

**Youth Employability in Ghetto Neighbourhoods: The Role of Personal
Agency in Reproducing or Transforming Social Structures**

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Abstract

This thesis explores variations in employment outcomes among youth living under similar structural conditions of poverty and unemployment in ghetto neighbourhoods. It challenges structuralist accounts that ignore the role of personal agency and hold that structures alone determine action. The critical realist framework offers a helpful understanding of social structures as both material and cultural since human agency, or action, is influenced by circumstances that are both materially objective and culturally subjective. By probing the interaction of agency and structure this research shows that individual agency is a response to cultural beliefs and competing cultural norms. The ensuing worldview informs decisions and actions of youth which, under different cultures and material family structures, either reproduce or transform their educational and employment prospects in ghetto neighbourhoods. Ten case studies are analysed from youth in Manenberg, Cape Town, a neighbourhood that was historically segregated through the apartheid system of forced removals and resettlement. In-depth interviews provide evidence from life histories, experiences of education institutions and of looking for work. Further information is gathered from interviews with secondary participants, apart from participant observation in family and community activities through an ethnographic approach. Findings reveal that the culture of disengaged parenting leaves youth exposed only to the influence of low education and employment expectations such that they despondently relinquish career aspirations by dropping out of school, remaining unemployed and underemployed as a result. By contrast, consistent mentoring from parents entails a culture that competes with the negative influence of gangs and enables resilience among youth to pursue tertiary education. Youth thereby transform, rather than reproduce, their position in the labour market as unemployed or underemployed unskilled manual workers. Similarly, social networks beyond the neighbourhood provide youth with job information, supportive resources, and cultural capital, which enable them to conceptualise ideas of professional careers. This transforms the historical and contemporary material structure of ghetto neighbourhoods with socially isolated networks that limit youth to low-skilled employment opportunities. Such networks do not support personal agency towards alternative employment and youth resort to cultural practices of gangsterism, irregular and informal work.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Ghettos, whether romanced or rebuked, are complex neighbourhoods that characterize the social landscapes of cities across the world. Rap and hip hop artists often portray a sense of resilience that emerges among people who grow up within these confines of limited opportunities, while the social adversities associated with ghettos are cause for marginalization from dominant socio-economic sectors of society. Amidst this complexity are countless stories of people, most especially youth, striving towards life goals such as education and employment. How they navigate these pathways, and what influence social structures have on their personal agency to achieve these goals, is the principal concern of this enquiry.

Taking into account the historical and structural context of ghettos, Wilson (1996: 37) highlights the racial segregation of people that clustered Black communities into inner-city areas that were physically and socially isolated from important employment hubs. Marcuse and van Kempen (2000: 19) convey a similar sense of involuntary separation where a particular racial or ethnic group is given an inferior status by a dominant social group and located in spatially confined areas. South Africa's history of forced removals and relocations, through the apartheid regime, is responsible for setting up such ghettos or townships that still bear the adversities of poverty, unemployment, and insecurity. Wacquant's (1996: 2) concept of "advanced marginality" serves to emphasise that even though historically imposed legislation may be lifted, these ghetto communities continue to exist as socially and spatially marginal neighbourhoods. Writers such as Seekings (2011: 533-535) help in using this concept to develop a contextual understanding of ghetto neighbourhoods in Cape Town, recognising firstly that apartheid laws set up firm boundaries between segregated neighbourhoods during the 1960s and 1970s, therefore creating ghettoization. Seekings explains that the subsequent poverty and inequality that manifested in these communities during apartheid has unfortunately persisted.

Manenberg is one such neighbourhood, located on the southern plains of Cape Town. It is home to almost 53 000 people, according to the national census (Statistics South Africa, 2015), but residents claim that this number is actually closer to 100 000 people who live in largely overcrowded public housing. It represents a microcosm of ghetto living in the Western Cape since the geographical and social conditions of Manenberg may be used to describe other historically segregated areas in the province. It is here that I met the ten young people whose stories have helped build an understanding of

how youth make sense of their structural circumstances to decide on education and employment opportunities that either transform or reproduce unemployment in ghetto neighbourhoods.

Carl and Calvin are twin brothers who remain the only members of their families to complete high school thus far. Raised by their mother Emily and maternal grandmother, they grew up across the street from the headquarters of one of Manenberg's most notorious gangs, the Hard Livings. For this reason, Emily forbade them to associate with neighbours and kept them indoors, mentoring them through their schoolwork. Carl is now nearing the completion of his university studies and Calvin acquired a tertiary qualification as a paramedic.

Rose also grew up in an area that faces the harsh consequences of gang violence since her apartment block is situated on the boundary of three gang territories. Her father and brother are both gang members, so their home is often a place where other gangsters gather, dealing drugs and ammunition. Her mother died when she was three years old and her father paid little attention to their family's needs. Despite Rose's efforts to progress in her school career and find assistance from neighbours with school resources, she grew weary of her lonesome efforts and dropped out of school in Grade 10. She now has a three-year-old son and struggles to find permanent employment. Rose's friend, Zaira, who lives in the same apartment block, also dropped out of school in Grade 10 but this was due to her decision to take care of her ailing mother. With her father having walked out on them, her brother battling a drug addiction, and with little access to public health facilities, Zaira felt compelled to stay at home and assist her mother. She has been out of school and unemployed for the past four years.

Jennifer is one of a minority of youth in her area who have completed high school but she has been unsuccessful in obtaining a tertiary qualification towards a career in graphic design. Jennifer's mother has shown little support for her studies, both financially and emotionally, leaving her to navigate this unfamiliar career path alone. With little finances to fund extra costs such as transport and books, apart from time constraints due to her having to take care of her younger siblings while her mother is often away with her partner, Jennifer struggled to meet her course requirements. Despondent about ever being able to pursue her career goal, she takes on contract jobs such as working as a shop assistant, filing clerk, or receptionist, but has never been able to secure any permanent employment.

Natheem, Nicholas, Leon, and Luke have all been involved in gangsterism and the illegal economy of drugs in Manenberg. I met Natheem and Luke at a support group for unemployed young men who gathered weekly at the library. While Natheem is still a senior member of The Young Ones gang, Luke has now disassociated himself from the gang that he was affiliated with. Both dropped out of school and are unemployed but try to earn money from hustling for jobs around the neighbourhood such as cleaning windows, repairing appliances, or running errands to the shops. Leon was responsible for forming his own gang when he was in high school and eventually dropped out of school due to several indictments for violent attacks on other students. Through the intervention of a church support group that provided assistance for his family, given his mother's alcohol addiction, Leon disbanded the gang and took up music ministry at the church. While he finds support from this network, he has not been able to find formal employment. Nicholas also dropped out of school for violent behaviour, associated with gang membership, but like Leon found support from a church-run NGO. The organisation provides after-care services for children in the neighbourhood through homework supervision and performing arts lessons. Nicholas befriended volunteer workers at the centre, from whom he picked up an interest in the guitar and is now employed by the NGO to teach guitar lessons to children who attend the after-care programme.

Michelle had a unique school education experience in that she was able to attend the last three years of her high school career outside of Manenberg, at a semi-private school with high pass rates, in a more affluent neighbourhood. This was through the efforts of her father Graeme who believed she would have a stronger education foundation, given that Michelle was an exceptional learner and that the new school was better resourced. Graeme knew about scholarships for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and successfully applied for these opportunities, apart from taking on extra work fixing motor vehicles, in order to afford the fees. Michelle's network grew, due to the supportive relationships she built with teachers, and found permanent work as an administrative clerk at a law firm. Through the staff development initiatives of the firm, Michelle is now studying part time towards a law degree.

This diversity of outcomes among youth, who grow up within the limited and isolated circumstances of ghetto neighbourhoods, are an indication of the role that individual agency might play in the navigation of their education and employment paths. My preliminary assumptions are firstly that social structures alone cannot determine

employment outcomes. If a young woman grows up in a neighbourhood where the majority of youth do not complete high school, we cannot draw the association that she will drop out of school. Inasmuch as there is a probability that she will drop out, then there is at least the possibility of agency or another cause that would influence decisions and actions to complete high school. Similarly, if gangsterism is an unaccepted practice but still a social structure of the informal and illegal economy, not every young man will make this choice. Inasmuch as agency should be considered in the way that youth make decisions about the networks they belong to and their employment prospects, my second assumption is that the social relations and immediate social environment of an individual might need to function in such a manner so as to challenge the cultural norm. Finally, we may assume that such a function involves extraordinary personal commitment and sacrifice to compensate for the severe lack of enabling resources that result in high unemployment rates among youth in ghetto neighbourhoods.

These assumptions challenge the structuralist perspectives of scholars such as Wilson (1996: 37) who account for youth unemployment in ghettos by making links with structural constraints such as distance from employment nodes and weak job access networks. The high rate of unemployment is therefore associated with a shared outlook or culture that youth will never be able to achieve employment goals. The main critique against this argument is that decisions and behaviour cannot be associated with culture since this ignores the way in which individuals respond to similar situations in diverse ways (Cruickshank, 2003: 131). What the structuralist position lacks is an exploration of how youth make sense of and respond to structural constraints. This is where the work of scholars such as Anderson (1999: 11) and Young (2003: 1074) help to understand the complexity of young people's interior world, by examining their process of meaning-making, their motivations, and values. In this way we avoid a deterministic account of youth employability in ghetto neighbourhoods.

I aim to contribute to this debate by using a critical-realist framework to explore the role of personal agency in making decisions around education and employment. Archer's (2003: 5) position holds that both structure and agency possess powers of enablement and constraint towards a certain "agential enterprise", allowing for the agent to reflect or deliberate on the opportunities and obstacles they see around them. Porpora (2015: 100) explains that social structures may be understood as both material and cultural circumstances since human agency, or action, is influenced by circumstances that are both materially objective and culturally subjective. Material

structure refers to the underlying conditions that connect individuals among themselves within a society. These conditions are material or objective since they exist with or without individuals having a concept of them. Inasmuch as material structure is objective, cultural structure is understood as being subjective since it constitutes the values that individuals share among each other. Material structure entails patterns in the way that individuals are differentially related to material and social phenomena such as poverty, education, employment, parenting, social isolation, and social networks. Cultural norms refer to social relations that entail beliefs and values that characterise people's consideration of social practices like attending school or looking for work. Personal agency is then the action that is determined by the "internal conversation" (Archer, 2003: 153) of the individual on their structural environment with regards to their education and employment goals.

The mechanisms through which structures work, as Danermark *et al.* (2005: 112) reminds us, are what generate observable behaviour. My research centres on the social relations of parent relationships and family environment, social networks and cultural capital within the context of social isolation from supportive material and human resources. What I hope to uncover is the way that these conditions influence the agential mechanisms of deliberation, as guided by Archer's (2003: 25) modes of "reflexive deliberation", such that youth either reproduce or transform social structures around education and employment.

Following the need to explore causal relationships, my method of enquiry involves qualitative research. This consists of loosely structured in-depth interviews with both primary and secondary participants, and participant observation through an ethnographic approach of understanding the cultural landscape of my research area. I adopt an interpretive approach, as guided by the principles of *verstehen*, to understand the social and cultural meaning of personal agency. As Sayer (1992: 36) reminds us, when we explore the realm of structure and agency these phenomena do not follow the cause and effect consistency of our natural world. We have to allow for complexity and contradictions that show the formulation of a worldview from an individual's perspective. I therefore spent almost four years building relationships with research participants, their families, neighbours, and influential community leaders. Apart from the time dedicated to interviews with primary participants, over an average of six to eight meetings with ten youth, I also participated in social activities such as accompanying them on a day trip to the city, walking with them to the shops or library, or even just an informal and unannounced family visit. Over time I experienced a warm

reception and while my role as a researcher was understood, I maintained a consistent presence that helped foster a trusting relationship. I was often encouraged by comments that expressed these sentiments, as by Zaira and her mother who assured me “you are always welcome here”. My presence as one who was willing to listen, in an environment where people do not often have the opportunity to speak confidentially about their lives, was also appreciated and often vocalised.

I adopted a purposive sampling method to select youth who would be able to participate in my study, selecting those who expressed a willingness to speak about their lives over a protracted period of time. While many of the youth whom I met in Manenberg were willing to talk about the circumstances of their neighbourhood, I selected primary participants from those who were open to telling their life stories. My conceptualisation of youth was also guided by Hartinger-Saunders (2008: 89) who uses the condition of dependency on parental support in transitioning to adulthood. While the ages of primary participants ranged from 18 to 28 at the time that I met them, I selected youth who expressed a dependency on adult support to assist them in their transition towards a goal. This transition included tertiary study and looking for permanent work in order to achieve independence from the household in which they grew up.

Chapters four and five explore the case studies of Rose and Carl respectively. While both grew up under similar conditions of poverty and amidst the volatile physical environment of gang activity, Rose is unemployed while Carl pursues university studies towards a career in education. Chapter four highlights the constraints of weak parental influence on Rose’s attempts to complete high school and her goal of studying further for a tertiary qualification in business administration. Despite her early academic success in school, and her aptitude for taking leadership in her community, we explore the disabling influence of disengaged supervision from her father as a single parent. Using Lareau’s (2011: 3) theory of “natural growth” to describe the model of parenting among working-class families, we see how the mechanism of such a structural relation exerts a causal liability on the personal agency of youth to navigate a successful career path, exposed only to limited resources and opportunities in the context of a ghetto neighbourhood.

Carl’s experience of a single mother who paid close attention to his school activities, insulating him and his brother Calvin from their immediate neighbourhood, demonstrates a different model of parenting. Lareau (2011: 2) uses the concept of

“concerted cultivation” to describe the parenting models of middle class families but this approach in poor, working class neighbourhoods demonstrates the influence that might be necessary in overcoming constraints. Using Elder-Vass’ (2012: 87) notion of “competing norm circles” we see how close and consistent parenting builds insulated family environments with cultural norms and expectations that challenge external negative influences. This causal power influenced the internal deliberation of Carl’s personal agency in such a manner that he built a resilient outlook and projection over his future career.

In Chapter six, Natheem’s case study of compounded adversity, through extreme poverty and the death of his parents, explores the constraining influence of social isolation. This chapter also traces the cultural influence of “competing norm circles” (Elder-Vass, 2012: 87) on the personal agency of youth within a limited and closed network of associations, with particular reference to the influence of gangs. While Natheem displayed an exceptional ability in his academic performance at school, as well as strong leadership skills, he experienced a constant struggle against material poverty and personal loss. The supportive norm circles of his family and a local support group exerted relatively little influence after the death of Natheem’s parents and the discontinuation of the support group. The influential allure of gangs, with the promise of protection and security, exerted an influence over Natheem’s personal agency to deliberate and choose gang membership through his fractured perspective of severe poverty and weak support structures.

Michelle’s case study, in Chapter seven, describes her experience of attending a semi-private school outside of Manenberg and building a wide social network, thereby offering her a different view of responding to social isolation. Building on Granovetter’s (1983: 202) and Elliot’s (1999: 200) theories of the quality of one’s social network in accessing information and resources to a wide range of employment opportunities, this chapter explores Michelle’s example of building a broad social network. Here we come to firstly appreciate how youth demonstrate personal agency towards transforming their position in the material occupational structure that favours non-manual clerical, sales, service, professional and managerial jobs over low-skilled manual work. Secondly, we understand how new cultural influences help youth formulate ideas and beliefs in their ability to pursue career paths that they initially considered to be elusive.

This study focuses on the interdependence of personal agency on social structures and thereby helps to understand how youth build perspectives that frame their

decisions around education and employment. The case studies explore social relations that enable or constrain youth in transforming or reproducing their structural circumstances, aiming to demonstrate how a purely structural and deterministic account neglects the critical interactions that produce diverse outcomes. To this extent we come to understand some of the complexities that youth encounter with navigating pathways towards successful education and employment goals. In order for social development practices to play influential roles in enabling such pathways, it is critical that we look further than structural changes and also address the needs that youth present for enabling their personal agency towards resilience.

Chapter 2: Contextual Framework

When Abdullah Ibrahim composed the epic jazz piece entitled 'Manenberg' he spoke of the music as epitomising the mood of people living there during the 1980's. While this was a time of protest and revolution against apartheid policies, the consistent rhythm of 'Manenberg' and the nimble melody seem to bravely hold the harsh struggle of people who were forcibly removed to segregated outskirts of the city, often likened to concentration camps.

This is the counterpoint that I sense as I drive through Manenberg Avenue. Fruit sellers have their stalls set out along the pavement where unaccompanied children playfully chase each other. Minibus taxis are sounding their hooters, alerting potential commuters, stopping at random places along the road. Groups of young men are chatting with each other while huddled in circles at the corners of apartment blocks called 'Courts', sharing a smoke from a cigarette or pipe. Women are stringing up laundry hung precariously between the spaces of these blocks and are engaged in animated conversation with neighbours. A funeral service with a fairly large gathering of people has just concluded at the Anglican church as the bus prepares to transport mourners to the graveside. A solitary bugle player escorts the cortege to the main road while the *Adhan*, the Muslim call to prayer, solemnly summons people for the *Dhuhr* midday prayer. This familiar rhythm of the day is however arrested at the sight of a large police truck on patrol, a harsh reminder of the gang war that has raged over the past two months.

On this morning I am on my way to visit four young women who live in the same apartment block, in an area of Manenberg positioned between three rival gangs. I am keen to catch up with them again after being unable to access their section of the neighbourhood for the duration of the unrest. They speak about these events in a tone that suggests they are quite accustomed to it. With long sighs they relate stories of needing to stay indoors the whole day and not having anything to do. Fairouz mentions that the army was present for just one day and as soon as they left, the shooting started up again.

They relate the story of a young man who was brutally tortured and killed in a block just next to where they live. His killers were from a gang who thought he belonged to their rivals. It happened during a time of scheduled blackouts by the local authority and no-one in the neighbourhood therefore saw what happened but they could hear the beating and shouting. It is still disputed whether he was actually a gangster and what the real motive for the killing was. His funeral takes place today.

Fairooz is five months pregnant and it will be her first child since she miscarried about a year ago. She is unmarried and unemployed, living in a two-bedroom flat that is occupied by fifteen people. They live with their grandmother as the main breadwinner while two of her cousins work as retail store assistants. Rachel is the only one with a relatively small household of four people in a one-bedroom flat. Zaira and Rose both live with approximately eleven or twelve people in each of their two-bedroom apartments.

The girls have renewed their efforts to look for work around the neighbourhood since the shooting stopped. Rose was offered a job to help at an NGO-run coffee shop, a short distance from where she lives. She decided not to accept the offer since she would only be paid R30 per week, hardly enough to sustain herself and her son. Rachel explains that jobs offered by the Community Work Programme are not feasible since

they pay a few hundred rand for a month and day-care for her son costs ZAR100 per week, leaving her with barely ZAR50 to spend each month.

As we continue talking, I initiate some conversation around their plans for the rest of the weekend. They laugh but with restraint, as Rachel reminds me, “You can never plan for anything in Manenberg”.

(Field Notes 23 May 2015)



Youth pose for a photograph outside Alletta Court on Manenberg Avenue. Courts, or apartment blocks, bear female names and are arranged in alphabetical order throughout the neighbourhood.

Introduction

While Manenberg is merely a twenty-minute drive from the city centre of Cape Town, its familiarity among the mainstream of this society is scarce. An attempt to search for images through Google Earth is likewise limiting and misrepresentative since requests for locations within the centre of the neighbourhood only bring up views of main roads that skirt the periphery. Locating material to document the history and context of the neighbourhood is a delicate process of sifting through much larger bodies of work in which Manenberg is traced by meagre mention. Census data too is highly contested by the reality that one encounters, where official population counts seem to downplay visible signs of overcrowding and inadequate housing. Census definitions of social practices such as employment also adopt nuanced meanings by the people who live these complex realities. What constitutes formal work, contract work, casual work, or even hustling for odd jobs around the neighbourhood, only take on meaning within the context of fluid dynamics that individuals must straddle within this confined space. What we therefore find, when encountering a bustling ghetto such as Manenberg, is a need to define the geographical and social context of its location in terms of the perspectives of those who live here.

The material for building a contextual appreciation of Manenberg is guided by academic findings, media accounts, artistic impressions, and data banks that record census information. In so doing I isolate the selected study area in which my research participants are located, demonstrating the concentrated prevalence of challenging structural circumstances here in comparison to the larger geographical space that constitutes Manenberg. These accounts are also informed by primary and secondary research participants who help verify information according to their lived experience. I begin by mapping the area in terms of features highlighted from interviews and from participant observation, before plotting the historical and geographic landscapes. This is followed by an appreciation of the social services and organisations that characterize the neighbourhood, before describing both the formal and informal economic conditions that help to frame our understanding of youth unemployment.

Mapping Manenberg

Four roads enclose the area commonly known as 'Central Manenberg'. As illustrated in Figure 1, Philippi Ring Road separates this centre from 'Lower Manenberg' and serves as a link to neighbouring townships. Vygekraal Road skirts a preserved wetland that separates Manenberg from a line of factories, the largest being a Coca-Cola bottling factory, and leads out towards Govan Mbeki Road. One of the most familiar landmarks is Duinefontein Road since it leads to the national highway, known as the N2. Figure 2 demonstrates the location of Manenberg within the local governing authority of Cape Town, depicting neighbouring areas as well as links to national roads and highways.

For most residents of Cape Town and international tourists who would be familiar with these roads en route to the city centre or the airport, it is all that they can associate with Manenberg. Travelling along these borders of the neighbourhood, one is able to glance at large blocks of local authority housing or meet one of the residents selling fruit at the traffic intersections along Klipfontein Road. They would just as easily try to coax you into parting with a coin or two in their favour to buy a cool drink or a smoke, should you not be interested in the colourful fruit on offer. Their weary faces and calloused hands are signs already of the hardship they traverse in the ghetto that this traffic by-passes everyday on the way to other destinations. As Jeppie (2004: 9) aptly remarks: "Planned with cold rationality – then neglected and allowed to grow into ghettos – by successive administrations running the city, these townships are very seldom 'taken in'..."

Each of the aforementioned main roads bear entrances and exits to the central part of Manenberg where my research is focused. The path most commonly used is the intersection on Philippi Ring Road that ushers traffic in through Manenberg Avenue. As you turn into this iconic road, more commonly known as *Die Laan* (The Avenue), a bustling street life emerges of pedestrians and minibus taxis. I often use this activity as a gauge of the mood in the neighbourhood because the absence of a vibrant street life is an indication of the outbreak of a gang war. Otherwise, there is a fluidity and ease of association among people to the extent that corner shops are open as late as 11pm on weekdays and almost never shut down on the weekends. The constant flow of activity bears a somewhat surreal personification of the names given to smaller streets that are tributaries of Manenberg Avenue. Generally named after great rivers of the world, Red River Street, Thames Avenue, Storms River Way, Sabie Road, and

Scheldt Street are the principal grid lines that further divide Central Manenberg into smaller sections that in turn bear their own landmark references.

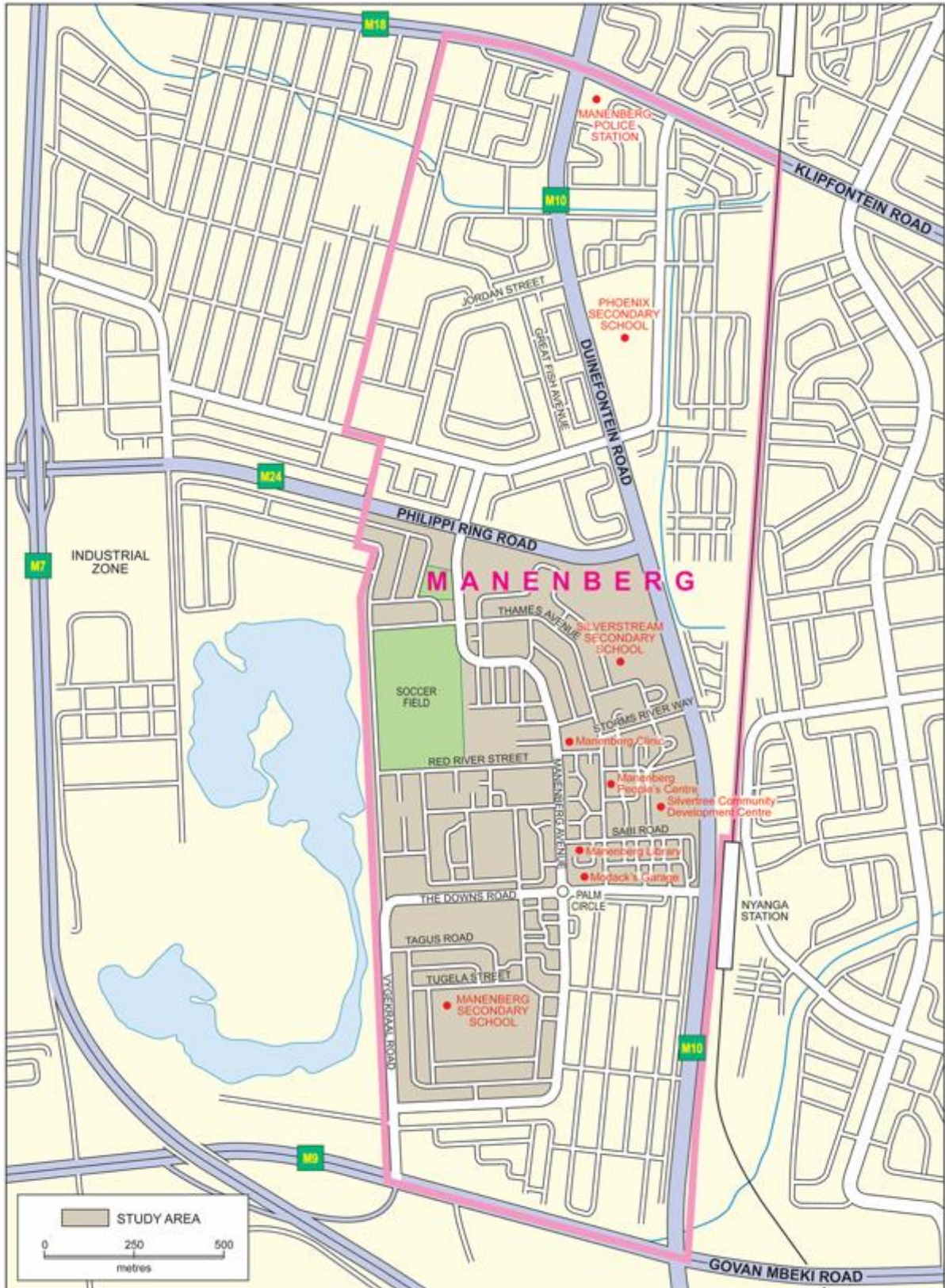


Figure 1: Map of Manenberg depicting study area

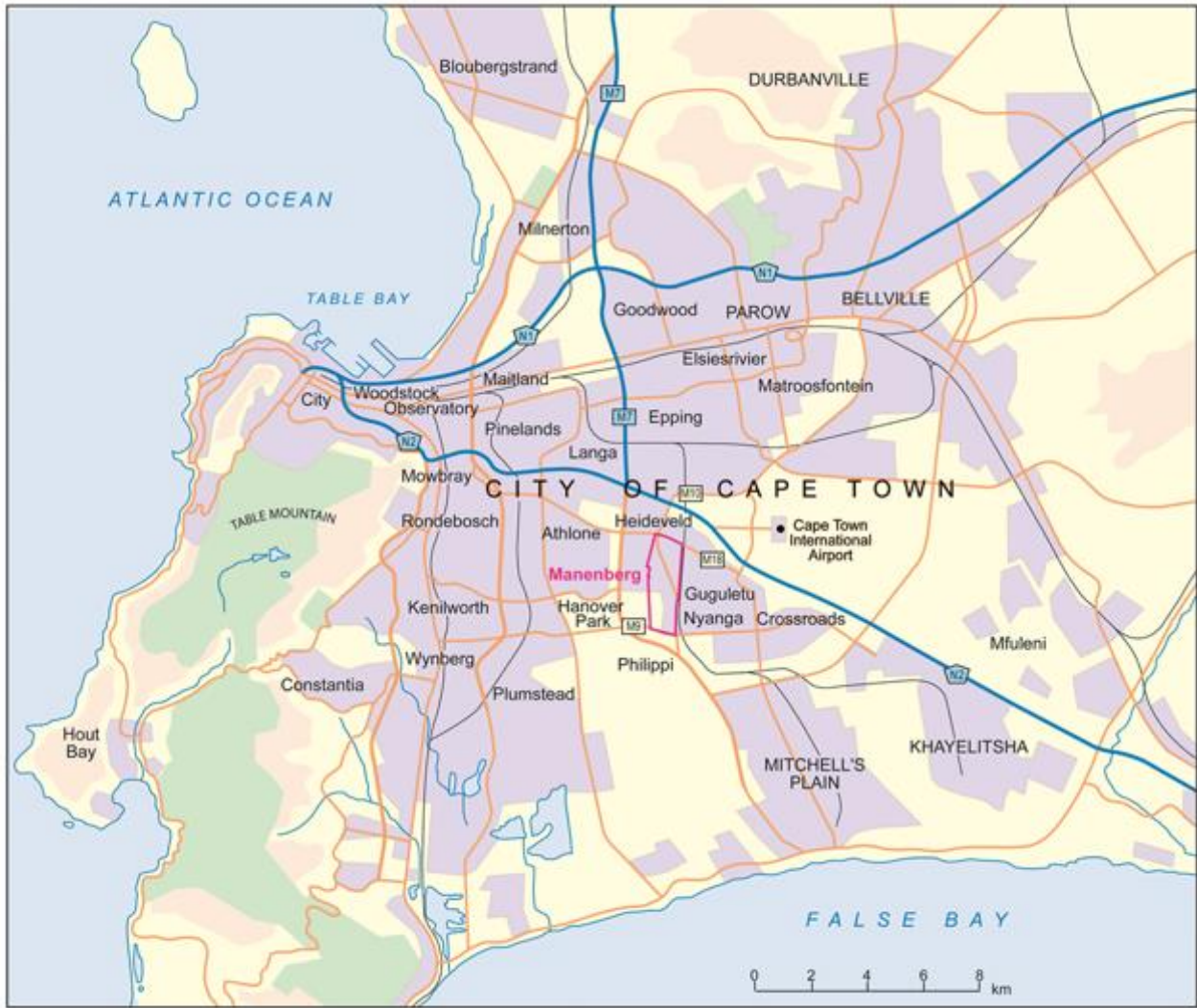


Figure 2: Map of the city of Cape Town depicting the relative location of Manenberg

History of Establishment

The Social Engineering of an Apartheid City

It is a popular view that the plight of people living in segregated neighbourhoods, following the 1950 Group Areas Act, actually dates back to the time of slavery. Many residents of Manenberg and surrounding Coloured neighbourhoods are descendants of the Southeast Asian slaves under the rule of the Dutch East India Company. When slavery was abolished in 1835, families who had lived on the premises of their 'masters' needed dwellings of their own and numerous housing projects were therefore established across Cape Town. While a few mixed residential zones, such as District Six, existed on the periphery of the Central Business District, most other public housing schemes across the city were already segregated into Black, Coloured, and Indian townships. These accounts are articulated by many of the older residents whom I spoke to while conducting fieldwork in Manenberg. "It goes back to slavery," says Gavin Joseph, a carpenter and community housing activist, "we never owned anything. Coloured people could never own anything and we could never have a choice where to live".

Pinnock (1984: 31) traces the industrial advance of post World War II as a major contributing factor to the overcrowding of cities, particularly for Coloured people who previously made a living from trades and skills that they learnt and passed on from the time of slavery. Seamstresses and tailors, in particular, were unable to compete with the textile industry that brought capital and industrial technology from Europe and the United States. During the 1950s, the influx of people in search of employment was largely concentrated in District Six as the closest mixed-race neighbourhood to the city centre and this soon led to overcrowding. Hart (1988: 613) points out that local authorities neglected the infrastructural maintenance of the neighbourhood, leading to dilapidated living conditions. While the local authorities outlined a plan to upgrade the area, national government overturned this decision in favour of razing District Six and relocating residents. Pinnock (1984: 44-45) goes on to add that during the 1960s and 1970s, the city foreshore of Cape Town was being re-engineered for the specifications of industry. It included raised highways that connected new inner-city office parks to the outlying factories and to the affluent Whites-only suburbs. As the dilapidation of mixed-race inner-city neighbourhoods increased, so did the motivation from government to raze these community structures and relocate Coloured people out of the city, where they would be closer to the new factory estates on the Cape Flats.

The township of Manenberg was established in 1966 as the forced removal programme of the Group Areas Act gained momentum and new separate residential areas for the different racial groups were defined (Jacobs, 2010: 6). The practice of forced removals and segregated areas epitomized the ideology of apartheid, that ethnic groups were incompatible and contact between them would only lead to friction. Accordingly, amicable relations could only be assured if minimum points of contact were maintained (Lemon, 1991: 8).

Modelled largely on the design of the Garden City in inner-city London during the late 19th century, as a response to the rapidly expanding urban working-class, Cape Town's apartheid city imported these ideas in defence of race segregation. Just as the garden cities of Letchworth and Welwyn were located in the open countryside, away from the city and made up of small farmhouses around dead-end roads, so did establishments like Manenberg become enclosed outlying townships on the dusty Cape Flats. It resulted in an isolation of people from the city centre since most residents could not afford vehicular transport (Pinnock, 1984: 45-46). Buffer strips were also created between Coloureds-only neighbourhoods and the affluent Whites-only suburbs. As Jeppie (2004: 9) points out, one such buffer is the M5 freeway that skirts what once was the Whites-only Southern Suburbs. It is only when one moves beyond this line, that the affluence of Cape Town is left behind and one encounters the homogenous public housing of the Cape Flats.

Broken and Reconfigured Neighbourhoods

While the Population Registration Act of 1950 enforced the racial classification of people, the Group Areas Act that was promulgated in the same year imposed racial residential restrictions. The very nature of forced removals and the resettlement of people, who lived in neighbourhoods that are now affluent and well connected to mainstream economic activity, speaks volumes of the social dissatisfaction that still breeds in neighbourhoods such as Manenberg. Western (1996: 253) quotes eminent scholar and activist Jakes Gerwel that "there is an antagonism towards the place, with many people having been forced to move to it in the first place". Apart from the relocation of established communities to scattered neighbourhoods across the Cape Flats, family units themselves were broken due to racial classifications that resulted in family members living in segregated parts of the city and losing contact. Standing (2006: 1) reminds us that prior to the Populations Registration Act the Coloured

population was regarded with much ambiguity and following 1950, individuals were subjected to crude tests that determined their classification as White or Coloured, often within the same family. Such classifications were enforced to the extent of 'race inspectors' having to decide on individual cases and imposing racial classifications that determined where one could live (Field, 2001: 22).

The new public housing facilities being constructed on the Cape Flats were designed for nuclear family units as a means of controlling the influx of people to urban centres in Cape Town. Most families who were relocated here from old neighbourhoods had lived within extended family units, so the move resulted in further separations among families being rehoused in different townships that were far apart from each other. Pinnock (1989: 168) comments that

“the ultimate losers in this type of urban atmosphere were the working-class families, torn out of the areas they knew and scattered across the Cape Flats. The emotional brutality dealt out to them in the name of rational urban planning has been incalculable.”

Field (2001: 11) records this sense of loss and anger through oral histories that highlight the emotional struggle of being forcibly removed. It is a traumatic memory, whose pain people still carry decades after the event, as recorded from a former resident of District Six in the city centre, now living in Manenberg:

“Oh! Don't talk to me about that, please don't talk to me. I will cry. I will cry over again. There's when the trouble started. When they chuck us out like that. When they chucked us out of Cape Town...They broke us up. They broke up the community. They took our happiness from us...I don't know how my life continued. I couldn't see my life in this raw township far away from the family. All the neighbours were strangers. That was the hardest part of my life, believe me.”

Apart from the strong sense of belonging that people associate with their former neighbourhoods, the freedom of movement and close proximity to work and essential amenities are experiences that no longer feature in the quality of living associated with relocated settlements such as Manenberg. The notion of being “chucked out” to the sandy and infertile land of the Cape Flats gave rise to a disassociation with the larger concept of community and a focus on micro levels of social interaction made up of a single street or apartment block. While an outsider's perception may easily be that of a homogenous community, given the high density of housing structures, Salo (2003: 350) points out that socio-spatial boundaries were clearly defined within small areas. Much of this boundary-making is due to the activities of gangs that divided Manenberg into territories that they often defend through violent gun battles. Movement within the neighbourhood is therefore severely restricted and routes that

residents use to access amenities such as the library, clinic, schools, or public transport is largely determined by the activity of gangs.

In the process of mapping my research field and identifying significant geographic features with research participants, they would often point out places that they accessed and clarify the routes that they would use to access them. The mapping of these routes is usually established by what areas they identified as no-go zones due to the presence of gang headquarters that they preferred not to be associated with. Frequently visiting a certain 'territory', albeit for non-gang related interactions, is always associated with membership. This is especially the case for young men and women who are prone to being coerced through drug trading, prostitution, and weapon smuggling. Robins (2002: 671) identifies weak governance structures and inadequate police services as giving rise to territorial gangsterism in Manenberg, being a marginalized and isolated neighbourhood. These hostile conditions are a far cry from the ease of movement and access enjoyed by communities that have flourished in areas vacated by generations of residents in Manenberg. Forced removals and relocations have, in these ways, given rise to fragile communities that have struggled to reconfigure a sense of stability, security, and belonging.

Spatial Dynamics

Distance and Relative Positioning

Panoramic views from the top floors of apartment blocks in Manenberg take one's gaze towards the sweeping horizon of the Table Mountain range, the foothills of which hold the affluent Southern Suburbs and City Bowl. On a clear day, the mountain seems within comfortable reach but this proximity is deceptive since there is a host of highways, railway lines and buffer zones that separate Manenberg from Cape Town's economic centres. Manenberg is situated 15 kilometres away from the Central Business District of Cape Town. The remaining two large concentrations of business and industry in the Northern and Southern Suburbs are also similarly located at a distance of 15 to 20 kilometres away. The industrial nodes of Epping and Maitland, as indicated in Figure 2, are respectively located approximately 10 kilometres and 15 kilometres away from Manenberg. This distance from employment hubs, and the associated high costs of traveling, is highlighted by economists such as Borat (2012: 9) who have proposed a travel subsidy for unemployed youth looking for work. Administered through the national Department of Labour, the subsidy would enable

youth to access labour centres in areas with a high density of employment opportunities.

The map represented in Figure 2 illustrates the surrounding position of three townships. Heideveld and Hanover Park, also established through the forced removals and relocation of Coloured residents, is arranged to the East and South West of Manenberg respectively. They are separated by the highways of Klipfontein Road, Jakes Gerwel Drive, and Govan Mbeki Drive. Jakes Gerwel Drive skirts along a green belt that consists of a dam owned by the glass manufacturing company, Consol Glass, and the area buffers Manenberg from a string of factory buildings that constitute an industrial zone. To the north, and across the railway line, is Gugulethu which is the closest of a line of several other neighbourhoods segregated for Black residents. Manenberg is therefore a typical example of the segregation design plan of the 1950s to create inward-looking clusters of dense housing, or “mono-class satellites... connected to the inner city by fast highways” (Pinnock, 1984: 46).



A view from the footbridge at Nyanga Station, against the Table Mountain range backdrop

Access and Public Transport

Moving Black and Coloured people away from areas that were to be developed as White suburbs had more to do with political and economic control, than with the much publicized motivation of 'separate development'. Dividing neighbourhoods by highways and buffer zones was also meant to serve as control measures in the likelihood of political disorder. A limited number of entry and exit points were ensured so that volatile areas could be easily policed (Standing, 2006: 5). In the case of Manenberg, this sense of being confined and controlled was re-evoked on the morning of 21 May 2015 when the army conducted a 'lock-down' of the area in the wake of a gang war. Dubbed 'Operation Fiela', all exits and entrances of Central Manenberg were closed such that no resident could leave and no-one enter for a four-hour period from 3am. Armed officers marched through the streets and conducted random searches for firearms and drugs. Mixed reactions were noted among residents, with many pleased about the attention that the problem of gang wars was receiving while others considered it a futile exercise that brought peace for only a day. School children and teenagers could not leave their homes and were late for school, along with many residents who could not access transport to work until after the search was concluded. The ease with which an entire neighbourhood was cordoned off and seized by a military operation conveys a stark representation of how the infrastructural design of the neighbourhood was purposely meant to contain and restrict the movement of residents.

Since the dismantling of apartheid legislation in the 1990s, little has changed in racially-segregated neighbourhoods such as Manenberg. Property markets and school fees in formerly Whites-only suburbs have soared and still exclude the meagre economies of the working class on the Cape Flats (Salo, 2003: 355). This exclusion is further highlighted when tracing the greatest growth in employment opportunities as taking place in affluent suburbs that are not well served by public transport. The Cape Town Central Business District, together with the Northern and Southern suburbs, contains 37% of the population but still account for 80% of all jobs in the Cape metropolitan area (Turok & Watson, 2001: 125). This pattern of car-oriented development has resulted in historically-disadvantaged neighbourhoods being further isolated from job prospects, along with the combined effects of lower income and the limited opportunities of moving to other neighbourhoods with higher quality schools and tertiary institutions (Turok, 2001: 2359).

