance between the two generations which needs further enquiry. The idea that the “first generation,” and the current are and were young at a time of radical social engineering is once again crucial; we need to think about the different modes of resistance in this manner. I also believe that there are many continuities as well and the murky relationship between the two is key to an understanding of subjective experience.

Preparing this report has been a very difficult process as I have attempted to mediate between the “new” forms of discourse as well as those that are part of a continuity with the old. Furthermore, truncating vast data into neat chapters has provided difficult. It is my contention that providing multiple generations and locating my study within a specific geographical space has enriched my presentation of the subjective experience of youth, at a time when globalization we like to believe that we are all in the process of “becoming the same.” It is also my contention that more crucial than a new phase of globalization, to shifts in the articulation of femininities is the shift in the political scene, into a democracy and I hope the narratives offered in this report were useful in portraying this.

My own positioning as a third-generation, “born-free” urban dweller within Southern Africa has placed me in a precarious position for this research. My mother perhaps best represents the generation between Toetie and her mother, while my grandmother was amongst the first to travel the city. The experiences described by Vuyelwa and her friends are part of a personal collective memory I hold of my own family’s past and the process of retracing these stories has been fantastic. At the same time, there is a particular discord with the genealogies of these experiences. The continued racialization of space, the shortage in housing and the continued socioeconomic inequality, particularly in the Western Cape continue to construct a modern history in Cape Town enmeshed within a history of a apartheid, which will continue to impact upon the youth, I say this having taken the position that my work will not contribute to the body of literature focused merely on spectacularizing social life for the “marginalised” in South Africa, which remains my primary contention.

I conclude in saying that I hope this report has been useful in illustrating an African feminist standpoint, and in elaborating upon feminist theorisations of the body, within space.

GLOSSARY

Acculturation the multiple aspects and processes by which an individual or group from one culture enters and negotiates in a different culture for an extended period of time. The following aspects are related to the process of acculturation: language use and preference; generational distance; cultural identity with or alienation from a dominant culture; association with members of one's own culture.¹⁵⁶

African feminism

Agency A crucial term in the theory and practice of feminist theory, as indeed, any politics. Its history in feminist theory is complicated and best by contradictions. Feminism's founding gesture involves the identification of women's lack of agency and their construction as victims of patriarchy. The goal of feminism has repeatedly been formulated as women's self-determination, i.e. women become actors in the world in their own terms. There are a number of well-rehearsed problems with these formulations. Firstly, the designation of women as victim serves to compound women's oppression under patriarchy and threatens to erase what agency they do manage to exercise. Secondly, the goal of self-determination is dependent upon the humanist belief that is indeed possible to determine the self. This has led to the introduction of the notion of negotiation by which sub-cultural (that is *non-dominant*) groups attempt to negotiate a space in relation to dominant culture. The ways in which women's different and differing social locations in relation to race, class, sexuality and other vectors of difference affect the degree of agency available to them is a central issue in recent theorizations of the politics of difference. The discourse of woman (or any other non-dominant group) as victim has been invaluable to feminism in pointing to the systematic character of gender domination, but if not employed with care, or in conjunction with a dynamic concept of agency, it leaves us with reductive representations of women as primarily beings who are passive and acted upon. It is important to engage simultaneously with women's systematic subordination and the ways in which they negotiate oppressive, even determining, social conditions and to begin from the conviction that structures of domination are best understood if we can grasp how we remain agents even in the moments in which we are being intimately, viciously oppressed.¹⁵⁷

Apartheid social and political policy of racial segregation and discrimination enforced by white minority governments in South Africa from 1948 to 1994. The term *apartheid* (from the Afrikaans word for "apartness") was coined in the 1930s and used as a political slogan of the National Party in the early 1940s, but the policy itself extends back to the beginning of white settlement in South Africa in 1652. After the primarily Afrikaner Nationalists

¹⁵⁶ AWID. *Young Women in Leadership Glossary*. <http://www.awid.org/ywl/glossary/index.php>