Minibus taxis are by far the most common means of transport for residents of Manenberg but the difficulties of commuting to work are such that only between 05:30 and 06:30 is it possible to get a direct taxi from Manenberg Avenue into the city centre. From 06:30 to 08:00, when most workers commute, one can only get a taxi to Athlone and then wait for another taxi into the city centre. The number of people needing to commute daily, as compared with the number of taxis available is also disproportionate and the competition for a seat results in long queues. Most workers prefer rather to walk along Duinefontein Road to the Police Station, at a distance of 2km, where they can get a taxi either to the city centre and then connect to the Southern Suburbs hub of industries, or to Belville where they will then change to the particular area that they will need to access in the business hub of the Northern Suburbs. The journey to work each morning and back home in the afternoon is therefore each approximately an hour and a half. The difficulty with regulating or increasing the capacity of minibus taxis as a public form of transport is that they are known to be monopolized by gang leaders. During times of gang conflict, which could go on for months, minibus taxis are scarce, placing an even greater strain on commuters.

Other forms of public transport include the trains that are accessed from Nyanga Station but overcrowding and crime result in residents making very minimal use of this service. Those for whom the trains are most beneficial are workers in Epping and Maitland, as seen in Figure 2, since the train line cuts through these areas with easy access to the industries located there. The station serves three large neighbourhoods: Manenberg, Nyanga, and Gugulethu. By the time that morning trains reach this stop they are already crowded by commuters further up the track from Khayelitsha and Philippi. The Golden Arrow public bus is seldom used by working commuters due to its unreliable time schedule. Passengers could wait up to an hour between buses that run from Vygekraal Road into Manenberg Avenue and then down through either the M10 or M7 highways.

Since 2011 the City of Cape Town has been phasing in the MyCiti bus service, an integrated rapid transit system that is meant to offer a more efficient means of public transport. These buses have dedicated lanes along their routes so that they can easily bypass traffic congestion. The townships of Manenberg, Heideveld, Langa, and Hanover Park are yet to feature on the plans for access routes and this oversight has led to much dissention among residents. While MyCiti buses pass frequently along Duinefontein Road, like most other traffic, they are headed elsewhere. This is the route

to and from Mitchell's Plain and while there are ample opportunities to create stops along this route to serve Manenberg, none exist.

Population

The most recent national census, conducted in 2011, reveals that Manenberg has a total population of 52 875 people, with the space demarcated as my study area in Figure 1 accounting for 27 141 (Statistics South Africa, 2015). The distinction between the geographical area of Manenberg and my study area was calculated by considering the small area boundaries. Appendix 1 displays these small areas, represented by codes, laid over a street map of Manenberg such that specific areas may be comparatively analysed.

With half of the total population concentrated in what is roughly a third of the geographical space, it is quite a densely populated part of the neighbourhood. The official records of the census data, however, are highly contested by residents and these sentiments are often raised at community meetings that address safety and social development issues. At a meeting that I attended in September 2015, a resident voiced the largely held view that Manenberg's social demise is due to overcrowding. He spoke, to strong approval from the gathering, that the neighbourhood was established almost fifty years ago to accommodate 35 000 people but this number has steadily grown to more than 100 000 residents.

Roegshanda Pascoe, a community activist who regularly chairs the safety forum meetings, believes that census figures are deliberately tampered with to sidestep the crisis of overpopulation and the responsibility that the local authority would have in order to remedy the situation:

“if the full amount of people living in Manenberg would come out, don't you think everybody would scream My God this place need some facelift...I took the city officials around to see what is happening in Thames Avenue and they said to me My God can people live like this? Are these humans staying here? And I said ha! Are you asking me that? Then you must tell your bosses that humans have to live like animals here.” (Interview Transcript ROE1 Page 3)

The conditions that Roegshanda points out, speak to the reality of physical infrastructure that is no longer able to accommodate the needs of a fast-growing population. Apart from crowded households of up to 20 people living in a two-bedroom flat, sewage and waste water systems have started to deteriorate from having to function for a much larger population than it was initially constructed for. Blocked and

overflowing drains are a regular occurrence in the neighbourhood, while children often play around barefoot on the streets.

The age distribution of the population, as reflected in Figure 3 (Statistics South Africa, 2015) represents a large concentration of people in the 15 to 64-year-old category and although the figure augers well for a potentially healthy workforce, we shall later see that this potential is severely compromised. The age distribution breakdown takes account of compulsory schooling years, as prescribed by South African education policy, to range from Grade 1 to Grade 9. While most children begin school in Grade R, aged 5, and go on to complete high school in Grade 12, aged 18, the official start to schooling is Grade 1. A learner may leave high school at the age of 15 in order to pursue an in-service training and it therefore becomes possible to start earning a regular income at this age. While there is no government legislation regarding a specific age for retirement, most company pensions or provident funds recognize retirement at the age of 65.

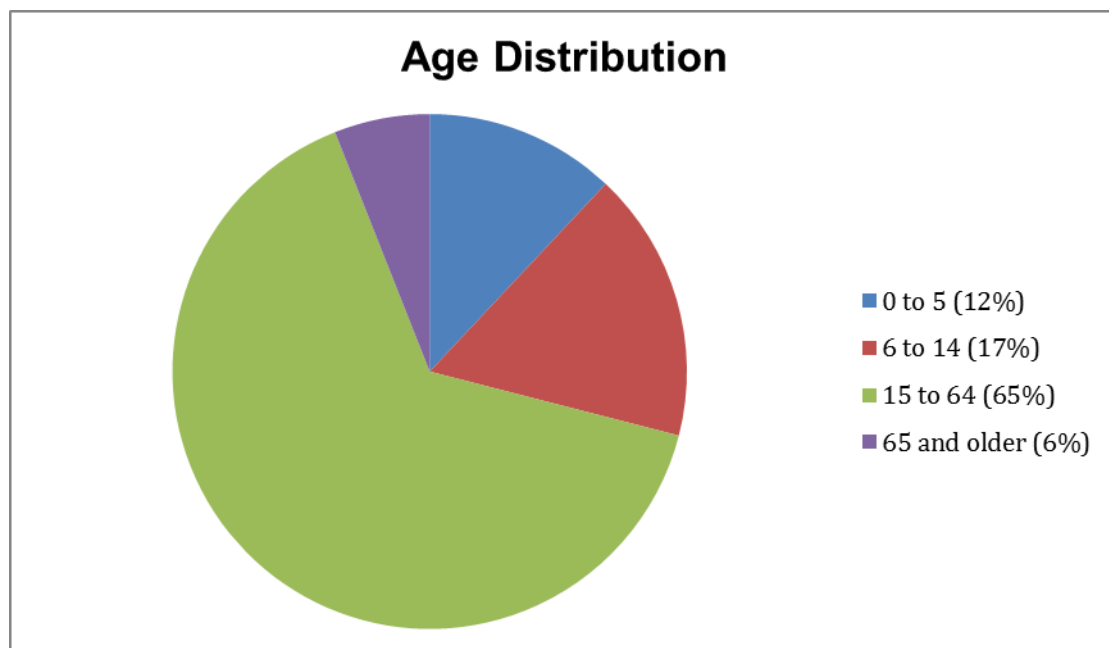


Figure 3: Age Distribution in Manenberg

Housing

It has been suggested that housing on the Cape Flats was never adequate, from the inception of these neighbourhoods in the 1960s and 1970s. The rate of forced removals surpassed the construction of new dwellings and by 1974 authorities had to compromise the quality of construction work due to inadequate funds. As a result, new residents were expected to occupy buildings that were poorly constructed despite being declared suitable for occupation (Standing, 2006: 5). As pointed out by several research participants and vehemently raised at every community meeting I attended, the substandard quality of structural engineering posed serious ramifications for the community as it grew within these confines. Apart from the confined space that generated competition and antagonism, the largest number of residents occupied apartments that are still owned by the local authority with shared water meters and sewage facilities between several apartment blocks. There are therefore no possibilities for transformation into private ownership and further development unless these structures are demolished and rebuilt.

Jacobs (2010: 19) documents the different categories of housing that were completed by 1970, with a total of 5 621 dwellings. Following the co-ordinates of the map in Figure 1, the triangular area to the right that is bordered by Duinefontein Road, Klipfontein Road, and the railway line passing through Nyanga Station, contains self-standing cottages and semi-detached houses. In August 1999 this part of Manenberg was most severely affected by a tornado that damaged many of the double-story rental apartment blocks that featured prominently here. The redevelopment of this area was considered an opportunity by the local authority to introduce the practice of individual ownership of what would be low-income houses. The intention was to build a greater sense of belonging and ownership that might impose pressure on gangs to relinquish control since property would be managed by residents who in turn take responsibility to ensure a low-risk environment (Robins, 2002: 676). As residents took ownership of semi-detached cottages that replaced rental apartments, this part of Manenberg became less known for unrest due to a decreased gang presence.

Similar conditions are prevalent in the adjacent area bordered by Philippi Ring Road, Duinefontein Road, Klipfontein Road, and the roads extending from Vygekraal Road. These properties were initially offered to residents who could afford a higher rental, many of whom held government jobs. As independent semi-detached structures, they were offered for sale to residents and are now largely privately-owned properties. The

only areas that allowed for vacant land to be purchased and private houses to be built consisted of the area indicated as unshaded at the bottom right corner in Figure 1, known as Sherwood Park, and the small piece of land at the top end of the dam, known as Primrose Park.

The largest number of dwellings are made up by double storey apartment blocks, with a total of 340 units, and the triple storey blocks that contain 1 584 units. While all of the double storey blocks have two bedrooms, the triple storey blocks have 858 one-bedroom units and 726 two-bedroom units. Housing shortages in the 1980s saw the development of a new category of housing, called maisonettes. A total of 364 units, containing three bedrooms each, were built throughout the neighbourhood. As a marked improvement from the 1960s housing project, these structures featured individually planned units that are now largely private homes (Jacobs, 2010: 19-20).

The shaded space in Figure 1, demarcated as my study area, is made up of all the double storey and triple storey apartment blocks in Manenberg, apart from only a small number of maisonettes and semi-detached houses. Community activist Melanie Manuel, of the Manenberg Housing Steering Committee, explains that overcrowding has always been a neglected problem in the neighbourhood. It is estimated that more than 6 000 residents are living in informal housing extensions on the ground floor units of the apartment blocks. Over the past eleven years, the committee has advocated for these residents, and others who are dependent on social grants, to receive new houses. Plans are now underway for 756 units to be built, subsidized by the local authority. The new structures will consist of semi-detached and free-standing houses, and four-unit blocks, to be owned by residents who will only be required to pay their monthly service rates to the local authority.



Many residents use the front yards of ground floor units to build makeshift extensions, due to overcrowding

Social Services

Education

The public education sector in Manenberg is made up of 11 primary schools and 3 high schools, all of which were established in the 1970s and 1980's, funded by the state and school fees. While fees range from R100 to R350 per learner per year, families may apply for an exemption from fees based on household income. A privately-sponsored high school, the Leadership College, was opened in 2010 and produced its first group of Grade 12 learners in 2014. Apart from this institution which funds school uniforms, stationery and textbooks from private donors, all public school learners are required to fund their own school uniforms and stationery, while workbooks and textbooks are provided through state funding. Almost all schools in the neighbourhood manage feeding schemes that provide a midday meal for learners.

According to the 2011 Population Census (Statistics South Africa, 2015) only 19% of the total adult population in Manenberg was recorded as having completed high school. An even smaller figure is recorded for my study area, at 8%. The highest drop-out patterns are observed at the end of Grade 10, as observed by a teacher Graeme Daniels at Phoenix Secondary School. The Census figures confirm this pattern, with 12% of the population having completed Grade 10 and 7.5% having completed Grade 11. His observation is that most learners still cannot read fluently by the time they reach Grade 10 and whereas the syllabus focuses on short reading and writing exercises in Grade 8 and Grade 9, subsequent grades are more demanding with essay writing and independent critical thought. Many learners are not able to cope, become despondent, and leave school. Unless a learner is receiving additional support with their studies at home or through after-school tuition programmes, their chances of reaching Grade 12 and passing are very slim. School principals, whom I met at community meetings, confirm that teachers struggle to manage learner numbers of up to 50 in a classroom. Lembrechts (2012: 801) explains this pattern through the case of a high school principal in Manenberg who registers a learner intake of 180 in Grade 8, with only 40 of these learners progressing to Grade 12 and reflecting a 78% drop-out rate.

With regards to further training and higher education, only a minute percentage of the population have completed certificates or diplomas after leaving school at the compulsory level of Grade 9. The figure for this education qualification stands at 0.1%. A slightly higher figure of 0.6% is attached to those who have cumulatively completed

higher education diplomas or degrees after completing high school, whereas 0.05% have completed a postgraduate degree. The total percentage of those who have not experienced any schooling stands at 2% (Statistics South Africa, 2015). While these figures portray a pattern of weak education qualifications, a number of individuals produce outstanding achievements. A recent example is that of Anushqah van der Ventel who won third place in a national essay writing competition as a Grade 12 learner at Manenberg Secondary School in 2015 (Phaliso, 2015: 9). At the end of that year, she achieved six distinctions in her final examinations and received sponsorships to pursue university studies in journalism after her story was published in the local media (Abbas, 2016: January 11).

Local Authority Services

One of the most well-resourced and efficient facilities in the neighbourhood is the Manenberg Library, centrally located on Sabie Road, where I have regularly conducted interviews with both primary and secondary research participants. Apart from well-stocked book shelves, periodicals and newspapers, computer stations with internet are frequented especially by school learners researching their assignments or job seekers submitting their applications and eagerly awaiting responses on their e-mail. A resource mapping document, compiled by Elizabeth Valcheva as an unpublished work in 2015, reports on the after school and extra-curricular programmes that provide a safe space for learners to study or engage in craft workshops, board games, public awareness campaigns, and Spelling Bee competitions. Senior librarian Jurena Moose, whom I often meet, is a charismatic and respected leader in the community who takes the initiative of raising funds from private donations for group excursions to historical landmarks and cultural places of interest in Cape Town. For most children, it is a rare opportunity for them to be outside of Manenberg.

While the library is regarded as a safe space and a reliable resource, police presence in Manenberg is regarded with contested perspectives. The police station, situated on the corner of Duinefontein Road and Klipfontein Road, serves to receive reports of crime and respond to incidents that have become predominantly concerned with gang violence and drug trafficking. Although some residents commend the work of the police service and support the unit through community police forums, a large majority consider their presence with disdain. The Afrikaans word *boere* is colloquially used when talking about police, conjuring images of White Afrikaner police during the apartheid era who would use violent and oppressive force on civilians as a means of

control, especially during times of protest action. Many of the youth speak of being randomly pulled over and searched in public, or even mishandled and taken in for questioning, while those who need to be interrogated are seldom sought out. Owing to this sense of distrust in police authorities, criminal activity is seldom reported. At a community meeting in May 2015, in response to a recent spate of gang shootings, the local station commander addressed the gathering towards the end of the evening's discussion:

I am surprised by his quiet and calm disposition, despite the fact that the police have been so heavily criticized. He speaks about the challenges that police face in the neighbourhood. Among these is the brutal way in which families of arrested gang members attack police and even vandalise police property such as the vehicles, as they demand the release of the arrested gangster. Police are also under serious threat and attacked by residents when they respond to calls. (Field Notes 11 May 2015)

Health facilities in Manenberg are extremely limited, with a community clinic on Manenberg Avenue that serves as a primary health care institution. As such, it has a special focus on HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis related treatment, as well as child health care. Patients who require regular medication and medical examinations make use of the day hospitals in Heideveld or Hanover Park. In July 2014, the GF Jooste Hospital closed down, creating much anger among residents about why an essential health facility could no longer be afforded to them. Situated on Duinefontein Road, close to Nyanga Station, it provided a critical service through the trauma unit. There is no longer any local facility that is able to provide emergency treatment for injuries or illnesses. While the municipality promised a multi-million-rand upgrade at the time of closure, that promise has since been unfulfilled and media reports have suggested that the property will be rebuilt as a police training facility (Isaacs, 2015: July 22).

Regarding infrastructural maintenance of the neighbourhood, the local Human Settlements Office at the intersection of Govan Mbeki Road and Vygekraal Road serves as a report facility for repairs on all rented property. During the period of 2013 to 2015, all the apartment blocks received their first renovation since the 1960's construction. These buildings were until then in an appalling condition with broken windows and door frames, collapsed plumbing structures and cracked walls. While the local authority is not directly involved in the cleaning of public spaces such as roads and parks, the Community Work Programme fulfils this responsibility. The facility is part of a country-wide poverty relief programme that is managed by the national Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. Each local Community Work Programme employs residents for a minimal wage, on a part time basis, to

participate in projects that benefit the neighbourhood (Valcheva, 2015: 8). Youth and elderly residents in orange uniforms are often seen sweeping up pavements or tending to the community gardens that have been established. Despite this service, makeshift refuse dumps are a common sight along the main streets, especially Vygekraal Road, where I have also observed residents picking through the waste.

Arguably one of the most relied on social services in Manenberg is government grants, administered by the South African Social Security Agency. The acronym for this department has become a colloquial reference, where people speak of “waiting for my SASSA” or “getting my papers to apply for a SASSA”. Versfeld’s (2012: 107) research in Manenberg revealed a strong dependency on social grants following the large-scale closing down of clothing factories in 2011, which was the lifeblood of many households where women ensured a regular income. The dependency on social grants is attested by the crowded shopping centre of Vangate Mall, along the M7 highway, at the end of each month. Queues of people snake around the two large supermarkets of Spar and Pick ‘n Pay where grant recipients are able to withdraw their funds from the tills or use their credited SASSA cards to purchase goods. Applicants are required to register in person and complete their forms in the presence of a SASSA official, providing proof of identity through the official green 13-digit bar coded identity book or a birth certificate. Applications take up to 90 days to process and the first payment compensates for the time that an applicant has waited (Kelly, 2014: May 7). Despite these control measures, fraud has become a common occurrence, as in the case of primary research participant Rose. In an unfortunate incident of identity cloning, she is no longer able to receive her child support grant since her account was intercepted. She has struggled to resolve this case, not made any easier by the distant location of SASSA offices in Wynberg or the city centre of Cape Town.

Public Benefit Organisations

Valcheva’s (2015: 23) resource mapping provides a comprehensive account of community development organisations, with particular attention to those that help build resilience among youth against the influence of gangs. In addition to the 18 organisations mentioned in the document, a number of individuals have pioneered their own campaigns or initiatives that range from neighbourhood feeding schemes to awareness programmes and community activism. One of my first impressions of public benefit organisations in Manenberg, as I began meeting community leaders, was that they operate very independently of each other despite sharing common visions and

objectives. Many leaders would admit that this is a deliberate stance largely due to the competition for funding from government and private grant agencies.

In building a contextual appreciation of the structures that impact on the life histories of primary research participants, I have selected those organisations that feature in their biographic stories. Among them is the Manenberg People's Centre, centrally located a block away from the library, along Thames Avenue. The centre houses various programmes that range from parenting support workshops, life skills, and lay counselling, to awareness campaigns. The large hall facilitates holiday programmes, which the majority of participants have spoken of attending. The centre manages a daily feeding scheme, a bread making workshop, and a hair salon training centre. It is also the premises from which Fusion Manenberg hires an office space. While maintaining a Christian ethos, Fusion has an inclusive approach to youth of all faiths in Manenberg with a particular focus on rehabilitation from drug and alcohol addiction. Founder and co-director, Jonathan Jansen, has been a reliable secondary research participant who holds incisive views over the social challenges that he has grown up with himself. Most of the organisation's work is centred in the Transformational Community House, a rehabilitation facility that is located close to Manenberg Secondary School.

Another organisation with strong religious affiliations, but of service to the entire community, is the Holy Family Child and Youth Development Centre on the premises of the Catholic Church next to the soccer field on Manenberg Avenue. It features a privately sponsored Early Childhood Development Centre and after-care programme for primary school learners. Apart from the homework tutoring initiative, participants are offered drama and music classes, a facility at which primary research participant Nicholas tutors guitar lessons on weekday afternoons. I occasionally met him there following his lessons, to conduct an interview, at which time I would observe the enthusiastic crowd of children playing chess, reading in groups, huddled over books and crayons, or playfully chasing each other around the church property. The Centre provides a meal for each of the participants everyday, prepared by a group of volunteers from the neighbourhood.

A similar approach has been adopted by six schools in Manenberg through the Massive Opportunity Development (MOD) Centres, also an after school programme that offers sport and recreational activities, as well as homework assistance. The programme is promoted by the Western Cape Department of Cultural Affairs and

Sport, employing experienced individuals from the neighbourhood to coach various codes of sport and supervise study sessions. Each participant is provided with a meal and has full access to school facilities, engaging in the daily weekday routine until 16:00. Activities extend throughout the school holidays, incorporating volunteers from the neighbourhood to facilitate, as in the case of Leon who occasionally assisted in facilitating leadership workshops.

Interest in sports, most especially soccer, holds the imagination of many people in Manenberg who adorn their living rooms with paraphernalia of local and European soccer teams. The Local Football Association, or LFA, makes daily use of the large expanse of field along Thames Avenue and Vygekraal Road. It serves as an umbrella organization under which the fourteen teams in Manenberg compete against each other in league matches. Each team consists of a junior and senior cohort of players and the field is very seldom an empty space, given the daily practice routines that take place. Coaches and team managers are themselves veterans from the neighbourhood who serve mentoring roles to players. Primary research participants Carl and Calvin are ardent members of the Association and despite the fact that gang leaders are a strong presence on the governance of the Association, both participants speak of the space as being free from intimidation or coercion to be affiliated with a gang.



A neighbourhood team at practice on the soccer field during a weekday afternoon

One of the first organisations I visited in Manenberg was the Community Work Programme (CWP), given its relevance to my research focus on youth employability. As already outlined, it creates part-time work opportunities for residents through projects that benefit the community. I subsequently grew to understand that each of the primary research participants who are currently unemployed have worked through the CWP in various sectors, at some stage of their job seeking experience. They have spoken of the inadequate and irregular remuneration they receive for a day's work, leading to their despondent stance towards the programme. Glenda Gain, who manages the initiative, explains that youth are meant to use the opportunity to gain work experience, compile their Curriculum Vitae document, and acquire Identity Documents and bank accounts with the help of the facility so that their chances of permanent employment in the wider job sector may improve. This rationale is however contrasted by the sense of immediacy with which youth seek to provide for daily needs such as buying food, paying for electricity, or taking care of their children, as pointed out in the field notes extract that prefaced this chapter. Primary research participant Natheem is also insistent:

“I worked at CWP by cleaning the streets and that but I dropped out because there's so many problems...There's always a problem. If your money is not short then there's another problem...you have to wait and wait. I can't work at a place where there's no motivation or inspiration for me...” (Interview Transcript NAT1 Page 1)

Religious affiliation in Manenberg is a strongly shared phenomenon between the two dominant faiths of Christianity and Islam. The split is approximately 50%, with cohesive relationships maintained. There are four mosques in Manenberg, and each of the schools is used for Madrassa classes among children and youth. Churches are far more ubiquitous with approximately twenty church buildings for large congregations but smaller congregations for as many as 300 churches meet in other spaces. Community leaders and residents speak of churches in backyards, school classrooms and even open spaces such as parks. Splinter groups constantly break off and reconfigure as disagreements emerge among pastors, giving rise to new churches and ardent followers. Across all faiths in Manenberg, religious observance is a pervasive symbol. Friday afternoons and Sunday mornings are especially marked with a solemn atmosphere in the neighbourhood as devotees dressed in prayer robes with fezes and formal attire respectively, make their way to places of worship.



*A youth outside the mosque near Storms River Way, as the mosque dome glistens in the afternoon sun.
The Anglican church, at the intersection of Manenberg Avenue and Thames Avenue.*

Economic Considerations

Formal and Legal Economy

Economic strain in Manenberg is evident from the following bar graph, Figure 4, that demonstrates a high unemployment rate at 47% of the total workforce. This figure is calculated by using the number of unemployed people, recorded by Statistics South Africa 2015 as unemployed and discouraged work seekers. Those represented by the Not Applicable category are made up of individuals outside the working age range of 15 to 64. The Census statistics makes allowance for children who might be receiving an income but this rate is recorded at zero for Manenberg. Those recorded as employed represent individuals who were receiving an income at the time of the census count and would therefore include the non-permanent workforce, or casual and contract workers. Similarly, the category of unemployed would count those who were not receiving an income at this time but who were in the process of looking for work. Discouraged work-seekers, however, refer to those who were not actively seeking employment. Those recorded as not economically active would include full-time students, homemakers, and those who have taken an early retirement or who are not able to work due to a disability (Politicsweb 12th March 2016).

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Employed | 10 944 (53% of workforce) |
| Unemployed | 7 536 (37% of workforce) |
| Discouraged Work Seeker | 2 025 (10% of workforce) |
| Other Not Economically Active | 14 115 (27% of population) |
| Not Applicable (Not of working age) | 18 255 (35% of population) |
| Total Workforce | 20 505 (39% of population) |

Figure 4: Employment status in Manenberg, 2011 (Source: Population Census)

The majority of the workforce in Manenberg is constituted by those who are employed in factories, particularly the textile and clothing industry concentrated in Woodstock, Observatory and Mowbray. The male workforce is still dominated by the construction industry, with those who work as carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, or electricians, plying their trade through building contractors that either live in the neighbourhood or surrounding areas such as Hanover Park and Heideveld. As gleaned from discussions with research participants and community leaders, an admired group of workers are

those employed by the local authority largely as clerks or maintenance staff. This is viewed as a secure and assured income stream with benefits such as a pension fund and medical aid, apart from permanent work status. Practitioners are predominantly made up of teachers and nurses, a few lawyers, and one medical doctor who has also served as a fieldwork reference person for this study.

Community leaders such as Jonathan Jansen and Glenda Gain have become concerned about a recent trend among employment agencies to source personnel for large retail stores around Cape Town. The unfair labour practices of these employment agencies is such that retail stores set aside an amount of about ZAR180 per worker per day while agencies hold on to 40% of this fee for their service. They in turn employ recruiters from neighbourhoods such as Manenberg who are paid a further 20% of the fee for each worker that is sourced. Another 10% is subtracted for work uniforms and for transport costs, to make certain that workers are able to access places of work for both day and night shifts, leaving the individual wage at merely ZAR52 per day. Given that no contracts are signed, there is no formal affiliation between the retail stores and workers, leaving them vulnerable to being laid off without notice as the need for employment during peak and low retail seasons fluctuates.

Informal and Legal Economy

The high unemployment rate in Manenberg is greatly influenced by the fact that only a small percentage of residents hold a matric certificate. As Valcheva (2015: 44) aptly points out, the majority of unemployed youth who attend job application workshops hosted by public benefit organisations cannot benefit from the services offered such as Curriculum Vitae preparation, current vacancy updates, and liaison with employers. Without the basic education requirement of a matric certificate to enter the job market, even employers offering low-skilled jobs will not consider permanent recruitment under such circumstances. These sentiments are confirmed by research participants such as Rose who acquired administration skills from the volunteer work she performed at Manenberg People's Centre. Several application attempts at more formal work experience have been in vain, leaving her with the option of engaging in domestic work around the neighbourhood. She also uses her skill of hairdressing to pocket some money that helps buy food for herself and her four-year-old son. This daily hustling for odd jobs is erratic and unreliable, dependent on the need and ability of those seeking assistance to remunerate her services. She often settles for the 'favour' being returned in kind through a meal, diapers or second-hand clothes for her son.

Newman and De Lannoy (2014: 102) found similar patterns while constructing case studies of youth in Manenberg. Young men hanging around community centres, hustling for a job, is quite a common occurrence. These jobs include painting, sweeping courtyards, and attending to gardens, sometimes only receiving a meal in return. Accordingly, it helps give a sense of structure and determination to youth who would otherwise have nothing to do. Many of the participants for my research have spoken of performing odd jobs that help provide sustenance and a sense of being occupied purposefully. Zaira, who dropped out of high school in Grade 9, accompanies children who live in her apartment block to school and then fetches them in the afternoon. She is given a fee of ZAR50 for the week, which she gives to her mother to buy groceries for the family. Natheem and a group of his friends wash windows and carpets. They perform shopping errands for house-bound residents, and use their combined skills to do household repairs and fix appliances. I have also often been approached to have my car washed outside the library, while I conducted interviews or visited community leaders. For Natheem, it conveys an almost desperate sense of needing to provide for each day, of having to consider how the next meal will be acquired, how units can be purchased to feed the electricity meter, how fundamental needs such as cooking and cleaning can be managed:

“The most I get is maybe ZAR50. Maybe I am washing all the windows, kitchen, room, sitting room and maybe make two carpets or so clean or I also do upholstery like chairs are broken, then I get new material and then I fill that pieces with my own imagination...I do that because...I won't give up, Merlin, because if I'm gonna give up then there is nothing.” (Interview Transcript NAT2 Page 2)

Small businesses such as fruit and vegetable vendors, carpenters, hairdressers, and motor vehicle repair shops are set up along the main roads such as Manenberg Avenue and Thames Avenue. The large majority of these businesses operate as informal and unregistered services to the public, offering residents an opportunity to access these services at a fraction of the cost as compared to similar services in the Central Business District of Cape Town. Operating from makeshift extensions to their housing structure, business owners employ youth on an irregular basis to assist on various levels like cleaning, or apprenticeships. The virtual absence of local authority figures in the neighbourhood works to the advantage of these operations since they are not regulated. They are, however, subject to 'protection taxes' from gangs controlling the territory such that they are not robbed from profits and material goods by gang members themselves (Lembrechts, 2012: 795).



Some of the small businesses located along the main roads of Manenberg

Criminal Economy and Territorial Gangs

Any discussion about Manenberg is bound to begin or end with an account of street gangs and the influence they hold over the neighbourhood. I have chosen the latter option in order to create a picture of the structural conditions that allow gangs to flourish in ghetto neighbourhoods such as Manenberg. It is also to advance the argument that gangs are not the root cause of youth unemployment but one of several reasons why young men especially will join a gang rather than find formal employment. Valcheva (2015: 21) makes a compelling point in this regard, based on the social audit of community based organisations engaged in youth development:

“Contrary to popular belief, the strongest pull to gangs in disadvantaged communities like Manenberg is not youth boredom or the income generating potential of gang membership, but rather their ability to act as surrogate families giving youth a sense of belonging and self-worth, as well as the opportunity to gain status in the community and contribute to a group that values their sacrifice...in Manenberg and the rest of the Cape Flats where youth are failed by the institutions responsible for developing their potential, these natural resilience factors and caregiving roles are hijacked by gangs”



A mural by Ralph Ziman, next to the library at the intersection between Sabie Road and Manenberg Avenue. It reads, in Afrikaans, “Genoeg is genoeg” (Enough is enough) and “I want to play free”.

In a community where socializing agencies like family units and schools struggle to hold together as support structures, longstanding gangs with visible signs of power and prestige are both admired and abhorred. Gangsters are not the accepted norm in Manenberg but they are respected out of fear for the influence they hold. In a study that traced the power dynamics between organized crime and the community, Lembrechts (2012: 793) found Manenberg to be an example of how residents are constrained to endure the presence of gangs. The 'Robin Hood' phenomenon, of gang leaders paying rent and electricity for residents within their territory, is a well-known occurrence in the neighbourhood. In exchange for storing weapons and drugs on behalf of gang leaders, some residents are also rewarded with food, clothing, and drugs. Even the minibus taxi industry and taxi routes are monopolized as a means to launder money that is obtained through the illegal industries of drugs and prostitution.

At every community meeting I attended, the ardent plea is made to stop supporting gangsters and to raise the alarm on illegal activity. This plea is heard and it is understood but never acted upon. When one is faced with the desperation of needing to provide a meal for a family, when police are not trusted or relied upon for protection, and the albeit pseudo-comforts of a cheap drug are within easy reach, there is not much motivation to do otherwise than accept what the gangs of Manenberg have to offer. Be that as it may, gangsterism is never an acceptable option even for those who take this route. Joyce Stollies is an iconic figure in Manenberg who bravely intervenes among rival gangs during times of unrest in the neighbourhood. She maintains a firm but warm-hearted relationship with gangsters who often confide in her:

“There’s something good in them. There is...you know you mustn’t think you just see the book, the cover is like this but you didn’t see inside. They don’t want this life. Some want to go back to school. HLs [Hard Livings], Americans, Street Boys, they come here. Then you hear how they cry. Big men speak out. When they come here they cry. They speak out to me. They don’t want this life. But what can I do? I am a poor woman. I got nothing. I am a pensioner. I can do nothing. I can just talk with him and take him, give him some plate of food or so.” (Interview Transcript JOY1 Page 8)

While there is no consensus on the number of gangs operating in Manenberg or the exact demarcation of their territory, most of their activity is concentrated in the space selected as my study area. As a densely-populated grid of small alleys and streets that end in cul-de-sacs, covert activity is easily proliferated. The lack of private ownership among these apartment blocks, run-down and neglected by the local authority, also creates a void that allows powerful leaders to hold sway through a criminal economy.

It is what Lembrechts (2012: 807) considers the “institutional void” that allows gangs to pursue informal and illegal means towards economic gain.

Summation

Tracing the history, geography, and economics of Manenberg gives one a sense that this is a neighbourhood of contested stories. It is embedded in struggles against forced removals, structurally isolated from opportunities that hold the elusive promise of development, and strung between the overt wealth of territorial gangsterism that appears to disparage licit initiatives. In this chapter I have discussed the social engineering of a neighbourhood that still confines its residents within a limited selection of choices that they are able to navigate. The social pathologies of poverty, high unemployment, poor education, and criminal gang activity are prevalent throughout Manenberg but these challenges are most concentrated in the area selected for this study. While it is indeed difficult to ‘plan for anything’ under such circumstances, there are still examples of individuals who manage to ‘make it’ in Manenberg: those who successfully complete high school and access further study or employment.

The contextual co-ordinates set by this chapter will later allow us to consider the life story accounts of youth in terms of how they have navigated these structures to produce diverse outcomes. The case studies selected for this research project are intended to demonstrate the way in which youth have responded to the same structural conditions and how they formed their values and eventual decisions around employment. Given that the process of meaning making involves a consideration of various role players and contesting circumstances, our appreciation of Manenberg’s structural conditions may illumine the individual spaces in which these life experiences are located.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Looking for Luke is usually an unpredictable venture. On this particular morning I begin where he lives, at a makeshift wooden structure in the backyard of an apartment near Manenberg Secondary School. It is a single room dwelling shared among his parents, two brothers and a sister. Luke's father is in the yard, throwing out a basin of soapy water. He assumes that Luke may be at his grandmother's apartment in the next block and I wait at the gate while he goes to look for him. There are a few groups of youth along the street, some playing ball, others in a circle throwing dice, and a few sitting on a concrete bench sharing a bottle of beer. The washing lines are already quite full of clothing strung between the two sides of the block.

Luke was with his grandmother yesterday evening but left early this morning. His father does not know where he has gone to but suggests that I check with his friend who lives close to the library. He knows that they have both been working on their CVs over the past few days. I wonder what contact number Luke has used on this CV since he does not own a mobile phone and none of his family does as well. Luke's father once explained that he has given up using mobile phones since he has been robbed of every phone he had. They are also not able to set up a landline since their home is not a formally registered dwelling.

After unsuccessful attempts to find Luke at his friend's apartment, neither at the library, nor with one of the NGO leaders who often looks out for him, I use the time to visit another research participant who lives in that part of the neighbourhood. Natheem is washing his clothes in a basin of water on the steps. I sit next to him and we chat largely about his sister's wedding which he attended the week before. After he hangs up his washing I say my goodbyes and expect to head home when I notice Luke approaching my car that is parked outside the library. It is by chance that he sees my car there on his way to get a taxi into town. Luke has heard from his cousin that a new fast food outlet is hiring staff and he is going to submit his CV. He washed windows at the school near his home during the week to earn some money to afford his trip into town. He explains that he has used the mobile phone contact number of his friend's father, who has agreed to relay the message to him should his CV be selected. We arrange to meet tomorrow afternoon for our next interview.

In the week that follows I attend a community meeting at the church on The Downs Road. It is late afternoon and I drive along the outskirts of Manenberg as a safety measure, so that I am not associated with a regular route that may make me an easy target for a hi-jacking. I have become wary of the dangers of being held up or robbed, since interviewing a research informant who spoke about his past association with a gang and their tendency to target people by their regular rhythms. The meeting takes place in semi-darkness, lit by a row of candles on the podium, since there is an unexpected power outage in the neighbourhood. As the discussion gains momentum, tensions and tempers flare with residents voicing grievances over issues such as overcrowded classrooms and poor physical maintenance at schools. The critical issue of housing is also raised, where needy families are evicted while vacant property is occupied by gangs engaged in drug smuggling. Domestic violence is flagged as a crisis especially because victims are constantly being asked by police to drop the case and perpetrators are seldom convicted.

As the discussion intensifies I think back over my struggle to find Luke three days ago, realizing how his experience of uncertainty seems to prefigure the adversity that youth navigate in their endeavour to make a living.

(Field Notes 16 April 2016, 19 April 2016)

Introduction

Ghetto neighbourhoods such as Manenberg, characterized by widespread poverty and unemployment, also bear the struggles of having to contend with crime and insecurity. Daily activities such as going to school or work are seldom mundane since the uncertainty of transport, gang violence, or even the availability of running water and electricity can never be taken for granted. Within the context of a historically segregated space, material structures of unemployment and cultural norms hold an influence over the way that youth build their own perspectives around education and employment. These perspective then inform their actions or personal agency as they deliberate possibilities that produce different outcomes. While many youth struggle to succeed and are chronically unemployed, some are able to pursue goals of higher education and career development. This thesis sets out to understand the way in which youth engage with mechanisms such as parenting and family, social networks, and cultural capital in navigating education and employment paths. Even though social development policies may open up opportunities for youth in ghetto neighbourhoods to pursue education and employment training opportunities, for example, these structures remain vacant unless youth receive constant, consistent, and close support to strengthen their personal agency towards overcoming negative social influences. Within an environment that faces constant adversity through poverty, poor amenities, and the risk of crime and violence, we come to see the immense effort that must be borne for youth to succeed against the constraints that limit their opportunities.

This chapter traces the literature that accounts for youth experiences of education and employment in ghetto neighbourhoods, highlighting the theoretical debate around structure and agency. I begin with a contextual outline of ghetto neighbourhoods, largely understood from a structuralist perspective, and then proceed to examine a critique of the deterministic approach that this argument presents since it overlooks the role of personal agency and does not account for the possibility of different outcomes within the same social structure. I engage with this debate from my concern around why some youth overcome the constraints of limited opportunities while others reproduce them. The critical realist perspective offers a helpful understanding of social structures and personal agency as both possessing their own powers of enablement and constraint (Archer, 2003: 5). Human agency is then influenced by both materially objective and culturally subjective structures (Porpora, 2015: 100) such that both cultural values and material conditions may be either reproduced or transformed in pursuing education and employment aspirations. Following a discussion on the critical

realist approach to the structure and agency debate, I outline theories around which my findings will later consider how youth interact with social structures through the mechanisms of parental and family intervention, social networks, and cultural capital.

Tracing Unemployment in Ghetto Neighbourhoods

Urban Economic Transformation and the Growth of Unemployment

A significant body of work has considered the impact of a deindustrialized job market on the opportunities for residents of ghetto neighbourhoods to find work. The research of William J. Wilson (1996: 29) identifies the most severe growth in unemployment among low-skilled workers, largely due to a shrinking of the mass production system. Increases in jobs are recognised for computer operators, designers, and engineers engaging in specialised work that involves the use of digital tools, but manual assembly work jobs have decreased. The decentralisation of employment to the suburbs, and away from the inner city where many ghetto neighbourhoods are located, has exacerbated unemployment. Expensive travel to the suburbs means that residents spend significant amounts of time and money on getting to and from work, such that it is not worth the meagre income they earn. This decentralisation also discourages people from going to look for work since low-skilled jobs are seldom advertised in newspapers. These findings concur with Kasarda's (1983: 22) view that the era of industrialisation ensured an abundance of low-skilled manual factory jobs and it provided an opportunity for low-skilled workers to participate in the mainstream economy. Such conditions changed dramatically as advances in production processes brought about the need for a more highly skilled labour force. Most jobs have been lost in industries that require lower education qualifications while more job opportunities have become available in industries that require higher levels of education. Wilson (2012: 39) goes on to add that these changes have seen a transfer in job opportunities from "goods-producing industries to service-producing industries" and have resulted in fewer low-skilled jobs being available. Unemployment among low-skilled workers has therefore increased. The most vulnerable sector of the population in this regard has been urban inner-city minorities in ghetto neighbourhoods.

Within a South African context, scholars advance the idea of increasing poverty and inequality as a national trend. In describing post-apartheid income inequality, Leibbrandt *et al.* (2012: 33) highlight the shift in demand for labour as favouring those who have completed secondary school and tertiary education. While there have been

more Black children and youth accessing school education, there is still no significant increase in the numbers of such previously disadvantaged youth who complete secondary school and no increase of those who hold tertiary qualifications. Individuals without access to well-resourced schools therefore struggle to compete for jobs. Crankshaw (2012: 839) gives further emphasis to the changes in demand for labour through deindustrialisation which has shifted economic focus away from the manufacturing industry towards employment in industries such as tourism, information technology, film, and finance. Jobs that do not require a high school certificate, namely semi-skilled manual jobs, even unskilled manual jobs, have grown slower than jobs that require a high school certificate or even a tertiary education qualification. Borel-Saladin and Crankshaw (2009: 653) highlight job trends in Cape Town that show a decline in manual work employment for the manufacturing industry, while increases are noted for managerial, technical, and professional jobs as well as middle-skilled clerical, retail and sales jobs.

Crankshaw and Borel-Saladin (2014: 1856) classify jobs according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) in three categories, namely high, middle and low-income occupational groups. The high-skilled and high-income worker category includes legislators, senior officials, managers, professionals, associate professionals, and technicians. Clerks, service workers, shop and market sales workers are grouped as semi-skilled and middle-income non-manual workers, while craft and trade workers, or artisans, machine operators and assemblers are considered as semi-skilled and middle-income manual workers. Elementary workers are considered to be unskilled, low-skilled, and low-income workers. Given that service sector employment has increased and the manufacturing sector decreased, these findings demonstrate that the occupational structure within both these sectors has also changed such that there is a greater demand for high-skilled workers than for semi-skilled and low-skilled workers, resulting in a professionalization rather than polarisation of the work force. We therefore understand professionalization of the workforce as the notion that jobs requiring higher skilled workers have grown in greater absolute numbers than jobs requiring semi- to low- or unskilled workers.

In Wilson's (1996: 40) account of decentralised work from the city centres, we find that ghetto neighbourhoods were located close to the city whereas in the South African context and especially in Cape Town, ghettos were established as outlying areas of the urban metropolis. City centres are well served by public transport but the suburbs are inaccessible to those without private transport. This is the context of decentralised

work nodes since most central city businesses moved to the more affluent northern and southern suburbs between 1995 and 2000. Those that remained in the city have centred on computer industries, small-scale design and manufacture, the film industry, fashion, and technology intensive industries (Pirie, 2007: 148). Sinclair-Smith and Turok (2012: 402) add that large-scale manufacturing industries moved to the suburbs for more affordable land and better access to freeways for transporting goods. There has however been a stark absence of such economic growth in the South East District where the apartheid-established ghettos such as Manenberg are located. This selective decentralisation has therefore resulted in higher levels of social inequality due to the physical distance between jobs and ghetto neighbourhoods. Rospabe and Selod (2006: 263) add that the costs of commuting are disproportionately high to the low wages offered and residents lack information about the availability of jobs the further away they are from these economic centres.

In addressing the concept of labour market spatial mismatch, Crankshaw (2014: 508) uses a qualitative causal-explanatory method to probe some of the causal properties that manifest in the experience of workers from ghetto neighbourhoods looking for jobs. Workers who live far from where most job opportunities are located, and who also live in neighbourhoods where unemployment is rife, are cut off from knowledge about the availability of work. To this extent, social networks are important considerations within the context of large physical distances between neighbourhood and work. Seeing that most managers use the referral hiring method of recruitment for low-skilled workers, because it is cheaper and more trustworthy workers are found, those who maintain social networks with individuals in the workplace are better connected to job opportunities. Given that this phenomenon applies to those who maintain contact with previous employers and others who in turn are socially connected to these individuals, inclusion in the job network can be possible even for those who live in outlying ghettos. Since the purpose of this section was to discuss why employment in ghetto neighbourhoods has grown, I have merely alluded to social networks in the context of geographical isolation from economic hubs but will expand on its causal powers and liabilities later in on this chapter.

Sustained Relegation

Researchers such as Wacquant (2016: 1079) consider ghettos as places that were set up in marginal locations for the working class. As such they have been characterised by social isolation and closure from major economic growth points. Government

policies, neglecting the development needs of these ghettos, are mainly responsible for the poor level of housing, education, and welfare that these neighbourhoods have endured, resulting in higher levels of poverty. In using the concept of “advanced marginality” Wacquant (1996: 123) conveys the idea that social isolation, poverty, and unemployment in ghetto neighbourhoods, which first emerged at the start of the industrialisation era, are not showing any signs of relief but are instead intensifying or advancing as social inequality increases. Ghettos are considered to be places of relegation in the sense that structural conditions such as decreased state welfare, and limited resources to improve the poor conditions of schools, have resulted in the worsening of social adversities. Apart from poor institutional policies, macroeconomic changes have also sustained relegation as the industrialisation or post-Fordist era saw a breakdown of the wage labour system that previously helped to support low-skilled work in ghetto neighbourhoods. With fewer of these jobs being permanent but rather on a part time, short term, contract, or subcontracting basis, insecure employment conditions have exacerbated poverty.

Marcuse and van Kempen (2000: 19) identify that ghettos have always been socially marginalised in cities but this isolation is intensifying through economic changes that are less focused on manufacturing and more concentrated around services. As more tasks in the workplace become mechanised, automated, and computerised, manual work declines and unskilled workers have fewer employment opportunities. This was not the case in the past when ghetto neighbourhoods, containing a large workforce of unskilled or semi-skilled workers, were characterised by poor living conditions but residents were still able to participate in the major economic activity of manufacturing and production. Ghettos are now seen to be disconnected from the social and economic life of the rest of the city. It is organised and structured according to its own norms, including its own economy that is largely informal with only a minority able to participate in the main activities of economic life but the majority are excluded. Marcuse (1997: 316) explains that ghettos have transformed from places of racial segregation, where employed residents were able to contribute to the mainstream economy of the Fordist era. They have now become places of economic and social exclusion where residents, who are largely low-skilled workers, cannot find jobs in an economy that favours middle-skilled and high-skilled work. Wilson (2012: 137) adds that with the availability of low-skilled work decreasing in the city, towards the suburban areas, the movement of middle-income ghetto residents closer to these work nodes resulted in the decline of social institutions such as schools, churches, and recreational facilities, accompanied by a decline in social organisation.

The concept of a closed opportunity structure may be attributed to Max Weber's theory of the positively privileged and negatively privileged. The former consists of those who have monopolized property, wealth and costly educational opportunities while the latter are excluded from such privileges largely due to their class situation of having limited skills, renting property and relying on irregular employment. Neuwirth (1969: 150) explains that the process which aims at such monopolization is referred to as "community closure", which Weber later develops as ideas of open and closed social relationships. While open relationships do not deny access to anyone who wishes and is able to participate, closed relationships impose political and economic conditions that deny participation to anyone who does not meet these criteria.

Salo (2003: 349) describes ghettos in Cape Town as racially segregated communities, far removed from the hubs of economic development. These neighbourhoods conferred physical, spatial and socio-economic meaning of not having open access to opportunities since residents were restricted from accessing jobs, schools and residential areas of more affluent race groups. Seekings (2011: 533) adds that apartheid legislation set up firm boundaries between segregated neighbourhoods and even though historically imposed legislation may be lifted, such ghetto communities continue to exist as socially and spatially marginal neighbourhoods.

The importance of this literature is that it helps identify some of the contextual circumstances that youth cope with while in the process of navigating pathways to employment. Wilson (1996: 57) identifies one of the characteristic features of ghetto neighbourhoods as the decreased quality of social institutions such as schools and the frustration of teachers to teach under circumstances of poor organisation, in turn leading to large numbers of youth becoming disillusioned and dropping out of school. Bray *et al.* (2010: 23) point out that in a South African context the lingering legacy of apartheid is such that youth who grow up in segregated Black and Coloured neighbourhoods attend schools that are still poorly resourced. Their compromised learning experiences therefore constrain their ability to acquire advanced skills, leaving them jobless in an economy that favours high-skilled workers. Sayed and Motala (2012: 112) add that the highest rates of school grade repetition and dropouts are among youth who are confined to poor quality schools in marginalised neighbourhoods. In many of these schools it is found that poor resources result in teachers spending more time on administrative tasks and less time teaching,

sometimes as little as 46% of a 35-hour week, leading to learner outcomes that are far below the national standard.

Newman and De Lannoy (2014: 38) concur that the apartheid legacy still continues since the material structures of segregation and deprivation continue to limit the education and employment opportunities for youth in neighbourhoods such as Manenberg. Glaser (2010: 304-305) argues that inequality in post-apartheid South Africa goes beyond the category of race. Whereas the era prior to 1994 showed a strong correlation between race, income, and occupational class, race is now no longer a “differentiator” in terms of employment opportunities but the stratification between rich and poor persists and continues to widen.

The Interaction between Structure and Agency

As reflected in the literature, unemployment in ghetto neighbourhoods may largely be attributed to structural circumstances that intensify exclusion from employment opportunities, but this perspective overshadows the role of personal agency in making sense of such structures and pursuing a particular course of action. Carter and New (2004: 3) outline four ways in which the relationship between structure and agency has been interpreted. Firstly, people’s behaviour is determined by the social structures they encounter. This is the stance adopted by writers such as William J. Wilson, as already discussed, where he is criticized by cultural sociologists such as Alford Young (2003: 1074) for not acknowledging the place of motivations and value orientations among his participants. Secondly, the voluntarist position holds that social structures are determined by people’s thoughts and ideologies. The consideration of social structures therefore takes on a diminished view against the role of agency and seems to suggest that people are the determinants of their own structural circumstances. Thirdly, the structuration view holds that social structures are only actuated when people reproduce them. Structure is therefore dependent on personal agency and only until such time as it manifests through the thoughtful actions of people can it possess a virtual existence. Finally, the realist view holds that structure and agency exist independently from each other. In and of themselves, they possess their own properties and powers. Among the properties of structure is that they exist as circumstances into which people are born. They also have powers such as those of enablement and constraint. At the same time people are, by their nature, endowed with powers to reflect on their structural circumstance and change or reinforce it. The realist stance recognizes the *sui generis* properties and powers that are inherent within

structure and agency (Carter & New, 2004: 4). Structure is therefore not the antithesis of agency since the existence of social structure does not entail the rejection of the existence of human agency. Both structure and agency exist in an interdependent relationship.

Critical Realism on Structure, Culture, and Agency

By exploring diverse education and employment outcomes, the aim of my study is to demonstrate how youth who grow up within the same structural circumstances of poverty and marginality navigate these conditions differently. In this regard Porpora (2015: 100) advances the critical realist theory of material social structure as the underlying pattern of relations that connect individuals among themselves within a society. These are the conditions that connect them to social phenomena such as employment or education. We may use the example of what we have already discussed about the occupational structure of employment in a post-industrialist era favouring middle-skilled and highly-skilled workers due to the increased digitisation and computerisation of work that was previously occupied by low-skilled manual workers. As such, structures are material in the sense that they are not dependent on individuals having concepts of them in order to exist.

I consider structure both on the level of material circumstances as well as on the level of culture since, as Porpora (2015: 118) reminds us, both aspects of structure are important in our consideration of the manner by which personal agency reproduces or transforms structural conditions. Human action arises, at least partly, from circumstances that are both material and cultural since structure and agency together play a role in producing action. Individuals exercise their personal agency through their cultural environment to either reproduce or transform the structures they find themselves in. Porpora uses Margaret Archer's theory of "morphogenesis and morphostasis" to highlight the role of personal agency in responding to structures to either bring about "stasis" or reproduction as well as "genesis" or change. This is because in the personal agency, or action, that we engage in we bring about a transformation or a reproduction of both the material and cultural structures that we find ourselves in. While material conditions are characteristically objective, culture is subjective in the sense that they pertain to the values and beliefs that individuals share on an ideological plane. Porpora (2015: 103) goes on to explain the critical realist view of cultural rules being constitutive, rather than regulative. While "regulative rules"

inform us of what is prescriptive about behaviour, “constitutive rules” reveal what social meaning behaviour comes to signify. Within this understanding of culture, certain behaviours are promoted by being rewarded and other behaviours are discouraged through punitive action.

Elder-Vass (2010: 123) helps us to understand cultural norms, through the concept of “norm circles”. It is based on a shared collective intention, by those who belong to or are included in the norm circle, to support the belief and practices around a particular phenomenon. Elder-Vass (2012: 87) emphasises that the central idea of norm circles is that it is a shared commitment among individuals to uphold the norm. It is through constant exposure to actions endorsing a particular norm that the collective entity of the norm circle demonstrates a causative influence on the individual’s behaviour. The diversity of most societies is such that individuals are influenced by “competing norm circles” (Elder-Vass, 2012: 87), thereby allowing for a transformation of cultural norms and not merely a reproduction of normative circumstances.

In appreciating that structure and agency both possess independent powers of constraint or enablement, Archer (2003: 5) emphasizes the relationship that both these entities need to engage in so that structure may be said to deter or assist in achieving a specific “agential enterprise”. This refers to the achievement of a certain outcome such as employment or unemployment. Within such a relationship, structure may only exercise constraining or enabling powers under three conditions. Firstly, there must be a clear and recognizable “agential enterprise” or effort on the part of an agent to achieve a certain outcome. In this regard we may consider how youth relate with family structures while mapping out their path to employment. Within such a relationship I would probe what elements of family relationships impacted on the decisions around employment and how parental support, for instance, varied among participants to produce different outcomes. Secondly I would have to identify enablement or constraint by explaining how the relationship is respectively congruent or incongruent. This involves a demonstration of how structure holds a negative or positive influence over the achievement of a goal, for instance the level of parental involvement in a child’s school career towards the achievement of a school completion certificate. Thirdly there needs to be a response from the agent towards the structural influences, in such a manner that the response is an intentional deliberation and not merely a passive reaction that is determined by the social structure. I would therefore need to trace how participants engaged in an internal dialogue over a period of time, building a stance with structural influences in the achievement or non-achievement of the

“agential enterprise”. As Sayer (1992: 105) maintains, as agents, we possess causal powers and liabilities which determine what a person can do and indeed will do in any given structural situation.

Causal Powers and Liabilities

Considering my research focus on the different employment outcomes of youth in ghetto neighbourhoods, the critical realist stance offers an appropriate framework to probe the powers and liabilities of social structures and personal agency. Cruickshank (2003: 96) highlights the value of critical realism for examining the ontological object of a study. As such, it is not only constituted by what we can observe from our experience of it but also by the underlying dynamics that produce observable events. Ekström (2010: 83) explains that causal-explanatory social science depends on an exploration of the conditions that bring people into relationships with one another, and the subsequent influence they hold over each other. To this extent, Sayer (1992: 105) describes the causal powers or liabilities of social relations. Even though people may have the causal powers of being able to work, such as good health and the ability to reason, there are also causal liabilities such as a negative influence of group pressure. These powers are not only inherent in the individual but also in the social relations that they build. We may therefore say that the causal power of a student is not based entirely on the person’s characteristics as an individual but stem from their interdependent relations with teachers, other students and school administration.

In determining how individuals make sense of their circumstances and how they respond to structural conditions to produce different outcomes, Sayer (1992: 89) makes the distinction between necessary and contingent relations. Contingent relations are those in which we can establish that either object in a social relation is able to exist independently of the other, while necessary relations hold an interdependent existence between objects. The relation of a student and teacher may be considered a necessary relation since the one role cannot be defined as such without the other. This is not merely tautological since both student and teacher are involved in a social structure that includes obligations and rights. Research into an outcome that depends on this relation will involve an abstraction that reveals these obligations and rights. If an abstraction reveals that these social rules do not exist, the relation will be regarded as contingent. Although both necessary and contingent relations have causal effects, it is only necessary relations that can help us understand an outcome associated with the student to teacher relation. Contingent relations would

require a different abstraction in order to understand the causal effects of that relation. The importance of exploring causal relationships in this way helps us to build rational rather than chaotic abstractions, where we are able to describe the mechanisms of social relations rather than generalise about patterns of observed behaviour.

The Reflexivity of Personal Agency

Archer (2003: 25) recognizes conditions for evaluating the influence of structure on agency as that of human reflexivity. This is because it highlights the power of individuals to engage in internal deliberations about what responses to make regarding situations that they were not responsible for creating. These internal conversations are distinguished by three modes of reflexivity. Communicative reflexivity refers to decision-making that relies on dialogue with other people who share their concerns. Even though the conversation begins internally, it is not until they have sought external consultation that the internal consultation is resolved. Autonomous reflexivity relies solely on the internal conversation, when an individual takes full responsibility for the choice of pursuits that are considered worthy to follow and the decisions that result from this deliberation. "Meta-reflexivity" (2003: 255) involves the activity of asking ourselves questions and resolving them. These are acts of self-monitoring, even if we are not able to provide answers to the questions we put to ourselves, such as "Why do I keep getting angry with him?". It could also demonstrate knowledge of oneself and other people, as in the example Archer gives: "I like it here, so would my friend, so we must come here together."

Apart from these modes of reflexivity, it is also important to consider "fractured reflexivity" (Archer, 2003: 164) where people become incapable of deliberating purposefully regarding their structural environment. This is largely due to prolonged affective distress that causes a person to lose their sense of being defined by their life goals, resulting in their inability to deliberate. In other words, they no longer take an active role in producing responses to structural influences since they are no longer pre-occupied with seeking the outcomes they once envisaged for themselves. The task of my research is to determine the quality of relationships that participants establish, maintain, or fracture with structural elements of their environment. More importantly, the modes of reflexivity or the means by which they build responses to structural influences help to trace the way in which participants produce different employment outcomes.

A Critique of the Structuralist Argument

Cruickshank (2003: 129) outlines Wilson's structural argument that economic changes, particularly de-industrialisation, have led to large-scale unemployment in ghetto neighbourhoods. While a Black middle-class and older working class have managed to leave these neighbourhoods, poorly-educated youth have no prospects of leaving and suffer chronic unemployment. Economic decline leads to the decline of local institutions such as churches, schools, and recreational facilities, as well as social institutions such as family life. Unemployment is considered as a cause of ghetto culture since the decay of these institutions that strengthen mainstream values, like completing high school, occupying a permanent job, and establishing a nuclear family, results in Black youth being alienated from formal employment. This then drives them to participate in high levels of crime, violence, gangsterism and drug trafficking.

Cruickshank (2003: 131) goes on to critique Wilson's position that structure alone may bring about culture since Wilson argues that economic change leads to cultural change, which in turn influences behaviour. In what Wilson (1996: 78) terms "accidental cultural transmission", youth are exposed to values and actions around unemployment on such a regular basis that it becomes part of their worldview and decision-making. What this argument lacks is an exploration of what these structural conditions mean to youth who encounter them in ghetto neighbourhoods. It also lacks a description of agency and how it is related to material and cultural structures. Cruickshank (2003: 131) explains that behaviour is automatically associated with culture in Wilson's argument "because there is no discussion of how different individuals respond to similar situations in different ways".

Moore (2003: 988) levels a similar criticism against Wilson's work in that it does not consider the interaction of individuals with social structures, thereby ignoring the variations in outcomes of children who grow up in the same ghetto neighbourhoods and what conditions influence this variation. It also does not take into account by what processes family and neighbourhood affect the development of youth. Moore's work on early sexual activity among youth in ghetto neighbourhoods investigates variations in outcomes such that youth who are able to engage with supportive family and other social networks demonstrate a lower risk of early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy. In this way she identifies "pockets of stability" (2003: 990), where strong interaction between youth and parents, as well as between youth and other adults in stable relationships demonstrate positive influences. Such youth are able to avoid the

risk of early sexual activity as compared with the observed patterns of sexual behaviour among youth in ghetto neighbourhoods

Young (2003: 1074) draws attention to a key weakness of Wilson's findings; that of overlooking the motivations and value orientations of his participants. In this way he addresses the role of agency in responding to social structures. He asks what are the individual experiences and reactions to structures such as the social isolation of ghetto neighbourhoods. In exploring three realms of social experience he begins with the "experiential realm" (2003: 1080) that interrogates the experiences of participants with the social institutions of family, school, and places of employment, to understand how they receive information about barriers and constraints to formal employment. Secondly the "constructive realm" looks at the way participants use this information to determine how other people encounter or avoid constraints. Finally, the "projective realm" considers how participants construct worldviews based on their perceptions of how people around them deal with structural circumstances of poverty and unemployment.

Bagguley and Mann (1992: 115) offer a further critique by referring to the "ecological fallacy", where Wilson uses census tract data to draw generalisations about individuals who reside within these geographical areas. Sayer (1992: 102) explains that it is fallacious to infer characteristics about individuals from what is observed about group patterns. In order to avoid such generalisations, we need to engage in a qualitative analysis of individuals within the group. Bagguley and Mann (1992: 114-117) point out that Wilson has unsuccessfully tried to counteract arguments of controversial writers such as Charles Murray who describe the urban poor in terms of a ghetto underclass who are characterised by conditions of unemployment, crime, drug abuse, and single parenthood. For Murray, it is a culture of anti-work and dependency on state welfare that causes their unemployment even under circumstances where jobs are available. Cruickshank (2003: 129-131) presents Wilson's argument as advancing that both culture and deindustrialisation cause unemployment, but also that deindustrialisation causes a culture of not working, which in turn causes unemployment. This may seem tautological but what we gather from this argument is that deindustrialisation causes unemployment by removing low-skilled manual jobs. This is different from an anti-work culture that makes workers unemployable even when there are jobs available.

Young's (2004: 5) research among poor urban Black men sets out to understand social structures in terms of belief systems and values. He challenges the perception that we

can understand peoples' values and beliefs from a mere observation of their behaviour, and he therefore probes the way in which his participants make a critical assessment of their world. Like Wilson, Young's work is set against the context of changing economic circumstances that favour technical and managerial work as opposed to goods-producing manual work. While Young brings about a new perspective of understanding the values and motivations that reproduce a culture of despondency around looking for work, he does not explore the variation in employment outcomes that may demonstrate what it takes to transform these structures. This is where I hope to make a contribution to the discussions around youth employability in ghetto neighbourhoods, by exploring how personal agency interacts with patterns of material circumstances and with culture in order to reproduce or transform these social structures.

Following the principles of critical realism, Danermark *et al* (2005: 34) explains that it is the connection between concepts and social relations that constitute the structure of our social worlds. It is in probing these connections that we find the mechanisms responsible for generating observable events or action. Porpora (2015: 118) expands on this idea by explaining that human action is influenced by both material social structures as well as cultural ones. When individuals act within a particular material or cultural structure they reproduce or transform either the material structure or cultural structure, or both, with regards to outcomes such as employment. Inasmuch as we cannot equate individual behaviour with culture, as guided by Cruickshank's (2003: 131) critique of the structuralist argument, our attention may be focused on identifying the causal mechanisms of social structures that are contingent on the phenomenon of employability. The following diagram, Figure 5, represents the place of reflexivity in either bringing causal powers of agency and structure together towards the achievement of an agential goal, or liabilities towards an unsuccessful outcome.

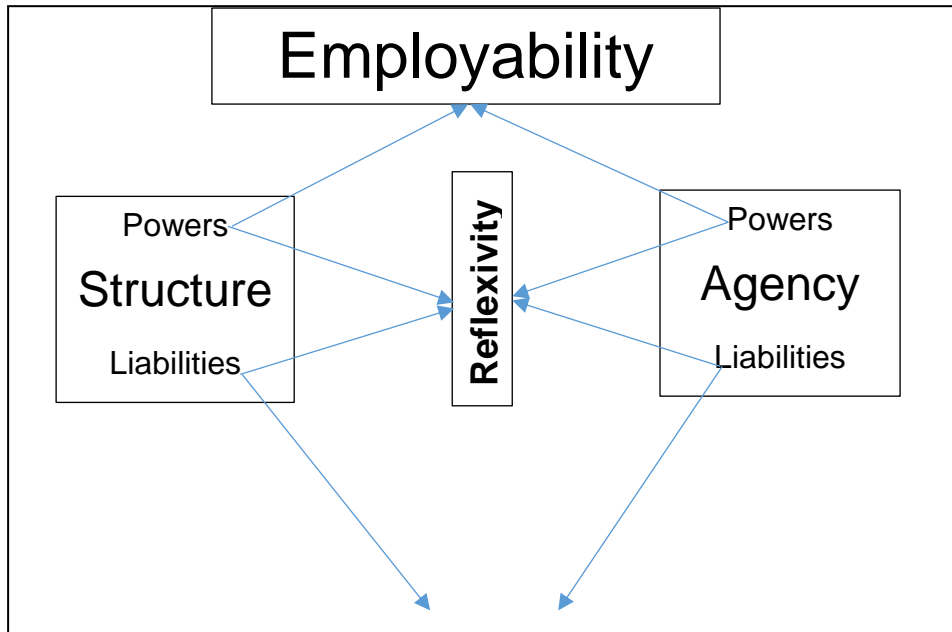


Figure 5: The links between structure, agency, causal powers, causal liabilities, and reflexivity

Parenting and Family Relations

The model of parenting and family relations provide insights into the kind of mechanisms that influence the values and belief systems of youth regarding school education and career aspirations. Lareau (2011: 238-239) provides evidence in support of the theory that parenting methods between working class and middle class families impact on children's life experiences. Middle class parents' "concerted cultivation" involves highly organized leisure activities and an interactive environment that elicits the feelings, opinions and thoughts of children. Working class and poor parents' "natural growth" methods observe a clearer boundary between adults and children such that children are told what to do rather than being persuaded with reason. Children's leisure activities are also largely their own domain, being free to go out and play with friends and relatives in the neighbourhood. Lareau observes that central institutions in society promote strategies of "concerted cultivation" and the strategies of working class parenting therefore do not correspond with the standards of institutions. In contrast to the sense of entitlement that middle class children develop, children of poor families develop a sense of constraint in their experience of social institutions such as school, university and the workplace.

Lareau and Weininger (2008: 119-120) go on to point out that there are also significant differences in the decision making process regarding college attendance between

working class and poor students, as compared with middle class students. Parents of the former consider it the responsibility of the school to assist the student in making educational decisions while with the latter, this is the role of counsellors, teachers, other professionals and parents. Even though working class parents may have aspirations for their children to attend college, they do not always have the informal cultural knowledge of middle class parents to successfully navigate the complex process of application and admission. Most middle class parents have gone to college and have a large, diverse social network that better equips them to give their children informal advice on academic matters. This is a key consideration for exploring the aspirations of ghetto youth and what may prevent these childhood aspirations from being realised. Lareau and Weininger (2008: 134) point out that while working class parents display love and concern for their children in various other ways, they do not consider their roles to include managing school careers. Parental involvement in the development of children's education may therefore be a reason why ghetto youth drop out of high school and struggle to find employment despite their aptitude for tertiary study. Although some children from poor neighbourhoods displayed above average IQ scores, most of them dropped out of high school or did not attend college.

A study by Furstenberg *et al.* (2000: 71) explores how families and communities can transform the culture of minimal engagement from parents in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighbourhoods, such that they do not remain disadvantaged throughout their lives. It questions how parents manage risk and opportunity in such circumstances. "Promotive Strategies" foster children's talents and opportunities, while "Preventive Strategies" reduce children's exposure to various types of dangerous circumstances. As such, parents are able to build resilience from negative influences by taking an interest in skills and talents that their children show an aptitude for, and encouraging their growth in these fields through exposure to development and recreational programmes. This also involves strong measures taken by parents to prevent children being exposed to behaviours that involve risk. Without consistent guidelines within a home environment or consequences on rule infringements, youth struggle to find a sense of personal control and struggle to navigate the world beyond the household. There is therefore a need to constantly and consistently engage with children and youth about critically assessing their environment, informing them of what behaviours and attitudes to avoid. This is also strengthened through activities shared by the family such as doing homework together or going to the library together. Regular interaction and conversation helps to open new perspectives:

“Children are influenced by the social circumstances in which they find themselves, but they and their families also make choices, no matter how constraining their world. Such choices provide access to certain transitions, options, and incentives that define life pathways, which in turn expose children to new opportunities and constraints” (2000:140).

Nurturing or Constraining Family Environments

Apart from an exploration of parenting methods, we would also need to build an understanding of what kind of environments are created by parents within the context of a family. In this way, we may appreciate how the constraining or enabling characteristics of parental influence may be enhanced or diminished by the wider context of family features. Cohen and MacCartney (2004: 189-190) examine how families respond to socio-economic inequality and find that a means of resisting inequality is through the supportive roles that extended family members play in order to make up for the shortcomings of parents during times of hardship. For example, single mothers often need to take on several responsibilities to manage a household and raise their children but extended families are able to give supplementary support to help take care of children so that single parents are able to work while children still receive care and support. Extended family members within a household, such as grandparents, demonstrate personal agency towards helping to transform the culture of limited engagement with children. They therefore also help to transform the constraints imposed by material structures of distance from work and long commuting time, such that children are assured of consistent adult supervision and nurturing.

Moletsane (2012) considers a South African perspective in articulating family features that impact on child learning and development. Among these features is the amount of time that a parent spends interacting with their children since this is considered to be a determinant of their occupational outcomes. While a stimulating and supportive relationship with parents can influence the personal agency of youth to transform cultural attitudes around practices such as dropping out of school, alcoholic, abusive and absent parents influence the child’s personal agency in a negative manner since such an environment does not promote children’s intellectual, academic and socio-emotional development. A family environment that promotes enthusiasm for activities such as reading and writing will stimulate a child’s interest in education but children who grow up in families that are unaware of intellectually stimulating resources will lack cognitive stimulation. This presence or lack of stimulating social norms within a family also holds true for the larger context of a child’s neighbourhood. Watson *et al.*

(2012: 270) concurs that childhood career development is closely connected to the cultural experiences of children, meaning that they start to develop ideas of work and career from observing examples of family and neighbourhood practices.

Social Network Structures

The Quality of Social Networks and Access to Jobs

The phenomenon of poor social networks in ghetto neighbourhoods is a logic that Seekings (2012: 12-14) ascribes to unemployment. He draws a distinction between the “urban privileged”, “urban insiders” and “urban outsiders” when accounting for the way in which South African youth look for and maintain employment. The “privileged” and “insiders” are considered as those who grow up in families that largely constitute the professional, technical, and managerial workforce. Apart from their strong education resources, most of these youth access jobs through people such as relatives or family friends. These are middle to high income jobs since they are class related. Such networks also improve the employment outcomes of youth by providing information about how the job market operates, what skills are in demand, and how to promote their skills to employers. The “urban outsiders” who live in underprivileged neighbourhoods often hold networks that consist of the unemployed or the low-skilled workforce. Very few people are therefore able to help them find jobs outside their neighbourhoods where only limited employment opportunities exist. While many of these youth have aspirations of high income work, they lack the educational resources to equip them for such careers and their social network does not provide the more informal access to job market information.

Within the context of social isolation in ghetto neighbourhoods, my research explores the material structures of social networks and how these conditions influence the personal agency of youth in deliberating over education and employment prospects. Granovetter (1983: 202) and Elliot (1999: 200) explore the mechanisms of weak and strong ties in the material structure of social networks, pointing to the tendency of weak ties in holding access to a wider choice of jobs. The underlying conditions of this structure are such that weak ties consist of acquaintances while strong ties consist of close friends and family. Weak ties are therefore a low-density network, in that they consist of people who are unlikely to be socially involved with each other, as compared to close friends and family who are densely knit. Since every acquaintance in turn has their own densely knit association of strong ties, it follows that fewer weak ties in one’s

network deprives one of news and information from sources other than what one is confined to through close friends and family (Granovetter, 1983: 202). Elliott (1999: 200) highlights the influence of limited social networks in marginalized communities which insulates people from job opportunities and perpetuates poverty. People living in neighbourhoods with high unemployment tend to concentrate most of their social energy on strong ties and this limits their exposure to job opportunities. He points to studies that demonstrate the tendency of workers relying on neighbours to find jobs, earning much less than those whose job contacts were from outside their respective neighbourhoods.

Glasgow's (1980: 72-75) work in tracing the experiences of ghetto youth in Watts, Los Angeles, demonstrates how problems such as limited social networks are perpetuated through the way in which the plight of ghetto neighbourhoods remains hidden away and ignored by social development policies. Based on the context of the 1965 riots, in which anger and frustration brought exposure to the adverse living conditions of residents, he identifies the ghettoization of Watts. He firstly describes the creation of housing projects in the central city which pushed Whites and middle to higher income earners into the growing suburban cities. Secondly the school system focused on a commercial course curriculum for Black schools and a college preparatory curriculum for White schools. Thirdly the economic structure changed such that deindustrialization resulted in fewer low-skilled jobs. Watts was characterized by low-level social organization, weak political structure and weak inter-social relations among residents. It also lacked the informal network of ties with powerful politicians to advance social action. Through the process of in-depth interviews and participant observation, Glasgow examined the aspirations and goal striving patterns of ghetto youth. He found that the reasons behind their despair and anger arose from interactions with mainstream institutions that gave them a sense of rejection. Schools, for instance, denied their individuality and integrity and thereby became failure-inducing agencies. This frustration was heightened by their entrapment due to the decline of low-skilled jobs and traces of racism which persisted under the guise of 'social profile' or the stigmatization of living in a poor, crime ridden neighbourhood.

The practice of relying on limited social networks in ghetto neighbourhoods may be regarded as a cultural phenomenon as well as a material condition since the former entails values and beliefs that individuals hold about their social position. It is a material condition, given the underlying objective conditions of historical segregation among race groups. I am interested to explore the constraints that influence the personal

agency of youth to reproduce material circumstances and cultural practices, as well as what might enable personal agency to transform the limitations of their social networks and bring about different beliefs about their employment and career prospects.

Social Isolation and Mobility

The material structures of urban segregation, with regard to social networks, is recognized by Wilson (1996: 37) who points out that the historical segregation of Black American people has created the constraining environment of social isolation and limited mobility. Besides the 'disappearance of work' from ghetto neighbourhoods, immobility among such residents, due to housing markets and policies favouring the affluent, has resulted in people struggling to overcome the material conditions that have decreased their employment opportunities. Norman Fainstein and Susan Fainstein (1979: 383) make use of Marxist theory to highlight the way in which urban planning is conceptualised to restrict social mobility and progress, where the wealthy social classes control and monopolise territory, such that poorer classes are structurally excluded from progressing beyond their circumstances.

Turok and Watson (2001: 122) point out that the "unusually steep house price gradient in Cape Town" makes living in the southern suburbs and around the CBD unaffordable for a majority of people who are therefore forced further away from these spaces that also bear the highest concentration of jobs, compared to other outlying suburbs. Furthermore, they expose the high costs of commuting and low wages for people who are forced to live in such areas. Fainstein (1993: 390) highlights that geographical racial segregation can also be exacerbated by structural constraints such as "segmentation of housing markets" that make mobility unaffordable and inaccessible for residents of ghetto neighbourhoods. Social isolation is therefore a major consideration in neighbourhoods characterized by "advanced marginality" since, as Wacquant and Wilson (1989: 9) agree, this perpetuates the social ills that have long been associated with segregated neighbourhoods of poverty within cycles that people struggle to escape even though they may nurture firm desires to do so. Elliott (1999: 206) also draws this comparison in noting that an individual's ability to find a job are severely limited through the social isolation that is created in high poverty neighbourhoods. In this regard, residents of ghetto neighbourhoods tend to maintain a high concentration of informal contacts as avenues for employment. This network usually consists of family and close friends such that a greater reliance on this confined

resource brings about a situation where most residents are employed in a similar industry and there is a lack of exposure to other industry networks.

Kasinitz and Rosenberg (1996: 182) built on the idea of social isolation, notwithstanding distance from work, as they investigated the case of Red Hook in Brooklyn, USA. Although it is close to shipyards and other blue-collar jobs, most of these opportunities bypassed local residents. Like the ghetto neighbourhoods described by Wilson (1996: 37) and Wacquant (2010: 215), Red Hook has declined into a dangerous no-go area but once held a strong working-class community and acted as a transitional base from which a large number of people joined the middle-income working class. Through a series of in-depth interviews carried out with local employers, Kasinitz and Rosenberg investigated why local residents were not hired for industrial work and thereby pointed out some of the reasons for high levels of poverty and unemployment. One of the main reasons was that contract work was communicated through the labour unions that were established in the past and only those who were unionised were notified about work opportunities. Many of these workers no longer lived in Red Hook. Employers also expressed hostility and racial discrimination against Red Hook residents who spoke about their businesses as frequent crime targets, as they feared being 'done in' by local residents. Bauder (2002: 88-89) also identifies negative stereotyping of poor neighbourhoods as a reason why residents are excluded from recruitment channels. He goes on to add that ideas of cultural adversity are even advanced by educators such that personal agency among youth is negatively influenced. They come to a belief of themselves as being unfit for educational and labour market achievement due to the negative cultural association that is made with their neighbourhood.

Cultural Capital

Social and Professional Skills for Employment

Closely related to social networks is the theory advanced by Young (1999: 224) that the accumulation of various forms of capital may both support, and detract from, poor urban Black men's ability to navigate life experiences. For example, gang membership affords them protection and safety in a neighbourhood but this works against accruing the cultural capital necessary for navigating opportunities beyond the neighbourhood such as employment opportunities. Cultural capital therefore has to do with a particular knowledge about and familiarity with a certain setting, in order to interact and function

well with other individuals of this social setting (Young, 2004: 59). Given the volatile and unstable circumstances in ghetto neighbourhoods, with high incidence of crime and violence, young people growing up under such circumstances need to accumulate cultural capital, or adopt social practices, that assure their safety. As Kasinitz and Rosenberg (1996: 189) point out, structures of social relations are meant to provide role models for how to navigate job markets but such cultural capital is difficult to find in ghetto neighbourhoods where the values of formal work are overshadowed by the lure of 'fast money' from illicit syndicates.

Young (2004: 74) goes on to demonstrate that while youth may aspire to pursue higher education qualifications, few adults in the neighbourhood are familiar with the intricacies of modern educational institutions and are unable to provide more than motivational advice. Whereas schools are expected to impart the cultural capital of skills and abilities to manoeuvre through the professional job market path, schools in ghetto neighbourhoods tend to replicate the surrounding environment, especially due to poor resources and ill-equipped teachers. Schools therefore fall short of being sites of learning and intellectual development, let alone preparing youth with social skills to compete for jobs in the labour market.

Even though a large number of youth in ghetto neighbourhoods reproduce the material structures underlying limited social networks of poor cultural capital, some youth are able to transform these structures by accessing a wider network of relations with a more widely informed cultural capital. The mechanisms that influence personal agency in this regard help us understand how different outcomes may be possible. Anderson (2008: 123) identifies that although youth in ghetto neighbourhoods may feel disillusioned by the limited resources and networks of their school education, supplementary programmes such as those of the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship in Chicago demonstrate a more positive influence on the deliberation of their personal agency. The new opportunities and resources encountered within this network enable them to transform the culture of despondency about limited opportunities by lowering the constraint of social isolation and raising the career aspirations of youth who may have otherwise dropped out of school. Similarly, I explore the material circumstances that youth in Manenberg engage with through the structure of wider social networks than those that they are often confined to, as well as initiatives within the neighbourhood that build cultural capital. In doing so I aim to demonstrate how such personal agency transforms a culture of disillusioned beliefs about pursuing goals of professional careers.

The Influence of Role Models

De Lannoy's (2011: 64) findings about the importance of role models is based on a study that tested the impact of health, subjective life expectancy and interaction with peers and parents on educational expectations among youth in Cape Town. She found that, regardless of their HIV-affected status, many young people on the Cape Flats hold high expectations and aspirations for their future. They consider their current circumstances of deprivation as temporary since a good education would ensure that they achieve future success. These educational expectations are however affected by circumstances such as the presence of adults and household income. Those who are not orphaned, who live in the same household as at least one biological parent, and those with higher household income express higher educational expectations. Cultural capital, such as the presence of an adult to talk about education and the example of peers who continue with schooling, is considered to be an important aspect of increasing educational expectations.

MacLeod (1995: 61) gives a further example of disconnection between aspirations and expectations in a study of two gangs, the Hallway Hangers and the Brothers, in a public housing development in Massachusetts. He identifies that aspirations involve preferences but expectations "are tempered by perceived capabilities and available opportunities." The majority of research participants are confronted with only examples of academic failure and they therefore see education and work as "a torturous path that is difficult to negotiate" (1995: 50). Those who are exposed to examples of academic success see that "the path to academic achievement can be followed".

A similar study by Swartz (2009: 104) probed the inconsistencies between belief and behaviour among youth in ghetto neighbourhoods of Cape Town. It found that youth possessed what she describes as the "facets of morality": knowing what is good, aspiring towards what they perceive to be good, and identifying themselves with this moral perception. What they struggle to find, however, is an enabling social context that would consist largely of positive and caring adult role models who help to build self-esteem and cultural capital or knowledge about acting out moral beliefs. This study found that in the context of deprivation and poverty, youth therefore struggle to find positive role models to build internal and external resilience skills that their peers in more affluent communities take for granted.