¹⁵⁷ Lovell, T. 1997. *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*. London: Arnold

came to power in 1948, the social custom of apartheid was systematized under law. The implementation of the policy, later referred to as "separate development," was made possible by the Population Registration Act of 1950, which put all South Africans into three racial categories: Bantu (black African), white, or Coloured (of mixed race). A fourth category, Asian (Indians and Pakistanis), was added later. The system of apartheid was enforced by a series of laws passed in the 1950s: the Group Areas Act of 1950 assigned races to different residential and business sections in urban areas, and the Land Acts of 1954 and 1955 restricted nonwhite residence to specific areas. These laws further restricted the already limited right of black Africans to own land, entrenching the white minority's control of over 80 percent of South African land. In addition, other laws prohibited most social contacts between the races; enforced the segregation of public facilities and the separation of educational standards; created race-specific job categories; restricted the powers of nonwhite unions; and curbed nonwhite participation in government. The Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 furthered these divisions between the races by creating ten African "homelands" administered by what were supposed to be re-established "tribal" organizations. The Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970 made every black South African a citizen of one of the homelands, effectively excluding blacks from South African politics. Most of the homelands, lacking natural resources, were not economically viable and, being both small and fragmented, lacked the autonomy of independent states.¹⁵⁸

Black feminism. refers to the variety of feminisms which are identified by their opposition to the racism and sexism encountered by Black women. In its various forms it undertakes a sustained critique of the racism and ethnocentrism of white-dominated systems and practices including feminism. The concept of the "intersectionality" of race and gender in the lives of black women as central to black feminism, thereby rendering inapplicable any single-axis theory about racism and sexism. Politically, the term 'Black' is linked primarily with a vision of a Pan-African identity in Africa and in the Diaspora. But in Britain (and other places) is used more generally to indicate a political identity that is non-white, and until recently 'Black feminism' functioned as a generic term for non-white feminisms.¹⁵⁹

Body feminism has a history of ambivalence towards the female body, which has figured alternatively as the source of women's oppression and as the locus of a specifically female power both approaches focus on the reproductive body; on female sexuality, menstruation, pregnancy, lactation, and menopause. These corporealities of women may be seen as making us vulnerable to male domination and control, both directly and through the exercise of superior physical power, and indirectly through social compulsions and the representation of sexual difference across a variety of discourses. From the 1980s there has been a virtual 'resurrection of the body' in social and philosophical theory. The body which has been

¹⁵⁸ Appiah, Kwame Anthony & Gates Jr., Henry Louis. 2003. *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*. Philadelphia: Running Press.

¹⁵⁹ Lovell, T. 1997. *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*. London: Arnold

resurrected in this corpus of theory, across all the differences that distinguish the individual theorists, is not sexually differentiated. The body is often implicitly male. The project of developing a corporeal feminism' has therefore had to engage in critique as well as appropriation of 'wayward' philosophical tradition. Corporeal feminism takes the female body instead of the male for its model, to refigure both. It emphasizes fluid boundaries, connection rather than separation, interdependence rather than autonomy. Its project is an ambitious one, attempting no less than the development of an alternative model of the sexed body which is less discrete and autonomous, more fluid and interrelational, than the one dominant for so long: a body which does not merely provide the grounds on which human subjectivity is built, but whose lived sexually-specific flesh constitutes that subjectivity.¹⁶⁰

Colonialism the term colonialism is important in defining the specific form of cultural exploitation that developed with the expansion of Europe over the last 400 years. Although many earlier civilizations had colonies, and although they perceived their relations with them to be one of a central imperium in relation to a periphery of provincial, marginal and barbarian cultures, a number of crucial factors entered into the construction of the post-Renaissance practices of imperialism.