While such studies help to understand how youth articulate their circumstances of structural constraints, the role of personal agency is still overlooked. De Lannoy (2011: 64) points out the needs that youth highlight in pursuing their career aspirations but what we still need to explore is how personal agency is influenced by and responds to structures such as role models in order to produce successful career outcomes. Swartz' (2009: 104) cultural argument also does not probe the mechanisms by which personal agency interacts with a culture of positive and caring parental practices in order to transform moral beliefs. These arguments are similar to that of Wilson (1996: 37) in that a South African perspective also acknowledges the material structures of racial segregation, deindustrialisation, and poverty as giving rise to poor education and employment outcomes (Swartz 2009: 25-27). Swartz *et al* (2012: 29) acknowledges that a significant gap in research about youth employment in South Africa is that we have not sufficiently explored the way in which youth in impoverished neighbourhoods navigate pathways between school, university, and work. By paying attention to the role of personal agency in deliberating over the material and cultural structures that impact on education and career decisions, I hope to contribute to the body of work that has considered the structural accounts of youth unemployment.

Although Wilson's earlier research focused largely on structural influences on individuals in ghetto neighbourhoods, his later responses to the critique of his work attempted to account for the response of youth to their structural circumstances. Niemonen (2002: 149) highlights Wilson's theory of self-efficacy in the face of few role models and poor access to information about work, in the context of persistently high rates of unemployment. He identifies that ghetto neighbourhood residents take in or internalise cultural expectations, such as dropping out of school, and thereby limit their personal capacity to complete school and find employment. This is where the distinction between cognitive expectations and normative expectations helps to clarify that even though it may be desirable to complete high school, youth act on their cognitive expectations, meaning that they have internalised values from what they observe around them about limited opportunities. This leads to decreased effort and unsuccessful school careers. These behaviours are what Wilson presents as cultural adaptations to material structures such as the growth in professional and technical jobs that exclude individuals who have not completed high school.

Summation

The literature concerned with youth employability in ghetto neighbourhoods gives perspective to the structural circumstances that youth straddle in navigating education and employment pathways. The phenomena of deindustrialisation, geographical and social isolation, poor public services of school and amenities, as well as the proliferation of illegal drug and gang activity, highlight the adversities that youth encounter in ghetto neighbourhoods. The material circumstances and cultural practices that are observed within this context constitute the social structures that youth are born into. By exploring different education and employment outcomes, my research aims to build on purely structural perspectives that provide accounts of unsuccessful education and employment outcomes for all individuals in ghetto neighbourhoods. By paying attention to the role of personal agency, I aim to demonstrate the mechanisms by which youth interact with and respond to social structures such that they may not only reproduce such structures but also transform them.

A critical realist perspective provides the framework with which personal agency may be probed in terms of the way in which individuals respond to the enablements and constraints of social structures. Appreciating that both structure, in terms of material circumstances and culture, and personal agency contain their own independent properties and powers, the concept of human reflexivity is essential for understanding the internal process that youth engage in. As individuals interact with various material and cultural structures, they reflect on their ability to either reproduce or transform these structures. This process of internal reflection then informs their decisions and resulting actions around education and employment. The model of parenting and family relations, the material circumstances of social networks, and cultural capital are the social structures that I explore among comparative case studies, informed by a thematic analysis of fieldwork interviews and participant observation of the field, as well as literature that highlights the social adversities of ghetto neighbourhoods. While such literature has examined structural accounts, as well as cases of internal responses from research participants, it has largely interpreted examples of youth unemployment. The aim of my research is to contribute to this discussion by exploring the ways in which youth in ghetto neighbourhoods both reproduce and transform social structures of unemployment.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Method

Driving into the car park, where I agreed to meet Randall Ortell, a group of adults are clustered around a few bottles of beer that they are sharing among themselves. Seated close to them are some children engaged in an animated conversation about a subject that elicits much laughter and jeering. Across from the car park is a field in which a soccer team is training. Their exercises look regimental, with the young men intensely focused and engaged. It is a hot and humid afternoon in Manenberg and the neighbourhood is teeming with people outside, walking along the pavements, standing against the walls of their apartment blocks or sitting in the open courtyards between the blocks. There is hardly a space that is quiet or unoccupied.

Randall is a medical doctor who lives in Manenberg, having grown up here with his parents and younger brother. He holds a somewhat legendary status in the neighbourhood, celebrated by the local community newspapers as Manenberg's first doctor. He has agreed to assist me in meeting some of the young people that he is in contact with through the work he does for the local soccer teams, conducting medical assessments and some coaching. He speaks passionately about the community. His tone is firm and his pace of speaking is swift. He raises his voice at times when he talks about the number of young people he knows who lack motivation and drive to work. He relates his own story of earning a scholarship to study at the University of Stellenbosch and to pursue a career in medicine. While the bursary only covered his tuition fees, he supplemented the meagre income of his family to pay for other study expenses by driving a minibus taxi during the peak morning worker commutes. He would sometimes skip classes on a Friday to drive extra routes and then make up with additional study time over the weekends but this became more difficult to manage as his studies intensified. He would adopt a tight schedule and make sure he was at various stops at the same time each day that he drove the taxi, so that he could build a strong clientele. He is still in contact with many of these passengers who live in the neighbourhood. One of them is Michelle, a participant of this research study.

Randall's popularity in the neighbourhood is evident from the number of people who stop over to greet him as we sit on the wooden bars of the car park fence. One of the young men, whom Randall recognizes and draws my attention to, does not approach us but walks aimlessly across. He has emerged from behind a shed on the grounds of the sports field. His eyes are glazed and his gait is undetermined. Randall describes him as one of the *tik-koppe*, those young men who are known for their addiction to methamphetamine or *tik* as it is locally dubbed. They were both in the same class through high school.

(Fieldnotes 30 January 2015)

Introduction

In exploring different employment outcomes among youth in ghetto neighbourhoods, my research traces diverse pathways of navigating the same social structures of poverty, widespread unemployment, isolation of economic hubs, crime, and gangsterism. The young man who staggers from behind a shed, drugged and aimless, bears a silent voice in my participant observation fieldnotes. Juxtaposed against his classmate's rather publicized and successful pathway to employment, the former holds more questions about a seemingly constrained pathway that leads to unemployment. These are the questions that I aim to pursue by comparing ten case studies of youth who interpret and respond to the structural conditions of ghetto neighbourhoods towards different outcomes: those who manage to 'make it' through tertiary study, permanent employment and career development; and those who constantly struggle with constraining influences as obstacles to finding work.

While much of the literature around ghetto neighbourhoods has centred on an analysis of structural dynamics that impact on unemployment, little attention has been given to the role of personal agency in determining values and behaviour associated with work. This chapter builds on the critique of purely structuralist arguments, as discussed in the previous chapter, by highlighting the value of a *Verstehen* perspective to uncover the causal mechanisms underlying behaviour, helping to understand what particular actions come to signify about personal agency. Recognising the independence of agents to therefore reflect and respond individually to structural influences, a research design consisting primarily of lightly-structured depth interviews probes these associations. These insights are further embellished by accounts from secondary participants and ethnographic participant observation. In analysing this research material, I demonstrate how a thematic analysis may reveal the concepts that youth build around structural conditions, while a narrative analysis traces the values and beliefs that inform agential decisions and action around education and employment.

A *Verstehen* Perspective

Writers such as Alford Young and Elijah Anderson acknowledge the existence of structures with their research into individual experiences of ghetto neighbourhoods, highlighting the way research participants interact with social processes to reproduce cultural norms. This understanding is gathered through observations from ethnographic participation in community activities, as well as in-depth interviews over longitudinal studies. These studies focus on an analysis of what participants describe about their neighbourhood structures, falling short of a probe into how participants construct responses that could transform cultural norms, apart from only reproducing them. For example Anderson's (1999: 9) *Code of the Street* examines the informal rules by which young men engage in aggression and violence but he analyses these codes without accounting for how individuals respond to these codes, in such a manner that diverse education and employment outcomes may be possible. Young's (2004: 5) *The Minds of Marginalised Black Men* focuses on how the arrangement of thought can become "common sense" for those who participate in a particular culture but remain unintelligible for outsiders. While participants articulate their understanding of how social processes work, we cannot trace how they reflected on these processes to decide on action that results in their present outcomes. What I aim to establish through my research is how individual agency has interacted with structural influences to build a system of values regarding education, career development, and employment. Questions likely to emerge from such an enquiry will ask how personal histories have influenced the choices participants made during their years at school and during their experiences of looking for work, what impact family and social networks have had on their identification of education and work options, and how weaknesses or strengths of their school system have shaped their worldview around financial stability and self-sustainability. In capturing the interactive elements that build a relationship between agency and social structures, both material and cultural, my method would therefore need to incorporate an interpretive approach.

Ekström (2010: 86) highlights Max Weber's argument that an interpretive understanding is central to producing a causal explanation in history and social science. It is important for uncovering social and cultural meaning, as well as knowledge of the processes that connect cause and effect. If we can understand the intentions behind actions, while relating actions to various complexes of meaning, we are able to see the processes that produce actions or patterns of actions. These are the principles of *verstehen* which are required for clarifying the social and cultural

meaning of what is to be causally explained, as well as for attaining knowledge of the processes that connect what we identify as an influence, associated with what we see as an outcome. Sayer (1992: 36) explains the role of *verstehen* when identifying the causes of social action, as opposed to the cause and effect of our natural world, where successive constituents of a process do not relate to each other in a “conceptually consistent” manner. Social processes are often disjointed and contradictory and the researcher’s role is therefore to build a contextual framework for understanding how social phenomena are interpreted and then used to see the world from a respondent’s point of view.

Verstehen may be considered a crucial practice when attempting to understand the opaque behaviour of my research participants. If I take, for example, the observed daily action of young men sitting outside the corner shop of their neighbourhood, I will have to probe how they have come to find value in such action and what life experiences have helped build this sense of value. What outsiders see as youth being bored and lazy, may be interpreted differently through the perspective of participants. The meaning they attach to this action may be an opportunity for companionship, support or a sense of belonging that strengthens their self-esteem. Biographic stories may reveal how they lacked such opportunities for more commonly-recognised socialising activities such as being part of a supportive family or being able to undertake a successful career. Weber’s methodology is based on the conceptualisation of meaning in order to understand the actions of people. Actions must be appreciated in relation to the categorical context in which it takes place, including the meaning imparted by the agent, if we take these meanings to be the socially and culturally determined motives for action (Ekström, 2010: 83). Using the aforementioned example, we would then ask how friendship and companionship is framed within the category of social relations. O’Hear (1996: 7-8) also reminds us that when we consider a person’s motivation for actions within the context of a particular culture, we come to appreciate the overarching frame by which they pursue actions but this does not tell us what actions they will perform. I therefore attempt to develop an understanding of how youth build worldviews and decisions that inform actions.

Research Methods

Fielding Complexity and Building a Holistic Enquiry

In my attempt to uncover how youth interpret and respond to the structural conditions associated with unemployment in ghetto neighbourhoods, my method of exploring life histories must allow for complexity in tracing the structure-agency relationship. A qualitative method of study is most appropriate since it is concerned with how people build inner meaning of their external world, or how particular social institutions are experienced by individuals (Josselson, 2013: vii). Sayer (1992: 246) describes the philosophy behind this method as “intensive research”, compared to “extensive research”. Extensive research is concerned with determining the quantitative extent of common properties and patterns of a whole population, and intensive research asks how causal processes work out in a limited number of cases. While extensive research is statistically representative and statistically descriptive, intensive research seeks qualitative descriptions in producing causal explanations. Sayer goes on to remind us that humans are self-interpreting beings, as compared to inanimate objects, so while we are all influenced by structural circumstances such as poverty or unemployment, these influences are mediated by individual perspectives that are available to us.

Sayer (1992: 30) reminds us that the researcher’s task is not merely to represent facts, or what we observe to be reality, but to rather channel these observations into concepts that help us understand the motivation behind actions and behaviours. So even though our observations are formulated by existing concepts through our theoretical framework, intensive research is meant to draw a connection between these abstract concepts and observations that we encounter in a day to day lived experience in order to impart new meaning. Wengraf (2001: 6-7) explains that one of the purposes of intensive research is to achieve a level of depth in understanding individuals’ experiences of social phenomena that we cannot understand from observing patterns of behaviour. The qualitative method of interviewing, for example, allows us to probe experiences that may seem straightforward but hold complex meanings that demonstrate how limited our previous conceptions of a particular experience might have been. In using the example of why young men join neighbourhood gangs, reasons such as a need for financial sustenance in the context of poverty or a need for companionship within a hostile neighbourhood might surface. When probing these experience through an intensive interview, research participants can locate their decisions and actions within the context of their family histories, social networks, or

school experiences, and speak to the complexity of influences that take on a new meaning within a particular situation. Sayer (1992: 69) therefore highlights that concepts must have “practical adequacy” in the sense of demonstrating how people act in any given situation. He uses the image of a recipe or a map to illustrate that concepts do not merely represent reality inasmuch as they lay out a set of steps to be followed or a route to be traced in reaching a certain point. Research participants may therefore give a certain representation of their lived reality but we must still trace the pattern of thought leading to that point, with the aim of discovering new meaning. These patterns should be evidenced by the everyday actions of people and the activity of their environment.

In this way, the enquiry becomes a holistic process of identifying the complex relationship of the whole and the parts, bearing in mind that they are “mutually constitutive” (Josselson, 2013: 6). As I explore various segments along the life pathway of a participant, I therefore apply a magnifying perspective to firstly probe the interaction of personal agency with social structures, followed by the individual’s interpretation or value judgement of a particular phenomena, and finally the response or attitude and behaviours that emanate from the interaction. In this way we are able to draw on crucial experiences in a person’s life history to analyse their perspective on subsequent events, as well as their relationships with social structures. (Thomson *et al.*, 2002: 336).

Lightly-Structured Depth Interviews

Wengraf (2001: 6) provides an apt description of what it means to conduct depth interviews, since they allow us to appreciate that what we may have assumed to be straightforward is actually quite complicated, and how surface appearances can at times be misrepresentative of unobservable phenomena. He thereby concurs with Cruickshank’s (2003: 96) notion of a realist ontology in highlighting the complexity of meaning-construction that lies behind observable behaviour. Creating such depth with research participants must therefore involve a means of speaking that connects their internal and external worlds. This is where Josselson (2013: 4) makes a convincing case for the use of life stories since it is one of the principal means of communicating “agential enterprise” (Archer, 2003: 5) and the culture in which this agency is contextualized. In the same way, stories represent the social institutions that we participate in and how we respond to social structures. Since memories of life experience are constituted by stories, when we are asked to describe these

experiences in an open-ended manner, a most appropriate response is therefore with biographic stories. In eliciting stories of participants' life experiences, the interview structure must then stimulate narratives that reveal the thought processes behind attitudes and values concerning employment.

There are various ways of designing interviews to elicit life histories, from those that require a high level of interviewer intervention to those that require only a single initial question with minimum further interventions. The model of "Biographic Narrative Interpretive Interviews" presented by Wengraf (2001: 5) is based on the research traditions of Gabriele Rosenthal and Wolfram Fischer-Rosenthal. The value of this approach is that it does not only portray an understanding of individuals as acting agents in society but also builds an understanding of the historical and contemporary social structures of that society in terms of the limiting and enabling interaction between personal agency and social structures. Wengraf's (2001: 111) use of the term "narrative" concerns the practice of prompting research participants to relate stories about their life experiences, allowing us to appreciate how the flow of events provides a context to the information that is being elicited.

Drawing such information from individuals, tracing the way in which they construct meaning around their relationship with their surrounding structures, means that my interview design must make allowance for ambiguous and complex associations that are difficult to access directly. In describing the interaction between researcher and participant, Goffman (1959: 13-14) draws our attention to the fact that values and beliefs can only be probed indirectly, thereby highlighting the importance of observing the way in which participants describe episodes of their life experience. It is very much of an inner conversation, as Archer (2003: 163) reminds us, where such deliberations take place through different forms of reflexivity. Even though the central point of my research is not primarily centred around biographical narratives, my case for adopting this method stems from my concern with the way in which individuals have constructed attitudes and values around significant life events within individual biographies.

Since Wengraf's (2001: 5) model of "Biographic Narrative Interpretive Interviews" demonstrates an application of this approach, it would be important to describe the mechanics of this method before accounting for its strengths in the design of my interview approach. As such, the research process consists of three sub-sessions that are divided between a series of interviews. The first sub-session is meant to induce a story through a single question that involves no further prompts from the researcher

who notes the topics that make up the narrative. This is followed by a break in which the researcher prepares further questions around these emerging topics. The second sub-session then pursues these topics, through questions that elicit further stories, according to the order that they were related in the first sub-session. While the first two sub-sessions can take place within the space of a day, the third sub-session is structured as a completely different interview and gives the researcher an opportunity to compile a preliminary analysis of the material that has emerged thus far. The researcher is then able to develop new questions according to the concerns of the research enquiry. These questions may include, but not necessarily be restricted to, the story-inducing type of questions of the previous sub-sessions.

The value of this approach is that it allows for ambiguous and complex associations as participants tell their stories, while giving the researcher an opportunity to probe these associations with direction from the central research focus. Sayer (1992: 54) explains that the knowledge we probe from our research participants is given perspective by our theoretical framework. So even though our observations are described by existing concepts, research is meant to draw a connection between these abstract concepts and everyday lived experience concepts to impart new meaning. For example, with my concern about theories on the influence of social isolation and the strength or weakness of social networks, I would probe the relationships that participants highlight when speaking about their education experiences or their experiences of looking for work.

Wengraf (2001: 111) uses a “single question aimed at inducing a narrative” (SQUIN) to initiate the first sub-session, such as “I would like you to tell me your life story, all the events and experiences which were important to you.” I found this to be an intimidating start to the interviews during my pilot phase since most participants responded with a shy laugh or a long period of silence, followed by a comment such as “Tell me what I should say” or “I’m not good at talking”. When I gave them a subject to talk about, such as “tell me about your family” or “what memories of your school career stand out for you when you think back to that time”, they were more inclined to start telling their biographies. Given that I only met participants over two or three encounters before starting interviews, I had not established sufficient rapport to expect them to relate a narrative as comprehensive as a life story so soon in the relationship. Young (2004: 208) adopts a similar approach in gradually developing rapport with participants over a series of interviews that cover experiences of growing up, family histories, and schooling careers.

I used the approach of Wengraf's (2001: 111) 'single question aimed at inducing a narrative' at the start of each session of interviews that I developed around the material generated from my review of the literature. This material helped to determine the new concepts around which my research findings were formulated and were probed through the following theory questions:

- i) What are the material and cultural structures that influence employment outcomes among youth in ghetto neighbourhoods?
- ii) How do youth interpret and respond to these structures?
- iii) How does this sense of meaning influence attitudes and behaviours around employment outcomes?

The first question in turn generated the themes for each interview session, regarding the structures that influence youth education and employment outcomes:

- i) Family Background
- ii) School Career
- iii) Work Experience / Tertiary Study
- iv) Social Networks

While each of these sessions began with a question to induce a story that allowed free associations to emerge, I noted topics while listening and refrained from making any interventions. I then conducted a preliminary analysis of the recorded material before returning for the next interview with topics that I used to probe further stories. While participants responded in ways that manoeuvred across themes and then homed in to focus more attention on a particular theme or themes, each interview did not follow a particular order but was composed according to the stories shared in the previous interview. For example, participants oscillated between narratives of parents, friends, siblings, neighbourhood parental figures, and work colleagues when asked about their family background. My experience of pilot interviews revealed that participants spoke most easily about their family backgrounds since this is where most of their stories seemed to be rooted. I therefore used this theme to begin the series of interviews with each participant.

As each session allows for an opportunity to conduct a preliminary analysis, before proceeding with the subsequent interview, I had an opportunity to prepare topics that induce stories around the relationships with structures. This provided material to analyse emerging concepts around the second and third theoretical questions of interpretation, response, and action. They were elicited through prompts such as "how

did you feel when that happened to you?” or “what do you think about that incident as you now look back over it?” or “can you tell me what you mean when you said or did that?”.

Even though the sessions were themed around material from my literature review, the narrative inducing questions and preliminary analyses also generated themes that participants identified as structures that influenced their employment outcomes. As a means of evaluating the range of narratives within each theme, I probed topics until I found that stories started being repetitive. I also referred to the topic guide, as in Appendix 3, to probe topics that did not feature in the stories but emerged from my literature review. The average number of interview sessions was therefore approximately two per theme, as well as further interviews to probe concepts recurring across the themes and to clarify conflicting or loosely connected stories. An average of six to eight interviews per case were recorded and transcribed.

An Ethnographic Approach through Participant Observation

My focus on how research participants interpret social structures calls for an ethnographic approach to the way in which I probe information since ethnographies help to explain how people think, how they formulate beliefs, and what actions they pursue within a particular cultural setting (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999: 12). Among the values associated with ethnographies is that they are able to bear a very close resemblance to the everyday practice of activities through which individuals make sense of their environment (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983: 168). This is especially important when considering my focus on the relationship of agency and structure within the process of meaning-making.

In developing a holistic case study of each participant and following an approach that is informed by social context, Wacquant (2008: 9) emphasises the need for ethnographic research to obtain direct information through personal participation in the ordinary everyday lived experience. This is because the technique of participant observation allows a researcher to gather information that is located within the mediums, symbols, and lived-in worlds that have particular meaning for individuals. Without stepping into these worlds and understanding the symbols, information revealed merely through interviews would lack authenticity. Participant observation therefore gives us a perspective by which we can evaluate how comprehensive our body of knowledge may be since it allows us to appreciate how and why a participant

orders a series of events within a story, which may escape us from the more artificial set-up of an interview.

While ethnographies range from overt or covert participation in the lives of research participants, through day to day lived-in experiences, or through participation in selected activities (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983: 89), my approach was to build a presence in the community around spaces and activities that are significant to participants. My first knowledge and experience of the neighbourhood began through relationships that I initiated with NGOs and other community-based organisations such as the Catholic Church where I started attending Mass on a Sunday morning. Key individuals who were responsible for outreach programmes introduced me to youth from the neighbourhood, who either agreed to interviews themselves or in turn introduced me to others whom they knew. I also found assistance through the community library, where the assistant librarian referred me to the Young Men's Unemployment Support Group for unemployed young men from which I drew further participants. The various organisations that are housed in the community resource centre, the Manenberg People's Centre, also became a source of help since they worked with a number of unemployed youth in the neighbourhood. My association with organisation leaders allowed me the opportunity to visit and get to know some of the youth before a more formal and organised meeting with groups of youth who showed interest in the study.

The Catholic Church, the community library, and the Manenberg People's Centre emerged as significant spaces in my field that gave me an indication of the ordinary scenes and everyday practices that made up the lives of research participants. Anderson (1999: 93) refers to such spaces as "staging areas" since this is where activities occur that set the stage for other activities, such as the library computer stations as spaces for youth to search the internet for jobs and to network, or the Catholic Church where people gather for religious observance and share news about the neighbourhood happenings during the week. In this way they reveal "social codes of interaction" (1999: 22). Other such "staging areas" would be the public housing apartment blocks where I conducted interviews in the homes of participants or visited them to join in some of the social activities they were engaged in. The space outside the buildings, or in between blocks that faced inwardly towards each other, was where women hung up their washing, where older people sat to drink tea and chat with a neighbour, where adults and youth smoked or shared their alcohol, where youth gambled with dice, and where children played. I would often use these gatherings as

opportunities to befriend people that I regularly met, so that I could engage in informal conversation with them and also invite some of them as secondary participants in the study. The more familiar I became with them, the more freely they engaged with me not only about the youth but also about some of the concerns they shared as residents in the neighbourhood. These concerns were further highlighted at community meetings that I attended and this interaction helped build a context around which participants shared their stories.

While my primary concern revolves around the internal process by which youth interact with social structures, I took a keen interest in the family unit as an immediate environment to gather information about relationships and associations. I therefore spent time, especially before and after interviews, having a cup of tea with other members of a household. Sometimes I would even accompany a parent or sibling who needed to run an errand, engaging with them through the context of everyday routine chores. The work of Lareau (2011: 9) is especially insightful in the way that she and her team of researchers followed families for a number of hours through each day of their routine activities. Over an extended period of time they gather valuable information about obligations, attitudes, how families plan and configure mundane activities, and how these phenomena reveal value systems around child rearing that bears different education outcomes between middle class and working class children. Although my approach does not adopt as concentrated an effort as Lareau, I have been able to build contextualised case studies over an extended period of four years from the significant level of participation that I was privileged to share in the family life of research participants.

Purposive Sampling

The process of building case studies involves a careful selection of participants, based on the principles of criterion-based or purposive sampling. This involves choosing a sample on the basis of particular features or characteristics that enable an in-depth exploration of the central research focus. An important consideration in prioritising the criteria for purposive sampling is that it contains key representations and that it is sufficiently diverse for a comparative consideration of the information (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003: 79).

My research sampling is primarily based on the criteria of youth who live in a part of Manenberg where structural conditions that impact on employment outcomes are most

pronounced and the confining characteristic of ghetto neighbourhoods is clearly recognised. It is also considered to be a high-risk area where gangsterism, violence, and drug trafficking are most concentrated, as compared with surrounding sections of Manenberg. As depicted on the map in Figure 1, it features Manenberg Avenue as the central road through the area and is bordered by three main roads. Selecting youth from this section would allow me to compare different employment outcomes among youth who are exposed to the same structural environment.

In defining the terms of who I consider to be youth, it is often understood that adolescence is a stage between childhood and adulthood, marked by emotional unsteadiness and awkward conduct, thereby requiring special needs as they make a transition to adulthood (Hartinger-Saunders, 2008: 92). This would present questions about what constitutes adulthood in neighbourhoods such as Manenberg if I wish to identify those who are still considered to be youth. In my understanding of the cultural phenomena of the neighbourhood, the responsibilities of youth and adulthood are often merged. There are, for example, instances of individuals who have jobs and support their partners and children but are still only in their early twenties when others of the same age may be attending tertiary institutions or unemployed and fully dependent on adult support.

The importance of adult dependency for youth is highlighted by De Lannoy's (2011: 64) study of the aspirations and dreams of youth in ghetto neighbourhoods of Cape Town. The respondents of this study expressed strong beliefs in achieving good education results in order to realise their dreams but also expressed their vulnerability to peer pressure and therein a need for adult support and guidance. Respondents also point to the lack of guidance and clarity about the education process as a hindrance to achieving their life goals. In order for their dreams to not merely remain fantasies, youth need help in constructing a plan to achieve what they set out for themselves. My criterion for selecting youth as primary participants of my research would therefore be more accurate without chronological development as a deciding factor. It would be more appropriate to consider their degree of responsibility for themselves and others, as well as their level of adult dependency. This then enables me to build concepts that speak to the experience of those who are dependent on support, guidance, and direction from adults, while still making the transition into adulthood.

Based on my interaction with youth in Manenberg, through my association with community organisations, I selected primary participants for interviews according to

their ability and willingness to share their stories over a series of interviews. As tabled in the list of Primary Research Participants in Appendix 2, I built a diverse selection through interviewing both male and female youth, youth who were unemployed and those who held jobs, as well as tertiary institution students. Apart from these primary participants whom I interviewed through an average of six to eight interviews, I also identified secondary research participants to build supplementary information around the topics that emerged with primary participants. These include parents and other parental figures, teachers, neighbours, and other individuals who feature prominently as influential life story characters. Secondary research participants were selected on the basis of their relationship to primary participants. They were individuals whom primary participants spoke of during initial interviews as people whom they confided in. These secondary participants resided in the neighbourhood and I asked them to participate following consent from primary participants about their involvement in building more information about the life histories of each particular primary participant. The value of this involvement is that primary participants would spend more time reflecting on their interviews with secondary participants, following my in-depth interviews, and these relationships continued to grow following the research period such that primary participants had access to listeners with whom they could continue the process of narrating the past.

Narrative and Thematic Analysis

As participants relate their experiences of navigating pathways to employment within the context of ghetto neighbourhood conditions, I am interested to trace their construction of meaning on two levels. The first is through the identification of themes and subthemes, to be developed into concepts, within a thematic analysis of the material that I gather. Ryan and Bernard (2003: 87) point out that this process of selecting sets of terms or themes does overlook slight differences but still provides primary material for building theory through highlighting the way these themes relate and weave the story together. While a thematic analysis may not be sensitive to slight differences, the strength of narrative analysis lies in its ability to pursue detail by asking why the research respondent has chosen a specific sort of text or manner of speaking to describe a phenomenon (Wengraf, 2001: 232). This focus on the telling, as compared to what is told, helps with conceptualising the identity, views and ideals of the narrator (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998: 88).

By adopting both a thematic and narrative analysis of the interview material I am able to firstly build the concepts that emerge across case studies, further strengthened by participant observation notes, regarding the sense of meaning that is attached to structural influences that shape beliefs and actions around education and employment. It also allows for new concepts to emerge, apart from those identified through the literature, or new meanings to be associated with these concepts. Secondly a focus on how participants tell their story, through a narrative analysis, helps with understanding the value that they attach to certain events or experiences. (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998: 88). A narrative analysis of stories helps to highlight the voice with which participants speak and gives us a perspective to understand how the events of their life make sense within this larger context. We are therefore able to appreciate the building blocks that they use to assemble their stories.

A combination of both narrative and thematic analysis techniques will allow for a diversity of interpretations. It will not only give attention to emerging themes within both the realms of structural conditions and agency but also help to draw the relationship between these two interdependent components of my research focus. Riessman (2004: 708) builds on the ideas of C Wright Mills by advancing that through its ability to help reimagine events, spaces and even a sense of self, such an approach is able to establish essential links between individual biographies and social structure. These sentiments are contained in Mills' (1959: 6) idea that "the sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society".

My analysis of emerging themes and concepts is guided by Sayer's (1992: 138-139) methodology of abstraction in order to ensure the building of rational, rather than chaotic associations. Relations that participants raise are therefore probed and analysed in terms of their contingency on education and employment outcomes. This is carried out through an exploration of the rules and obligations that exist, for instance between a parent and youth, towards the shared intention or goal of completing high school. This approach helps to avoid the weakness associated with tautological structuralist arguments that make inferences from observed patterns of behaviour rather than from the mechanism of interaction between personal agency and social structure.

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent and Free Participation

Many of the youth whom I met during my initial fieldwork stages and pilot interviews were interested to know about my personal world. Apart from their knowledge about the research project, they asked questions about my family, career, place of residence, and what social activities I engaged in. I used this as an opportunity to build conversation and establish a relationship of trust, as well as to initiate discussions about their world as a place I am interested to discover. I explained this interest within the context of my research, that I consider it important to highlight the experiences of youth themselves when trying to understand problems such as unemployment. I found that many youth agreed with this approach and expressed interest, even excitement, about the opportunity to tell their story. “You must give me a whole day to tell you my story,” was one of the responses, “I got a lot of things on my chest.” Others were suspicious about what I wanted to know from them, and whether I would be able to understand what people experience on a daily basis in Manenberg.

At a meeting of the Young Men’s Unemployment Support Group, one of the members sat resolutely still, with his arms folded and feet crossed, as I explained my research intentions. After a few others in the group asked questions about the research process, he spoke in a solemn tone without looking at me and addressed the group in Afrikaans even though we had been speaking in English: “...*daai mense sal nooit verstaan wat ons hier doen nie, hoekom ons steek en skiet. Hulle sal nooit verstaan...*” (“Those people will never understand what we do here, why we stab and shoot. They will never understand”). I then explained that my purpose of conducting the research is to try and understand, and that by listening to the first-hand accounts of youth themselves I could build an authentic account of what goes on in the minds of youth, behind the actions that people see. I then emphasized the fact that voluntary participation is an important value of my research activity and that only those who felt free enough to share their stories should consider being interviewed. I was pleasantly surprised when he came up to me in the foyer after the meeting to inform me that he would be ready for an interview on the Saturday following our meeting.

Declaring my research intentions through social interactions with youth helped to build clarity about my presence in the neighbourhood. More importantly it provided me with an opportunity to prepare candidates for what they might experience through the

research process. Bulmer (2008: 150) emphasises the importance of allowing for potential respondents to freely participate or refuse, based on the most comprehensive information about the purpose of the interview. This includes arrangements to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Wengraf (2001: 187) explains the need to assure the participant that certain biographical information will be confidential and that a sufficient level of anonymity will be observed. It involves changing details without tampering with the “research value” of the concluding analysis. I therefore adjusted details such as names, places and logistics around stories that may be otherwise easily identified by readers, while ensuring that the essential narrative remains intact. By the time that each participant sat down with me for their first interview, they had already considered what I informed them about the process. This was formalised through the Informed Consent form, as found in Appendix 4.

The widespread poverty and impoverishment of the neighbourhood raised an ethical quandary over whether I should consider some financial remuneration for those participants who struggled to find employment and a source of sustenance within their families. I became aware of the common practice of youth going around from door to door, asking for a meal from neighbours. Others would run errands, wash windows or perform small maintenance tasks for neighbours in exchange for a meal or some cash. Their time spent participating in interviews with me might also be valuable time used to find an odd job for the day or another source of daily provision. While I was concerned that voluntary participation might become a challenging commitment to maintain over months of interviews under such circumstances, I was cautious not to allow financial remuneration to become an incentive for participation. As Head (2009: 336-337) points out, financial incentives are not the sole reason why participants commit to being interviewed and motivations are complex, seldom dependent on economic gain. I therefore decided to offer a packed meal at each interview with those participants whom I knew to live under especially poor conditions. The offer was gratefully accepted. This reflection prompted me to probe the complex motivations of participants to regularly attend interviews and welcome my participation in their social space. As outlined in the following section, this motivation stems largely from the appreciation of being listened to and having an opportunity to speak about aspects of their lives that they have always kept to themselves.

Given the personal dangers of conducting research in a neighbourhood such as Manenberg, where gang activity and violence take place unexpectedly, both primary and secondary research participants cautioned me about being alone in the

neighbourhood. To this extent, my presence was always accompanied by participants and community leaders such that my intentions could be understood as gathering information for research purposes. Some of the limitations were that I could not speak with high ranking members of any gangs, since this could be misinterpreted as attempting to expose gang operations. In the case of research participant Rose, it meant that I was limited in obtaining insights from her father Brian about how he considered his role. I therefore used insights from neighbours who could provide perspectives from their relationship with him.

Engaging with Sensitive Biographic Stories

The work of qualitative research involves disclosure of life experiences that often elicit sensitive topics. Dickson-Swift *et al.* (2007: 338) notes that many of these stories are difficult to relate because they are as yet untold and a researcher is therefore tasked with the responsibility of creating a safe space for participants to share stories that they may not have previously raised with other people. Taking time to build rapport with a participant, before the actual interview, is crucial to accessing this information in a responsible manner. This responsibility also extends over the risk of distress among some participants when recalling experiences of a deeply personal nature. Corbin and Morse (2003: 343) therefore advise on the need to firstly ascertain whether potential participants will be comfortable with sharing such experiences, apart from making provision for them to discontinue the interview as they may see necessary. It also calls for sensitivity on the part of a researcher to terminate an interview should it become too stressful, where a participant may indicate their willingness to raise the issue further at a subsequent interview or abandon the issue completely. My presence in the neighbourhood and interest in the social relations of participants helped build rapport since I often visited them outside of the context of the interview. It allowed them to introduce me to various settings and characters in their stories that they then found easier to refer to in the interviews, given my prior familiarity with the bigger context.

Josselson (2013: 12-13) reminds us that apart from performing the tasks of a research process, we are also still entering into and building a human relationship. It is for this reason that participants have a need to feel valued throughout the process. Participants also come to expect that interviewers respond in human terms to stories about their lives from which they make new meanings through the mere telling of it. It is important for the interviewer not to tamper with this meaning-making by offering one's own interpretation even though the temptation to do so might be strong. I found

it helpful to respond with phrases such as “we are all human”, “your response is natural and many others respond in similar ways”. Some participants did become emotionally overwhelmed at times, as expressed by lengthy pauses or crying, but preferred to continue talking about the issue rather than returning to it at another time. I gathered that they gained a sense of affirmation from trusting me with stories of a particularly sensitive nature. This was verbalised towards the end of a series of interviews by a participant who related stories of remorse from engaging in violent crime: “You know these interviews, it’s like my blood, its pumping more and more. Its giving me, you know what, it’s like here’s dark inside and you make like there is light inside.”

Summation

As youth navigate their way through the structural landscape of their social environment, they participate in this setting but it cannot be assumed that they will share in the concepts, values and beliefs. While this sharing may be one possible means of participation, there are still other possibilities (Maxwell, 2012: 28). It is the exercise of their personal agency in response to structural conditions that, over time, creates an individual system of meaning that must be understood as operating in diverse ways on a case by case basis. A Critical Realist approach helps to identify the constraints and enablements of structure against the powers and liabilities of agency as individuals relate stories that demonstrate interactions with social structures. The task is then to analyse this material to build concepts and trace the organization of these concepts within biographic stories. In this way we may identify the values and beliefs that determine attitudes and behaviour around employment outcomes.

This is why it may be possible for youth who grow up in a neighbourhood associated with poverty, confinement, and limited opportunities to demonstrate different employment outcomes, as can be observed from the selected cases for this study. A purely structural perspective does little in the way of accounting for this complexity and tends to portray a generalised account of individuals not being able to build responses of their own making, mechanically influenced by structural changes. My research method, which adopts a qualitative interpretive approach, is intended to unravel the conceptualisations of meaning that youth hold regarding education and employment. Through a series of lightly structured interviews from participants selected through purposive sampling, I explore relations that are contingent on their employment outcomes and aim to understand what motivations lie behind observed behaviour.

As I conclude my chat in the car park with Randall, I am saddled with curiosity to probe the starkly juxtaposed stories that I encountered. Randall makes his way back to the soccer field to continue medical examinations with the youth engaged in practice, and on my way out I drive passed the shed from where his once fellow classmate staggered out during our discussion. A group of youth is crouched together against the back wall of the structure, smoking what looks like *tik*. I make this identification from the large white puffs of smoke they emit from their mouths and the globular pipes that they grasp with both their hands. As the corridor created by the back of the shed and the caretaker's cottage is still visible from the main road, their actions are barely shielded from public view and I am able to observe them with ease. More opaque and concealed, however, is the story beneath this observation which I am challenged to pursue.

(Fieldnotes 30 January 2015)

Chapter 5

Disengaged Parental Supervision and Resigned Career Aspirations

Introduction

Parental relationships and family life were among the first most noticeable features of youth's social worlds, as I started to explore their individual contexts. At the very outset of setting up interviews, I found that some youth preferred to meet in their homes while others expressed that they were more comfortable talking to me in a different setting such as the community library. Rose was one of those who asked that we meet away from her family home since it was difficult to find a private space there in which she could speak openly.

After our interview at the library, I accompany Rose as she walks back to her flat. On the way, she looks for her son who was being minded by his father outside the library. They are no longer around where she left them but she does not seem too concerned about this as we walk and continue talking. Rose went to bed at around 4am today because her sister was out drinking and came back causing a racket with some of the neighbours in their family living room. I realise that the meal I prepared for us to share before we started our interview was a much needed source of sustenance since she went to bed without any food the night before. I observe a sense of helplessness about her as she speaks since she does not seem to have much control over her domestic circumstances. We part ways at a junction close to her block, where I need to visit a community leader. Rose walks off, still uncertain about where her son and his father have wandered off to.

(Fieldnotes 28 February 2015)

These early observations started to raise questions about the kind of support that Rose received from her family, especially from her largely absent single-parent father. I began to probe the nature of this relationship and how it might have influenced her decision to drop out of school, leaving her in a position of constantly struggling to find employment.

This chapter explores the interaction of personal agency with the structures of a disengaged parenting model and estranged family environment, as a constraining relation in the realisation of the educational and career aspirations of youth in ghetto neighbourhoods. Lareau's (2011: 238) theory of "natural growth" describes the parenting model of working class families as one in which children are allowed the freedom to associate with others and formulate their own ideas. I argue that in the context of a ghetto neighbourhood, however, this freedom may be interpreted as neglect since youth are left vulnerable to the cultural norm of limited education

expectations and are therefore constrained in navigating successful career paths. Without support from parental figures in considering what options may be available to them and how to navigate these pathways, they are only exposed to the structures of short-term casual work, hustling for irregular jobs, high school drop outs, and unemployment. Using the critical realist approach of identifying the way in which agency responds to social structure, I rely on Archer's (2003: 164) theory of "fractured reflexivity" to demonstrate how the social relation of disengaged parenting constrains the ability of youth in ghetto neighbourhoods to purposefully deliberate over their structural environment. They therefore reproduce, rather than transform, structures that leave them disillusioned about career aspirations and chronically unemployed.

Norms and Expectations around Education and Employment

The decline in availability of jobs for unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers is most pronounced within the clothing and textile industry which historically absorbed a large proportion of the female labour force in working class neighbourhoods such as Manenberg. Edwards and Morris (2007: 128) discuss this economic trend within the national context of a declining clothing and textile industry due to Chinese imports. It resulted in 530 factories, largely based in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, either closing down or retrenching workers between 2004 and 2006. During this time approximately 60 000 job losses in the industry were recorded. Versfeld (2012: 105) concurs that economic changes in post-apartheid South Africa saw many industries decline, with the textile and clothing industry experiencing the greatest number of job losses in the Western Cape. As Salo (2003: 354) explains, women were relied on to sustain households through what used to be a steady income from permanent jobs at clothing factories in Woodstock and Salt River which were established as inner-city industrial neighbourhoods. Most men were employed on an irregular basis in the construction industry as semi-skilled bricklayers, handymen, and painters, as well as along the docks unloading cargo and packaging goods for transport to factories.

Turok (2001: 2359-2360) found that as semi-skilled manual work became more scarce and the location of factories became more decentralised, employment for low- to semi-skilled workers has become more elusive. The concentration of industrial nodes away from the South East of Cape Town, where Manenberg is located, and the lack of business investment in these areas means that only small-scale industries continue to exist in the neighbourhoods of Manenberg, Hanover Park, and Gugulethu. The

industrial zone to the west of Manenberg, as illustrated on the map in Figure 1, consists largely of these micro-industries such as printing companies and motor vehicle repair garages, with the demand for work far outweighing the availability of low-and semi-skilled manual labour. The two larger companies, Consol Glass and Coca-Cola Bottling, do offer weekly opportunities for unskilled manual work that may include packing or cleaning. Some research participants spoke of the disillusioning practice of submitting work application forms and then waiting outside the gates of these premises on a Monday morning to hear whether their application was selected. While only those with prior work histories and traceable references are usually hired, it is a 'lucky draw' for most others who struggle to find such references since their work experience has been informal and irregular.

As already outlined in the literature, regarding economic trends in post-apartheid South Africa, the most growth in employment opportunities has taken place in highly-skilled professional, managerial and technical jobs, as well as semi-skilled clerical, sales and service jobs. These occupations exclude youth who have not completed high school. The number of residents in Manenberg who have a high school certificate is considerably low, at 19%, with an equally low employment rate. This rate shows that 68% of adults are considered "not economically active" and 47% of the workforce is unemployed (Statistics South Africa, 2015). This means that a substantially large number of adults are not actively seeking work, either because they might be disabled, retired, studying at a tertiary institution, or have not been recently engaged in looking for work. Given that only a small percentage of the adult population have completed high school, not many individuals would be students at tertiary education institutes. The percentage of retired people, at 8%, is also a small portion of this category.

The area in which Rose lives is characterised by adults seated on the street corners, engaged in conversation. It is striking to note how this bustling scene is a constant feature, even during weekdays and working hours. From my conversations with people I met, I came to discover that most adults who would like to work are not actively seeking work on an ongoing basis. They would therefore be considered as discouraged work seekers and not economically active. Many hustle for a job around the neighbourhood when they are in need of money, ask neighbours for food, borrow and lend items such as clothing, or rely on donations to the community that are managed through the Manenberg People's Centre. Providing for short-term material needs, is what most people speak of when I raise the subject of poverty and making a

living. Comments such as “just as long as I have enough” are often voiced, expressing a sense of contentment with being able to satisfy day-to-day needs.

Family Background

Imperilled Home Environment

Rose celebrated her 25th birthday in January 2015, a few weeks before our first interview. She lives in a two-bedroom apartment on the second floor of a Council apartment block. It is currently inhabited by 7 adults and 4 children. This includes Rose and her two sisters, with their children, Rose’s father and uncle, as well as friends of their father. In addition to the two bedrooms, there is one bathroom, a kitchen, and a living room. Although Rose’s sisters and their children occupy one of the bedrooms, her father and uncle occupy the other with their friends. Rose sleeps on a couch in the living room with her son Deon. She gave birth to Deon when she was 21 and raises him on her own. The father of the child is a member of The Crusaders gang, one of the oldest gangs with the largest membership in Manenberg. While he occasionally visits his son, Rose is cautious about his influence over the child due to his drug addiction. He has also physically assaulted Rose on several occasions. Rose’s only brother is in prison due to his involvement in illicit gang activity and her younger sister is an alcoholic, while her older sister has struggled to maintain the household with part-time work as a washing machine operator and ironer at a laundry since the death of their mother.

Rose does not have much recollection of her mother, since she died when Rose was still a toddler. Ivan, who lives in the flat above Rose, speaks very fondly of her mother, recalling that she was a humble and soft-spoken woman. She grew up in Kimberly, in the province of the Northern Cape, where she met Rose’s father and came to live with him in Cape Town as a teenager. Her family then disowned her due to this decision. They never married but shared the household and had four children. It was a physically and verbally abusive relationship, and Ivan maintains that Rose’s mother worked several jobs as a domestic worker in order to provide for the family’s material needs. Rose’s father did not work at this time and expected his wife to both raise the children and provide for them. This was, however, a virtually impossible expectation, as Ivan explains:

“She had to basically work and did not have time to look after children. Even if her mother was still alive, Rose would have seen very little of her mother...they

were often left alone up until the mother comes home at night and they get whatever she got from the people she worked for. Up until today, they can go to bed without food. They can go without food two or three nights in a row and never complain.” (Interview Transcript IVA1 Page 1)

Rose grew up under circumstances that she describes as “hectic”. Her father Brian is known by the neighbours in their block of apartments for his affiliation with The Crusaders gang as well. He is also known for his addiction to drugs and alcohol, and for his abusive behaviour towards his wife and children. Marion, a retired woman who lives with her husband only two units away from Rose, recalls the helplessness she saw in Brian on the day Rose’s mother died: “*Wat gaan ek nou doen?*” (What am I going to do now?). Marion believes that he was anxious about how he would raise the children since Rose’s mother took the lead in earning a household income through domestic work. She describes him as a careless and distant father who never protected his children nor cared for their needs.

The apartment has always been a crowded space that was also used as a meeting and recreational venue for gangsters who were friends of Rose’s father, brother, and cousin. Rose’s father would sometimes spend long periods of time away, working on fishing vessels out at sea. During this time Rose’s aunt and cousin lived with them:

“there was always gangsters living in the house with us because of her son...the same as my brother. With my aunty, if you were a gangster and you want her to keep something for you, you just buy her two beers to keep the guns, whatever, she would keep drugs for you. Now a lot of gangsters knew about our house because of my cousin...they would shoot at our house [apartment] so our house was damaged and everything.” (Interview Transcript ROS1 Page 7)

During the time that Rose’s father was at home, the apartment offered little privacy and protection from men who frequented the space. As a teenager, Rose recalls her father often smoking drugs in the living room with men whom she did not know. While she shared a room with her siblings at that time, she would need to walk across the living room to access the bathroom. It was on one of these occasions that she was accosted by one of the men who attempted to rape her. She managed to fend him off, given his inebriated state, and ran outside. This took place while her father was passed out from smoking mandrax (methaqualone). Rose explains that she chose not to speak to her father about this incident since she was certain that he would not believe her and dismiss the story as lies, since he held his friends in high regard and always defended their actions. Salo (2003: 362) reminds us that the bond among gang members becomes deeply imbedded through rites and practices that allow men to assert their heterosexual masculinity and personhood in the absence of a professional education

or a permanent job. It is therefore not only their livelihood but their primary sense of meaning that stems from an affiliation and allegiance to their gang, above all other relationships. We therefore understand why Brian would never have taken action against his friend's attempted rape on Rose, even at the tragic expense of his daughter's neglect and violation.

Apart from the harsh experience of poverty and the high-risk presence of gang members in their family home, Brian sent his children out to beg for food and money from neighbours. Marion recalls seeing Rose going from "door to door" with her brother, asking for food. Having no children of their own, she and her husband decided to take Rose into their care soon after her mother died. Marion relates the story of the day she came home from work, on the afternoon of the funeral for Rose's mother, to find Rose sitting alone on the stairs. She looked up at Marion and asked: "Aunty Marion, where is my mummy? When is my mummy coming home?" Marion explained that her mother is no longer coming back and that she is in heaven. She realised that no-one took the time to explain the death of her mother to her and took pity on Rose as a three-year-old child looking for her mother who had just died. Rose would live with them periodically, especially when Brian was working away for long periods of time out at sea but he always demanded that Rose return home. This was his attempt to prevent his children from exposing the presence and activity of gang members in his household, as Rose explains: "I was scared to speak to people because he would beat me. He never wanted people to know what's happening in the house." Despite his insistence that his children remained within his household, he did little to provide for them: "[H]e leave you without food. Just as long as he can go into his [drug] habit and you have to go look for him for his habit, food and money, then everything is OK."

The concern over Rose's safety, in a household that condoned and accommodated illicit gang activity, was shared by neighbours in the apartment block. Despite this shared concern, they were afraid of the harsh consequences they might experience should they alert the local authority to the need for social workers to investigate the circumstances under which Rose and her siblings lived. For the most part, adults in the block tried to assist the children but silently objected to the callous structural conditions that were brought about by Brian's disengaged presence. Marion explains:

"They went through a lot in that house. That is why I took her and kept her safe as though she was my own child. That house was full of friends of her father and it was not safe. She was small. No-one knew what was going on in that house. There were drugs and gangsters, so what were they doing with the children?" (Interview Transcript MAR1 Page 2)

Disengaged Parental Supervision

Rose explains that her father did not play an active role in her education, even to the extent of not being able to register her at school: “He was never there for me. Other people had to go write me in at primary school and other people had to do it in high school. Even if the school had meetings he was never there.” Rose was forced to ask neighbours for help in getting second-hand school uniforms and shoes from those who were no longer at school and often felt embarrassed about doing so since neighbours would comment: “[B]ut your daddy is working, why doesn’t he support you?” While Rose kept up her struggle to find school resources for herself, there were times when she would grow weary and stay away from classes if she did not have the necessary books or stationery: “[T]here was people that helped me get my stationery together but like if I don’t have that book for that subject I don’t go into that class. That was me (laughs) and then I was the whole day outside.”

The “natural growth” that Lareau (2011: 3) ascribes to the parenting models of working class families can hardly condone the disengagement that Rose’s father adopted, but the theory helps us to understand what drives parents to set boundaries and distances with their children. Lareau (2011: 239) holds that the economic hardships associated with working class families place a burden on the responsibility of parenthood such that parents, especially those who are single, do not have many options available to them in raising their children. They therefore use directives, rather than discussing the feelings and thoughts of their children, setting a clear distance between adults and children. They also do not consider it their responsibility to manage their children’s leisure activities, nor attend to their school education needs. This distancing is a means of coping with the limited resources they have available to them to run a household.

Brian’s directives were harsh and severe methods that involved sending his children out to beg for food and money from neighbours. He maintained supervision of his children to ensure two self-preserving needs: to have food and money to support the household and his drug habits, as well as to ensure that any details of illicit activity associated with his household would not be disclosed. He therefore maintained a disengaged supervision, distancing himself from his children’s emotional and material needs. Lareau’s (2011: 3) “natural growth” theory identifies parent-youth distances as a coping mechanism for parents with limited resources, and it is therefore considered an “accomplishment” to raise children under such constraints. In the case of Rose’s

family this model of parenting translates into an abusive approach that, as we shall later analyse, gives rise to detrimental outcomes.

Further examples of disengaged parenting are reflected in the stories of other research participants such as Jennifer, who lives two blocks away from Rose. Jennifer, who is now 22 years old, grew up with her mother and siblings from other fathers, while she has never known her own father. She performed well at school and successfully completed high school, but has struggled to find permanent work. Jennifer has longed for support from her mother, both materially and emotionally, but found her to be aloof and disinterested:

“[F]or me, its like when I need like the support and that support system from my mother its not always there. You know when I need advice from her she will tell me I can’t tell you what to do, you have to decide for yourself and sometimes I just need a little extra push ...you have to push yourself. You pushing yourself for a very long time, it gets exhausting.” (Interview Transcript JEN3 Page 9)

While Jennifer’s mother works occasional jobs at retail stores as a shop assistant, she often spends money lavishly on luxury food items and expects Jennifer to provide for her own personal needs such as toiletries and transport costs. Apart from holding part-time jobs over the weekends, Jennifer has the responsibility of taking care of her younger siblings. On the numerous occasions of my visit to their home over the weekend I would find Jennifer feeding or bathing her new-born sister while her mother entertained friends in the living room. Jennifer abandoned an attempt to pursue a state-funded diploma course in graphic design, after successfully competing for admission. While she was able to fund transport and personal costs of the first semester, from her own savings, having to hold a part-time job and take care of her siblings meant that she had limited time to complete the demanding load of assignments and group projects. Despite Jennifer’s exemplary performance in the first semester and her enthusiasm about pursuing a desired career path, her mother showed little interest in her progress. Whenever Jennifer tried to discuss the challenges she was experiencing with time management and her struggle to supplement the costs of her study, her mother would respond in a manner that suggested she would prefer not to intervene: “I can’t tell you what to do...you have to figure that out for yourself.” After missing several deadlines Jennifer was excluded from the college.

Leon, a 22-year-old who lives close to Rio Grande Primary School, grew up with a mother who was an alcoholic. He has only vague memories of his father who walked out on them while Leon was still four years old, an event that marked the beginning of his mother’s excessive drinking. Leon recalls having to return home from school on

many afternoons to hear, from his maternal aunt who also lived with them, that he needed to fetch his mother from one of the local bars. Leon would then have to bring his mother home in a drunken state and help his aunt to put her into bed. Like Rose, Leon experienced little support from his family. With his mother often away drinking and his aunt trying to take care of her, as well as her son who struggled with a drug addiction, Leon was without parental supervision and developed an interest in gang activity:

“I used to go to school without bread, without a pencil, without books, without a bag. I used to look at other children. Other children’s mum[s] look after them but my mum (sighs)...on the end of the day there was no-one who cared so I started throwing stones and sitting with bad friends and having a good relationship with bad friends, started to gang fight and after throwing stones, stab each other and I was doing that at school also and so I went to high school and I started to have my own gang [at] school.” (Interview Transcript LEO1 Page 5)

Leon dropped out of high school in Grade 9 after being expelled for violent behaviour. Four years ago he experienced a religious conversion through a local church group that took an interest in his family. Leon began playing guitar and drums at church services and this strong sense of belonging helped him to relinquish ties with his gang. One of his regrets is not having a high school completion certificate since this has prevented him from securing any full-time employment. He therefore tries to make a living off stipends that he collects from playing in the church band. While Leon’s mother has been sober for the past two years, also with help from the local church social support services, she is often in conflict with him about getting a permanent job with medical aid benefits such as with the local authority. Leon however feels helpless at not being able to compete for such prospects without any academic or skills qualifications.

Unfulfilled Expectations within the Parent-Youth Relationship

Following Archer’s (2003: 5) critical realist position on the structure and agency relationship, we identify the powers of constraint and enablement by firstly clarifying the “agential enterprise” or the anticipated outcome. In the case of Rose, Jennifer, and Leon, I firstly trace their anticipated outcomes in terms of education and careers. I then explore parent and family relationships, with regards to this enterprise, to determine whether expectations and obligations around their projections were compatible. I explore how this compatibility, or lack thereof, builds a position from which youth interpret the contextual structures of poverty, and the shortage of low-skilled jobs, as well as the cultural norms around education and employment. The quality of the social

relation of disengaged parenting therefore helps us understand how youth respond to social structures by building motivations and beliefs around their employability.

Anticipated Outcomes

When Rose completed primary school, she decided to attend Phoenix Secondary School which is a kilometre away from her home, as compared to Silverstream Secondary School, only a block away:

“I was the only [one] in Phoenix from all my friends. I preferred it like that where there’s none of my friends, just me. Otherwise I am not gonna focus on my work. Also there was a lot of girls pregnant in Silverstream and Manenberg Secondary, so I wanted to go to Phoenix to go finish school because I know for a fact if I’m gonna go to Manenberg Secondary or Silverstream, Grade 8 or 9 I’m gonna drop out of school.” (Interview Transcript ROS2 Page 5)

Despite Rose’s efforts to focus on her studies and avoid influences that may distract her from completing school, she dropped out after failing her Grade 10 examinations and when she was halfway through repeating the Grade. This was not after many attempts on her part to keep up with her studies. She explains that she would deliberately choose to study alone, in order to focus, and would make use of the community library to do so. At home she would also wait until the house was quiet in the early hours of the morning to prepare for important tests and examinations. Her favourite subjects were English and Mathematics, where she often excelled. Her interest in Business Economics was inspired by a teacher whom she speaks fondly of. He would often counsel Rose and demonstrate empathy towards her situation at home, encouraging her to stay focused. She felt motivated to put more effort into this subject and had aspirations of pursuing tertiary studies in business administration.

We appreciate that Rose demonstrated a personal agency towards academic success, through the achievements of her early school career. She also showed potential through the community development programmes that she participated in and excelled at leading. While Rose did not foreground these experiences through our interview sessions, I was able to supplement her case study from the input of people such as Jonathan Jansen who is an NGO leader based at the Manenberg People’s Centre. Jonathan speaks of his reliance on Rose’s leadership and management skills when he hosted youth development workshops but he remains disappointed that she has never relied on these skills to build a career. Rose’s neighbour Marion concurs:

“She is clever. She is very clever. Computer, programmes, whatever, she is a very clever girl, truly. We were disappointed that she threw her life away. She can go far with those thoughts she had. I tell her you could have a better life

and she just laughs because she knows that's the truth." (Interview Transcript MAR1 Page 2)

Jennifer's example of academic success is seen in obtaining a commendable high school certificate, with a distinction in Mathematics. Still, she struggled to find support from her mother or any other adult in her extended family to pursue her aspiration of a career in graphic design. While she expresses the need for help in navigating the choices associated with building a career, apart from material resources to complete her studies at college, she was confronted with her mother's sporadic work career and constant financial need for material affluence that took precedence over Jennifer's needs. This disengaged relationship is also reinforced by her mother's insistence on Jennifer finding her own means to provide for her personal material needs, constraining her opportunity to pursue a tertiary qualification.

Leon's aspiration of pursuing a career in music grew from the exposure he experienced, during his primary school years, to the band practices that he would attend with his uncle. He started to learn playing the drums and guitar from the age of seven and excelled at it but when his uncle moved to Johannesburg, he was not able to keep up with any music practice. As his mother's alcoholism worsened and his aunt was more pre-occupied with taking care of the household, Leon's interest waned. Since relinquishing his involvement in gangsterism and starting to participate in a local church's activities, he has aspired to follow the ranks of successful performing artists who have emerged from impoverished neighbourhoods in Cape Town but struggles to access this network. He is reliant on the stipend he receives from occasional participation in his church band, which helps him to "give my mommy something for the house."

The unfulfilled expectations of Rose, Jennifer, and Leon, for a provident and supportive parental presence, are important in understanding their pathway towards unemployment. What Lareau (2011: 3) terms the "accomplishment of natural growth", has unfavourable outcomes in the case of youth from Manenberg who need strong interventions from their parents for advice, material provision, and emotional support in their education and career aspirations. Distanced parenting, however, does not recognise these needs since the obligation, on the part of parents, is for their children to provide income for the household. The disjuncture comes about through the failure of parents to recognise increasing demands for a more professionalised, educated,

and non-manual labour force and the need that their children have for parental intervention to navigate such a career path.

Incongruent Relations

Having identified the “agential enterprise” (Archer, 2003: 5) or anticipated outcome for Rose, Jennifer, and Leon, in terms of their education and career projections, we now consider the elements of parental relations within the family environment that posed structural constraints on their personal agency. Archer (2003: 8) describes such relations as incongruent, since the anticipated outcome or enterprise of the child is not recognised by the personal agency of the parent such that there is a disjuncture between the structural power and the enterprise. Sayer (1992: 89-90) speaks of identifying obligations and rights, meaning that if there is no acknowledgement between a parent and child over what a child needs from a parent in order to achieve a certain outcome then the parent-child relation is considered incongruent.

In applying this analysis to Rose’s experience, we find that her father Brian did not support her need for educational requirements such as stationery and uniforms or even his presence at parent-teacher meetings, while she expresses a need for his intervention. Rose expected her father “to be there for me” but his attention was on finding means to support his drug habits, with priority for the use of their household space given to friends who shared a gang membership with him, instead of his children. Brian’s expectation was for Rose to support these actions through acquiring money for him and providing for herself through asking for food from neighbours. He expected this support from all his children and while the others complied, Rose grew angry about having to find money for her father’s drug and alcohol use: “Ja [Yes] they support him. They give him money. Now I don’t give money, because why must I give money if I have to look for my own stuff to eat...Sometimes I feel I can kill him.” This response from Rose often led to arguments in the household and she would be ‘thrown out’ at night to sleep on the landing of the staircase outside their apartment. To the extent that the expectations within this parent-child relationship were never met, we gather that Rose held an independent rather than interdependent association with her father. She also received little support from her sisters who objected to the way in which she stood up to their father, since this attitude of Rose created more animosity in the household. Rose could therefore not rely on their assistance with raising her son Deon and thereby faced further constraint in trying to look for work.

The negative influence of an unsupportive parent is most clearly expressed in Rose's failure to complete high school. Her independent efforts to complete her school career could not be sustained as she struggled to find a supportive and motivating influence. Rose's interest in school began to wane during Grade 9. She describes herself as becoming a very "stubborn" person who found it difficult to take instructions from others. Coupled with this hostile attitude to others was a surprisingly high degree of anger for someone who described herself as a "shy and quiet girl" who kept to herself. Rose relates the story of being accused of stealing a girl's cap at school:

"We were sitting outside and this girl just came to me and she asked me where's her cap. So I was like what cap? So she was like, 'Oh my cap that was hanging here'. I was like, 'No, I don't know about it.' But OK I kept quiet because we were a lot of friends sitting there, so why you blaming me? So I went to class and she still came in class and told the teacher about it so I just got angry and I started hitting her. So after that the teacher tried to cover up for her and so I went to the teacher and I hit her as well. So that is how I was." (Interview Transcript ROS5 Page 2)

Rose was expelled from school on a few occasions for similar incidents and it resulted in her missing out on classwork that she did not catch up with. She found that nobody in her family took note of her coming home early, so there was no concern over what had happened at school: "It didn't matter whether I went to school or not." Furstenberg *et al* (2000: 81) comments that such forms of parental neglect, where consistent guidelines within a home environment or consequences on rule infringements are lacking, youth struggle to find a sense of personal control and struggle to "navigate the world beyond the household".

The incongruent expectations that Rose experienced, in terms of her education aspirations and the neglect she encountered from her father, tells us that this relationship may be regarded as a constraining influence since he failed to provide for her most basic needs, apart from never demonstrating any interest or involvement in Rose's school career. We may draw the same parallels with Jennifer and Leon, as further examples of youth whose unmet expectations for support from their parents had a constraining influence over their career aspirations. For Jennifer this constraint was the pressure she faced to care for her younger siblings and provide for her own material needs, thereby relinquishing the time and effort she needed to pursue further studies towards a career in graphic design. For Leon, the absence of parental involvement left him imperilled by the influence of gangsterism that led to his suspension from school. Leon struggled to find both material and emotional support from his mother and aunt. Apart from not being able to pursue his early childhood talent and interest in music, his inability to complete high school meant that he could not

qualify for permanent employment opportunities that would offer benefits such as subsidies or medical aid. To this extent the unmet expectations of youth within the social relation of disengaged parenting holds a constraining influence on employment aspirations.

Agential Reflection and Response

Rose's experience of growing up in a single parent family, with a father who neglected the educational and nutritional needs of his children, must also be considered within the structural context of widespread poverty, high rates of unemployment and discouraged work seekers in the neighbourhood. The culture of low education expectations and hustling for an odd job, a meal, or other necessary material resources, may hold an influence over the way in which youth consider their prospects of finding employment. Following the critical realist approach of probing the powers and liabilities of personal agency, in responding to these cultural conditions, we are able to explore how youth build meaning around their circumstances that influence their decisions about education and employment. The social relation of parent-youth interaction, in this case the liabilities of disengaged parenting, is used as a mechanism through which we can evaluate how youth reflect on and respond to their structural environment. As a necessary relation, in terms of education and employment outcomes, I explore how the causal liabilities of such a form of parenting can bring about unsuccessful outcomes.

Resigned Aspirations

Rose demonstrated that she was capable of achieving academic success, through the efforts of her early school experience. We also appreciate her aspiration to complete high school and pursue a career in business administration, given her attempts to find her own school resources in the absence of support from her father. Apart from this constraint, Rose was also exposed to poor examples of school attendance and employment in her family, as explained by Rose's neighbour Ivan:

“The one cousin is walking up and down Cape Town. He's a beggar. The other one is a leader in [The Young Ones] gang and then the other cousin in Hanover Park has been on drugs and then her sister is just on drugs. They drink a lot...There is not one relative of hers who has a decent job or is earning a decent living, or at least a non-criminal living.” (Interview Transcript IVA1 Page 1)

These are the associations that Rose makes when speaking about her eventual decision to discontinue her school career.

“...[S]o ja [yes] that is why I dropped out of school because for me, I didn’t see a future for me. What’s the use I’m gonna finish Grade 12 and then I’m still gonna be at home so I told myself no I’m gonna drop out of school and just do my own thing, so ja [yes].” (Interview Transcript ROS2 Page 2)

To this extent, Rose demonstrates a stance of having grown weary of the struggle since childhood to take care of herself: “So it was difficult, even today if you want something you have to go out and look for it to survive. Since I was small, since I was in primary school it was so. Today it is still the same. So nothing ever changed.” Rose has internalised her observations through what Archer (2003: 164) calls “fractured reflexivity”, referring to the incapacity to look beyond the constraints of one’s structural environment. It is a position that no longer values goals that were previously set out, where one has ceased to take an active role in responding to structural influences. As Young (2003: 1080) explains, belief systems are reinforced by what family experiences reveal about barriers or obstacles. As compared to the experience of parenting that included concerted efforts to support the education goals of other research participants, Rose was unable to find support that could reinforce her aspirations to complete high school. The culture of disengaged parenting practised by Brian included his neglect of Rose’s educational needs and aspirations in favour of gang culture that reproduces beliefs of disregard for formal employment. It is not the only kind of parenting culture in Manenberg but is certainly one of them. The fracturing that Rose experiences in her personal deliberation is observed in her inability to see possibilities of pursuing her aspirations beyond the barriers of neglect and a lack of supportive resources.

Rose relates a story of neglect and physical abuse, from her father, in a manner that suggests she has disillusioned beliefs about her future and she struggles to find a hopeful option out of her situation: “...[T]here’s nothing that made me happy there. I could see myself dying in that house.” This position of ‘dying’, in the sense of having nothing to give or to say, has reflected in Rose’s behaviour. She describes herself as a reserved individual who does not easily talk about herself, to the extent that she struggles to promote herself at job interviews: “I never speak to people. If I go for a work interview I struggle to talk so I feel they can see that on my face I am not a talkative person.” Not only did Rose’s father neglect to take care of his family’s essential needs for material provisions, but he also allowed his home to be used for illicit gang activities which in turn created a high-risk and unprotected cultural condition for his children. Moletsane (2012) explains that such risk factors in the development of young people have the debilitating influence of compromising their sense of well-being. While fear is a functional aspect of human growth, in response to threatening

situations, growth is inhibited and disturbed when threats of violence are perceived as normal. Barbarin and Richter (2001: 247) help strengthen these views by advancing that greater risks result in poorer outcomes, particularly with regards to education and employment. Exposure to high-risk environments, especially within the context of a family home, is highlighted as being an experience that debilitates individuals and hampers their development. The high-risk cultural circumstances of parental neglect and gangsterism in Rose's home therefore constrains her personal agency in attempting to navigate a pathway of career development.

In relating stories from her childhood and youth, Rose organises her speech to suggest that she has reached the end of a pathway that does not lead anywhere. She often engages in detailed descriptions of her life experiences and then ends with "so ja [yes]", as though there is an acceptance of the harsh realities she speaks of such as going to bed hungry or hustling for money. Taking care of her son, Deon is what Rose considers a priority and she organises her daily activities around providing for him. In the absence of any day-care assistance which might have given her time to improve her education qualifications or look for more sustainable employment, Rose settles for short term and irregular casual jobs that she acquires through neighbours.

Rose's position of disillusionment and resigned aspirations may also be recognised in other decisions regarding her living arrangements and social support. One such example is when Marion offered Rose the opportunity to live within the supportive household structure of Marion's home, since she was already 18 and not legally bound to the guardianship of her father. This offer included a condition from Marion that Rose ends her relationship with the father of her child. Marion and her husband were prepared to have Rose and her son live in their home, in the hope of supporting her to find employment and to study part-time towards a professional career. They were, however, not prepared to accept Rose still maintaining ties with her boyfriend due to his gang affiliation and drug addiction. Marion expresses her disappointment in Rose's decision not to leave her abusive relationship: "I used to tell her you had a tough life growing up so why you take a guy who still gives you a tough life? You can have better than that but she don't want to listen". When I spoke with Rose about her decision to turn down the offer by Marion, she sighs deeply and recalls: "I was just drinking that time. Late at night, on the weekends, partying. I didn't want any rules. I was just drinking. I didn't care anymore." Rose is also reluctant to pursue actions that may secure more support for herself and her son, as seen in her response to her experience of identity fraud. Rose has not been able to access the government child support grant

since her identity was cloned. While she is aware of the process involved to resolve the problem, Rose has not taken any action to do so for the past two years and continues to rely on hand outs to support Deon.

Rose's sense of resigned aspirations and willingness to accept opportunities easily available to her, is reflected in the indiscriminate attitude with which she accepts job offers, often leading to her being exploited. One such example is the work she conducted for an insurance company, through door-to-door policy sales. For each policy of ZAR300 that she sold, she received ZAR30 commission. The recruitment process did not require an interview or presentation of a CV. It offered little training and only supported workers with transport to and from areas in which they were required to conduct sales. Rose was often hungry and tired. She was not well versed in the terms of the policy and struggled to explain it to me when I probed the subject during our interview. She sold two policies in the space of ten days and then quit out of sheer exhaustion and frustration. Her experience of exploitation is also evidenced in her hairdressing services to women in her neighbourhood, where she would accept to do a job for ZAR10 that would ordinarily cost ZAR100 at a hair salon, due to the certified training course that Rose followed at the Manenberg People's Centre. She would often not get paid, with women promising to pay her at the end of the month and then not honouring their commitments.

Reproduced Unemployment

Most of the jobs that Rose has worked were acquired through adults who live in the same apartment block. These positions are only available during retail high seasons when extra staff is required, involving work such as packing shelves or serving customers at the bakery. Rose speaks about these work experiences only as opportunities to provide for short term material needs, "to buy a few things for myself and to sort Deon out". It is a notion of work shared by other adults in the neighbourhood who often talk about "just as long as I have enough", expressing a sense of contentment with being able to satisfy day-to-day needs. Rose reflects her reproduction of this social structure: "For me it's not what kind of work is it for me, it's just I'm gonna go do it, so I don't care what work it is, I just wanna do it to earn money." Her decisions about work revolve around what she needs to provide for her daily needs rather than on a long term employment plan. Despite her access to facilities at the People's Centre, Rose has also not compiled a CV but merely speaks about it as a task that "I must still do".

While Rose is not happy about the situation she finds herself in, she does not see other options that are possible to pursue apart from the examples she sees everyday around her of other unemployed youth and those who have given up looking for work. Her attempts to transform this social norm may be traced to decisions that she made as a teenager to attend a school that offered more positive examples of diligent school attendance and study. This aspiration was however difficult to maintain, given her unfulfilled expectations around parental support which left her without the ability to pursue a different pathway.

Along with the examples of Jennifer and Leon who have also resigned their career aspirations to irregular work as shop assistants or earning stipends from the church band, Rose's ability to pursue her education and career aspirations has been constrained by her unsupportive family structures. Jennifer has attempted to respond in a manner that would have challenged the norm of unemployment through the graphic design course she qualified for but the constant strain of limited resources, due to poor support from her mother, curtails her aspiration. Their experience of disengaged parenting, that does not support their expectations, has given rise to attitudes that accept only what is closely available to them as work opportunities. This "fractured reflexivity" (Archer, 2003: 164) does not allow them to look beyond their circumstances and create ideas of work with the notion of planning, training, or networking. Their vulnerable state of constantly needing to provide for themselves, with limited resources and support, has restricted the way in which they consider the options they may have access to. In adopting a stance of having to accept what is closely available, youth who straddle this resigned pathway lack the ability to challenge the social structures of unemployment that they grow up with. Their perspective on work has become one of temporal and immediate relief to material needs, with no projection towards long term employment. Youth such as Rose therefore find themselves in a state of chronic under-employment, accepting temporary work placements for a small wage, while also hustling from neighbours for odd jobs and material provisions from one day to the next.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to trace the manner in which youth are influenced by the material structures of poverty and the scarcity of low- and semi-skilled manual work, as well as the cultural structures of disengaged parental supervision. Following the

relationship that Rose held with her single-parent father and the poor support she received from the rest of her family, we recognise that her expectations were largely unfulfilled. Lareau's (2011: 3) theory of "natural growth" helps us to understand the circumstances under which some parents adopt a disengaged style of parenting. Within the context of a wider ghetto culture, however, this parenting practice translates into an experience of neglect since it exposes children to values that prevent them from succeeding at school.

If the expectations and obligations of the parent-youth relation do not meet around education and employment aspirations, the result of such experiences is that youth are left without emotional and material resources to navigate desired outcomes. As in the case of Rose, the lonely path of struggling to provide for herself left her weary and disillusioned about being able to transform the culture of low expectations around education and employment. The culture of disengaged parenting leaves her exposed solely to such expectations which she reproduces through a fractured deliberation over her constrained ability to pursue a career in business administration. By reproducing lowered education expectations of dropping out of school, Rose did not have the personal agency to transform her position within the material structure of deindustrialisation and the unemployment of poorly-educated workers. As she organises her speech around negative influences and failed struggles we get a sense that she feels trapped in her circumstances, identified by her association with place: "I don't see myself here. That is the feeling I am getting for myself, to be out of Manenberg".

Rose, Jennifer, and Leon have adopted a position of having to accept what is closely available to them, although they have demonstrated the personal agency towards success in their career aspirations. Their experience of disengaged parental supervision has influenced their deliberation around career options such that they believe only in the examples of irregular and informal work in their immediate environment. The incongruence of this necessary social relation has therefore disabled their attempts to transform social structures, and influenced their reproduction of these circumstances in their pathway towards under-employment. Their perspective on work has become one of temporal and immediate relief to material needs, with no projection towards long term employment. They find themselves in a state of chronic under-employment, accepting temporary work placements for a small wage, and hustling for odd jobs, without a sustainable or reliable source of income.

Chapter 6

Consistent Parental Intervention

Introduction

Carl grew up in an area of Manenberg associated with circumstances of widespread unemployment, as well as violent crime and drug trafficking. Many observers have attributed the high rates of school drop outs, especially among young men, to the location of the Hard Livings gang headquarters within this area of the neighbourhood. Carl's story, however, traces the pathway of an alternative outcome that sees him on the brink of completing his university degree towards a professional career in education. Structuralist arguments such as those of William J. Wilson (1996: 78) hold that the ongoing exposure of youth to joblessness, high school dropout cases, and social adversity is a structural constraint in limiting their options and leading to the reproduction of these structures. While this may be true from observing statistical patterns of behaviour among youth in Manenberg, we would need to probe further to explain how alternative outcomes, such as those of Carl and other similar youth, may be possible. Following the critical realist approach of paying attention to the role of personal agency in response to structural circumstances, I aim to understand how youth build worldviews and beliefs which provide agency in completing high school and resisting the allure of gang membership.

Carl's mother played a significant role in his life as a single parent. Her close involvement in his socialisation and school career may be considered as a basis for building his worldview on education and employment. One of the most striking features of this relationship is that she kept Carl and his twin brother indoors for most of their childhood. Apart from going to school, they were forbidden to be outside of the apartment that they shared with their grandparents. Carl was also one of those research participants who felt most comfortable being interviewed at home, rather than at a venue elsewhere in the neighbourhood:

Carl is seated in the lounge of his family's two-bedroom apartment. He is at the table leaning over a set of papers that he reads as I approach the doorway and he looks up to greet me. The gate is unlocked but closed and, as he walks over to let me in, he prompts his younger sister to go into the bedroom. It is a modestly furnished and neat living room with a large framed picture of Carl and his twin brother, Calvin, on the wall. It was taken on the evening of their Matric Ball, a celebration to mark their final year in high school. He explains that he has been inundated with assignments and spends every day indoors. His mother has been working a seven day per week schedule for several months

now. He tries to take care of the housework so that she merely needs to cook when she gets home. Calvin is still at work and his ailing grandfather is asleep in the other bedroom. The house is quiet and still, amidst the noise of busy traffic and children playing outside.

(Fieldnotes 9 February 2015)

In this chapter I explore the model of parenting as close and consistent mentoring. I argue that it is a necessary means by which youth are enabled to transform social structures of unemployment within the context of poverty, unemployment, and the influence of gangsterism. Following Archer's (2003: 255) theory of personal internal reflection I demonstrate how Carl's "meta-reflexivity" enables him to critically assess his environment. Elder-Vass' (2012: 87) theory of "competing norm circles" helps to reinforce the notion that insulated family environments can create cultural norms and expectations that help youth to challenge the negative culture of despondency that includes the practice of dropping out of school. I argue that within the context of ghetto neighbourhoods, "concerted cultivation" (Lareau, 2011: 165-166) parenting does more than prepare youth to better navigate social institutions of school and formal employment. It also influences personal agency in internalising one culture over another, such that education and career aspirations may be fulfilled.

Cultural Norms around High School Completion and Career Development

Carl's stepfather Grant, a high school teacher in Manenberg, explains that most of the students he encounters have not thought about careers even in their final year of school. They also do not look further than what they see around them when trying to find work: "They don't think further than that. They don't think doctor, professor, scientist, astronaut. They are happy with getting a job at the local supermarket because that is the only thing they know." When I spoke with both primary and secondary participants about their exposure to careers fairs and workshops at school, they responded that these experiences were merely outings they would enjoy in other parts of the city but they were never able to follow-up with teachers at their school about how to pursue these paths or what subject choices might best prepare them for a professional career.

The national Census 2011 records reveal that only a very small and insignificant percentage, 1.7% of adults, in Manenberg have completed a college diploma or university degree. An even smaller percentage, 0.5% of those aged 15 and above has completed any form of skills certification. Within Carl's area of the neighbourhood, the

data shows that not one individual has completed any of these qualifications that may put them in line for a professional career path. Furthermore, only 11% of the adult population having completed high school in this area.

The Matric Ball, celebrated in the final year, is a rare and celebrated experience in many ghetto neighbourhoods of Cape Town. Those who make it this far are afforded a celebrity status, with crowds of neighbours gathering outside the homes of candidates to cheer as they leave for the ball. Community leaders and teachers explain that poverty in Manenberg drives families to focus on immediate needs such as food and rent. Completing high school seems to be a far-off and elusive goal that will not “put a meal on the table tonight” but the deception of this thought process is that stable employment is largely assured with a high school certificate. Youth are therefore expected to provide for the family by whatever means they can, albeit asking for food from neighbours, hustling for odd jobs, and short term casual work. While illicit means of acquiring income, through association with gangs, is not openly condoned, parents seldom question or challenge youth who occasionally provide for the family with unusually large amounts of money. This is a cultural norm, evidenced by the way it is often raised at community meetings and in my discussions with community leaders. Parents who are aware of their children being involved in illicit gang activity are criticised for not speaking out or informing the police but such parents are constrained by the threat of their lives being in danger for doing so. Also, their extreme poverty means that they are reliant on whatever material provision they receive, albeit through illicit means.

Examples of the decision to drop out of school in favour of immediate family needs, and of families who accept material provisions from gang activity, are evidenced in the case studies of Zaira and Natheem. Despite Zaira’s commendable academic performance at school that saw her successfully pass through each grade and emerge among the top five learners in her class, she chose to drop out of school and take care of her ailing mother. With the situation of her mother being a single parent after their father walked out on the family, and the difficulty of her brother struggling with a drug addiction, the more immediate need was to support her mother rather than completing high school. Natheem’s circumstances of poverty in his family, likewise saw him resorting to desperate means of acquiring money and food through crime. While his mother never accepted the money he brought home, knowing that he acquired it through illicit means, she would make use of the packages of groceries and other provisions he brought home without questioning where they were from.

Although it is the aspiration of youth in Manenberg to complete high school and find permanent employment, the expected outcome is that they drop out of school by Grade 10 and find a source of income for their household. In each of the case studies that I compiled, with youth dropping out of school, none of their parents raised any objections to these decisions by encouraging them to persevere through their school career. There was, however, more pressure from parents for their children to “get a job” and secure material support for the family. This is especially evidenced in the previous chapter with Leon’s mother often at loggerheads with him to find permanent employment, yet his earlier decision to drop out of school was condoned by his family. With the scarcity of low- and semi-skilled manual labour and the distant location of these jobs, the norm is that most youth in Manenberg remain unemployed and find a means of income through the informal sector. Obtaining a high school certificate, a tertiary education, full-time work, and professional careers are considered extraordinary achievements that only a small minority of youth are able to reach.