Consciousness-raising an innovation of the United States Second-Wave feminism was the emergence of small groups of women who exchanged experiences and feelings about them in order to raise their consciousness of oppression. It is seen as a practice which named and placed under the spotlight knowledge that women already had from experience, but which required collective articulation, and the exposure and rejection of an internalized patriarchal ideology.¹⁶¹

Epistemology is a theory of knowledge. Feminists and gender researchers have argued that traditional epistemologies exclude the possibility that women can be "knowers" or agents of knowledge; they claim that the voice of science is a masculine one and that history is written exclusively from the point of view of men (of the dominant class and race). They have proposed alternative epistemologies that legitimate women's knowledge.¹⁶²

Experience consciousness-raising highlighted women's experience as the source of feminist knowledge, as against expert, official or male-defined accounts, and made it the foundation of feminist strategy. Although experience is still privileged in feminism, it has become a much more contested category, first and foremost in relation to difference. Some feminist theorist prefer the term 'subjugated knowledges', thereby recognizing women as producers of (often disqualified) knowledge without presuming that their

¹⁶⁰ Lovell, T. 1997. *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*. London: Arnold

¹⁶¹ Lovell, T. 1997. *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*. London: Arnold

¹⁶² The United Nations International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women/INSTRAW. *Gender Research Glossary*. <http://www.uninstraw.org>

experience speaks for itself. Since women's experience does not pre-exist as a kind of prior-resource, we can have access to another's life and consciousness only through multiple readings of texts which add and shape each other in both cacophonous and consonant waves, building 'just-barely-possible' affinities and connections while, ideally, avoiding appropriating each other's experiences.¹⁶³

Gender refers to the array of socially-constructed roles, relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power, and influence ascribed to women and men on a differential basis. Whereas biological sex is determined by genetic and anatomical characteristics, gender is an acquired social identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationships between them.¹⁶⁴

Gender Analysis is the systematic gathering and examination of information on gender differences and social relations in order to identify understand, and redress inequalities based on gender.¹⁶⁵

Method techniques used for gathering information in the process of research. For example: interviews, surveys, desk-review, focus groups, community mapping exercises.¹⁶⁶

Methodology refers to the theoretical analysis of the methods appropriate to a field of study or to the body of methods and principles particular to a branch of knowledge. A theory and analysis of how research should be conducted.¹⁶⁷

Objectivity there are not several important attempts to define objectivity in ways which are compatible with feminist recognition of the socially located nature of the production of knowledge. Objectivism sees the only alternative to relativism as value-free, dispassionate, impartial research, which is a very narrow reading of the concept. Harding (1993) suggests that the application of conventional scientific methods does not usually make visible or eliminate sexist and androcentric assumptions – the beliefs of an age. 'Strong objectivity' is achieved only through 'strong reflexivity' which applies objectivity-maximizing procedures to the scientific communities themselves (to the subjects and not only the objects of knowledge) from the perspective of the marginalized. The need to develop forms of strong objectivity applies not only to those scientific communities where the relative absence of disadvantaged ethnic minorities and women of all groups, but also the ethnically homogenous feminist communities. Like Cain (1990), Harding insists that the social locations feminist knowers should take as their starting points are not

¹⁶³ Lovell, T. 1997. *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*. London: Arnold

¹⁶⁴ INSTRAW. *Gender Research Glossary*. <http://www.instraw.org>

¹⁶⁵ INSTRAW. *Gender Research Glossary*. <http://www.instraw.org>

¹⁶⁶ INSTRAW. *Gender Research Glossary*. <http://www.instraw.org>

¹⁶⁷ INSTRAW. *Gender Research Glossary*. <http://www.instraw.org>

ethnocentric, individual, idiosyncratic or biologically founded; they are constituted politically, theoretically and reflexively.¹⁶⁸

Participatory Action Research (PAR) PAR is the most activist-based method of the several commonly-used participatory research methods. With roots in the work of Paulo Freire and other South American social scientists, PAR focuses on the empowerment of local communities and works directly with local political/development organizations to bring about sustainable change. The methods used emphasize participation, capacity-building, ownership of knowledge and empowerment.¹⁶⁹

Participant Observer one of the most commonly-used methods for conducting participatory research, the participant observer method was established in the field of anthropology. The method is based on observing actions (rather than surveys or interviews) in order to gain insight on a community's values, dynamics, internal relationships, structures and conflicts. The participant observer attempts immersion, to the extent permitted, in local life in order to understand and document how things work. However, the participant observer method is the least "objective" of all methods, relying heavily on the intellectual honesty of the researcher, whose experiences cannot be replicated. It is also the most time-consuming.¹⁷⁰