The contested cultures are such that youth desire to complete high school but there is still the widely-held belief that dropping out of school will provide immediate relief to poverty through odd jobs or even gang membership. This belief is encouraged by the cultural practice among many individuals who accept or at least give in to the influence. Community leader and activist, Joyce Stollies meets many children and youth through the soup kitchen that she runs from her home every Thursday afternoon. She explains that many of them have not eaten for days and experience neglect in their homes due to parents spending long hours away at work or struggling with alcohol and drug addictions. They are therefore unsupported and despondent about keeping up with attempts to regularly attend school:

“...the children at home, they don’t wanna go to school because there is no bread at home. Daddy didn’t come home, there is no money. Or mummy did work but she is here and there paying her debts for money she borrowed last month. She must pay the people. There is no money for bread tomorrow to go to school. They are clever, they can make something of their life but they don’t want to go because they haven’t got food. They didn’t eat. Its very tough to stay in Manenberg.” (Interview Transcript JOY1 Page 3)

Gang leaders observe and target youth who do not have strong support at home from parents. They are carefully lured through generous offers of branded clothing and mobile phones which youth find difficult to resist:

“So there it is starting. I am getting the phone. I am wearing a name *takkie* [sneakers]. I got a little money. Now I don’t go to school at all because its nice there. Tomorrow they put a gun in my hand...that gang boss don’t worry about

that kid anymore. His life is ruined. He [has]n't got a life anymore. But they cry to me. Their hearts are sore. They are good kids. They don't wanna be gangsters." (Interview Transcript JOY1 Page 3)

Such examples help to demonstrate how contesting cultures challenge the ability of youth to exercise their personal agency towards completing school and finding formal employment. Elder-Vass' (2012: 87) theory of "competing norm circles" highlights that individuals make decisions based on the consistency with which they are exposed to one "norm circle" or culture over the other. Our attention is therefore drawn to the family, which is the cultural group or unit in which youth experience the greatest exposure, in order to understand how personal agency interacts with this causal influence.

Family Background

Insulated Home Environment

Carl and his twin brother, Calvin, were born in 1995 when their mother Emily was 18 years old. They do not know their father since he abandoned Emily when he came to know that she was pregnant. Their stepfather, Grant, befriended Emily soon after she gave birth and pursued a relationship with her until the boys were seventeen years old. During this time he had a daughter with Emily and assumed the role of father to Carl and Calvin. Grant worked as a high school teacher at Phoenix Secondary School in Manenberg and did not live with them but maintained a daily presence in the afternoons and weekends. He also fetched the boys every morning for school. Emily was, in the first few years of their relationship, hesitant to accept financial assistance from Grant because she preferred to exercise her independence. She also preferred that they live separately since Grant was only informally separated from his wife. After the birth of their daughter she agreed that he could assist with groceries and other household expenses. Emily and Grant ended their relationship before Carl and Calvin began their final year in high school.

Carl lives in a two-bedroom apartment on the second floor of a two-storey public housing block. The main bedroom is occupied by his mother, their sister, and Calvin. Carl sleeps on a couch in the lounge while their ailing maternal grandfather occupies the second bedroom. There is a kitchen that leads into a bathroom at the back, and a living room in the front. Carl's maternal grandmother also lived with them until she died of tuberculosis in 2012. She played a strong nurturing role in Carl's upbringing since

she took care of him and Calvin from when they were two years old. This was the time that Emily started full-time employment as a machinist at a clothing factory. Emily still continued to have a strong presence and influence over the boys and one of the most striking features of this relationship is that she kept Carl and Calvin indoors for most of their childhood. Apart from going to school, Emily insisted that they do not leave the apartment and associate with children outside. She relates a story of what motivated her to keep the boys from interacting with other children in the neighbourhood:

“One day I was standing in the doorway and I was watching these kids that play here downstairs and I was staring at them, at the way they went on outside. They were throwing stones at each other, almost like a small gang fight. I told myself: ‘No ways, I am not letting my boys play outside in this place’. I’m sorry, they can rather play inside than outside. And I told my mom that I don’t want my children to mix, those were my words, I don’t want my children to mix with that. Not that I was looking down on them. It was only because I really didn’t want my children to turn out like that. And I am glad I did that. They played in the house. They had no problem. They never desired to play outside...” (Interview Transcript EMI1 Page 3)

Carl and Calvin would occupy themselves in the house with games that they invented such as lining up everyone’s shoes along the walls to see how far the line could stretch. On the occasion that Emily decided to take them out to play on the soccer field, they were terrified to go outside:

“I bought them a ball and so I was going to show them how to kick a ball. It didn’t help. When I went downstairs they were screaming my head off because they didn’t want to go out. They weren’t used to the outside world. This was their little comfort zone...They didn’t even want to walk outside. One was on this leg and the other was on this leg and I had to move like this (she demonstrates walking with a weight on each leg) in the road because they didn’t want to walk. Not because they want me to pick them up, they just didn’t want to be outside. They were afraid of everything, even the grass that they love today so much. They were afraid of the grass. They didn’t even know it was grass. They didn’t know that yellow thingy there in the ground was a flower.” (Interview Transcript EMI1 Page 3)

Carl and his brother, for the most part, remained inside their apartment until they were fourteen years old and they eventually began to go out on their own, especially to participate in the activities of the soccer club that they joined. Much of Carl’s life is still occupied inside his home and he is largely unaware of happenings in his neighbourhood. When I once asked him for directions to a research participant whom I was supposed to meet, he did not know that such a street existed even though it is two blocks away from his home. Carl also lives across from the headquarters of the Hard Livings, a large and influential gang in Manenberg. There is often unrest and a strong police presence in that area but he is seldom aware of what incidents transpired, yet research participants who live three to four blocks away would be able to recount

these events quite easily. To this extent he conveys a sense of being insulated from his neighbourhood surroundings, such that he maintains a social distance from what he would call “the bad things that happen in Manenberg” and seals in the nurturing he receives from his mother. He speaks of this nurturing as the constant and consistent guidance he experienced:

“It is extremely difficult in Manenberg. It is something that can absorb you like a vacuum and that’s where your parent comes in. If your parent tells you everyday something is wrong, sooner or later you will know for yourself because your mom won’t like that. It’s something that needs to be ingrained. That small stuff makes a difference.” (Interview Transcript CAR4 Page 6)

Close and Consistent Mentoring

Emily consistently intervened in the schooling of both her sons. Their daily routine entailed returning home from school to a meal which their grandmother would prepare, followed by a short playtime indoors. After taking a bath, their grandmother would supervise their homework until Emily got home. They would have supper together and Emily would then go through their homework for corrections. She created charts with numeracy tables and stuck them up along the walls of their living room so that she could regularly revise with them. On afternoons that they did not have homework, their grandmother would revise these exercises with them.

Even though Emily did not complete high school herself, after dropping out in Grade 11 due to the severity of her epilepsy at that time, she was a bright student. She spent most of her time indoors, with hardly any friends. She would come straight home from school and spend a lot of time reading. She still loves reading. Emily was especially good at Mathematics and was entered for several Maths Olympiads. Even though she was not always familiar with the terms and concepts of Carl and Calvin’s school syllabus she would still try and figure it out in order to help them.

Carl’s grandmother, who lived with them until her death in 2012, played a strong nurturing role in his upbringing. When Emily started full-time employment at a clothing factory in Woodstock, her mother took care of the boys and developed a strong bond with them. Carl speaks about her with great admiration and gratitude, conveying a strong sense that his fundamental needs for care and support were met by her:

“We were living like kings. I would come out of school, and my bread and tea will be on the table. My clothes will be clean, will be ironed, will be packed in the cupboard. That’s why I am lazy today, can’t help it hey (laughs). She was a lovely woman, very motivating. School work or sports, we would play a normal

soccer game on the turf here in front and she will say: “Good luck boys”. That’s the kind of woman she was. We say: “No ma it’s only a game of five friends just kicking ball”. She would still say: “Good luck, enjoy yourself”. That’s the type of woman she was.” (Interview Transcript CAR2 Page 3)

Her influence over Carl and his brother is noted by the way he speaks of her death: “this story will stay with me for the rest of my life”. Carl’s grandmother was diagnosed with tuberculosis only two days before she died. She had been coughing severely for a few weeks but did not seek any medical attention until she noticed traces of blood in her sputum. Carl describes the anniversary of her death each year as a very sombre time in the household. Despite it being only a few days before Christmas, the house is usually very quiet with no visitors or outings over that week: “we feel that is a time when we have respect, we have to respect her death and that’s the way in which we honour her”.

Carl’s stepfather Grant also joined Emily in reinforcing the value of achieving good grades and constantly motivated Carl and his brother to raise the standard of their school examination performance. He would get them to read the newspaper every day and engage them with road signs and directions, shop names and billboards whenever he took them for an outing. He initiated their involvement in the local soccer club, the only neighbourhood social activity that they participate in and, together with Emily, he was closely involved in their school career. Carl’s response to Grant was also one of admiration, such that he never wanted to disappoint Grant: “he would always like talk to me and say [Carl] do that, do that, I know I’ve been there, you see, and I would take his advice and I would do it and really practice what he told me.” Grant was able to maintain a close relationship with Carl since he was also his class teacher in Grade 8 and Grade 9, and Carl speaks of always having the need to “make him proud” by achieving good grades. Grant constantly challenged him to keep improving and to never settle with average scores, so Carl felt motivated to be more competitive at school. He speaks very proudly about his achievement of the highest grade for Life Sciences in Grade 12.

While Emily maintained clear and strict directives for her children, as Lareau (2011: 147) traces in working class “natural growth” parenting, she also saw the need to intervene with their school education. To this extent, Emily adopts the approach associated with “concerted cultivation” despite their economic strain and the demanding responsibilities of maintaining a full-time job. What sets Emily apart from other single parents is that she had the support of her mother who stepped in to take care of the boys in Emily’s absence. Within this material structural context of the

extended family, the culture of consistent intervention through “concerted cultivation” takes the form of mentoring children through close involvement and motivation. Both Carl’s mother and his grandmother, in their respective roles, agreed on the importance of closely mentoring Carl and his brother. This family culture then enabled their personal agency to succeed in navigating towards the goal of completing high school and building professional careers.

Lareau (2011: 35) associates the parenting model of close mentorship and intervention with middle-class families, as compared with working-class families, because there is less of an economic burden and greater access to extra-mural activities in middle-class neighbourhoods. This close mentorship is however all the more needed in impoverished circumstances where children rely on constant motivation to do better than the norms and expectations they encounter around them. This is not without firm directives that prevent children from association with negative influences. It concurs with the findings of Furstenberg *et al* (2000: 71), that amidst the adversities of socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, “promotive strategies” and “preventive strategies” are both essential in motivating children’s talents and averting their exposure to dangerous behaviour. Consistent guidelines such as not associating with gang members and maintaining regular study schedules at home, as laid down by Emily, also become necessary learning processes for children to navigate formal institutions of school and work.

From his perspective as a teacher, Grant describes the difference between scenarios where parents are highly involved in their children’s school careers and those who are not: “salt and sugar, water and oil, its so far apart”. He explains that children who experience poverty at home, often lack parental guidance and again at school have no guidance from teachers: “Teachers don’t have time to help the children because of the system. What saved Carl and Calvin is that we recognised their problems early, otherwise they would have been failures at school.” He believes that this is important because a child needs to feel a sense of accomplishment, that they are winning, but if they struggle in their formative years they believe that they cannot get it right and that sets a precedent for future years. If children receive the help and confidence that “they can”, they see the rewards for themselves and their interest grows to be active at school.

Shared Expectations within the Family Unit

Education and Career Projections

Carl's education and career projections centred on the goal of completing high school and studying further towards a professional career. Despite his experience of learning difficulties in the first two grades of primary school, Carl adopted a determined attitude to achieving good grades:

"I struggled a bit. Ja [Yes], we had this extra-mural activity after class. Those are the slow learners... It was after school so it was a bit tiring, draining, you don't want to be there after school, you want to go play, stuff like that but it helped. When you think about it now, it helped a lot because when you in that moment you think it's a waste of time but that small class of ten children, it helped and after that I didn't want to be there so I would work harder not to be there and so it helped me." (Interview Transcript CAR3 Page 4)

Emily explains that Carl and his brother struggled to grasp concepts which she recalled to have learned quite easily at their age and was concerned that they would not pass from one grade to the next. She therefore took the initiative of enrolling them for extra classes at school so that they would catch up to the expected standard of learning. Emily also found that Carl had a speech impediment since he stuttered quite severely and his speech therapy at a public hospital in Observatory did not seem to help him. She therefore spent more time with Carl, getting him to read aloud and practice pronouncing complex words.

In high school, Carl often took the initiative of enrolling for tuition classes that were offered by the Western Cape Department of Education to learners across the province. These were opportunities to interact with learners from other schools and receive coaching from tutors who were responsible for setting national examinations. While these opportunities were advertised at his high school, Carl found that he was the only learner from his school who would attend since the classes were located in neighbourhoods far from Manenberg, in the Southern and Northern suburbs. Emily was able to afford these monthly transport costs and Carl felt driven to use these opportunities that he believed would put him on a similar plane as other youth from schools that were better resourced:

"You can see like top schools, Bishops, the top school in the Western Cape also attending that workshop, so I am from Phoenix in Manenberg competing, not knowing but we are competing, against each other. I used that as a form of encouragement and motivation to work even harder because if I know you are better than me then I will put the extra effort in so that did help me actually, it helped me a lot to grow." (Interview Transcript CAR3 Page 7)

Carl was at first undecided between looking for work after high school or pursuing his interest in teaching, a desire that he nurtured through his close relationship with teachers at school whom he admired. When he spoke to Emily about the prospect of studying, she was concerned about how they would fund it but encouraged him to still go ahead with the application. It is only through this process of applying that Carl became aware of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) which works on the basis of a student loan but a percentage of this loan is waived according to good performance:

“So for now NSFAS is fine because I am working hard. Last year I got a 75% average so only 15% of last year’s fees I have to pay back from my salary when I start working and this year I am aiming higher, a[n] 80% or 85% would make it easier for myself when I start working.” (Interview Transcript CAR2 Page 3)

Carl studies towards a Bachelor of Arts in Education degree at the University of the Western Cape. His grades have demonstrated a consistent upward trajectory in his studies that have won him accolades of enrolment in the Golden Keys Society and a Deans’ Commendation for academic excellence. He has most recently been selected to participate in a bilateral student exchange programme with the University of Oslo.

Another example of a firm commitment and aspiration towards a professional career is seen in the case study of Michelle, a 25-year-old research participant, who grew up close to Manenberg Secondary School but attended school outside of the neighbourhood. She explains that she never thought of herself being able to pursue a career in law since “such things don’t happen for kids in Manenberg”. While at school she merely nurtured the goal of achieving a good pass at the end of Grade 12 and then the prospect of looking for whatever work she could find. It was through her exposure to the field of law, while doing clerical work at a law firm, that she came to know about study opportunities for employees. The supportive structure of this social network, along with a positive and motivating home environment, enabled her to respond with a commitment to long-term part time study towards the education goal of completing a law degree.

These life goal projects or “agential enterprise” (Archer, 2003: 5), as evidenced in Carl and Michelle, are important to identify before we consider the necessary relation that enabled them to respond to their circumstances in a manner that transforms, rather than reproduces, cultural expectations of low education and employment outcomes. In this regard the compatibility of expectations within the “competing norm circle” (Elder-Vass 2012: 87) of consistent parental mentoring may be highlighted. Both Carl’s

mother and Michelle's father insisted on high standards of academic achievement and the response was of personal agency towards hard work and commitment to study. Within this cultural unit of the family, expectations and obligations between parent and youth centred on the goal of pursuing tertiary-level study and building a professional career. It then opens up our understanding of how the influence of close and consistent parenting can lead to the construction of values and beliefs around education and employment, which in turn influences the decisions and actions of youth.

Congruent Relations

Emily's expectation was for Carl to remain indoors and away from the negative influence of gangsters, such that he would not be distracted from his studies. She fulfilled the obligation to provide for him and his brother Calvin, through intensive tutoring and clear directives about making informed choices. Carl explains this influence when relating the story of choosing to disassociate himself from a friend who became a gangster. It was a difficult decision for Carl since he understood the personal circumstances that his friend struggled with and he also had to accept the loss of friendship:

“It was difficult because I was alone after I told him and then I had to like make new friends you see. I told him please man we can't be friends anymore because I can't be friends with a gangster. Number one my mum will find out and that will be something big because she wants me to focus on my studies, understand, and being friends with a gangster will impact my studies so I had to stay away...One difference that stands out for me is that my mom made me aware of obstacles beforehand. I do not know if his mom told him about the things that is going to happen in school. That for me is one difference, important difference. I knew, before I went to school, I need to watch out for certain things so for me when I saw the problem, I faced the problem, I knew OK I can just jump over this.” (Interview Transcript CAR4 Page 2)

It is a congruent relation (Archer, 2003: 8) in that Carl fulfilled the obligation of observing the expectations of his mother and is likewise grateful for the efforts she made to not only provide for him materially but also to closely mentor him. This is an example that we can describe as the practising of personal agency on Carl's part since it demonstrates an internal reflection on choices that he needed to make. Whereas Carl could have rebelled against the guidelines that Emily expressed, he chooses to rather follow the expectations and norms that are endorsed by the cultural unit of his family. The relation between parent and child may therefore be regarded as congruent in the sense that expectations and obligations among both individuals correspond over the shared goal of exceptional academic performance.

We may also consider this family dynamic of congruent expectations and obligations according to the notion of a cultural “norm circle”, as explained by Elder-Vass (2010: 124), where the “commitment to enforce or endorse the norm...is the characteristic relation between members of a norm circle”. Within Carl’s family, Emily displayed a strong commitment to hard work and sacrifice, working extra hours in a week in order to support her family. It instilled a similar commitment from Carl to prioritise his education goals above influences that could risk the achievement of his aspirations, as evidenced in the example of his decision to sacrifice friendship: “I had to make that choice or otherwise I would have fallen in the trap and I can’t afford it especially with my circumstances at home.”

Apart from Emily, Carl’s grandmother played an important role in the family by reinforcing a commitment to hard work and perseverance against adversity. Carl speaks with a strong sense of admiration for his grandmother. She was a well-respected woman in the neighbourhood whom people would often come to for help with ailments. She was called ‘the doctor of Manenberg’ because she would prescribe off-the-counter medication and home remedies to many people who came up to their apartment with various medical complaints. Carl describes her as a person who commanded respect by the way she carried herself and he admired that ability. This is fondly expressed by a story that Carl relates of her taking care of a dog that was given to them as a pet by their uncle. It was the weakest pup in the litter at that time but Carl’s grandmother nurtured the animal to strength and over the years she was the only one whom the dog was obedient to, even though Carl and his brother understood it to be their pet: “Sometimes we would come from the field, my dog will bark at me. My dog will bark at me on the stairs. I say Ma, Ma and she comes, he’s quiet. So for me that’s like a big impact.” Childhood stories like these speak of the way in which Carl built a strong sense of admiration for his grandmother who also demonstrated examples of hard work and determination to succeed against obstacles. Emily often told the boys stories of her mother as having worked two jobs for most of her life in order to sustain the household. She worked at a clothing factory in Woodstock by day and thereafter would go to work at a friend in Athlone who operated an outsourced clothing manufacturing unit. She would take the last bus home at midnight, cook for the next day, and then go to bed. Emily’s older sister took care of them while her mother was away at work. Her influence on Carl, as a person who worked hard to overcome poverty, may be regarded as a formative element in his worldview as a young person who faces the social challenges of growing up in a ghetto neighbourhood: “She was a big impact not only in our household but in Manenberg”.

Cohen and MacCartney (2004: 189-190) underscore the importance of supportive roles from extended family members that supplement the efforts of single parents in resisting poor employment outcomes. Were it not for her mother's presence, Emily's efforts to hold a permanent job and ensure an insulated environment for her children may have been compromised.

Congruent obligations around education aspirations, in the parent-youth relationship, may also be attributed to successful outcomes among other research participants such as Michelle, who has a permanent job as an administrative clerk at a law firm while engaging in part-time studies. The principle of commitment to hard work and determination to succeed above perceived limitations was instilled through her father Mark. He worked as a machine operator at a factory in the industrial zone, as featured on the map in Figure 1, and repaired cars on a part-time basis. Michelle's mother also worked permanently as a packer at the Coca-Cola factory in the same industrial zone. Michelle appreciated the role they played in her school career: "I had support all the years of my life with education. Every meeting, my parents were at the meetings." Mark encouraged Michelle's academic success in primary school and later on insisted that she attend high school outside of Manenberg in order not to be influenced by the culture of dropping out of high school. Her good grades meant that she qualified for a bursary at a semi-private school in Kenilworth in the Southern Suburbs, which is well known for high quality pass rates among matric learners. Michelle had to travel by bus every day, having to wake up much earlier than her cousins with whom they shared a house:

"My daddy used to drag me out of bed, compared to my aunties. If their children didn't want to go to school, so what must we do? There's nothing we can do, you can't force the child but that wasn't his motto. You had to, even if I had to drag you out of this bed, you are going to school. That was my daddy's thing with us." (Interview Transcript MIC4 Page 4)

Michelle successfully completed her high school career and worked at several retail companies before being employed at the law firm where she has been for the past three years. One of the benefits of her association with the firm is that they now sponsor her studies which she pursues by correspondence through the University of South Africa (UNISA). Like Carl, Michelle attributes her successful education and career navigation to the intervention of her parents: "I am whom [sic] I am today because I had support. I got it from my parents. I had people who explained things to me."

Carl's stepfather Grant, in his capacity as a high school teacher in Manenberg, holds a strong view about the need for parental involvement in a child's school career. The limited resources and overcrowded classrooms that teachers have to cope with incapacitate them to give learners individual attention. He is critical of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) curriculum that was introduced during the time that Carl was in primary school, since this system suited well-resourced schools with small classroom numbers. It required individual attention and supplementary support through parents monitoring homework. Those that really progress are therefore learners who are able to get assistance and support at home. Grant considers it critical that Carl's learning difficulties were identified at an early stage in primary school. He describes their learning foundation as "cracked but not broken" and joined Emily with providing the extra lessons they received at home. He describes Manenberg as a place that can "swallow you easily" and credits Emily for keeping them indoors since he believes that those who drop out of school or become gangsters are those who experienced disengaged parenting.

Formulating Alternative Beliefs and Actions

Resilient Projections

Carl's response to supportive parenting was a firm commitment on his part to persevere towards achieving his education and career goals. Acknowledging the influential presence of his mother, grandmother, and stepfather, Carl demonstrates a clear deliberative process that Archer (2003: 255) would refer to as "meta-reflexivity". To this extent he engages in an internal dialogue that monitors his circumstances and considers a response. One of the striking features of Carl's case study is that he adopts a critical standpoint. He presents himself as standing apart from the action around him and thinking through a decision about what he needs to do. He thinks his way out of a perceived problem and demonstrates a strong determination to overcome structural limitations. He speaks about his material poverty as a source of motivation for him to work harder: "I think about the times I didn't have and then I just put everything into my work". He avoids giving much detail about what these "times" were like and chooses to rather organise his speech around the resolutions to his difficulties: "It was difficult at first but we are better now"; "things aren't on the way I want it to be but at least I have something to eat and I am at varsity."

Carl's experience of insulation, as compared to the imperilment of participants such as Rose, emerges as a necessary element in building resilience to influences that threaten the achievement of employment aspirations. This is where we once again note a similar idea with Furstenberg *et al* (2000: 71) since we could describe this insulation as consisting of both "promotive strategies" that foster youth talents and opportunities, and "preventive strategies" that reduce the exposure of youth to risky circumstances. Not only were his academic abilities strengthened through the close intervention of his mother, grandmother, and stepfather, but his exposure to the negative influence of gangsterism and low education expectations was also prevented by limited association with neighbourhood children and youth. Carl's perspective on work may therefore be regarded as the aspirations of nurtured talents, realized through the influence of a shared family commitment to hard work and permanent employment.

Within the context of a family unit endorsing a set of norms and expectations around education, hard work, making sacrifices and difficult choices, Elder-Vass (2012: 86) maintains that individuals are influenced to conform to these norms and this leads to a set of beliefs that in turn affects behaviour. This influence only takes place through consistent exposure to behaviour of others that endorse the norms within the "norm circle". These norms also challenge other "competing norm circles" (Elder-Vass 2012: 87) which endorse cultural practices that may not support the goal of completing high school and pursuing the pathway of tertiary study that prepares an individual for a professional career. The numerous examples of commitment to the alternative norm of hard work and determination to secure permanent employment was evident in the case study examples of Carl and Michelle, through their parents and family, within supportive home environments. There is therefore a common understanding of what is expected in order to be successful at school and to build a rewarding career. This understanding is then expressed in the choices that youth make to exercise personal agency towards sacrificing friendships and other relations that may bring negative influences, and spending long periods of time indoors studying.

Examples of the formulation of alternative beliefs and associated actions are seen in the personal agency of Carl and his brother Calvin with regard to their social network. It is consistent with the norm within their family of disassociation from gang influences. Apart from distancing themselves from friends who turned to gangsterism, both Carl and Calvin were selective in choosing friends who were able to support positive education and employment outcomes. While Carl qualified for a university study programme, Calvin's Grade 12 results fell short of these requirements. He therefore

opted to work in the year following his matriculation and found a job, through the referral of his friend, at an airport-based delivery company. Besides the social capital of job networks, Calvin considers it important to associate with friends who ascribe to the same system of values and beliefs that challenge negative influences, or else “you just get caught in the trap here in Manenberg.” He singles out the example of his friend Bradley who failed twice in high school, given his learning disabilities, but persevered through assistance from school teachers to complete Grade 12. “He works hard...he motivates me. So we have a good understanding and that means a lot to me.”

Carl's social network consists of a group of friends who are also members of his neighbourhood soccer club. In speaking about those whom he associates with in the club, he finds them to be a supportive network in terms of his own life goals: “they are all working, they are doing something with their life and that's good for me because now I find myself with positive people”. While these friends are all based in Manenberg, the only network that Carl has outside of the neighbourhood is through classmates at university. In this instance their activities revolve around study groups and online chat groups when working on assignments. We may therefore identify a mutual exchange of expectations within Carl's network, based on the common goal of success at a soccer game or with achieving their education aspirations. Elder-Vass (2010: 123) would describe such a network as another example of a “norm circle”, where members of the group ascribe to a collective intention of supporting a desired outcome, such that “they each tend to support it more actively than they would if they did not share that collective intention.”

Carl seems to draw most of his support from the “norm circle” (Elder-Vass, 2010: 123) of his close friends and immediate family. His relationship with his twin brother Calvin is an especially close and supportive bond such that Carl describes it as “telepathic” and expresses this unique connection with the example of them playing a soccer match: “I don't know what it is but I just know where he is. I'm a mid-fielder and he's in the wing. I don't look at him. I just know where he is at that very moment.” At home, Carl relies on his brother as a confidant and draws support from knowing that they share a close understanding of each other. In this way, he maintains a close and supportive relationship within his family such that this social relation is a critical support base for deliberation and decision-making.

Transforming Expectations

Carl is the only person in his area to have been accepted for a university degree and to this extent he has defied the cultural norms of high school drop-outs and unemployed youth. His development from overcoming learning difficulties in primary school, to achieving university acceptance at the end of his school career, may be appreciated by identifying the social relation of parent-youth interaction and his agential response. While closely involved parenting, strong role models, and a supportive family environment insulated Carl from the negative neighbourhood influence of violence, illicit gang activity, and pervasive unemployment, he adopts a critical stance of challenging social structures and setting clear goals that he is determined to achieve:

“There are a few people who have money here but most of them have illegal money so, drug money, and for me what I think is we in Manenberg, including myself, that is what I am aiming to change and it’s the effort. I believe it’s the effort. We want easy ways out in life. We want short cuts but that’s the thing, a short cut would be to sell drugs to get money, and then the long way is to finish school, varsity, go to college, study, go work, and get money. That’s the long road so it’s effort but we are all different. We all don’t have the same drive for success.” (Interview Transcript CAR2 Page 9)

Such instances demonstrate Carl’s personal agency, in terms of his choice to challenge cultural norms and expectations in Manenberg and wanting to bring about alternative employment outcomes for himself.

Apart from having the desire to become a schoolteacher, Carl was able to configure the requirements of good school results, financial aid for university fees, material provisions for personal needs, and a long-term commitment to studying. His expectations in this regard were principally met by his mother whose active involvement in his school career enabled him to overcome learning difficulties. Her strong nurturing role meant that Carl and his brother, Calvin, were assured of material security, and her example of commitment to long term employment exposed them to a culture of consistent hard work to achieve a long-term goal. While Carl progresses in his Bachelor of Arts in Education degree, Calvin completed a medical services certification course and now works as a paramedic with the provincial Western Cape Department of Health.

The examples of Carl and his brother Calvin, as well as Michelle, help us appreciate how “concerted cultivation” (Lareau, 2011: 60-63) or consistent mentoring strengthens the ability of youth to challenge structures of unemployment and high school drop outs.

Rather than internalising these circumstances, they nurture a belief in their agency to challenge adversities and build resilience. As Carl explains, “I have to do good. I have to complete my studies because it’s difficult to be anything in Manenberg, so I wanna be someone, to do something with my life...I am not forced to but I have to”.

Conclusion

Within the structural constraints of poor expectations around education and employment in ghetto neighbourhoods, the ability of youth to transform these norms may be attributed to the social relation of parent-youth interaction. The principal case study of Carl has demonstrated that while youth may have the aspiration to complete high school and pursue tertiary studies towards a career, congruent obligations around this goal between parent and youth help to navigate a successful outcome.

The parenting method of “concerted cultivation” (Lareau, 2011: 244-245) is not only necessary to prepare youth for the discipline associated with a successful school and work career, but it also enables youth to challenge the culture of not completing school, which often leads to chronic unemployment. As evidenced in the cases of Carl, Calvin, and Michelle, consistent mentoring from parents insulates them from the negative influences of social adversities. Within the context of a supportive and insulated family environment, fostered by close and consistent intervention from parents and other family role models, a “norm circle” (Elder-Vass, 2010: 123) promotes commitment to values and associated behaviours. Hard work, making sacrifices, and difficult choices about selective social networks, then influence the decisions that youth make to pursue pathways that challenge the culture of despondency that condones dropping out of school. The personal agency of youth is demonstrated in their internal reflection and deliberation of a choice between two cultures or “competing norm circles” (Elder-Vass, 2012: 87). In Carl’s case study we observe the structure of the norm circle influencing Carl’s behaviour in that his mother, stepfather, and grandmother all exerted pressure on him to achieve exceptional academic results. He followed their guidance because of their joint membership of the family social structure, meaning that even though each of them guided him individually their actions in this regard carried causal power since they are each part of the norm circle. This causal influence does not, however, determine Carl’s decisions since he could have rebelled but he chose not to.

The alternative education and employment outcomes discussed in this chapter help to build on the theory of writers such as Young (2004: 10) by tracing the enabling and

constraining influences that aid in building perspectives and beliefs around employment. To this extent, we are able to challenge deterministic accounts of unemployment in ghetto neighbourhoods, as presented by structuralist arguments, since the response of personal agency to cultural norms is a necessary consideration in accounting for alternative outcomes. While we appreciate that it is possible for youth to produce different outcomes in ghetto neighbourhoods, it is also evident that such pathways are not easily traversed. The wide-spread culture of despondency, that includes low education and employment expectations, means that many youth struggle to transform their position within the material occupational structure where scarce low- and unskilled work leaves such youth chronically unemployed. It is only through close and consistent intervention, through a social relation such as parenting, that youth can transform cultural norms. Given the adversities of poverty, crime, social isolation, and limited resources, supportive social relations are often elusive and the extraordinary efforts of those who successfully build such structures deserve commendation.

Chapter 7

Social Isolation and the Concentration of Adversity

Introduction

My first impression of Natheem, at a meeting of the Young Men's Unemployment Support Group, was that he conveyed a hostile demeanour. As I introduced myself to the gathering of eight men, ranging between their late teens to early thirties, Natheem sat next to me with his hands folded and the hood of his jacket over his head, looking towards the floor. He interrupted me as I spoke, addressing the group in Afrikaans: "*Wat doen hy hier? Hy verstaan niks van ons lewe nie...*" (What is he doing here? He understands nothing about our life). One of the facilitators asked that he give me a chance to speak and I responded by affirming that I do not understand the struggle of unemployed youth in Manenberg but that is what motivated me to conduct my research, by listening to the stories that they might want to tell me. Natheem did not speak further for the time that I explained the purpose of my research to the group but he was the first to approach me briefly after the meeting: "I will be here on Saturday morning if you want to talk." I met with Natheem for a series of ten in-depth interviews from that Saturday onwards at the Manenberg Library. Many of these sessions held tearful accounts from a life history of compounded adversity and personal tragedy that Natheem admitted to have never been able to talk about before.

The hostile demeanour that Natheem initially displayed, in sharp contrast to the personal struggle he went on to later reveal, is a phenomenon among young men in ghetto neighbourhoods which Young (2004: 10) identifies. He explains that by probing the inner worlds of such individuals, we come to understand why their behaviour might seem odd to people who do not straddle such circumstances. This chapter examines the way in which youth respond to adversity within the socially isolated environment of ghetto neighbourhoods, and how this response frames their decision-making around employment. Structuralist views, such as those of Wilson (1987: 60), have only drawn patterns of association with social isolation and unemployment but writers such as Young (2004: 10) and Anderson (1999: 11) have explored the interior worlds of youth to understand how they make sense of the structures that influence their behaviour. I aim to build on these findings by examining how personal agency is influenced by both cultural and material structures such that youth reproduce, rather than transform, social structures of unemployment. I begin with a description of the cultural norms

associated with social isolation and unemployment in Manenberg, using Wilson's (1996: 37) work that highlights the historical segregation of ghettos and the scarcity of jobs that has given rise to widespread poverty, as well as a proliferation of crime largely through gangsterism. Young (2004: 74) goes on to also highlight the lack of cultural capital under these circumstances, in terms of job information and supportive networks that are necessary to assist youth in navigating paths towards formal employment. This understanding of social isolation in Manenberg is followed by a critical realist analysis of the personal agency held by Natheem and other research participants in terms of their employability. Elder-Vass' (2012: 87) theory of "competing norm circles" highlights the cultural influences that individuals experience in an environment where gangsterism challenges the practices of formal employment. Following Archer's (2003: 164) theory of "fractured reflexivity" I pay attention to how youth internalise these values and beliefs, growing weary of constant exposure to adversity and relinquishing their employment goals. We therefore come to appreciate how their decision-making is framed in a worldview confined by the cultural norms and limited cultural capital that they see around them such that they reproduce these structures from despair and desperation, rather than from hopeful deliberation.

The Structural Circumstances of Social Isolation

Coping with Poverty

Manenberg is a historically segregated neighbourhood situated far from key employment nodes in Cape Town and also lacking adequate social support services. Poverty has been one of the key characteristics associated with the neighbourhood, most pronounced in the area inhabited by the research participants of this study, as indicated on the map in Figure 1. As already highlighted in previous chapters, the high unemployment rate means that many households experience difficulties with financial responsibilities. Apart from hustling for jobs to pay for electricity and basic food items, or asking neighbours for food hand-outs, families also rely on the various religious organisations that run family support programmes with regular grocery hand-outs. The Catholic Church, where I attend mass, runs a soup kitchen every Sunday morning and assists a number of families with school fees and some household costs. The mosques in the neighbourhood similarly provide weekly meals after Friday prayers and on every evening for the month of Ramadan.

Meagre household incomes, as reflected in Figure 6, barely allow for a substantial daily meal. The average annual amount that a person lives on in Manenberg either meets or lies below the national food poverty line for South Africa, set at ZAR 321 per month or ZAR 3 854 per year (Statistics South Africa, 2015). Many of the youth whom I interviewed have spoken about going to bed hungry, relying on friends or neighbours for food, as well as school feeding programmes that provide two meals a day. Since most families scarcely meet the food poverty line with their household income, they are unable to provide for other expenses on their own such as rent, electricity, clothing, toiletries, or even transport. As a result, many households operate without electricity even in the cold winter months and families make several appeals for the local authority to reduce or waive their monthly rent. Evictions are quite commonplace, as explained by community activists such as Roegschanda Paschoe, who regularly pleads for the cause of families facing the bleak outlook of no shelter. In such cases, families would split into smaller units such that they can be accommodated among two or three other households that may have a place for them to live.

| | Manenberg | Natheem's Area |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Number of Households | 10 872 | 152 |
| Total Population | 52 875 | 819 |
| Average Number of Individuals per Household | 5 | 5 |
| Average Annual Household Income | ZAR 9 601 – 19 600 | ZAR 9 601 – 19 600 |
| Average Annual Amount that a Person lives on | ZAR 1 920 – 3 920 | ZAR 1 920 – 3 920 |

Figure 6: Household Income for Natheem's Area

As outlined in the previous chapter, the material social structure of employment that favours middle-skilled to professional work means that many individuals struggle to find well-paying jobs that can sustain a household, especially given that many of the youth drop out of school and are chronically unemployed. Those who do manage to find low- and unskilled work try to supplement their meagre income. From my discussions with NGO leaders, and observing the family life scenarios of research participants, it emerges that the practice of individuals holding two jobs is common especially among households where families are single-headed. In such cases, weekend or evening work is sought through offering domestic services either in the neighbourhood or in adjacent areas such as Primrose Park and Surrey Estate where higher earning households are located. Those who are able to practice skills such as

baking, tailoring, motor vehicle repairs, carpentry, or hairdressing, provide these services for nominal rates in order to supplement their full-time job earnings.

Crime and Gangsterism as Contested Cultural Practices

Gang activity is quite visible and concentrated in the area that Natheem lives. It is located at the intersection of three gang territories and the open field across the road from Natheem's apartment block is where gang negotiations take place when peace is brokered after periods of fighting. Street corners and shops are usually places where young men stand around smoking and it is assumed that many of them belong to gangs. While some young men seen in these groups have never made any formal pledge of gang membership, their friendship with gangsters gives them a reputation in the community of engaging in gang activity. The presence of gang leaders at these spots is noted by their expensive cars, branded clothing, and hand gestures that indicate gang allegiance. High school youth especially stand in awe of these symbols. They consider it a privilege to ride in these cars and use words such as "*kwaai*" (fierce or smart) to describe the fashion sense of gangsters. Children are sometimes seen flashing hand gestures used by gangsters in the role-play games that they create.

Gangs hold great influence in the neighbourhood by practices such as providing financial relief to poor families, or even preventing families from being evicted through corrupt deals with the local authority. Gangsters observe a strong sense of fidelity among themselves, with precedence given to a 'brother' over one's family. As explained by a community activist affectionately known as Uncle Errol, the allegiance that men swear to a gang is so deeply entrenched that gangsters are expected to rather "sacrifice the life of a family member than betray the brotherhood", sometimes leading to the instance of being forced to kill a family member who reports gangsterism to the police. Salo (2003) reminds us that gangsters share a deeply embedded bond through rites of passage and other practices that supplement the sense of meaning and fulfilment that may be attained through a successful education path or a well-paying career. Their allegiance to a gang therefore takes priority above all other social relations. Since parents of gangsters, especially mothers, defend and protect their children from exposure to the police, those who try to challenge gangsterism are victimized. The issue of family members and close friends condoning gangsterism is often a heated subject that is raised at the community meetings I have attended. Women especially stand up and fervently plead with the gathering against such

behaviour, and while these comments are cheered on at the meetings, those whom they are addressed to are seldom present.

The prevalence of gangs in Manenberg may be regarded as a contested cultural practice since there is widespread disapproval of their activity but gang activity and membership still continues. The disapproval of gangs is expressed in the tendency of some residents to not give hand-outs of food to gangsters or allow them to do odd jobs for a small fee. As Natheem admits “they give you nothing if you’re a gangster...you can struggle but you get nothing.” Pinnock (2016: 90) identifies a culture of “us and them” where gangsters proudly assert their identity as an expression of strength and authority, while other individuals consider them with disdain and contempt. In my conversations with residents in Manenberg, those who distance themselves from gang members use terms such as “evil”, “sick”, or “the presence of the devil”.

Elder-Vass’ (2012: 87) theory of “competing norm circles” may be used to describe the contested cultural practice of gangsterism in neighbourhoods such as Manenberg. Since behaviour is understood to be influenced by the collective endorsement of individuals within the norm circle, the shared values and beliefs among gang members are causal influences that each member is committed to. This is most clearly expressed through the initiation rituals that gang members speak of, where their affiliation and commitment to the norms of the gang are confirmed through their acceptance of a tattoo that senior gang members inscribe on new recruits. Pinnock (2016: 161) explains that within the context of a ghetto neighbourhood, where conventional ideas of respectability are associated with formal employment that young men find elusive, gangs endorse respectability through socially deviant means such as crime. The values of security and stability, endorsed by many residents of the neighbourhood, are therefore contested and challenged by the violence of gang activity.

The practice of violent crime in the form of muggings and robbery is an example of a competing cultural practice that young men with gang affiliation carry out. Since only gang leaders benefit from large amounts of money through the sale of drugs, ordinary gang members only receive occasional financial benefits. Many of them therefore use their status as gang members to hold up residents with knives and guns, robbing them of valuables. The common occurrence of such crime has compromised the safety of the neighbourhood to the extent that residents choose not to own devices such as a mobile phone. These incidents do not only take place at night or early mornings but

sometimes in broad daylight, where minibus taxis get pulled over by a group of gangsters and passengers are forced at gunpoint to hand over all their belongings. On one of my very first visits to Manenberg I was warned to be more cautious as I stood alone outside the library waiting to interview a research participant. A woman passing by on her way to the shop that morning took great care to explain: “there are lots of guys who are not nice around here but it is safe inside the library rather.”

Confined Cultural Capital

A common scene around Manenberg is groups of adults gathered at street corners, shops, and the courtyards of apartment blocks during the day. Since many of them do not hold permanent jobs, there is no morning or afternoon rush to and from work as in other neighbourhoods which may have lower unemployment rates. The more common example of work that youth are exposed to is therefore the informal practice of doing odd jobs, or hustling, for a small fee. My conversations with research participants and community leaders indicate that most men in the neighbourhood work as construction workers or as handymen who are informally employed for short periods of time dependent on when work becomes available. Glenda Gain, who runs the Community Work Programme (CWP), explains that most youth associate work with merely making money and do not know about the more formal requirements of being employed. The majority of youth who drop out of school and come to the centre in search of work do not have an Identity Document or bank account. The CWP staff then assists them in applying for an Identity Document or registering for a bank account, and sign them up on work contracts. These include jobs such as teaching assistants in schools, maintaining the parks and street sweeping, or sports coaching. This is usually their first formal work experience since they have previously only been occupied with informal jobs such as street vending, which Glenda explains is a popular means of youth making money. They make pirate copies of DVDs and CDs, selling them to residents in the neighbourhood: “Their mind-sets are made up from what they see around them. They will tell me ‘No I don’t wanna study and things like that. I just wanna make money.’ That is all they want, to make money.”

As highlighted by Young (2004: 59) cultural capital is an important aspect of navigating successful employment paths since it constitutes a particular knowledge about and familiarity with a certain setting, such as formal employment. The knowledge that youth hold about how to make money through planning a career and navigating a path towards it, is severely limited in ghetto neighbourhoods. The material structure of

cultural capital is such that in a geographically-segregated neighbourhood such as Manenberg, isolated from major employment hubs and resources such as recreation facilities, youth rarely associate with people other than whom they see every day. They seldom have the opportunity to leave the neighbourhood and their ideas of work would therefore be influenced by this limited cultural capital. As Seekings (2012: 14) points out, these “urban outsiders” in underprivileged neighbourhoods lack access to job market information. Young (2004: 83) adds that even schools in ghetto neighbourhoods struggle to provide adequate cultural capital for youth to navigate strong career paths since they are poorly resourced and ill-equipped. This is the case for research participants who speak of events such as career days which were merely taken as an entertaining school outing since no follow-up or assistance was given by teachers about appropriate subject choices, the availability of financial aid programmes, or the application process. Carl, for example, speaks about his difficulty to navigate this path since he was ill-advised about doing Maths Literacy rather than Pure Maths in high school and therefore could not pursue studies in Life Sciences at university. Such instances of poor cultural capital are more severe for youth such as Natheem who had no exposure to work role models, as Carl had with his mother and stepfather. Natheem’s social world, as we shall now explore, is characterised by a smaller and more constrained cultural capital that does not look further than day-to-day survival in a volatile environment.

Agency and Adversity

Compounded Tragedy

“I didn’t have it easy,” is Natheem’s response when I introduce the subject of his growing up. He begins by relating the tragic story of being run over by a car on Duinefontein Road when he was nine years old. While accompanying a group of neighbours on a shopping trip to Nyanga Junction, he lost sight of them in the crowd. He anxiously tried to retrace his steps back home and did not judge the speed of the car that hit him as he crossed the road. His next memory is of waking up in hospital with a body cast. He was immobile for several weeks and even after being discharged from hospital he was confined to a bed for three months. During this time Natheem’s father was caught in the crossfire of a shootout between police and rival gangs in the neighbourhood:

“The people carried my father up to our flat. I was feeling helpless, powerless, I can’t do nothing because I see my father here with the blood, everything. I

can't do nothing because I'm with this plaster. I can't do nothing. All I can do I can cry, you see. At the same time my mother is pregnant with my brother and when she saw this she just passed out." (Interview Transcript NAT1 Page 2)

While Natheem's father survived the gunshot to his head, he suffered a neurological disorder that impeded his movement and speech. Natheem also recovered from his injuries but had to repeat Grade Four since he was absent from school for almost four months.

At the time that I started interviewing Natheem he was 26 years old, living in the apartment where he grew up. His mother died when he got to high school and his father died two years afterwards. Natheem is the third of his siblings, with his sister being the eldest followed by an older and a younger brother. He lives in a two-bedroom apartment on the third floor of a block that is situated close to Manenberg Library. While his sister Nasreen is married and lives with her family about ten kilometers away, Natheem and his younger brother Saleem share a room while his older brother Sayeed and his family occupy the rest of the apartment. Sayeed works on a contract basis as a painter while his wife is unemployed. With Natheem and Saleem also unemployed, Sayeed's meagre salary barely covers his family and household expenses. Both Natheem and Sayeed have tried to support the household income by hustling for jobs around the neighborhood or asking for food from neighbors who are willing to help them occasionally. Nasreen works three days a week as a cleaner and regularly visits her brothers with groceries for them. She explains that they have always struggled to make a living: "Our parents struggled, we are still struggling today but I share with them the little that I get. I am worried about them. I want them to get on their feet and support themselves."

Both Natheem's parents never had formal work histories. His mother did domestic work around the neighbourhood and his father would also hustle for any job that he could find:

"[T]hey tried their utmost best to provide for me, man but how they provide for me, the same by knocking by people's doors, by doing jobs for people, by washing peoples' windows, you see. That is how my mother and my father provide for me and so I go on, I go on..." (Interview Transcript NAT1 Page 3)

Natheem explains that people in the neighbourhood knew about his family circumstances, even his teachers at school. They would rally among themselves to assist his mother with groceries and also waive any outstanding school fees. He did however feel embarrassed about not having a school bag, new school shoes, or a new uniform like his classmates. He was also teased by other learners at primary school:

“every day they wanna laugh me out, about my broken shoes and my plastic packet, they take the blade and slit my packet when I am not looking and then when I pick up my packet, the books fall out.” Natheem admits to feeling so embarrassed about being poor that he would never let any of his friends enter his home but rather have them wait for him at the foot of the staircase that leads up to their apartment. While he explains that he felt angry about his parents not being able to buy him new clothes, and that they always had to go around asking neighbours for help, Natheem becomes tearful when talking about the struggle his parents faced to deal with poverty:

“I used to tell them, OK there’s nothing for me for *Labarang* [Eid] or I must wear again old takkies and stuff, OK Salaam you keep your money and give it to that one but at the back of my mind I didn’t know, man. They still struggling. They struggling and how can I expect that they must bought me shoes because my friends are all sorted out, all of them is dressed to kill. I know how it feels, man but I don’t know why I did that with my mum and my dad that time. You don’t know what you got until you lost it.” (Interview Transcript NAT2 Page 4-5)

Promising Early Education Experiences

Despite growing up in a family that struggled to provide school necessities such as fees, uniforms, and even a daily packed meal, Natheem maintained an exemplary academic record at primary school. He adopted a determined attitude to succeed despite being constantly ridiculed by other learners about his poor circumstances: “At the end of the day, they beat me with good looking clothes and wearing new shoes but they didn’t beat me with this (pointing to his head) and that’s what made me go on”. He passed each grade at the top of his class and was elected Head Prefect in the last year of primary school. Natheem enjoyed the experience of working closely with teachers to organise activities such as the school assemblies and sports events.

With his home being close to the library, Natheem used the opportunity to study there and worked diligently to outperform other learners in class tests. Despite the fact that his father never completed school, he took a keen interest in Natheem’s studies. His father adopted the practice of getting a copy of Natheem’s examination schedule to follow the subjects he would write for each day. He then took responsibility for testing him on the work he would be examined on, with the result that Natheem was motivated to be well prepared:

“I study, I study, every day I study so when the library closes I go home you see. Then my father used to try me out by closing my book. He asked for me questions to see if I really did study...so he can understand that I really did study. I didn’t go play by the library.” (Interview Transcript NAT1 Page 5)

He continued with an excellent academic record during his first two years of high school but explains that he started to grow angry and frustrated about his adverse circumstances of poverty. He considered it a pretence to keep working hard and making sacrifices while his circumstances of poverty never improved: "I had to pretend I am strong, that there's no problems. I just get fed up with this pretending and I want to show myself this is who I really am."

Competing Cultural Structures

Natheem has always held an association with gangsters in his neighbourhood due to the large membership of young men who live in the same block of apartments where he grew up. While he did not become an official member until he was 25, he joined in their activity and often felt drawn to the appeal of money and material provisions while his family struggled with providing basic necessities such as a food, electricity, or money to pay the rent for their apartment. Despite their adversity, Natheem felt supported by his parents who constantly appealed to him to reject formal gang membership.

Natheem's sister Nasreen explains that their mother died unexpectedly: "She wasn't sick. She just woke up that Saturday and she told my daddy that she don't feel *lekker* [good] and she went down to her mother and she just fell there dead. I am still struggling to get over that because she wasn't sick..." She believes that her father died of "a broken heart" since they shared a very close and affectionate relationship from the time they were teenagers. After the death of their mother, Natheem's father became reclusive and his health began to decline. He died of tuberculosis two years later. Nasreen explains that their parents were a supportive presence even though they experienced severe poverty: "[T]he struggle was really hard and it was bad also but there was lots of love." Natheem often broke down in tears when he spoke about his parents since he relied on his father for mentorship through his early school career and the determination of his mother to provide for his family despite not having a regular income. After her death, he tattooed her name on his chest.

With the loss of both his parents and his sister moving out of the family home at the start of her marriage, Natheem was alone in confronting the opposition of his older brother Sayeed who insisted that Natheem relinquish any association with gang members and find formal employment. Sayeed would impose conditions on Natheem's

actions by excluding him from participation in meals and the use of electricity to cook his own meals or use hot water from the geyser to bath. While Natheem's parents disapproved of his gang affiliation, they still supported him materially and emotionally. Since their death, Natheem felt more alienated and experienced less support from the norm circle of his family. In contrast, the gangsters whom Natheem associated with as friends regularly welcomed him to share a meal with them, to bath and even sleep over in their homes especially during times of altercation between Natheem and Sayeed. Natheem's formal affiliation with The Young Ones gang took place following his involvement in the brutal killing of a rival gang member to revenge the death of a "brother" gangster. Natheem speaks of experiencing a sense of acceptance and a bond with the gang as he received his tattoo:

"They say to me today you are not alone. Today and from this day forward, where you get hurt I get hurt. Where I see you get hurt I must also hurt them. Anyone who hurts you, because we are brothers...the moment they take that needle and the blood is coming out, the blood is coming out by every letter" (Interview Transcript NAT3 Page 4)

The competing cultural structures of Natheem's family and of The Young Ones gang that he joined may be understood through the theory of "competing norm circles" (2012: 87). The values that Natheem's older brother Sayeed instilled within the household was that of formal employment, or at least informal work that was a licit means of bringing an income. It also included a disassociation from gang members, even as friends. This norm was reinforced with other members of the family such as Sayeed's wife and Natheem's younger brother Saleem taking up domestic work in the neighbourhood. The values endorsed by Natheem's gang were in sharp contrast to his family norms since the gang valued a culture of illicit work, relying on the criminal activity of theft and the drug trade for financial income.

Constrained Choices

Natheem is drawn to tears from feelings of regret when he speaks about his decision to join The Young Ones, even though he felt accepted and affirmed:

"When I close my eyes I think, yor what I did...I don't wanna be this person anymore man but this is who I am...I dowanna do that anymore. I am a soldier of God, not a soldier of Satan, but if I have to do it for survival I will do it one more time." (Interview Transcript NAT3 Page 8)

Here we see the practice of personal agency in the choice that Natheem made, which was therefore not pre-determined by the "norm circle" (Elder-Vass, 2012: 87) of the gang. Being in conflict over the choice that he made, Natheem often became irritable

and frustrated. His sister Nasreen explains that she noticed a dramatic change in Natheem's behaviour after he left school and began associating with gang members in his apartment block. He would speak abrasively with members of his family and become reclusive, even though he used to maintain a light-hearted and friendly disposition: "Natheem changed ever since he's with this people [the gangsters]. I wish for him to be out of here from these bad influences because he is hard working. Natheem is a very eager person. He is very eager."

Since his membership in the gang was most pronounced during times of unrest between rival gangs, Natheem would use times of low gang activity to try taking up more formal work opportunities. He found assistance through the Young Men's Unemployment Support Group that met every Thursday afternoon at the Manenberg Library. It also offered a "competing norm circle" (Elder-Vass, 2012: 87) to that of the gang since it consisted of members who collectively endorsed the norm of formal employment. This was clearly expressed through the initiative of group facilitators to connect members with potential employers. Natheem demonstrated an agency for hard work in this regard and relates episodes of work experiences in which he tried to challenge the gang culture of illicit work. He undertook several jobs that he acquired through contact with the support group, largely consisting of casual work with construction companies, such as insulating and ducting air conditioners, painting, and carpentry. They were short periods of work that lasted two to three weeks. Alison, a co-ordinator of the support programme explains that Natheem showed potential through his eagerness to also occupy himself with odd jobs that he could find in the neighbourhood:

"Natheem can work very hard with his hands. He was very fond of doing woodwork and he knows about painting or building things and that is the kind of work that he does. He can do that well. Even though it is a skill that he picked up, it is not his profession, but he picked those skills up." (Interview Transcript ALI1 Page 2)

The support group unfortunately disbanded after the NGO that co-ordinated it decided to discontinue work in Manenberg due to the volatile situation of gang wars that erupted periodically. Natheem therefore lost contact with the construction companies that hired him. He then tried working for the Community Work Programme in Manenberg, sweeping the streets and collecting refuse, but became despondent after the programme defaulted on several occasions with their weekly wages: "There was always a problem. If your money was not short, there's another problem...I can't work at a place where there's no motivation or inspiration for me."

Natheem still hustles for casual jobs that he can find within the neighbourhood. He speaks of work that ranges from washing windows and carpets, to fixing furniture or appliances. He sometimes struggled to figure out complex tasks such as electric circuits and did not always have tools for carpentry but he would improvise with what he had to complete the job: “[A]lthough I don’t know how to fix it I will tell you I know how to fix it. I will try my utmost best to do it and to fix it.” He never turned down an opportunity to work so that he could earn some money and make a contribution to his household. He also speaks of the difficulty he often encountered with neighbours not treating him well or mistrusting him due to his association with gang members in the neighbourhood:

“I am like a slave to them. They will always put me to a test and they will just put the phone there, put the money there and I am working there. Now they all go to the sitting room and I come out, tell them I am finish and maybe I’m gonna wait outside, the first thing they ask is, they will look if the money is there or the phone is there, you see. I can feel it. I get hurt. I don’t wanna do it anymore or I don’t want their things.” (Interview Transcript NAT2 Page 2)

The conflicting choices that Natheem experienced between the culture of illicit work within gangs, against the culture of licit work within his family and the support group, helps to demonstrate the role of personal agency within competing cultural structures. In Natheem’s case, however, his exposure to positive cultural influences was limited by the weakened social material structure of his family, especially through the death of his parents, and the disbanding of the Young Men’s Unemployment Support Group. Within these limited or constrained structures, youth therefore regrettably reproduce illicit work cultures through gang membership.

Natheem describes instances of personal conflict in his decision-making where he would think about his struggle and try to build an uplifting response: “That is always what I was thinking and I had to work. I had to work. I had to work. I had to earn money but not by drug smuggling or something.” This response became difficult to maintain due to his constant exposure to negative cultural influences and dwindling support from more positive associations. He therefore speaks of being left with no other option than to participate in illicit activities of crime by robbing people for money and valuables: “There’s nothing else I can do.

What Natheem constantly saw around him was the example of young men, like himself, who joined gangs to gain security and protection in an otherwise uncertain environment. Although he describes gang members as “dumb”, in the sense of giving in and not resisting the negative influence, Natheem identifies himself in this same manner when he talks about his eventual decision to accept gang membership: “I am also dumb. They made me dumb”. His sister Nasreen helps to understand the way in which Natheem felt constrained:

“...[H]e told me why he really became a gangster was because gangsters from different gangs will usually hit him and tell him he’s one of that [gang] or one of this [gang]. That’s why he became a gangster, because he had to, like, get people to defend him. There wasn’t someone else that was, like, standing with him.” (Interview Transcript NAS1 Page 2)

The experience of being constrained by negative cultural influences may also be traced in other participants of this study. Luke, who is now 18 years old, joined a gang almost two years ago. Both his parents struggle with an alcohol addiction and he is the eldest of four children who all live together in a single-roomed makeshift dwelling that is attached to the ground floor of an apartment block, as shown in the images on Page 33 in Chapter One. With some financial support from his ailing grandmother, Luke intended to finish high school but failed his Grade 12 final examination. He explains that he grew up with a sense of insecurity about his surroundings, with several of his friends and family being gang members:

“That’s where I started being part of the gang. One of my cousins, they did hit him with a brick and then with poles...they stabbed him so I told myself I couldn’t even walk there because my cousin said I will get the same, even though I did nothing wrong. That’s why I did tell myself that I rather join them and be part of it so that’s why I started to be part of the gang, so ja [yes].” (Interview Transcript LUK3 Page 1)

Luke admits to initially experiencing power and security from his membership but also explains his disillusionment with the decision to join a gang: “You feel like nothing can happen to you, you feel like you can be the president...like you have power and stuff but I realise now it is not power. At the end of the day you are alone.”

Disenabled Employment Projections

In applying a narrative analysis to Natheem's story, I pay attention to the way in which he conveys his experiences in order to understand the meaning that he attributes to significant events (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998: 88). He anchors the story of his growing up in the tragic experience of the motor car accident that left him bandaged and immobile for almost four months. He relates the events in the form of a story that he tells with animated gestures, getting up from his chair and demonstrating the way he ran across the road or the static position that he had to maintain while he recovered in a body cast. As Josselson (2013: 4) reminds us, when research participants respond to questions with stories they communicate a deep sense of themselves and the circumstances in which this self finds a context. While Natheem responds to other questions with less descriptive speech, such as those about his education and work history, there are instances where he launches into longer and more engaging stories that demonstrate the deep value he attaches to these experiences.

One such instance is the story of his accident, particularly the experience of being physically immobile, which is a metaphor for the way in which Natheem struggles to make sense of the adversities he faced. From the time that he was in primary school and began thinking about a career he could someday pursue, he speaks of being constrained by constant reminders of poverty:

“I used to think what is going to happen to me if I now bring a plastic packet, will I still don't have a bag when I go to high school? Will I still don't actually have food, bread to take to school? So I was thinking about that...what is the goal I want to achieve in life but to get my goal in life it costs money so I can't, I can't.” (Interview Transcript NAT1 Page 4)

Archer (2003: 210) describes this response to structural circumstances as “autonomous reflexes”, since it takes the form of an internal dialogue that does not include any external reflection with one's social network. Decisions are therefore made within a limited and confined field of thought that is constrained by what one can only see immediately around them.

In terms of the competing cultural values between Natheem's family and the Young Men's Unemployment Support Group, which promote a formal and licit work culture, against The Young Ones gang, which promotes an illicit work culture, Natheem's personal agency was exercised in the internal dialogue and choice that he made. In this choice he constantly reflected back and forth between regret for his decision to join the gang, and a sense of companionship and protection from the gang. In order to

understand this decision-making process and its impact on Natheem's employment outcomes, it would be important to firstly consider his "agential enterprise" (Archer, 2003: 5) in terms of employment goals.

To this extent Natheem does not articulate a specific career path but expresses his goal of being able to earn a stable income to support his family household, of acquiring "money to have something to eat every day, electricity, rent. I am tired of struggling every day." It is for this reason that he grew frustrated with work experiences such as those of the Community Work Programme (CWP) where poor administration of the organisation meant that he could never be certain of what he would bring home at the end of each month or whether he would be paid at all. Secondary research participants also speak of this frustration. Justin, a nineteen-year-old youth who dropped out of school in Grade 9, worked on the school sports coaching programme of the CWP but often did not get paid: "...[Y]ou go to the ATM to check and there is nothing. They say next week, next week but you get paid after maybe three months."

Natheem's employment goals may also be understood through his attempts to look for work in the industrial nodes of Epping and Maitland, which he travelled to by train. Natheem would look for work by presenting himself at factories and filling out application forms for low-skilled jobs. Even though he sometimes found work for a day at a time, this was not sustainable since the cost of his train ticket and the uncertainty of work meant that he could only earn a meagre wage that barely left him with enough money to cover household costs. His personal agency towards hard work and willingness to take on jobs from which he learnt new skills is evidenced by the experiences he took up through the social capital afforded to him by the Young Men's Unemployment Support Group. When this facility disbanded, however, he was left unsupported in navigating towards his employment goals.

Natheem speaks about his sense of loss with the discontinuation of the support group in a similar way that he speaks of the declining influence of his family after the death of his parents:

"You see like that group that we had on Thursday, they helped me very much. That build momentum. It motivated me, inspire [inspired] me in positive ways, mentally and physically so it's like that is disappearing, small piece by small piece it is disappearing. Every time we don't have a class like that what I learnt did fall away because that support isn't there anymore." (Interview Transcript NAT6 Page 2)

Archer's (2003: 164) theory of "fractured reflexivity" which holds that constant and prolonged experiences of emotional distress result in individuals losing a sense of their personal goals, thereby hampering their ability to pursue them. Natheem expresses this distress in terms of the many tragedies he has experienced:

"Like every time you on the right path, you going and you almost there where you wanted to be and then something comes up, like trouble, someone is sick in your family, someone did die in your family but there always comes something. There's always something, always an obstacle..." (Interview 18 July 2015)

Young (2004: 100) speaks to the way in which such deficits constrain the decision-making of youth in ghetto neighbourhoods. In this regard it disempowers them to pursue alternative pathways from what they see around them and limits their imaginative capacity to consider a way of life with other possibilities.

The constant exposure to distress and adversity is also evidenced in the example of Zaira, a nineteen-year-old research participant who lives in an apartment block that is close to the Manenberg library. It is situated between the territories of two rival gangs, The Young Ones and the Street Boys, so it is often caught in the crossfire during shootouts. Zaira has therefore developed a habit of staying indoors and reading, which she finds to be a consoling escape from the violence she regularly encounters around her. Despite performing well at school, she dropped out at the end of Grade 9 since her mother was diagnosed with diabetes and needed someone to take care of her. Their father walked out on them when she was nine years old and her brother struggles with a drug addiction that often results in him being physically abusive towards Zaira and her mother. Zaira was disheartened at having to prematurely end her high school education since she hoped to pursue a career in nursing, having been inspired by the nurses she met at the clinic where her mother worked as a cleaner. The outsourcing company that employed her mother did not support her case for being medically boarded so she claims a government disability grant that helps manage household costs. Zaira has grown weary and despondent about ever being able to successfully navigate towards her employment goal. She spends much of her time with young women from her block who are also unemployed:

"I can't go out so much because I have to be here for my mummy but my friends come all the time... and we sit here on the *stoep* [porch?]. They will come sit here by me. They always come to me and we will sit, talk a lot of shit and maybe we sit on the corner the whole day..." (Interview Transcript ZA12 Page 4)

Zaira has accepted a job of accompanying children in her block to and from school for a meagre earning of ZAR 50 a week that assists with household groceries. She speaks

about her future with a sense of being unable to move beyond her present circumstances, having disengaged with her goal of being a nurse: “that was my dream but I never came so far because I am stuck at home. I dunno what to do with my life.”

Faced with limited opportunities and possibilities of reimagining a pathway to employment that transforms the social structures of casual work, hustling, or the illegal economy, youth in ghetto neighbourhoods perceive their world through the fractured lens of being disenabled. The positive cultural influence of social groups such as an emotionally supporting family, especially in the case of Natheem, begins to diminish when the number of members in this group decrease. Even though Natheem experienced the competing influence of gangs while his parents and sister were present to provide emotional support, the “norm circle” (Elder-Vas, 2012: 87) of his family held greater influence than the “competing norm circle” of the gang that Natheem eventually joined. We identify the same competing structure with the disbanding of the Young Men’s Unemployment Support Group that exerted a positive influence of job information and emotional support. Natheem experienced a declining influence in the culture of licit work and anti-gang with the weakening of material social structures such as discontinued weekly support group meetings. This is further exacerbated by the weakened material social structure of his family through the death of his parents and his sister Nasreen moving out of their family home.

While youth may set goals of completing high school, earning a stable income, or pursuing a professional career path, they struggle against competing cultural norms to find support in navigating such paths. The adversities that youth encounter, especially through poverty, the violence of gang activity, illness, and unexpected loss, impose constraints that they struggle to look beyond without supportive social networks. Their attention on the future, in terms of employment and careers, is therefore overshadowed by a more immediate need to provide for fundamental concerns such as food and security. The education and employment goal is therefore perceived as unachievable since it involves resources that they cannot attain on their own. Anderson (1999: 135) concurs that, given the adversities associated with ghetto neighbourhoods, youth do not invest much attention in their long-term futures and this therefore has a detrimental impact on their decision-making. He finds that an amalgamation of various harsh life experiences constrains their ability to build an optimistic perspective on their future and their agency to pursue education or career goals that overcome adversity.

As Quane and Wilson (2011: 2979) highlight, the structural constraints of social isolation do not only pertain to the physical segregation of ghetto neighbourhoods and their exclusion from opportunities that promote economic advancement, it is also prolonged exposure to actions of people within a particular environment that intensify poverty and adversity. An example of such actions could be the reliance of many individuals on hustling for jobs, or even the widespread yet contested practice of drug trafficking. The constraints or liabilities of these cultural structures far outweigh the enabling power that can be accessed to transform social structures of dropping out of school and engaging in the informal and illegal economy. As evidenced in the cases of Natheem and Luke, the allure and protection of gangs gave them a deceptive sense of security in an uncertain environment since the practices and values of gangs, such as violent retribution and the illegal drug trade, are at odds with the values associated with formal employment. Anderson (1999: 32) speaks of the phenomenon of gangs as the “code of the street” which stands in opposition to many social conventions since the perceived glamorous lifestyle of expensive clothes and fast cars is not achieved by conventional means of a stable career path but through the illegal economy.

Natheem’s response to this influence is what he calls “the easy way out”. He explains: “I did what any ghetto kid would do...but that’s not working for your money.” This struggle not to reproduce what he sees around him is also expressed in his use of the term “being dumb” which he ascribes to the young men who join gangs and engage in criminal lifestyles such as robbing people in the neighbourhood. Natheem acknowledges the imprudence and danger of this lifestyle but it is one that he nonetheless chooses to follow, demonstrating the choice that is exercised by his personal agency. This choice is, however, exercised in a fractured sense of emotional distress through the declining influence of norm circles that support alternative outcomes to gang membership.

The internal battle that Natheem articulates, regarding his decision to join a gang, and the deep regret he spoke of during highly emotional interview sessions, demonstrate feelings of despair: “I’m just tired of this life, man. I need help, man. I just want to live the ordinary life like any ordinary person. That is not much to ask, man.” Since decision-making is largely driven by desperation, not being able to consider any other options, youth resign themselves to follow the pathways of those whom they encounter every day and who therefore exert a stronger influence on the internal deliberation of their personal agency. It conveys a sense of being immobile or constrained. With a criminal record against his name for possession of drugs and ammunition, and an

inability to move freely within or out of the neighbourhood due to the territoriality of gang membership, Natheem is ironically as immobile as his childhood experience of recovering from his accident in a body cast. He is unable to find formal employment without lying about his criminal record and he can only hustle for jobs in the immediate area of his gang territory. In this way he represents an image of being trapped by his fractured decision-making, unable to transform his circumstances even though he longs to do so:

“That is why it is almost like I am having competition with myself here. I am fighting because I know if I go here through I’m going to get there but I’m not gonna get there, I wanna go a new road, experience new people. I wanna experience new faces, experience new places because I’ve got the knowledge. I know myself.” (Interview Transcript NAT5 Page 6)

Conclusion

Social isolation may be identified as a material social structure since it segregates residents in ghetto neighbourhoods from normative cultural practices that promote positive education and employment outcomes of completing high school and looking for formal employment. For this reason, structuralist perspectives hold that all youth in ghetto neighbourhoods will produce unsuccessful employment outcomes through irregular work or chronic unemployment. This chapter has, however, found that the social isolation of ghetto residents does not necessarily imply the lack of cultural norms that value education and employment. What we find instead are competing practices of an illicit work culture largely through the activity of gangs, and a licit work culture through influences of support groups or families that endorse formal work endeavours and disassociation from gangs. This is what sets ghetto neighbourhoods apart from middle-class neighbourhoods such as those in the affluent Southern suburbs of Cape Town where illicit work cultures are uncommon. We therefore appreciate the plight of youth, especially young men, in ghetto neighbourhoods since we understand the internal conflict that they experience as personal agency interacts with competing cultural values. Without strong cultural influences to support goals of completing high school and finding formal work, a culture of illicit work holds a greater influence such that they reproduce, rather than transform, social structures associated with unemployment. These structures include the practices of dropping out of school, or participating in the illegal economy of drug trafficking, assault and theft.

In applying the critical realist theory of “fractured reflexivity” (Archer, 2003: 164), I explored Natheem’s social world and agency for work as a primary case study.

Strengthened by similar other examples of struggle with social adversity, we are able to see how youth formulate a perspective of being caught between limiting possibilities such that they disenable employment projections that may be alternatives to the norms they see around them. Since it is a fractured decision-making process that they engage in, they find themselves trapped between what they aspire towards and what they have. As in the case of Natheem, he sees a different path and longs for it, but with the dwindling presence of positive influences that value formal work and education he has little support and limited opportunities to navigate alternative pathways.

Chapter 8

The Use of Social Networks in Accessing Resources and Capital to Build Alternative Career Paths

Introduction

At the end of an interview with Michelle, in which we talked about experiences of her school career, she asks me to wait for a while as she fetches the year book from her high school. She is keen to show me the page that features each student being described in one word by their Grade 12 teachers. Being an Afrikaans-medium school, Michelle's word is "doelgerig" which translates loosely into "goal orientated". As a 25 year-old accounts clerk at a law firm and a part time student towards a law degree, Michelle ascribes this anecdotal description from her teachers to a spiritual experience in that "I was purposed to do something better than what I thought I could do or be". Her career path is an extraordinary journey, as compared with many other youth in Manenberg who struggle to complete high school or engage in formal employment. Pursuing career goals amidst the adversities of poverty, limited resources and cultural capital, is therefore often considered to be an elusive and spiritual endeavour for youth in ghetto neighbourhoods. Tracing the milestones of such a journey, however, helps to understand how youth experience causal influences to navigate their way towards the transformation, rather than reproduction, of their position in the material structure of chronic unemployment.

Michelle attended a school outside of Manenberg and established material structures of social networks with teachers from more affluent neighbourhoods who assisted her in finding work placements. One of these was with the law firm where she is currently based, in which she developed an interest in law and found resources such as company development programmes to fund her studies. Using Michelle's story as a key case study, I explore how social networks beyond ghetto neighbourhoods influence personal agency in successfully navigating a career path that transforms the social structures of high school dropouts and unemployment. I argue that while personal agency does not alter the unemployment level in Manenberg, it changes an individual's position in that social structure. I begin by describing some of the material structures associated with youth accessing social networks in looking for work. This understanding is aided by structuralist interpretations, such as those by Wilson (1996: 37), who identify historical segregation and social isolation as the reasons why

youth in ghetto neighbourhoods are excluded from job networks. Granovetter (1983: 202) and Elliot (1999: 200) explain the significance of establishing social networks beyond family and close friends, in order to improve one's access to job opportunities. I build on this work by demonstrating how such networks influence youth in ghetto neighbourhoods to formulate ideas and beliefs about employment, beyond the examples of work that they are regularly exposed to. This argument is built around a critical realist perspective that considers how personal agency responds to social structures in a manner such that internal deliberation (Archer, 2003: 25) and "norm circles" (Elder-Vass, 2012: 123) enable youth to critically reflect over the structural circumstances they find themselves in and bring about their transformation.

Navigating Networks and Employment

The Structural Network Constraints of a Segregated Neighbourhood

How youth look for work in Manenberg is largely characterised by the social networks that they establish. The historical residential segregation of Manenberg is such that it does not expose residents to those in other neighbourhoods who hold a wide diversity of jobs ranging from semi-skilled to professional work. Furthermore, the high levels of crime and gangsterism within the neighbourhood also restrict social circles to close family members and immediate neighbours within the same block of apartments. During the initial weeks of my fieldwork, as I tried to familiarise myself with the geography of Manenberg, research participants would usually only be able to assist me with information about their immediate neighbourhood and would sometimes not know the names of certain streets a few blocks away from their homes. I could therefore only piece together information about the neighbourhood from residents within each specific area. Information and news is also restricted to people within these small social networks and jobs are therefore acquired through informal contacts among those who are employed, the majority being low to semi-skilled manual workers.

Apart from research participants, I found that these patterns of social relations could also be extended to members of their families as well as neighbours. In the case of Carl's mother Emily, her social network was limited to her immediate family and she relied on her sister to help her find employment at a clothing manufacturing company. Emily's sister, who had worked for the company over a number of years, referred Emily to her employer and accompanied her to the job interview. In a similar way, Natheem's younger brother Saleem accompanies Natheem on some of the casual jobs that he

hustles for in the neighbourhood. In Natheem's absence, these families are familiar with Saleem and would therefore offer him the opportunity to assist with chores or errands for a small fee. Given Natheem's gang membership, Saleem is also at risk and therefore can only hustle for work within a confined social network of the geographical gang territory that Natheem identifies with.

One of the results of being confined to limited social networks in looking for work is that many youth who do find employment take up similar work as those individuals whom they have regular and close contact with. As demonstrated in Figure 6 in the previous chapter, the low ratio between individuals with a skills certification or tertiary qualification and the total workforce in Manenberg reflects the large number of individuals who pursue low-skilled manual work. With a large percentage of the population accounted for as unemployed or discouraged work seekers, the social networks of youth are therefore limited to information about work opportunities that largely reproduce the practices of casual low-skilled work.

Seekings (2012: 12-14) associates the phenomenon of limited social networks with the structural context of urban segregation from apartheid South Africa, such that those in affluent neighbourhoods have access to resources and networks that keep them abreast of employment opportunities and place them in a more competitive position for such jobs. They share social networks with individuals who have already established professional careers and therefore have the cultural capital necessary to navigate similar paths. Those in ghetto neighbourhoods on the peripheries of significant economic hubs, are both geographically and socially cut off from information and resources available in the suburbs. With networks confined to the unemployed and low-skilled labour force, little chance exists for youth to fulfil aspirations that they may have of competing successfully in the formal employment sector that favours non-manual semi-skilled and professional competencies.

Based on quantitative data from a survey conducted in Khayelitsha and Mitchell's Plain in Cape Town, two neighbourhoods with similarly high unemployment rates as Manenberg, Seekings and Natrass (2005: 284) found that two-thirds of research respondents were recorded as having found their first job from family or a close friend. An equally high proportion reported that their second job or current job was also acquired in the same manner. 38% agreed that employers would rather hire close friends and relatives of their existing employees rather than others, and 43% strongly agreed. Crankshaw (2014: 508) gives further evidence of the limited structure of this

social relation by highlighting the preferred referral hiring method that is practiced by managers in factories and companies that employ low to semi-skilled manual workers. Since employers believe that they are better able to secure a loyal and trustworthy workforce through the referrals of their current employees, those who are closely connected within these social networks would stand a better chance of acquiring low-skilled work. Given the lack of money to travel far out in search of jobs, residents of ghetto neighbourhoods with high unemployment rates therefore rely on the networks of close family and friends.

Employment Structures around Limited Alternatives

As a means of pursuing different pathways to employment, and widening individual perspectives on possibilities for work, Granovetter (1983: 202) advances that stronger social networks are established through “weak ties”. These ties consist of individuals who are not part of one’s immediate family or close friendship circle. They are rather acquaintances who are not socially involved but who come from other neighbourhoods and have access to networks different from those that one ordinarily associates with. In this way they bring new information and social capital in terms of broader knowledge on work opportunities and since they are in regular contact with individuals on these employment paths, they are familiar with the means of navigating such pathways. Elliott (1999: 201) concurs that the social isolation of ghetto neighbourhoods limits contact with “weak ties” since individuals rely on the confined perspective of “strong ties” to look for work. This results in a reproduction of poor employment outcomes, given the concentration of residents in ghetto neighbourhoods who engage in casual work and low-paying jobs.

The material structure of social networks in Manenberg is consistent with the view that individuals find jobs through immediate family and friends. In my conversations with both secondary and primary research participants, each individual traced a family member or close friend as the person who assisted them with finding work. The case of Jennifer, as discussed in Chapter Four, highlights the way in which one’s entire work history can be determined by the networks of family members. After Jennifer successfully completed high school, her immediate plan was to access work through her aunt who worked as a store manager at a linen shop in the local shopping mall. Jennifer worked there as a shop assistant, and then moved on to work as a filing clerk at the accounting firm where her grandfather worked. Even her decision to study towards a diploma in graphic design was informed by her cousin who enrolled for a

course at the same college which offered state tuition subsidies for youth from impoverished neighbourhoods.

Both Natheem and Rose give further examples of confined social networks that revolved around the people whom they encountered within the immediate vicinity of their neighbourhood. The only formal work that Natheem managed to find was through the Young Men's Unemployment Support Group that met every Thursday at the library across the road from his apartment block. Seeing that these were two to three week contracts with sub-contractors in the building construction and maintenance industry, it did not offer a permanent opportunity for work and Natheem lost contact with this network when the support programme discontinued. Rose also relied on neighbours who informed her about contract work opportunities in retail stores when staff was needed over busy trading seasons such as Christmas and Easter. When Nicholas, now 22 years old, dropped out of school in Grade 9, he was struggling with a marijuana addiction and trying to disassociate himself from a gang that operated in Silverstream Secondary School, which he attended. He considered that having a job would be a distraction from these negative influences and he sought the assistance of a neighbour who helped get him recruited as a casual worker at the cleaning company where she works. After the company was dissolved due to the mismanagement of funds, Nicholas found casual work as a shelf packer at the local supermarket, through a friend of his mother.

A structuralist perspective would conclude that, from such examples of navigating the limited social network of close family and friends, youth largely reproduce the occupational structure of their neighbourhood by taking up short-term casual jobs as low-skilled manual workers. Scholars such as Wilson (1996: 37) hold that social isolation in ghetto neighbourhoods excludes individuals from important employment hubs. However, this argument excludes an understanding of how individual agency interacts with social structures to bring about decisions and actions around employment. In ignoring the role of personal agency, a structuralist argument is deterministic in the sense that it does not explain why some individuals in ghetto neighbourhoods do have jobs. In contrast to the structuralist argument, voluntarism advances that structures such as social relations of job networks are determined by the thoughts and beliefs of individuals. This position holds that individuals themselves are responsible for bringing about their situations of poverty and unemployment. Structures therefore assume a less important role to personal agency, to the extent that individuals are understood as determinants of their own structural circumstances

(Carter & New, 2004: 4). By adopting a critical realist stance, I hope to demonstrate how both structure and agency hold their own constraints and enablements. This is important for an examination of how youth transform social structures of employability in ghetto neighbourhoods, rather than reproduce them, as they navigate alternative employment pathways.

The Pursuit of Education and Career Aspirations

Crossing Boundaries for Access to Resources

Michelle grew up in the context of an extended family, sharing the household of her paternal grandmother with uncles, aunts, and cousins. It was an overcrowded space of three bedrooms shared with two other families, in a semi-detached double-storey unit known as a maisonette, located a block away from Manenberg Secondary School. Michelle is the eldest of four children, with two sisters and a brother. Her father worked as a machine operator and her mother as a packer at a factory in the industrial zone to the west of Manenberg. Michelle recalls that her parents often worked late hours due to her mother being occupied with irregular shifts and her father took on informal work in the evenings with a friend who ran a vehicle repair business from his home about two blocks away. Michelle would therefore take care of cooking supper, while she was still in primary school, learning basic techniques from her grandmother. To this extent her grandmother played a nurturing and mentoring role, giving her parents the opportunity to pursue full-time work while ensuring that Megan and her siblings were being looked after within a supportive home environment. She recalls that the house was a small and noisy space, with approximately ten children and seven adults, but the evenings were a quiet time when she would share the living room and kitchen with her siblings and cousins as they did their homework.