Politics of Location a research perspective which grew out of feminist methodology, primarily through the critiques of women of colour in both the global north and global south who viewed the majority of early gender research as stemming from a generic white, Northern, middle-class perspective. The politics of location suggests that personal backgrounds and experiences of researchers (whether chosen or imposed by society) have political and theoretical implications that must be articulated throughout the research process.¹⁷¹

Power The power relations between men and women, especially struggles over the control of women's bodies, have been a key focus of feminist analysis. Concepts such as patriarchy imply some relatively stable sex/gender system in which men possess power which they hold over women (and subordinate men and children). However, Foucault's theorization of power has forced feminists to consider whether this was of conceptualizing power best captures the kinds of relations they want to highlight. In consequence the concept has received the most systematic attention in feminist appropriations of Foucault's definition. Foucault rejects what he terms the juridico-discursive model of power, which sees power as (1) a possession held by individuals or classes; (2) emanating from a single site of central source, or imposed from top to bottom (3) primarily repressive in its exercise. For Foucault power is (1) exercised rather than

¹⁶⁸ Lovell, T. 1997. *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*. London: Arnold

¹⁶⁹ INSTRAW. *Gender Research Glossary*. <http://www.instraw.org>

¹⁷⁰ INSTRAW. *Gender Research Glossary*. <http://www.instraw.org>

¹⁷¹ INSTRAW. *Gender Research Glossary*. <http://www.instraw.org>

possessed; it is never a zero-sum game in which one agent always loses when the other gains; (2) better analyzed as operating in a capillary fashion from below; there is a multiplicity of power relations at work in any particular area; power is produced at every moment and at every point; (3) polymorphous, often and even primarily productive and positive rather than repressive or negative. Feminist sympathetic to Foucault agree that his formulation parallels and develops many of the strengths implicit in the way feminists have conceptualized power, which is as concerned with power in everyday life (Foucault 'micropolitics') as with the power of the state, especially the interactions between various sets of experts and laity; the power relations in which women are involved in a range of sites cannot be pinned down to any one institutional base nor reduced to any single factor. Feminists have always refused to limit their notion of power to one which operates within structures, and the relationship between power, knowledge and discourse, as elaborated by Foucault, parallels feminist concern with how power defines situations and subjects. Less sympathetic critics argue that Foucault's formulation makes it impossible to analyze – and even rejects the existence of – the systematic power of men as a group over women as a group, 'the massive continuity of male domination' and underestimates the continuing importance of state power and legal regulation in relation to women.¹⁷²

Qualitative Methods Qualitative research involves an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern human behaviour. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research relies on reasons behind various aspects of behaviour. Simply put, it investigates the why and how of decision making, as compared to what, where, and when of quantitative research. Hence, the need is for smaller but focused samples rather than large and random samples.¹⁷³

Race/racism Although the "West" assumed its superiority from "the rest" from their first encounters with 'race' discourse as a particular way through which the West distinguished itself from its "others" first appeared in the nineteenth century, relatively late in the imperial era, and paralleled assumptions about biological difference to justify men's dominance over women. Indeed many sociologists see racism – the claim that there is a scientific basis to division of human beings into biologically distinct, hierarchically ordered races, identified phenotypically – as dating from the 1930s. Despite new attempts in the 1990s to systematic 'racial' differences in intelligence, generally speaking the idea of biologically fixed subdivisions has been replaced by new racial discourses which discriminate between 'bounded groups' defined in terms of community and nation. Although the precise role of racism in determining disadvantage is contested among sociologists, in ordinary usage the term refers mainly to institutionalized discrimination against racialized minorities, especially Black people. However, once groups have been differentially located in the social structure (for instance through slavery, colonialism,

¹⁷² Lovell, T. 1997. *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*. London: Arnold

¹⁷³ INSTRAW. *Gender Research Glossary*. <http://www.instraw.org>

labour market discrimination) they can be affected differentially by a range of policies even when these are not directly racist in intent.¹⁷⁴

Reflexivity A key component of feminist research, reflexivity is the process through which researchers seek to constantly reflect upon, and critically analyze the nature of the research process — choosing methods, conducting research, writing the research project, proposing outcomes and solutions, and research presentation. Feminist researchers also use reflexivity to analyze the gender relations underlying not only the research subject in question, but the way of conducting research in general. Feminist researchers will commonly use self-reflexivity in their own research, but will also partake in collaborative reflexive techniques (such as consciousness-raising) to deepen their analyses via the perspectives of other researchers and also their research participants.¹⁷⁵

Representation a term which circulates in a range of discourses – legal, political and aesthetic. Is widely used in feminist theory, especially in feminist cultural studies, but often in a taken-for-granted way, as though its meaning were transparent.

Standpoint epistemologies ‘Standpoint’ is a term adopted by Sandra Harding (1987) to group a number of feminist epistemologies which privilege women’s “ways of knowing” above others. The term has since been adopted more widely, by both proponents and critics. Standpoint theorists look two ways, offering on the one hand a critique of dominant conventional epistemologies in the social and natural sciences, and defending the coherence of feminist knowledge against postmodern uncertainty on the other.¹⁷⁶

Sex refers to the biological characteristics which define humans as female or male. These sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive as there are individuals who possess both, but these characteristics tend to differentiate humans as males and females.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Lovell, T. 1997. *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*. London: Arnold

¹⁷⁵ INSTRAW. *Gender Research Glossary*. <http://www.instraw.org>

¹⁷⁶ Lovell, T. 1997. *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*. London: Arnold

¹⁷⁷ INSTRAW. *Gender Research Glossary*. <http://www.instraw.org>

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Appendix One

Interview Schedule: the "first generation"

The purpose of this group interview is to discuss life in Gugulethu with women who have lived there for a number of generations (Mothers/grandmothers, etc...) It will be conducted in one of the women's homes. I will begin with a short life history discussion. The following are a list of question prompts for discussion amongst the women on several topics. I will allow the women to discuss amongst themselves so there may be questions which they ask each other, which I have found with past interviews of this nature:

Gugulethu: How did you get here?

- How long have you lived in Gugulethu?
 - Where did you live before?
 - How was it when you arrived here?
 - Who did you come with?
 - How many times did you move?
- What part of Gugulethu do you live in?
 - Do you like it? Have you moved around?
- What was it like growing up in Gugulethu?
- What was it like arriving in Gugulethu?
- Who did you make friends with?
- Where did you work?
- How have things changed since you came here?

Being "young" in Gugulethu:

- You know I am studying "youth culture," what was it like growing up in Gugulethu?
- What was the fashion like?
- Hairstyles?
- Did people dress differently in town than in the rurals?
- How so?
- What lotions and perfumes did you wear?
- Did everyone have these things? Were these status symbols? How?
- Have things changed? How have things changed?
- Do you think that you grew up differently from your children? Grandchildren? How?
- What do you think about young girls growing up in Gugulethu these days?
- Do you approve? Disapprove? Why? The way they dress? Behave?
- Where did you go for fun?
- Tell me about dating, what was that like?
- Did you have beauty pageants in town/rural areas?
-

Appendix Two – Bridging the gap

Interview Schedule – Group Discussion Toetie et. Al, 2 September 2006

The purpose of this discussion to have an overview of what growing up and living in Gugulethu is or has been like for this group of women. Is interview will speak to their individual experience of rural-urban migrations, the surveillance applied on to women's bodies and the meanings attached to the different "housing spaces," in Gugulethu for example.

- I. We begin by introducing ourselves – where are you from, who are you?
- II. Where did you grow up?
- III. What was it like growing up in Gugulethu?
- IV. How were your childhood years?
- V. The teenage years?
- VI. What do you think of today's young people?
- VII. Have things changed?
- VIII. What did/do you do for fun in Gugulethu?
- IX. What kind of women did/do you consider to be beautiful?
 - a. Is this the same as it was when you were growing up?

These are some guiding questions, but I suspect that given the close relationship that these women have with Toetie and my own familiarity with them will foster a dialogue that does not necessarily require a set of questions. I will allow the conversation to occur "naturally".

Appendix Three