Michelle attended Downeville Primary School on The Downs Road in Manenberg. Here she excelled in academic work to the extent that her teachers would rely on her to assist other learners in class: "I used to help the other kids because the Sir [the schoolteacher] made sure that they don't fall behind so if he couldn't help them, because we were so many in class, he asked me to help them." She recalls always having good support from her parents to make sure she had a meal to take to school every day, new uniforms and stationery each year, as well as constant motivation, especially from her father Graeme, to be consistently hard-working with her studies. After completing Grade 9 in Manenberg Secondary School, Graeme decided that

Michelle should attend school outside of the neighbourhood and enrolled her at Voortrekker High School in Kenilworth, among the affluent Southern Suburbs. It is a semi-private school that required higher fees to ensure that more teachers were employed and extra services offered to learners such as music, art, and sport. The class size is kept to a minimum to ensure close interaction between learner and teacher, as compared to the overcrowded classrooms of schools in impoverished neighbourhoods. Furthermore, learners have access to modern equipment such as laboratory facilities and computers. Extra-curricular activities are also available to learners at such schools, whereas public schools in places like Manenberg cannot afford to have teachers that do more than the prescribed academic curriculum. In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, semi-private schools also became racially diverse while schools in ghetto neighbourhoods remained largely attended by Black and Coloured learners.

Fataar (1997:346) explains that schools in Black and Coloured neighbourhoods continued to experience a poor quality of education since post-1994 education policies centred on greater access without providing more teachers, suitable infrastructure and sufficient equipment to deliver a quality of teaching on par with schools in previously White neighbourhoods that were historically well-resourced. Michelle's exceptional academic record meant that she qualified for a scholarship, alleviating any financial constraints on her family. With the extra income that her father earned from informal vehicle repair work, they were able to afford the costs of transport and school resources such as uniforms and books.

Graeme explains that he came to know about the school from a work colleague whose son won a rugby scholarship to attend there. He was concerned about the poor resources and overcrowded classrooms at schools in Manenberg and wanted to ensure a more promising education for Michelle and her siblings:

"I sent them to a Model C [semi-private] School out of Manenberg because I wanted to show her that there is a different protocol out there from Manenberg...Especially with education here, she was in a class of 48. I don't know how a teacher can handle 48 kids that's not even theirs. When I sent them to a school outside Manenberg I earned a minimum wage at that time. A lot of people told me, listen here it is never going to work. You won't be able to afford to keep her in that school but I knew about [school fee] exemptions and stuff like that, so that is why I took a chance...I could apply for an exemption and the fact that she did so well in primary school, I knew that if she did as good in high school too then she was up for a bursary." (Interview Transcript GRA1 Page 1)

Attending school outside of Manenberg entailed a cultural adaptation for Michelle who started to interact with youth from more affluent neighbourhoods and encountered a school system quite different from what she had grown accustomed to in Manenberg: "I came across a lot of different things, completely different from what we knew on this side." She explains that the rigorous discipline and close attention of teachers, through small class numbers, seemed worlds apart from her school experience in Manenberg where overcrowded classrooms and fewer teachers meant that rowdy behaviour among learners was difficult to control and this created an environment that did not motivate her to study:

"I had this conversation with a lady and she asked me does it make a difference and I said yes it does. If I look at my life now, if I look at my way of thinking now, it definitely makes a difference to go to a school that is on that level in the sense of the way of disciplining the children. I understand we all write the same matric paper but I was in a physics class of 19. My maths class, we were 22...[P]eople seem to think that that's not important but it is because I got enough attention." (Interview Transcript MIC4 Page 1)

Growing up in a household where everyone else attended school locally, Michelle found it difficult to be the only one who had to wake up early to get a bus to school and attend regular sports events on the weekends. Graeme was a significant motivating influence for Michelle as he would wake her up every morning and track her weekly events so that he could help plan her schedule. Michelle conveys a deep sense of gratitude to her father for the sacrifices he had to make in order for her to attend school outside of Manenberg. It is an experience that she speaks of as an essential element of her success in high school:

"[T]hat was really a blessing from God for us to be able to go to that school because I don't know if I would have finished matric if I had to go to Manenberg Secondary [School]. I would probably be another statistic. I'm not sure if I, you know with all the negative influences there, because it was a lot better at Voortrekker [High School]." (Interview Transcript MIC1 Page 6)

Michelle speaks most fondly about her Afrikaans teacher Cheryl at Voortrekker High School, who took an interest in her due to the fact that Michelle lived in a poor neighbourhood. Cheryl would make time to meet with Michelle during breaks and check on how her family was coping, knowing that they made several sacrifices to overcome adversities: "She used to cry if I come tell her stories about what's going on at home and things like that because she used to feel so sorry for me." More than being a source of moral support, Cheryl gave Michelle an opportunity to work as a shop assistant at her family clothing boutique during the holidays in order to earn some money that could help support her family. These holiday work experiences started to create a broader social network for Michelle who met women working in various

professional careers. One of these acquaintances co-owned a law firm in Cape Town CBD and offered Michelle the opportunity to work there after completing high school.

Since Michelle did not have any plans to study further after high school, she accepted the job offer as a filing clerk since it was her main intention to start bringing an extra income to the household. This is largely because her family was planning to purchase a house of their own in Manenberg and a third income would be a significant addition to the salaries that her parents earned. She explains that the thought of university study at that time was a very elusive idea: “[Y]ou think OK, so because I grew up in Manenberg and there’s some sort of that in your mind, there’s that mentality that varsity [university] is not for you, that you will never make it there.” As Lareau and Weininger (2008: 121) point out, the limited cultural capital of families in poorer neighbourhoods means that youth grow up with little knowledge and exposure to the possibilities of tertiary study. As a result, many youth with exceptional academic potential drop out of school or never attend a tertiary institution. In the case of Michelle, however, she found this access to cultural capital through her associations with fellow employees at the law firm. She would sometimes help out in other departments such as reception, and the accounts department, and demonstrated such skill that she was promoted after a year to the position of an accounts clerk. She started to gain an interest in the practice of law and found that the firm sponsored employees from historically disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue further studies through correspondence. Michelle first enrolled for a para-legal course and then qualified to pursue a law degree programme. Not only did she have the financial support of the firm, but she also had access to work colleagues who would assist her with study themes that she had difficulty to grasp. Resources such as text books and stationery were also available to her through the firm.

Granovetter (1983: 204) explains this phenomenon, of finding cultural capital beyond one’s immediate environment, as “bridging weak ties”. It not only pertains to acquiring knowledge about job opportunities from groups of people other than those in one’s close network of family and friends, but also presents opportunities for mobility in terms of transitioning beyond low-skilled work to professional and higher-income jobs. Young (2003: 1080) goes on to add that, in this regard, worldviews among youth in ghetto neighbourhoods are not permanent and can change. This is dependent on what he calls the “projective realm”, referring to the experiences that allow youth to see more facilitating influences rather than obstacles. Whereas Michelle grew up with little exposure to the pathway of tertiary study towards a professional career, despite her

academic acumen, she only knew the obstacles of insufficient financial resources to pursue such a path. It is through her work experience and acquaintances at the law firm that she found more facilitating influences in the form of a bursary and a social network that could help bridge her employment path across the norms that she was accustomed to in her neighbourhood.

The experience of access to facilitating resources through a wider social network is also shared by Calvin who successfully completed high school and first relied on the informal contact of a close friend to find work as a courier service deliveryman. Calvin's career goal was however more inclined towards the health sector, since he was inspired by the example of medical personnel when he visited his ailing grandmother at Groote Schuur Hospital: "I wanted to become something like that, someone who can help people, like a doctor or a nurse." While Calvin passed Grade 12, his grades did not allow him to qualify for a tertiary institution study programme in the medical field but he came to know about the St John Ambulance College through an acquaintance of his mother Emily who worked as an events coordinator at Rondebosch Golf Club in the Southern Suburbs. The only entry requirement for the course was a Grade 12 certificate. Emily worked with clients in a variety of professions and some of them took a keen interest in her family since she used to occasionally bring Calvin and his twin brother Carl to work with her, especially if she had to work over a weekend. Emily explains that Arnold, a medical doctor who grew up under impoverished circumstances, was often keen to assist Emily with her sons' education since he understood her constraints. Emily refused any financial assistance since she preferred to maintain her independence but when Arnold spoke to Calvin about the paramedics course, the cost of which was beyond Emily's financial means, he offered his assistance in the form of a loan that Calvin started to pay back when he found employment. It is an opportunity that Calvin might not have found within his immediate social network of family and friends, since it not only provided him with knowledge about alternatives to his intended path but also the financial resources to assist him in navigating towards his career goal.

Career Mentoring

Young (1999: 70) tackles the phenomenon of cultural capital deficits among youth in ghetto neighbourhoods within the context of constrained social networks. He advances that the type of cultural capital that might be needed to ensure one's safety and protection in a volatile environment, such as the support of gang membership, detracts

from the cultural capital one needs to navigate formal employment pathways. This is the experience of Nicholas who struggled to cope with experiences of authority and strict timelines for work production during his employment at a local supermarket. He often felt threatened by the close supervision of his line manager who reprimanded him about arriving late for work or being “too casual” with his tasks. Nicholas would respond in a hostile manner, as a means of protecting himself, but this attitude was inappropriate for a formal work environment: “[T]hey will argue with me and I wouldn’t say I was wrong, we would always argue...[T]hey did fire me because it was in my contract and I came late, so I left. That did take my self-confidence away to look for work so I stayed at home.” Given his interest in poetry and music, Nicholas attended a concert at the Catholic church down the road from where he lives. There he met volunteer workers from Germany who were teaching music at The Holy Family Child and Youth Development Programme, an NGO hosted by the church. He decided to take up guitar lessons and found that he excelled to such an extent that after a year he was invited to start teaching a class to Grade 3 learners. This not only provides him with income but also a supportive network, outside of his close family and friends, who have opened up new possibilities for him to consider in terms of a work career. It was only when he associated with the network of the NGO he now works for that he began to find a sense of support and mentorship that helped him navigate a successful career path as a music teacher:

“They helped me make a change. It was Ricardo and that guy Phillip from Germany...you can make a change but if you don’t see other people inspire you to make a change then you will feel *naai* [no], what’s the use of making a change but there is no-one who stands in the line with you to actually push you forward also...you gonna feel neglected and you gonna feel no-one is there for you, so what’s the use of making a change if you can’t find somebody who can push you till that, till where you can become something.” (Interview Transcript NIC2 Page 7)

Both De Lannoy (2011: 64) and Swartz (2009: 8) highlight the importance of role models in navigating a successful career path that aims to transform social norms. While many youth who live under impoverished circumstances have high education aspirations, the lack of adult support to map out a path of milestones and advice on how to achieve them means that they struggle to achieve such goals. This is what Swartz (2009: 104) describes as a social context that enables building self-esteem among youth who are surrounded largely by negative examples such as school drop-outs and chronic unemployment. To the extent that role models influence beliefs in terms of what individuals can achieve, and values that they need to ascribe to in

pursuing successful career paths, we may consider such an influence as a cultural structure.

What emerges in the case study of Michelle is that the influence of her father Graeme did not only pertain to positive cultural values that are constituted by mentorship, since he also transformed the material structures of her education by ensuring that she acquired a bursary to study at a school that was better resourced and not socially isolated as schools are in Manenberg. Inasmuch as his personal agency transformed the social structure of his children's education, this enabling influence then has a positive impact on Michelle's access to resources and the internal deliberation that brings about decisions towards career paths that are different from the cultural norms in her neighbourhood. An equally positive influence is that of Michelle's grandmother who ensured a motivating and supportive home environment while Graeme and his wife were at work. Given the challenging social structures that parents in ghetto neighbourhoods straddle, which Lareau (2011: 83-84) highlights as economic hardships that result in distanced or absent parents, Michelle's experience of her grandmother stepping in as a carer helps build a culture of resilience around completing high school and finding employment.

Lareau and Weininger (2008: 134) remind us that even in situations where working-class parents are able to create a supportive home environment for youth, they often lack the knowledge of middle class parents to advise their children on the complexities of tertiary study. While the expectation is on schools to provide this information to youth and assist in the transition to higher education, the poor resources and isolation of ghetto neighbourhoods leaves many school-going youth uninformed about opportunities to pursue a professional career path.

While Michelle completed her high school examinations with a university entrance pass, her first decision was to take up permanent employment in order to assist her family with a stronger income. Both her parents offered their support for any employment path that she chose but her decision to begin part-time studies towards a law degree was motivated through the network of people she encountered at the firm where she worked. She explains that it is only through conversations with lawyers and other employees who pursued part time studies that she began to understand what such a career path entailed: "[W]e are not exposed, growing up. I was not exposed to things like studying law...[N]obody sits you down and tells you, you can do this...[N]obody tells you that you can be a lawyer." At the law firm, Michelle not only

found emotional support from colleagues but also relied on their advice about how to approach assignments, what literature to consult, and how to select courses that would give her a more inclusive grounding when she needs to eventually decide on the area that she would like to specialise in. These are the relationships in her social network that Michelle has relied on to achieve success with her career aspirations:

“I am constantly learning from them, especially the attorneys...[T]hey really offer their help, you know if you have questions that you don't understand, they will tell you come sit, you know at lunch time, and help you write it in your own words so you can see how you understand certain terms and concepts...you know it makes sense so I have very good relationships at work with the people there and also with the directors.” (Interview Transcript MIC2 Page 2)

Transforming Mind-Sets

Internal Deliberation

Michelle describes her decision to study towards a law degree as one of her most fearful and difficult experiences. While she was confident of her academic ability and identified a keen interest in the field of law, she was at first uncertain about how she would navigate this unfamiliar path. In describing her experience, Michelle organises her speech around the concept of a ‘mind-set’. She speaks about struggling to overcome the mind-set that because very few individuals from Manenberg pursued professional careers, being a lawyer was not meant for her:

“That is an excuse for me to believe that I won't be able to do it because of where I come from and how I grew up and things like that, so that was definitely my mind-set. That was definitely the problem. The mentality that I had back then I think was my biggest obstacle to study further because once you start believing that you can do something, then you start growing and you start doing things.” (Interview Transcript MIC3 Page 1)

Michelle engaged in self-reflective exercises that even entailed taking the time to write down a list of positive and negative implications that such a decision would have on her life, how she would manage her time and finances, as well as how she would cope with the pressure of balancing both work and study. She was once again assured of the support of her family but admits to feeling more comfortable about the decision after consulting with individuals outside of her close family and friends. This network consisted of work colleagues, especially those who had pursued similar paths of full-time employment and part-time study, as well as her church pastor who offered advice about how to build self-discipline and break down what seems like an elusive aspiration into smaller, achievable goals.

To this extent, Michelle engaged in a deliberation process that Archer (2003: 221) identifies as “communicative reflexivity” where the process of making a decision involves a dialogue that may begin within oneself but then extends to others, such that it is only after this external consultation that an internal resolution is made about the way forward. This internal deliberation, or reflexivity, is an important consideration in evaluating the way social structures impact on the agential power that individuals possess. It is a process that maps out the course of action an individual will take, determining how the education or employment goal can be achieved within the context of the “powers and liabilities” (Sayer, 1992: 104) of structural circumstances. What we observe from Michelle’s case study is that she was able, through the process of communicative reflexivity, to stand apart from the constraining mind-set that “I can’t do this because I am from Manenberg”. What her conversations with a wider social network helped her understand is that the difficulties she initially perceived are not unique to herself and can be transformed: “It’s not that bad...so now I have people who help me see you can do this, man, it shouldn’t be a problem for you. There’s thousands of people studying like this. They probably went through worse things than what you went through...”

Formulating Different Norms and Transforming Social Networks

When Michelle compares her experience of school attendance at Manenberg Secondary School to that of Voortrekker High School, she explains that her most striking observation was the high level of discipline that she appreciated at Voortrekker High School. The small class size and close attention she received from teachers differed greatly from the overcrowded classrooms at Manenberg schools, with approximately 48 learners in a class and one teacher struggling to maintain order. While cultural practices such as late-coming, frequent absenteeism, and defaulting on homework deadlines were condoned at the schools that her cousins attended in Manenberg, Michelle speaks of strong punitive measures being taken against any infringements of school rules at Voortrekker High School. Reflecting back over the experience, she finds that these cultural structures better prepared her for the demands associated with formal employment:

“I used to sit in detention sometimes because I came late and you know at that school they don’t tolerate things like that, you just sit in detention and you know you come here and you learn or you leave...That is why, even with work now if you don’t have a reason to stay at home you not staying at home. Always be professional and accountable. Work ethic. That’s the one thing I got from them also...and I am very grateful for it today, very grateful.” (Interview Transcript MIC2 Page 3)

Michelle's father Graeme explains that due to his own experience of growing up amidst the challenge of poverty, he tried to instil ideas of a strong work ethic among his children in order for them to be more competitive in the work environment:

“The same thing that my mum instilled in me I instilled in them. Work ethic, that's the main thing. If you have work ethic, then you will have drive. And your independence as well. Even if you work for a minimum wage you can also have your independence.” (Interview Transcript GRA1 Page 2)

While these norms were familiar to Michelle through the culture of her family, they were further reinforced through the culture of her school environment and her work colleagues. She found that the law firm was a fast-paced and demanding environment in which employees would regularly work extra hours, step in to assist with portfolios beyond their own, and perform several tasks at the same time. Michelle felt motivated and driven in this environment, volunteering to work extra hours in departments that experienced high workloads or assisting with other portfolios where employees were on leave. Within this network, such actions were recognised and rewarded as Michelle was offered a promotion within only a year of her employment.

Elder-Vass (2012: 123) describes this interaction between the cultures of social groups and individuals as “norm circles” where groups express a commitment to certain standards of behaviour. Elder-Vass builds on Archer's (2003: 52) position about the influence of social structures, in terms of cultural norms, and the agential response. Accordingly, within these circles there is not only acknowledgement and acceptance of such standards through being rewarded but there is also a deeper sense of internal conviction or belief by individuals who choose to subscribe to the set of norms. This means that individuals make a conscious decision to be affiliated with such a “norm circle” (Elder-Vass, 2012: 123) and it is therefore not an automatic association. The decision also excludes norms that stand in opposition to the standards of behaviour that one subscribes to. The causal powers of the culture in the semi-private school that Michelle attended taught her values and behaviours that she found helpful for her career. This ensured that she succeeded in her “agential enterprise” (Archer, 2003: 5) and did not reproduce the structure of unemployment by dropping out of school. She describes the transforming power of her agency in terms of developing a different mind-set:

“You know, just try a different perspective or mind-set, as one preacher at church explained to us. She said when you cleaning your room and you spring cleaning and you view it from this side, where you actually go out of the room and you come in and you view it from the door side and it will be completely different and that was like a light bulb for me because that is how I wanna live

life because I believe when you want to see something completely different, you gonna see OK the purple actually goes much better with that, so the next time I'll do this or next time I'll do that and that's how you add to life." (Interview Transcript MIC4 Page 6)

Nicholas shares a similar experience with his social network, outside of family and close friends, that challenge the structures of his environment and the behaviours that he struggled with. Being part of a gang in high school meant presenting a hostile demeanour to people in authority, such as the teaching staff, as a means of preserving one's honour and garnering respect from his peers. Whenever he was reprimanded in class for being disruptive or for not participating in class activities, he responded with insults to his teachers which sometimes turned into violent altercations that left him suspended from school. It created a dilemma of wanting to be accepted and to progress with his education but the response to his behaviour from school authorities left him feeling "rejected". It was when Nicholas began associating with staff at the NGO where he now teaches guitar lessons, that he felt inspired by the attitude of care and concern that he found. Nicholas responded positively to the influence of the NGO team, as compared to his teachers, since he found that he was respected and treated by them on the level of peers who supported and corrected each other in a non-threatening manner. It was a space in which he began to feel at ease, to talk about the challenges that troubled him and explore a different approach to gaining respect than what he found through gang membership. Ricardo Cupido, the NGO director, explains that the organisation aims to challenge what children learn from behaviours they encounter "on the street". Since so many children and youth in Manenberg grow up with little parental or adult supervision, they easily learn values and sets of behaviours that they see from the very visible and ubiquitous presence of gang members: "[B]ut here we do not tolerate that, we give them something different. Its discipline, its self-respect, or else they will never make it out there."

Anderson (1999: 69) points out that many children and youth in ghetto neighbourhoods pick up the social order of what happens on the streets where they spend much of their time. It is here that they are exposed to risk and danger, a space where constant insecurity gives rise to tough and confrontational attitudes for survival. These personal dispositions then continue to influence their adult lives. Coupled with this experience is the poverty, crime, and violence that one is often exposed to, building a sense of frustration and anger such that individuals easily lose patience in their interactions with others and the value ascribed to the use of aggression becomes a cultural norm.

While Michelle grew up in a household that was able to provide for her family, she experienced the frustration of a neighbourhood in which she was seldom at ease due to the high levels of crime and violence around her:

“Back then I had a big problem with anger. I had a short temper, a very short temper and I believe that is because I just never, I didn’t deal with things. I would just keep it in, you know and I didn’t talk about it. None of us did. We just got on with what we needed to do to survive.” (Interview MIC3 Page 3)

She speaks of experiences such as an elderly woman being murdered next to her home, as a revenge attack due to her son being a policeman who arrested a gang leader. Such trauma left her feeling insecure and hopeless about not being able to have much control over such adversities in her neighbourhood. What she found, through the network of colleagues she met at work, is that people spoke openly with each other about life challenges and insecurities. She found that emotions such as anger and disappointment were not entirely negative and can be dealt with through a healthy approach within a work environment by being upfront in a manner that is not confrontational: “[B]eing around people that dealt with things in different ways, I learnt how to deal with things better.”

Deliberating Alternative Career Possibilities

Graeme motivated Michelle to attend school outside Manenberg and build associations with people who lived in other neighbourhoods as a means of exposing her to new and different opportunities: “For me it was important to expose them because I wanted to show them that there is this whole big world out there. You need to experience that...even reading, my thing is I can go places in a book.” Within the transformed social structure of a wider social network of people who were engaged in professional careers, Michelle deliberated over the new possibilities that might be available to her. Being less confined to the perspectives of individuals within her close social network of family and friends, she was able to adopt a more critical standpoint on the world she was exposed to:

“Everything is in the mind...if you don’t think out of the box then unfortunately you gonna think like everybody else in your box. You get different boxes... because we can’t control where we are born...Even though I just had a moment where I viewed it like everybody else, I do myself that favour to view it like someone else would. You know, just try a different perspective or mind-set...” (Interview Transcript MIC4 Page 6)

Archer (2003: 255) recognises that the agential response to social structures begins with the internal conversation that deliberates over various perspectives in the process of reaching a decision or a standpoint on what possibilities an individual sees for

themselves. She uses the concept of “meta-reflexivity” to express the internal activity of deliberating over possibilities and finding a resolution through the knowledge gained about one’s capability and the knowledge of other people who have navigated similar pathways to the one that is being considered. Were this deliberation merely confined to the perspective of people within Michelle’s immediate network of family and neighbours, the alternative of working for a law firm and studying towards a professional career in this field might not have been within her frame of consideration. The uncertainty of navigating such an unfamiliar path would also present itself as a constraint that prevents individuals from transforming the occupational structure in ghetto neighbourhoods such as Manenberg. It can be an elusive pathway to consider if “nobody tells you that you can be a lawyer.”

Alternative possibilities to reproducing the high rate of unemployment and low-skilled jobs in Manenberg, through wider social networks, may also be identified in the case studies of Calvin and his twin brother Carl, as well as Nicholas. The knowledge of a career path in the medical field, as a paramedic, was only within Calvin’s frame of deliberation through his association with a client at his mother’s place of work. This information about an alternative path to what he was aware of, regarding medical doctors and nurses for which his high school grades did not grant him access, was also accompanied by an availability of resources to pursue such a path. While his brother Carl only deliberated around the possibility of becoming a schoolteacher, through the example of their step father, it was only through his association with academic staff at university that Carl began to consider the possibility of a career as an academic. He met professors within his faculty who grew up under similar circumstances as himself, whom he could identify with and map a similar pathway based on their experiences. As he prepares for postgraduate study, Carl has also gained access to resources such as scholarships and a study-abroad programme that may strengthen his efforts towards a career in academia. Likewise, Nicholas not only found alternative opportunities at the NGO where he now works as a music teacher. The transformed social network that he engaged with also provided the cultural capital he needed, particularly through mentorship, in order to transform his employment outcomes into a career that might have otherwise not been an alternative for him to consider.

Conclusion

The structuralist argument, that aims to account for youth unemployment in ghetto neighbourhoods, identifies social networks of unemployed residents and low-skilled workers as a reason why most youth reproduce the social structure of incomplete school careers and chronic unemployment. Manenberg, being a socially and geographically isolated neighbourhood through the historical segregation of apartheid, demonstrates patterns that concur with these findings. While the majority of residents do not hold high school certificates and are either unemployed or engage in informal employment, this chapter traces the case studies of youth who are able to transform these social structures. By exploring the way in which youth transform the material structures of social networks, granting them access to resources and cultural capital that they would otherwise not have access to in their own neighbourhoods, we also observe the transformation of cultural values and attitudes. In this regard personal agency is influenced by alternative perspectives to formulate ideas and beliefs in their ability to pursue employment aspirations other than low-skilled manual work.

Michelle's pathway of a successful school education, permanent employment, and especially that of part-time study towards a professional career, was at first an unfamiliar and elusive prospect. She is the first in her family to complete high school and among a small minority of residents in Manenberg who have studied further towards a professional career. Through the agency of her father Graeme, who transformed the social structures of her education by having her attend a school with better resources and cultural capital than schools in Manenberg, Michelle was enabled to build a wider social network. In so doing she transformed the structures of her social network to access resources and cultural capital in navigating a professional career path. When considering her internal process of deliberation, as her agential response to the social structure of a wide social network, we find that both her initial lack of cultural capital and her fear of what was once unknown takes on a different meaning through what she conceptualises as a different mind-set. Her self-reflection is not confined to the limitations of the social structure she encounters in her neighbourhood but rather expanded and strengthened through alternative possibilities. Historical and contemporary segregation, through the legacy of apartheid, imposed material structures of constraint on residents in ghetto neighbourhoods such as Manenberg. Within this context, we appreciate the transforming power of personal agency against confining limitations of social inequality.

What was once perceived as constraints, takes on a different meaning through exposure to a social network that answers needs for financial resources, for examples of navigating unfamiliar paths, for mentorship, and for the support of a social structure that upholds standards of behaviour necessary to pursue such goals. The examples of Michelle, Nicholas, Calvin, and Carl demonstrate how accessing a social structure outside of immediate and close associations may open up different possibilities of career paths. Endowed with the knowledge, resources, and commitment to an alternative set of cultural norms, youth are able to transform limiting expectations and compete in worlds that they have been isolated from.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

The body of work created by acclaimed South African playwright, Athol Fugard, has typically focussed on the way in which ordinary people encounter and deal with structural circumstances of poverty, racial segregation, and oppression. Despite the adversity that his characters experience, their lives are portrayed with deep sensitivity and even sobering humour such that judgement is deferred on whether their stories are altogether tragic or hopeful. One of Fugard's less-produced works carries the seemingly benign title "People are living there" but meticulously crafts the complexity of two boarders and a landlady whose lives fell short of the goals they imagined for themselves. Disillusioned, bitter, fearful, and sarcastic about their circumstances, they are comforted by each other's presence inside an apartment on a busy street in Braamfontein, Johannesburg where a bustling city seems oblivious to their plight. Don, who is one of the boarders, is unemployed after numerous unsuccessful attempts to build a career as an academic. At the end of the play he is caught up in a self-reflection that he shares with the landlady Milly: "...[L]ike everyone else I eat, I sleep, my fingernails grow. The framework is still sound. If it comes to the worst I could always get a job in the Civil Service. The worst that can happen to me is that I'll be forgotten a bit before my time" (Fugard, 1983: 69). Milly responds empathetically with a plea for recognition: "There must be something we can do! Make a noise...I can still do that. I'll make it loud, make them stop in the street, make them say: People are living there! I'll remind them. Tomorrow."

The motivation behind this research project echoes the plea that Milly makes, on behalf of individuals who live under adverse circumstances that we often describe with sweeping deterministic conclusions. Such accounts may be helpful in calling attention to the structural constraints that limit the education and employment pathways of youth in ghetto neighbourhoods but what we forget here is the role that personal agency plays in building beliefs, values, and behaviour that either reproduce or transform structural circumstances. Outcomes need not be pre-determined, in a manner that forgets the individuals who daily interact with social structures to make sense of their lives. Unlike the traffic passing by the highways that segregate Manenberg from significant employment nodes and opportunities, this enquiry has attempted to "stop in the street" and enter the interior worlds of youth to understand the causal powers and constraints that they navigate.

The structural circumstances of Manenberg's high rates of poverty, school drop-outs, and unemployment, may be traced to the history of legislated segregation that saw apartheid ghettos established on the Cape Flats. Separated, not only from family members who once lived together in communal units, residents were also relegated to areas that are far from employment hubs or easy access to good quality schools, medical institutions, and other essential services. In the post-apartheid period after 1994, widespread unemployment has been observed in historically segregated neighbourhoods. In Manenberg the economic environment is characterised by a high unemployment rate of 47%, with the majority of employed residents occupied with low-skilled jobs in the manufacturing and construction industries. While apartheid brought about legislated segregation among race groups, changes in the occupational structure resulted in a scarce availability of low and semi-skilled manual jobs. Given that many youth do not complete high school, they have little chance of finding formal and permanent work. They therefore make a living from the informal practice of hustling for cleaning, maintenance, or repair jobs around the neighbourhood. Participating in the illegal economy of drug trafficking, through gang membership, is another means by which some youth resign themselves to make a living. The social structure, or pattern of relations (Porpora, 2015), with regard to education and unemployment is that many youth drop out of school and struggle to find sustainable employment, such that chronic unemployment persists.

The structuralist perspective advances that structures alone hold a deterministic influence in the education and employment outcomes of youth in ghetto neighbourhoods. As observed in the findings of writers such as Wilson (1996: 78), this view also ignores the role of personal agency, such that individuals are not recognized as having powers and liabilities to transform or reproduce the social structures of education and unemployment. Writers such as Young (2004: 10) and Anderson (1999: 11) have offered different views by exploring how youth understand and make sense of structures that influence their decisions and behaviour, and thereby give a place to the role of personal agency. My findings have built on this work by looking not only at structural constraints that disenable employment goals but also the agential powers that transform material structures and cultural expectations towards successful employment and professional career paths.

The critical realist approach, which identifies *sui generis* properties and powers that are inherent within structure and agency, has been most useful in analysing the interaction of structure, culture, and agency. Porpora (2015: 100) highlights that it is

important to keep these three entities distinct from each other since our analysis focuses on the way in which each element influences the other. As such, social structures may be understood as both material and cultural circumstances since human agency, or action, is influenced by circumstances that are both materially objective and culturally subjective. The analysis of case studies in this thesis has therefore considered structures both as both material and cultural, where material structures pertain to the way that people relate to material and social constructs of poverty, education, employment, social isolation, social networks and cultural capital. Cultural norms have considered beliefs and values that characterise the way people consider social practices such as parenting, attending school, looking for work, and gang affiliation, as ideological constructs. Personal agency is exercised, in relation to social structures as these phenomena have an influence on the “internal conversation” (Archer, 2003: 153) or deliberation of the individual. The choices and decisions that youth make then produce action that either reproduces or transforms their cultural or material circumstances, or both.

Chapter Four traced the way in which youth respond to the material structures of poverty, and the scarce availability of low-skilled work, through the cultural circumstances of disengaged parental supervision. Rose’s goal of completing high school and pursuing tertiary studies towards a career in business administration was an unsuccessful endeavour largely due to the lack of support from her single parent father. Lareau’s (2011: 239) theory of “natural growth” describes parents who leave their children and youth to make their own decisions, and do not intervene in schooling activities, but this translates into parental neglect within the high-risk context of a ghetto neighbourhood since it exposes them to values that prevent them from succeeding at school. With incongruent expectations and obligations within the parent-youth relationship, youth struggle along a lonely path to provide for themselves. The response of their personal agency is such that they are despondent and disillusioned about being able to transform the culture of low expectations around education and employment. Youth such as Rose, Jennifer, and Leon therefore exercise personal agency over their circumstances through a fractured deliberation over limited choices. By reproducing the cultural expectations of low education outcomes through dropping out of school, Rose was also unable to transform her position within the material structure of deindustrialisation and the unemployment of poorly-educated workers.

In contrast to the culture of a disengaged parenting structure that reproduces patterns of incongruent expectations and obligations around education and employment goals,

Chapter Five probed an alternative parenting culture. Carl's aspiration to complete high school and qualify for a university study programme towards a career in education may be attributed to congruent obligations around this goal between himself and his mother Emily, such that he was able to navigate a successful outcome. The norm circle (Elder-Vass, 2010: 123) of a close and supportive family, with a culture of commitment to studying and disassociation from negative influences such as gangsters, was fostered by Emily. While adopting a close and consistent intervention over both her sons' school activities, her efforts were strengthened by support from her mother to take care of Carl and his brother Calvin while she was at work, apart from also supervising their homework. Their stepfather Brian assisted in mentoring and motivating them to aim for exceptional academic results. The close intervention of "concerted cultivation" and the firm directives of "natural growth" (Lareau, 2011: 238-239) are both essential for insulating youth from negative influences and nurturing a commitment to values such as hard work and sacrifice to achieve education goals. Youth demonstrate personal agency through their internal reflection and deliberation of a choice between two cultures or "competing norm circles" (Elder-Vass, 2012: 87). In Carl's case study the collective efforts of family members exerted pressure on him to achieve exceptional results, thereby challenging the illicit work culture of gangsterism that many other young men reproduced. In following the guidance he received from the norm circle of his family he rejected the influences of other norm circles that detracted from the agential goal of successful education outcomes. This causal influence of his family as a cultural norm circle does not, however, determine Carl's actions since he could have rebelled but he chose not to. Transforming cultural norms within the context of competing values and beliefs may be regarded as an extraordinary demonstration of personal agency when we consider the adversities of poverty, crime, and limited resources that youth encounter on a daily basis in ghetto neighbourhoods.

The plight of youth who struggle through adversity, within the context of social isolation from resources and networks, is evidenced in the principal case study of Natheem in Chapter Six. Social isolation may be understood as a material structure that separates youth from normative cultural practices that promote successful pathways to formal employment. However, this separation does not necessarily imply the lack of cultural norms that value education and employment. Competing cultural practices exist between gangs that promote an illicit work culture, on the one hand, while families and support programmes endorse formal work endeavours, on the other. As evidenced in the case study of Natheem, personal agency deliberates in a fractured manner over these choices, especially when the agential goal of formal employment is not

supported through the weakening influence of “norm circles” (Elder Vass, 2010: 123) that endorse the goal. In this way we come to appreciate the plight of youth, especially young men, in ghetto neighbourhoods because we are able to understand the internal conflict that they experience as personal agency interacts with competing cultural values. It is a cultural condition that we do not find in middle-class neighbourhoods, since gangs and other such illicit work cultures are uncommon in these settings.

Coupled with a personal battle to overcome the tragedy of a debilitating childhood accident, adverse poverty, and the loss of his parents, Natheem perceived his world through a “fractured reflexivity” (Archer, 2003: 164). Since it is a fractured deliberation and decision-making process that youth in such circumstances engage in, they are trapped between what they aspire for themselves and what they have. Even though they may have demonstrated exemplary academic performance at school and held aspirations for a professional career, they resign themselves to take care of immediate needs only through despair from constant exposure to adversity. Youth such as Natheem, Zaira, and Luke therefore reproduced structures of hustling, short term casual work, or even the criminal economy which further isolated them from the formal work sector.

Michelle’s case study, in Chapter Seven, may be contrasted to the unsuccessful employment outcomes of youth who experience the causal liabilities of limited social networks. Through the personal agency of her father Graeme who transformed Michelle’s education structures by ensuring her attendance at a better resourced school outside of Manenberg, she was enabled to interact with a wider social network. While Michelle initially considered tertiary-level study towards a career in law as an elusive goal for youth in Manenberg, her interaction with a network of colleagues at the law firm where she worked as an accounts clerk started to open new possibilities for her. The cultural influence of this social network was such that her personal agency deliberated over new opportunities and resources that were not available to her through social networks within Manenberg. Not only was she afforded material resources to manage her tuition fees and costs of study materials, she also found the cultural capital to navigate a pathway that was previously unfamiliar to her. In her agential response to the social structure of a wider network, we see that an initial lack of cultural capital and fear of an unknown path is transformed into a new possibility through a different mind-set. In this way we appreciate the transformation of cultural norms as well as the material transformation of Michelle’s position in the occupational structure of ghetto neighbourhoods as she studies towards a professional career. The

case studies of Calvin, Nicholas, and Carl further highlight the role of wide social networks, outside of one's immediate associations, to access career knowledge, cultural capital, and resources. Such access enables participation and competition in worlds that socially isolated youth yearn to be part of.

This four-year research journey, with youth and their families from Manenberg, concurs with structural perspectives that poverty, unemployment, and crime hold debilitating influences over their education and career aspirations. Economic trends in employment continue to favour non-manual clerical, sales, service, professional and managerial jobs that depend on completed secondary and tertiary education. With school structures that struggle to promote successful education outcomes and inadequate support networks in ghetto neighbourhoods, it is only a minority of youth complete high school and pursue professional qualifications. How youth interact with this high-risk structural environment helps us understand the ways in which they often find insurmountable constraints that leave them trapped between what they aspire to and the limitations they see around them. Transforming these structures is a bold and extraordinary accomplishment on the part of youths' personal agencies that are supported through insulation from exposure to negative influences and nurturing through supportive parenting and families, wide social networks, and resourceful cultural capital. Those who do not receive such intervention are then left vulnerable to the constraining cultural norms that value immediate and short-term solutions which further isolate them from the formal work environment. The struggle and plight of youth in ghetto neighbourhoods to navigate successful employment paths receives an inadequate evaluation by mere associations with structural constraints, unless we delve into their interior worlds and pay attention to the enabling or disabling power of their personal agency. In doing so we help to unearth the deficiencies and needs that should be addressed in order to strengthen youth employability in ghetto neighbourhoods. We look deeper than just the patterns and recognise the individuals that construct these paths, ensuring that their aspirations are not elusive and forgotten, that people are indeed living there.

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Appendix 2: Primary Research Participants

| | Name | Age | Area | Highest Education Qualification | Occupation |
|----|-------------------|------------|------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Rose (Female) | 22 | Thames Avenue | Grade 9 | Unemployed |
| 2 | Carl (Male) | 20 | Manenberg Avenue | Grade 12 | Student (University of the Western Cape) |
| 3 | Calvin (Male) | 20 | Manenberg Avenue | Grade 12 | Paramedic |
| 4 | Natheem (Male) | 28 | Sabie Road | Grade 10 | Unemployed |
| 5 | Jennifer (Female) | 20 | Sabie Road | Grade 12 | Unemployed |
| 6 | Nicholas (Male) | 22 | Manenberg Avenue | Grade 9 | NGO Music Teacher |
| 7 | Zaira (Female) | 19 | Thames Avenue | Grade 9 | Unemployed |
| 8 | Leon (Male) | 22 | Red River Street | Grade 9 | Unemployed |
| 9 | Luke (Male) | 18 | Nellie Street | Grade 11 | Unemployed |
| 10 | Michelle (Female) | 25 | Tagus Road | Grade 12 | Administrative Clerk, Part time Law Student (UNISA) |

Appendix 3: Interview Topic Guide

Each theme is headed by a “Single Question aimed at Inducing Narrative” (SQUIN), with topics to induce further narratives in subsessions (Wengraf, 2001: 111).

1) Family Background

SQUIN: How would you describe your relationships with each of your family members?

- Relationships with family members not living at home / deceased
- Work experiences of household members
- Involvement of parents / other household adults in school affairs and studying
- Involvement of family in employment applications or decisions about further study / training
- Other adults considered to be parental figures and why

2) School Career

SQUIN: What are the memories that come to mind when thinking about your school career?

- Teachers
- School conditions, both social and infrastructural
- Friends
- Childhood thoughts about careers
- Motivation for subject choices
- Study habits
- Exposure to career development

3) Work Experience / Tertiary Study

SQUIN: What are the experiences you recall about looking for work or making applications for further study?

- Description of work experiences thus far, both formal and informal
- Study funding
- Resource people for finding jobs
- Application processes
- Job / Study locations and travel
- Challenges experienced in looking for work
- Assignment and Examination Preparations
- Long-term goals for employment / career
- An experience of losing a job
- An experience of not being accepted at a job application
- An experience of being successful for a job application

4) Social Networks

SQUIN: What are some of your most memorable experiences of friendship?

- People relied on for support during difficult experiences
- People to seek advice from when making important decisions
- Assistance with looking for work?
- Interaction with people outside of Manenberg

Appendix 4: Informed Consent

I volunteer to participate in a PhD research project conducted by Merlin Ince from the University of Cape Town. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about youth unemployment in Manenberg.

My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

Participation involves being interviewed by the researcher for approximately 60 minutes, as well as occasional accompaniment by the researcher during agreed upon social activities. Notes will be written during the interview and visits. An audio recording of the interview and a subsequent transcript will be made. I also agree that the researcher contact key individuals identified in my personal history to build a case study, with my knowledge and verbal consent.

I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this research, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.

Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies that protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Cape Town.

I understand the explanation provided to me about the process of conducting the research and I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

My Signature

Date

My Name

Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher