Being a teen, tween and in-between girl in Mitchell's Plain: Toward a heterogenous conception of youth agency in a Global South city

Ruth Brain

BRNRUT005

SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MPhil in Southern Urbanism

Faculty of Science

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

7 September 2020

Supervisor: Dr Gareth Haysom

African Centre for Cities

Environmental and Geographical Sciences

University of Cape Town

Plagiarism declaration

I, *Ruth Brain*, hereby declare that the work on which this dissertation is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university.

Signature: Signed by candidate

Date: 5 September 2020

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank my research participants for sharing their lives with me. I will always remember the hot summer afternoons we spent together fondly. This thesis is dedicated to them, and to the young people across Global South cities, who are figuring out who they are. Thanks too to my liaison teacher and the school for being open and enthusiastic to research and assisting me.

I am grateful for the continued support from the MPhil in Southern Urbanism Master's program. Thank you to my classmates for always encouraging me and pushing me to deeper learning, I have loved being on this thesis journey with you all. Thanks particularly to my programme convenors – Professor Sophie Oldfield and Dr Anna Selmeczi for their revolutionary kindness and personal investment in my learning. The EGS Department has provided a learning environment that one can only dream of – a rare example of academic excellence nestled in a pocket of care. Thanks to my fantastic supervisor, Gareth Haysom, thank you for your constant support and guidance through this process. I could not have asked for a more thoughtful and committed supervisor – thank you for giving of your time and expertise so generously in these strange pandemic times.

Thank you to my family and friends who have cheered me on across the social distancing requirements of lockdown. Phone calls, wintery walks and board games have kept me sane in this time. Finally, a special thanks to my lovely partner Chad, who has walked this thesis journey with me - listening to my thesis woes, providing many cups of coffee and helping me polish my argument through robust debate and lengthy discussions.

Abstract

How do young South Africans assert agency? This study uses Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) theoretical conception of agency as temporally embedded and constantly reconfiguring; and combines it with the idea of shifting strategies as manifestations of agency. I introduce the seminal works in South African everyday youth literature to orient my study to explore how youth in South Africa assert agency through everyday strategies. Using qualitative methods – photo voice, focus groups, mapping and individual interviews - with four teenage girls from a high school in Mitchell's Plain, this study offers an enriched approach to a conception of youth agency, by overlaying a youth study with a theoretical conception of agency. The girls' everyday accounts show that as young teenagers they are waiting to enter the unknown prospect of teenagehood. To navigate their everyday lives, they draw on iterative (past), practical evaluative (present) and projective (future) agency in shifting configurations to maximise their agency in their lifeworlds. Although their agency is in tension with structures of safety concerns, familial expectations and culturally validated narratives of being a 'good girl'; the girls find ways around and through these limitations by strategically asserting their agency. This study applies a comprehensive theory of agency to a small youth study with rich everyday descriptions, in an effort towards enriching and grounding a conception of youth agency in an urban environment in the Global South.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures and Tables

Chapter One: Introduction

Africa has the world's largest youth population, a figure that is predicted to grow rapidly in the next 30 years (United Nations, 2015). Many of these young people live in cities (Pieterse, 2011). This study is a specific and in-depth contribution to understanding how young people in cities assert agency in their everyday. It weaves together a theoretical conception of agency and multiple South African youth studies, teasing out contradictions, alignments, specificities and contextualities. In this study, I show how ordinary young girls from Mitchell's Plains employ strategies to navigate their everyday lives. I argue that they draw on iterative (past), practical evaluative (present) and projective (future) agency in shifting configurations to maximise their agency in the environment they find themselves. Although their agency is in tension with structures, the girls find ways around and through these limitations by strategically utilizing their temporally embedded agency. This thesis makes use of stories from the girls' everyday to illustrate the shifting configurations of agency, adding richness to a youth study by focusing on the how (logics), why (motivations) and where (geographies) of youth agency.

I begin by justifying the study, illustrating the need to study 'ordinary' youth, in an effort to avoid catastrophizing the youth experience. This is important because it allows stakeholders (parents, family members, schools, policy-makers etc.) to engage with the reality of youth, rather than the marginal cases of shocking extremes, popular in tabloid headlines. This aligns with the focus on the configurations of agency, as often in the past, youth literature has cast young people as problems to be solved (see Bray 2003 on AIDS orphans) or extremely negatively agentised and fuelling moral panic as a "lost generation" (see Van Zyl Slabbert et al., 1994) and delinquents (Henderson, 1999:3). This loses the nuance that defines youth experience for many.

Justifying Study - studying the ordinary

Despite South Africa having a significant youth population (35% of the population is between 15 and 34 years old, (Statistics South Africa, 2019)), there is minimal literature on the study of ordinary young South Africans. In the limited literature on children, adolescents and youth, the focus has been on atypical groups (Bray et al., 2010:28) – in the 1980s and 1990s focusing

on participation in political protest and violence; in the early 1990s moral panic at the 'lost generation of marginalized youth' and post-apartheid (Seekings, 1995, 1996), the focus has shifted to specific groups of younger children, such as street children or AIDs orphans (Bray, 2003). Erikson (1968) a key youth identity theorist, in his work *Identity: Youth and Crisi*s is careful to clarify that he means that the crisis is merely a turning point and not an imminent catastrophe. Understanding crisis as a turning point challenges global thinking, as child and youth studies have typically focused on the extremes of optimum conditions for children and deviant behaviour that disrupts public order. The latter focuses on delinquency, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse, identity, youth culture etc. (Henderson, 1999:2).

Henderson argues that these assumptions, prevalent in Western industrialised countries' discourse around childhood, are underpinned by the universalistic pretensions of developmental psychology (she uses the United Nations Declarations of Children's Rights as an example). She motivates that child-centred disciplines and institutions need to be placed within the "liberal, neo-Enlightenment framework from which they have emerged" (Henderson, 1999:6), based on the assumption that child-care patterns have improved as they have evolved (when reforms began in the 19th century). Honwana and de Boeck (2005:3) similarly note that in international law on children's rights, children are often framed as "people in the process of becoming rather than being" and in need of protection from adults. This universalistic framing obscures the specificity of the construction of childhood in particular social contexts (see De Waal (2002) and Twum-Danso (2005) on conception of childhood in conflict zones) and can ignore the interpersonal emotional dimensions of care and the cultural norms that shape these (Bray & Brandt, 2007:2).

Soudien (2007:3) adds his voice to this line of argument, noting that the few attempts to explain who young South Africans are fall into the trap of actively stereotyping and caricaturing young people's identities and the issues they have to deal with (he uses *Tsotsi*[1]

[1] *Tsotsi*, meaning thug, is a South African film based on Athol Fugard's novel, *Tsotsi*. It tells the tale of a young, small-time criminal who steals a car, only to find a baby on the backseat. Set in Alexandra, Johannesburg, the film is associated with the violence and poverty in South African townships. The film gained international acclaim

and *Yizo Yizo*[2] as examples). He argues that this paucity and distortedness fail to understand youth and relegate young people to the margins.

There are, however, a few studies that focused on the everyday lives of ordinary young people in South Africa, both in and after apartheid (see Burman and Reynolds, 1986; Jones, 1993; Dawes and Donald, 1994; Ramphele, 2002; Henderson, 1999; Barbarin and Richter, 2001; Seekings 2006). More recently, Bray et al., 2010 offer a useful, everyday account of young people and how in particular they make choices in post-apartheid South Africa. They choose to study 'ordinary children', a deliberate move away from framing children or youth as a social problem, and as they themselves say "studies (such as theirs) that simultaneously explore several domains of South African children's lives are rare, but valuable because they illuminate the importance of ordinary social settings and the many dimensions of resilience and vulnerability" (Bray et al., 2010:31). The authors draw on years of fieldwork and quantitative data across the Fish Hoek Valley, in the Cape Town South Peninsula (Fish Hoek, Masiphumelele and Ocean View), "to explore the everyday interactions of children, and to build an understanding of the manner in which their actions, relationships and well-being are influenced by their social worlds, as well as by the nature and extent of their agency in shaping these worlds"(Bray et al., 2010:31).

As Elaine Salo notes, most work on communities focuses on what was lost following the forced removals of apartheid and does not engage with how "social webs have been painstakingly re-spun" (Salo, 2003:4) in these areas or how new meanings have been developed since families were forcibly removed (Moses, 2005:1). Similarly, Henderson, in her

---

when it won the 2006 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and was nominated for the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film in 2006.

[2] Yizo Yizo (1999 - 2004) is a state-commissioned three-season television series engaging with the problems around township high school schools in South Africa (Modisane, 2011). Colloquially it was used to refer to schools where 'kids went wild' and violence, drug and alcohol abuse were pervasive (personal correspondence with Fortuin, 2020).

work in New Crossroads in the mid-1990s, focuses on how children make meaning in their environment by "examin(ing) what experience of stability children have, whether there is routine, predictability, security and dependability in social institutions including families in relation to which children can create, respond and shape their lives; if and how adults and children attempt to impose order on their fractured worlds; and the kinds of subjectivities, styles and agency the children bring to bear on a 'kinetic universe'"(Henderson, 1999:6). This study takes seriously the positioning of children's geography, focusing on the agency that children have rather than the structural constraints of their environment. It offers a contribution to illustrate how "social webs have been painstakingly re-spun" (Salo, 2003:4) by youth in a post-apartheid generation.

Chapter Roadmap

I begin the thesis with a literature review – Chapter Two. In this chapter, I bring together a theoretical conception of agency as temporally embedded and constantly reconfiguring (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) and overlay it with the idea of shifting strategies as manifestations of agency, drawing on Soudien (2007). I then introduce Salo's work on *personhood*, De Lannoy's (2007) work on *kinetic fragility* and Henderson's (1999) idea of *fluidity* and how this informs youth identity. Having built the theoretical foundations for the chapter, I ground these abstractions in reality by drawing on the seminal works in South African everyday youth literature - authors such as Bray et al. (2010), Henderson (1999), Ramphele (2002), Moses (2005), Swartz (2009) and Salo (2018). The third set of literature that I address is the external factors that shape young South Africans configurations of agency (household responsibilities, child's age and safety, neighbourhood and the availability of attractive third spaces).

Chapter Three forms my methodology chapter. In this chapter, I draw on the methodologies employed by other South African youth studies to answer my research questions of: How do young people assert agency in low-income, urban neighbourhoods? What are the logics, motivations and geographies of these choices? To do this, my research design made use of a number of qualitative methods, selected to particularly appeal to teenagers and illustrate individual choices (individual photo-voice submissions, mapping and interviews) and peer

influences (focus group discussions). I go on to detail the adaptations to the planned methods, ethical considerations and limitations of the study, as well as to explain the methods used in data analysis. The second half of this chapter provides context for the research site by giving a brief overview of the history of the area and introducing the four research participants.

The body of the thesis interweaves the findings of the study and my analysis. It is divided into three chapters - Chapters Four, Five and Six. These chapters present findings that build on the legacy of youth studies in Cape Town (Ramphele, 2002; Henderson, 1999; Bray et al., 2010; Salo, 2018; Soudien, 2007), to offer a theoretically enriched contribution to understanding youth agency in Cape Town's low-income neighbourhoods. In these chapters, I have shown *how* the girls exert agency in the logics and strategies they employ (Chapter Four), *why* they assert different forms of agency in light of certain culturally validated narratives (Chapter Five) and *where* they assert their agency (Chapter Six).

In Chapter Four, I draw on concepts from Soudien (2007), Henderson (1999) and De Lannoy (2007) to show how the girls employ strategies in an effort to leverage their agency and create room to experiment as they begin to forge and make sense of their identities. In Chapter Five, I argue that the girls' agency is affected by the threat of violence and their gender, by the culturally validated narratives that shape their everyday and their future aspirations, and by the diverse factors that shape their household responsibilities. In Chapter Six, the final body chapter, I discuss the geographies (the *where*) of agency in my findings. Understanding the geography of agency gives insight into the morality of spaces. Much of how the girls conceive of themselves and their moral code is rooted in where the girls spend time and assert agency – primarily, in the home. Finally, in Chapter Seven I bring together the various tenets of my argument to illustrate how I have answered my research questions and explain why my findings are significant, given that they both sit in tension and align with findings of pre-existing youth studies.

Caveats

A few caveats before I begin. Agency is a blockbuster term, and as I detail in the literature review, has been theorised at great length. Given the scope of a MPhil dissertation, I

strategically elected to use a particular conception of agency which I believe adds richness to the study with a selective focus. Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) conception of agency builds on a comprehensive review of most major theories of agency, and in choosing to make use of their conception of agency, I strategically leverage their work. Additionally, Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) temporally embedded conception of agency resonated with my preliminary findings and other conceptions of agency embedded in youth studies. Using this particular conception of agency, I focus on the logics, motivations and geographies of agency. Logics differ from motivations in that they focus on the describing the strategies of *how* the girls in this study assert agency; whereas motivations focus on *why* the girls assert agency the way that they do, and the narratives that shape their strategies. Geographies are included to provide a spatial element to agency.

In relation to the limited scope of a MPhil dissertation, I have not spent a great deal of words on explaining the Cape Town context at length. The broad account of the legacy of apartheid spatial planning and its long-lasting impact on the everyday lives of most South Africans is told far better by others (Western, 1981; McDonald, 2012). My hope is that the brief historical context overview that I give in Chapter Three provides sufficient context for the specific stories that the girls tell to take root. To foreground their stories, I have introduced them with photographs, although these are blurred to ensure anonymity. I have also included their direct quotations as the headings of many of the sub-sections within the thesis to let the stories take centre stage. With this in mind, I do not explicitly discuss the class and racial context that frames their lives. I make use of racial categories as the girls themselves did – black, coloured and white – only where it is a necessary descriptor. Finally, my field work was cut short by the national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic; I discuss the ramifications of this in detail in Chapter Three.

Chapter Two: A review of youth agency literature in South Africa

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the current literature on youth, predominantly in South Africa, and apply theories of agency to understand and locate youth agency through the strategies and arenas in which young people assert agency. Using the waithood[3] literature to situate youth studies, I discuss how some literature has positioned youth as decision-makers, as they gain influence in their network and step into their personhood. This leads me to present briefly an overview of theories of agency, drawing primarily on Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) seminal work on the shifting, temporal dimensions of agency. I discuss how this plays out in the form of strategies that young people employ in fragile and fluid environments. I go on to account for how theories of youth agency have been debated in geography (see Henderson (1999), James and Prout (1997), Holloway and Valentine (2000)), drawing on children's geography. I show how studies of South African youth provide evidence that young people assert agency in the form of self-worth and self-control, and particularly in their friendships. Finally, I present current findings on what affects configurations of agency - independence and responsibility and how these differ based on gender and a number of other factors; age and safety; the type of neighbourhood young people live in and the 'third spaces' available and attractive to them.

Positioning youth as decision-makers

Globally, the focus of childhood research has shifted from "identifying what children lack to understanding the particularities of their daily lives, the meanings associated with their actions and their relationships" (Matthews & Limb, 1999 cited in Bray et al. (2010:38)). Over a decade ago, the World Bank began seeing children and adolescents as "decision-making agents" (World Bank, 2006:53). There are few South African studies that study how children interact and influence their neighbourhood and communities (see for example, Bray et al.,

[3] A body of literature in human geography that engages with the extended nature of adolescence and the sometimes-lengthy transition to adulthood. This is discussed at length in Chapter Two.

2010; Ramphele, 2002; Henderson, 1999; De Lannoy, 2007; Swartz, 2009; Soudien, 2007; Salo, 2018). Rather, the focus has been on children's socialization at home and school settings; despite evidence that children spend a significant proportion of their time with non-family networks (Moses, 2005:1). A few exceptions include studies such as Ramphele (2002) and Henderson (1999) in New Crossroads, Cape Town which illustrate how youth make decisions in less than ideal circumstances, and with little awareness of the consequences of their choices (Bray et al, 2010:38). Similarly, De Lannoy's 2007 study, *The Stuff That Dreams Are Made Of – Narratives of Educational Decision-Making Among Young Adults In Cape Town*, argues for the need to consider youth as active decision-makers to reveal the individual-level factors (such as values and traits) that affect schooling.

As children get older, they move into ever-widening social networks. Jenkins (1996:66) argues that as a result, social life becomes more negotiable and negotiated, and less predictable. Status begins to matter, and hierarchy must be negotiated. How one sees oneself and how others see us can result in conflict; and identities become projects and are resisted if imposed and unwelcome. In Moses' (2005) Ocean View study, teenagers both buy into and resist the identities imposed on them by adults – trying to do right by one's parents is compromised when false assumptions are made about a child's behaviour. This results in teenagers wanting to 'teach their parents a lesson' by becoming the 'problems' their parents fear they are and embracing a 'deviant identity'. It is often the hypocrisy of adult judgements that most infuriates young people (Moses, 2005:77-8).

Crain Soudien (2007: xi), in his work on youth identity refers to what he calls the youth puzzle: "how are young people to find their social, ethical and intellectual bearings in the maelstrom of modern South Africa?". He investigates what makes young South Africans who they are and what shapes their thinking and the choices they make. He terms this 'youth consciousness'. This resonates with Salo's (2018:15) contention that there is a theoretical relationship between personhood, agency and structure, and that this requires us to investigate the extent to which subjugated communities assert agency, how they do this and whether they reproduce the structures that subordinate them. In light of this contention, I draw on Bray et al. (2010), Henderson (1999), Ramphele (2002), Moses (2005), Soudien (2007) and Salo (2018), to offer a contribution to youth everyday literature in South Africa. To do

this, in the next section, I introduce some theoretical literature on agency, combined with literature on youth agency and strategies.

Agency

Theoretical

Put simply, agency is people's ability to do things (Giddens, 1984). This can produce both intended and unintended consequences. Previously agency has been conceived of as one-sided. Various schools of thought have emphasized different aspects – American sociologists focusing on habitus and routinized practices, rational choice theory and phenomenology on goal-seeking and purposivity, and publicity and communication and feminist theories on deliberation and judgement (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:963). Emirbayer and Mische (1998) argue that there is a need for dynamic interplay between these various aspects. They propose to reconceptualize human agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement – informed by the past (habitual), oriented toward the future (capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and the present (capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects with the contingencies of the moment), simultaneously at any given moment. To capture the agentic dimension of social action in full complexity, it is necessary to situate it analytically within the flow of time, and relationally, as overlapping ways of ordering time.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) draw on the philosophical schools of American Pragmatism and Continental Phenomenology to disaggregate the dimensions of agency, to account for the variability and change in actors' capacity for imaginative and critical intervention in diverse contexts. They define human agency as composing of iteration (past), projectivity (future) and practical evaluative (present). This varies across history, culture and person, based on the conceptions of time and the ways in which people understand their own time. They see agency as a dialogical process, and the self as a dialogical structure.

The iterational aspect draws on the past, and schematizes formative social experiences of race, gender, sex etc. which shape the web of corporeal, affective and cognitive patterns we develop. The projective aspect refers to the future and encompasses beyond what we take for granted – imagination, goals and aspirations. This is linked to Appadurai's (2004) conception of agency as "capacity to aspire". Finally, practical-evaluative refers to the present,

the practical wisdom and prudence that we use in empirical application (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:971). This is what de Certeau (1984) refers to as 'tactics' and James Scott (1985, 1990) as "patterns of disguised dissent". Emirbayer and Mische (1998:1002) note that the challenge is to capture the variability and volatility of the interplay between structure and agency. This requires that we do not see them as insurmountably opposite, nor fall victim to the fallacy of central conflation that leads us to see them as mutually constitutive in a direct and stable way. Rather, the three aspects of agency shift and reconfigure in a chordal triad, increasing and decreasing our capacity accordingly. The authors use the term 'chordal' to refer to the three dimensions as "separate but not always harmonious" (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:1002).

Soudien (2007:7) echoes Emirbayer and Mische (1998) in arguing that individual's identity and agency is constantly repositioning. He proposes using the idea of a dynamic between controlled and uncontrolled forces to explain personal and social identities and how the individual deals with demands of each. Both forces have psychological and social elements. In sociology, controlled forces refer to agency and in psychology, ego. Structure and agency offer an alternative explanation for the relationship between the individual and the social. Soudien (2007:9) draws on Althusser (1971) to describe how individuals are called upon by various powers in everyday life and have to choose how to respond. Combining the psychosocial, Fanon (1963) and Bhabha (1994) propose that identity is an iterative process, that leads to a continual repositioning of an individual as either 'self' or 'other' in a range of contexts. These repositionings require the individual to work out if they belong or are being alienated. Soudien (2007:99) is careful to emphasize that most young South Africans do not have the luxury of "space to play around with their identities in the same way as their middle-class peers" (he uses the example of 'gap years' to the UK for middle to upper class white young South Africans). Kroger (2004) suggests that these feelings of belonging and alienation are influenced by the meanings of an individual's childhood (past) and the hopes and ambitions the individual has for adult life (future). This iterative process of forging an identity resonates clearly with Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) conception of agency.

Salo (2018) uses Fortes' (1993) concept of *personhoo*d to link agency to structure. Personhood is defined as the "locally acceptable means of showing that one is a person, a

socially recognized agent-in-society" and that personhood is what connects one to history, to structural time and therefore to social structure (Salo, 2018:20). This conception of personhood enables Salo (2018: 23) to propose the possibility of a heterodox social field, allowing for an "individual who is identified as a person in one socio-cultural worldview to be identified simultaneously as a non-person in a co-existing, though opposing socio-cultural worldview". She uses this to illustrate how an alternative personhood is constructed in the local Manenberg context, in conjunction with the non-personhood evidenced in the marginal location of Manenberg and the systematic oppression of coloured people by the apartheid government (Salo, 2018:26).

This theoretical account of agency is not unique to *youth* agency. What is unique about youth agency, is that the shifting and repositioning of young people's agency is constrained by various institutional structures (for example, school) and norms that are most often controlled by adults, justified by the need for the young person's protection. These are most evident in legal rights, which forbid children to give their consent, vote, marry, drink alcohol and work. Henderson highlights that notions of childhood in hegemonic discourse reflect the worldview of *adults* and *their* desires for particular types of society (see Hendrick, 1990:38-39; Burman 1994:59). These may silence children and dismiss their social knowledge. Particularly, this conception of childhood denies the very real social contexts that children bear responsibilities, and the agency they assert in moulding society (Henderson, 1999:5). This context requires particular strategies for youth to leverage their agency, amidst these particular structural constraints, which I discuss in the next section.

Strategies

Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) shifting, temporal conception of agency typifies the constant moving of strategies that young people employ. De Lannoy (2007:13) captures its kinetic fragility:

> "…no such strategy can ever be considered static: these descriptions only offer a representation of the young adults' lives at this point in time; whichever small change in the context of 'fragility', can lead the youngsters to completely different paths."

Similarly, Henderson (1999:25) notes the fluidity that accompanies fragility[4]:

> "Fragility then, is linked to fluidity and it is out of a social context characterized by discontinuity and flux that children's sense of self emerges as multiple and variable. Attempts to reconstitute social worlds, sometimes through ritual process, seldom reach a point of finality. Healing and repairing of the social fabric is thus an ongoing process… sense of self that are continuously being worked upon appealing at times to imaginary ideas of coherence".

It is important to note that strategy within a context of fragility is never static. Rather strategies represent a moment in time, and particularly in the context of fragility, are open to a dramatic shift even from a small contextual change (De Lannoy, 2007:13). Additionally, the absence of an endpoint in young adults' lives (Henderson, 1990), especially with the extended nature of 'growing up', adds further pressure to achieve resolution. Strategies are thus neither static nor unambivalent; with endless re-configurations of mixed and 'in-between' versions, including complete inertia (see De Lannoy, 2007:46 diagram for more details). Moses (2005:97) notes the high levels of individual variation and creativity in the nature of young people's agency, and the tactics they employ to negotiate everyday life. While all young people were actively engaged in meaning-making in spaces and employing a variety of tactics to ensure their safety and the safety of others – these strategies could have both positive and negative outcomes. Young people are embedded in their social environment, and they juggle existing possibilities in different ways, often reaching imaginatively beyond the boundaries of their physical location (Henderson, 1999:139). Similarly, "the constitution of the self… is a constant process of formation, loss and reconfiguration" (Henderson, 1999:160). She goes onto to argue that "what is remarkable in the children of New Crossroads is their ability, in most cases, to confront their lives with strength and to challenge obdurate and limiting

[4] Henderson uses the concept of fragility in her research with children in New Crossroads as a framing metaphor to capture the "flux and discontinuity in the lives of children and in the institutions of family and neighbourhood… although I show how children's worlds can "shatter", I uphold children's strength and improvisation in the face of discontinuities" (Henderson, 1999:25). This idea can also be understood as 'precarity' (see Pieterse, 2011), linked to fluidity in the face of vulnerability, as De Lannoy (2007:45) explains that she uses fragility as a "compound of 'fluid' social relationships, economic pressures and inequalities, crime and violence, the temptations and influences of, and frustrations caused by a globalized, materialistically oriented society that offers young people today a myriad of choices, yet in the absence of strong guidance and evidence on the outcomes of such choices."

circumstance" (Henderson, 1999:166), it is this resilience and adaptivity that I am interested in.

Locating Agency: Children's geography/Geography of children

Focus on children's agency emerged in European sociologists' work on the 'new sociology of childhood' in the early 1990s (see James and Prout 1997). Childhood studies have become popular within anthropological studies, and Henderson (1999:5) notes that this is similar to how women's worlds have become foregrounded in recent years. This shifted the focus from how children are shaped by their physical and social environment to how children might shape these environments. Tobias Hecht (1998) in his work with street children of Northeast Brazil, notes that this is a new paradigm of childhood research in anthropology and social science, that focuses on the everyday experiences of children as social actors navigating through socio-economic, cultural and political environments.

More traditional approaches to neighbourhood-level studies (particularly in the USA) tend to construct children as passive (Moses, 2005:2). This reflects a divide within research on children – drawing on social anthropology, sociology and social history – geographers distinguish between 'geography of children' and 'children's geography'. 'Geography of children' focuses on the structural determinants of action – what children do in their external environments. 'Children's geographies' focuses on agency - how children perceive, experience and represent their environments (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). This literature argues that place attachment impacts on personal identity formation, and that children use space in different ways to adults, making meaning in their own cultural locations (Matthew and Limb, 1999:68-70). Recognising children's agency is important because it allows interventions to learn from and build on the everyday tactics that children employ. An example of this would be in Moses' (2005:97) Ocean View study, where she identifies a supplementary intervention as 'activating internal resources' to assist children in developing a sense of pride and positive feelings about their neighbourhood.

Bray et al. (2010:294) note that the term 'agency' is widely used, and often uncritically applied to youth to mean "the general recognition that the young have some kind of power to

influence their own and others' worlds, even when these worlds present considerable obstacles to their wellbeing". The authors emphasize that unpacking the term 'agency' is important, particularly in a South African context, where youth have been framed with particular narratives since the end of apartheid. Seekings (1995, 1996) argues that youth agency became of public concern with the 'lost generation' narrative of a disruptive youth, who disproportionally asserted their political agency in the township revolts of the mid-1980s. Research in New Crossroads in the mid-1990s illustrated how young people develop innovative and creative but, for the most part, insufficient strategies to navigate the systemic violence, poverty and the lack of opportunities that they face (Henderson 1999, Ramphele 2002). Bray et al. (2010) offer a more recent account of how young people in post-apartheid South Africa develop agency, in its broader sense, one of which is that teenagers express agency through a sense of self-worth.

Self-worth and self-control as agency

Teenagers tend to understand the challenges they faced as requiring personal attributes, rather than the provision of better resources or infrastructure (Bray et al.,2010:298). This echoes Swartz' (2009:99) finding that young people in Langa, Cape Town focus on personal culpability when they make negative choices, without recognizing the poor environment and with limited recognition of the legacy of apartheid in their daily lives. In contrast, they attribute their positive choices to their community and God. This plays into the 'meritocracy myth', that 'people get what they deserve and deserve what they get' (McNamee & Miller, 2009). As a result, poor youth take on unrealistic and "middle class" responsibilities upon themselves without the middle-class resources their ambitious goals require. Lucey and Reay (2002:264) use their findings among working-class youth in the UK, to argue that this myth lurks as a constant threat to undermine children's positivity and creativity. Swartz (2009:100) observed that in her study, teenagers had maintained positive outlook due to a fervent belief in their own ability (agency) to escape the limitations of their environment. She warns that while this allows teenagers to move beyond blaming the system and being a victim of their circumstances, the potential for disappointment in discovering the gap between reality and expectation looms large.

Beyond personality and temperament, many young people draw a sense of control and morality from a personal faith in God and from religious institutions. Self-determination is thus linked to discourses of 'right' and 'wrong' decisions, in terms of choice of friends, dating relationships, drugs or sexual behaviour (Bray et al., 2010:302). Bray et al. (2010:304) go on to argue that this moralistic dualism often sets the bar for being a 'good' person unrealistically high. Swartz (2009:79) notes that morality is often tied up in where youth spend time – whether they are off/on the streets before/after curfew (usually 10pm), in/out of home and school. This understandably results in incoherence in living by certain behavioural codes, and a high 'failure' rate, as young people feel they have failed themselves and their families. Embedded in this morality are two assumptions, which Bray et al. (2010: 305) term the "insidious myths that inform the transition from childhood to adulthood". Firstly, that adhering to the 'right' and 'good' code (particularly at school) will result in a success as an adult; and secondly that a person's moral integrity is determined by their choices, regardless of their environment and structures beyond their control. The pervasiveness of these myths is indirectly reflected in Ramphele (2002), and directly addressed in De Lannoy's (2007) work on dominant education ideologies.

Friendships: an arena for agency

One area in which teenagers assert agency in is their friendships. As part of peer pressure teachings (from Life Orientation at school, as well as home and religious institutional teaching) and general common advice given to young people, most teenagers are aware that choosing one's friends requires careful attention. In De Lannoy's 2007 study, some of her participants would choose to not spend time with peers who made choices they did not agree with or who did not share the same motivation and drive. Others attempt to integrate into a bigger peer group, while still maintaining their own moral code. In De Lannoy's study, this required significant self-control to navigate the pressure of peer influence. Friends can be a negative influence in a different way, as Moses (2005:80) notes in her research where friends pull each other down, or as one of her participants puts it, "a vision killer". These are people who may be jealous of your dreams, and so put you down (interestingly, this continued to be a feature in adults' lives in New Crossroads, who spoke extensively about neighbours' jealousy - see Ramphele, 2002:107).

'Taste' in popular culture through fashion and music become important expressions of identity. In Dolby's (2001) study at a former-white, now multi-racial school in Durban, South Africa, 'taste' became a proxy for racial or group identity; despite popular culture reflecting a distinctly international influence. This form of self-expression is said to reflect the need to immediately and materially express well-being through instant gratification as an escape from structural poverty. This is typically positioned in opposition to the future-oriented, long-term goals of well-being expressed by those who remove themselves from the dominant social pressures (in De Lannoy's 2007 work, she terms these teenagers 'the dreamers'). In Moses' (2005:87) work in Ocean View, a social worker suggests that people tending to prioritise brand name purchases over other basic needs (such as school fees, buying uniforms). She argues that this is a legacy of apartheid, when people in Ocean View were robbed of their self-worth and self-esteem. She posits that because people feel 'less than' on the inside, they try to present themselves as 'more than' on the outside. Moses (2005:87) goes on to add that self-esteem is further undermined by lack of economic opportunities in Ocean View.

In Oceanview, Moses (2005:61) found that teenagers gave themselves 'gang' names, to define who they hang out with. She argues that this shows how children "resourcefully utilize networks to appropriate and attach their own meanings to spaces". For youth, much of identity is forged in what Soudien (2007:11) terms the "informal arena", through the influential, but implicit and unstated rules of friendships.

In-between youth and adulthood: growing up

Statistics South Africa reports that there are over 10 million adolescents in South Africa, defined as those between ages 10 and 19 (Toska et al., 2019:81). This 'second decade' of life is considered a period of transition from childhood to adulthood, and this transition is defined by significant biological, physical, psychosocial, cognitive and emotional changes. Many young people develop a sense of self, explore relationships beyond familial bonds with peers and experiment with romantic and sexual partners. As teenagers test out new social roles and aspire to greater autonomy, this is both an exciting and tumultuous time. Different societies define adolescence differently – some with legal entities such as the voting age, others with physical development (such as menstruation among young women or circumcision and

manhood rites among young men), starting a family or working towards financial independence. Around the world, the gap between physical maturation and social transition to adults is increasingly widening. As a result, some extend the definition of adolescence to the age of 24 (Toska et al., 2019:81).

The idea that childhood as "bounded and pristine, a period of innocence, and almost magical time out of time, continues to persist in popular discourse" (Henderson, 1999:5). This is despite the fact that in almost all developing countries, the transition from child to adult is lengthening, and young people face the difficulty of an extended transition period (Bray et al., 2010:40; see also Honwana (2014) on waithood). As Lloyd (2005:2) notes, "in the past, young men and women tended to move directly from childhood to adult roles. But today the interval between childhood and the assumption of adult roles is lengthening. Compared to the situation twenty years ago, young people are entering adolescence earlier and healthier, more likely to spend their adolescence in school, more likely to postpone entry into the labour force, and more likely to delay marriage and childbearing". Bray et al. (2010:39) echo this, using quantitative data (Lam, Seekings & Sparks, 2006) to illustrate how the teenagers in Cape Town experience transitions – by the age of 22, most have some experience of work, and one third of young women have children, although few young men admit to paternity and marriage and cohabitation is rare. Very few vote or attend civic meetings and most live with their parents or non-sibling adults. The concept of waithood captures the extended nature of adolescence and the sometimes-lengthy transition to adulthood.

Honwana (2014:24) defines waithood as "the period of experimentation, of improvisation and of great creativity as young Africans adopt a range of survival strategies to cope with the daily challenges of their lives. They identify, explore and try to maximise whatever opportunities arise in a constant effort to improve their situation". Waithood describes the suspension between youth and adulthood, but rather than being stuck or passive, waithood is a "performance and period of activity in which young people exercise agency in an improvised but constructive way" (Finn and Oldfield, 2015:33). Finn and Oldfield (2015:29) illustrate how young men in Sierra Leone "build forms of provisional agency and enact dynamic forms of waithood", using the concept of 'straining'. They make use of Jauregui's (2014:76) notion of "provisional agency" as a "transformative mode of 'can do' sociality" to

add nuance and allow for a more complex understanding of the 'youth bulge' (aged 15 – 34 years old) in African cities. This is in line with Sommers (2010:32), who suggests that pejorative depictions of the youth bulge (such as being trapped in failed liminality (Fuh (2012)) fall short as they "inspire unproven assertions about how young people think and act" and include "little data featuring the views of youth themselves." Maira and Soep's (2005) term "youthscape", a fluid classification of the shifting stages of waithood that acknowledges the challenges as well as the everyday experiences of youth and micro-practices of agency (Finn and Oldfield, 2014:34).

In this in-between waithood period, youth navigate independence and responsibility, in various configurations. In the next section, I discuss factors that affect these configurations, drawing predominantly on youth studies literature from South Africa.

Independence and responsibility: juggling adolescence

Bray et al (2010:43) note that across the Fish Hoek valley, teenagers' mobility and independence is affected by safety concerns, which play out differently, dependent on class and gender. In their study on the Fish Hoek Valley, middle class teenagers tended to spend the majority of their time at home, with their mobility and time determined predominantly by adults. This is in contrast to poorer neighbourhoods, where teenagers tended to have more independence from adults and would spend time outside of their homes (albeit nearby), playing and socializing. A good example of this is 14-year-old Samantha, a participant in the Bray et al. (2010:97)'s study - her diary "records that she spends most of her time with a group of close female friends who, like her, live in one particular block of flats in Ocean View. She writes about hanging out 'around the corner' from their flats, having a *braai* (barbecue) in the mountains, playing table football at the game shop across the road or just walking around Ocean View together. Because they do most things together, they have given themselves a 'gang' name, 'The Young Little Bastards'. Their camaraderie is summed up by Samantha:

> "The other day one girl's mom sent her to the shops to buy electricity and eggs. So we all went along. We were walking the road closed [walking in a line to block the road]."

Bray et al. (2010), emphasize that while this increased mobility allows youth to draw on community members outside of their immediate family for emotional and material support, it also involves them in neighbourhood rumours and gossip. Moses (2005:92) argues that accessing social capital (or social networks) "can simultaneously have positive and negative effects for children and that children's perceptions and experiences need to be taken into account in this regard".

Gender affects mobility further in the allocation of household chores. In Ramphele's (2002:81) study in New Crossroads, she found that most of the adolescents complained about being overburdened by domestic chores from a young age. This included getting the family ready for work or school in the morning by preparing breakfast (usually porridge) and having to make beverages for the adults. After-school, children were expected to clean the home, take care of siblings and prepare the evening meal. She found that there was limited gender discrimination in allocation of chores; although some boys shirked their duties by feigning incompetence or after initiation into manhood (usually 18 years old), when domestic tasks were not considered suitable work for men. Salo's (2018:212) work on personhood in young women in Manenberg illustrated that young women carry out domestic task in an effort to submit to their parents' authority and uphold the household's respectability (*ordentlikheid*).

Bray et al (2010:59) draw on their research in Fish Hoek Valley, to illustrate factors that affect domestic relationships. These include structural factors such as demographic and economic parameters of gender, birth position, parents' age, household's composition and work arrangements at a given time. For example, in Masiphumele, both boys and girls are responsible for household chores, but girls' chores tend to be more time-consuming and indoors (cooking, cleaning, looking after younger children, laundry), while boys' chores are more minimal and take place outdoors, such as sweeping the yard or washing their own clothes. Salo (2018) identifies more specific factors that affect domestic relationships for young women in Manenberg – whether they are school students or mothers who had dropped out of school, their position within the household, the presence of a senior women and the household's developmental cycle. An example of this would be how young women in Manenberg are required to take on responsibility for household chores, limiting their mobility to the home and immediate surrounds; in contrast to the unrestricted mobility and freedom

from household chores of their male peers (Salo, 2018:14). While limited mobility due to household responsibilities might be considered a constraint of agency, Salo (2018:232) argues that as a result, domestic or household spaces become a space where young women can exercise agency, such as secretly organising illicit leisure activities (drinking alcohol or romantic liaisons with young men) while their mothers are away at work.

In addition, individual's "successful use of culturally validated discourses guiding intergenerational relationships" affect the quality of domestic relationships. An example of this in Masiphumelele households is *hlonipha*, meaning respect in isiXhosa; which requires one to respect each other, particularly one's elders (Bray et al., 2010:59). For young women in Manenberg, this meant being a *goeie dogter* (good daughter) by adhering to a moral code of respectability, termed *ordentlikheid* – through values of domesticity, sexual modesty, obedience and respect for their mothers and elders, and loyalty to their own households (Salo, 2018:215).

While one of the key support structures in young people's lives is their relationships with their parents, domestic relations are not always defined by care and supportive reciprocity, and neglect and abuse at home mean that teenagers employ various strategies to protect themselves and their family members. These include, "tacit acknowledgement of particular challenges facing adults in the family; silence; strategic communications; residential moves; and the reassertion of the parental role of provider even when it is weak or absent" (Bray et al., 2010:66). While the level of frequency of verbal and physical abuse experienced by adolescents were found to be similar in white and black Cape Town neighbourhoods, adolescents in low-income coloured neighbourhoods reported a notably higher frequency (Bray et al, 2010:72). Henderson (1999:82) posits that children are exercising agency when they go to great lengths to excuse the failings of their parents and care-givers; as a way to reconcile the gap between local and ideal notions of family and the reality of children's lived experiences.

Age and safety

The independence that youth have is dependent in part on their age. In Bray et al. (2010: 100), children under 11 years old tend to play in yards in Masiphumelele (seen as private, safe

spaces) and open spaces in Ocean View (seen as public, dangerous spaces). In poorer areas, plots of land tend to be small and houses overcrowded, with little outdoor space. As a result, public spaces are very important for children. Although some children play games of cricket and soccer in the quieter streets in Ocean View, the wider roads are considered unsafe due to the traffic speed. Teenagers in Ocean View report using the public spaces around the flats, mountains, streets, local game- and video-shops and multi-purpose centre, as well as walking around with friends to visit people. Older teenagers prefer the soccer fields and flats as places for socializing, and the graveyard for couples to hang out (Moses, 2005:60). In more middle-class areas such as Fish Hoek, cars restrict interactions with neighbours and socializing tends to be more institutionalized, regardless of age (Bray et al., 2010: 101).

Henderson's (1999) study of New Crossroads found that children did not frequent the nearby youth centre because they were scared of the older boys in the neighbourhood who would try to stop them. One girl, Lydia, was the only one who visited the youth centre confidently, saying that she was not afraid of the boys on the street as they were her neighbours, who she took as brothers (Henderson, 1999:99). Ramphele (2002:119) reports that the youth centre was not well-used as a result of the presence of gangs in the area, as well as the fact that there had been several rapes in areas around the youth centre. Safety fears also impact street use – as was the case in New Crossroads, where people were warned not to use the two main roads in New Crossroads after 5pm, once the fighting between two groups of young men was said to begin (Ramphele, 2002:119).

Neighbourhood

The size and density of neighbourhoods also affects youth experience. In the Bray et al. (2010) study, the authors show how Masiphumelele as a small, densely populated neighbourhood facilitates a close-knit community where everyone knows everyone, similar to Henderson's (1999) New Crossroads study where home and other places are blurred. Ocean View, on the other hand, is a larger area, and people tend to know people on their block or road, rather than everyone in the broader area. While this sense of community can be romanticized as 'ubuntu', Henderson (1999) emphasizes that children's experiences of lack or conflict in the home can manifest in violence and jealousy, and face ridicule, gossip and even accusations of

witchcraft from neighbours. In lower-income areas, expectations of neighbour relations differ – for example in Masiphumelele, a close community, where there is a shortage of facilities and poor infrastructure, people share appliances. Taverns and shebeens serve as gathering places for people, where there are pool tables, electronic games and music to attract teenagers. Similarly, the safety of public spaces is determined by the prevalence and pressures associated with drugs and alcohol. While after-school programmes tend to be limited in lower-income areas, those that do exist provide an important physical and social space for belonging, particularly sport as a well-loved space for boys (Bray et al., 2010:114).

Third spaces

The importance of places for children to play and hang out has been widely documented as essential to facilitate children's need to play, and thereby their potential for learning (Moses 2005:59). Children living in poorer areas (such as Ocean View in Bray et al., 2010 and Moses, 2005), identified their favourite places for socializing as the malls, beaches and entertainment centres – mostly located in white and middle-class neighbourhoods. Some children (mostly boys) travelled outside of their neighbourhood to play soccer and cricket. Other studies in South African cities confirm this ability to carve out spaces for play and socializing, despite real and perceived danger constraining children's lives (Moses, 2005:48; see Swart-Kruger and Chawla, 2002:94 on their study in four areas in Johannesburg). Many places in Moses' study were deemed both 'dangerous' and 'fun' by children. Globally, there are other factors that decrease the quality of common spaces for children – a study in England showed that litter and dirt (often from adults) excluded children from the social life of the community (Morrow, 2001:265).

Institutional facilities and individual networks facilitate social spaces for young people – in Ocean View this included the library, church, church youth activities and occasionally, school outings (Moses, 2005:60). Despite children's creativity in making meaning in space, all the participants in Moses' (2005:61) Ocean View study would like to have better public spaces – for example a nice park and safe sporting facilities. An exceptional after-school program in Ocean View – Art Vibrations – proved to be a well-loved space for children, particularly because the adults involved valued the children's contributions to the space (Moses, 2005:67).

In *Steering by the Stars*, Ramphele (2002:115) notes that "street life in the townships does not respect tidy boundaries. Peer group activity sometimes slides into gangsterism. Adolescents hanging around become bored and are drawn into more exciting vistas: bullying, harassment of others, 'forced sharing of scarce resources', 'repossession' and open violence which may result in loss of life". Salo (2018:222) again notes the pervasiveness of boredom in her study of young women in Manenberg – limited for the most part by financial constraints and the need to uphold a household's reputation by avoiding the 'wrong places', such as shebeens-cum-discos.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have engaged with the need to study ordinary young South Africans in an effort to add nuance to youth studies that have focused disproportionately on atypical groups. I have brought together a theoretical conception of agency as temporally embedded and constantly reconfiguring (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) and overlaid it with the idea of shifting strategies as manifestations of agency, drawing on Soudien (2007). I have then introduced Salo's work on *personhood*, De Lannoy's (2007) work on *kinetic fragility* and Henderson's (1999) idea of *fluidity* and how this informs youth identity.

Having built the theoretical foundations for the chapter, I ground these abstractions in reality by drawing on the seminal works in South African everyday youth literature - authors such as Bray et al. (2010), Henderson (1999), Ramphele (2002), Moses (2005), Swartz (2009) and Salo (2018). These authors use rich, detailed descriptions from their ethnographic studies to how young South Africans' sense of self-worth and self-control inform one's sense of agency, and how friendships, so key in adolescent development, form one of the arenas in which to assert agency.

The third set of literature that I discuss is the external factors that shape young South Africans configurations of agency as they grow up. Drawing briefly on waithood literature to position the complexities of growing up, I discuss the juggle of independence and responsibilities, and

how this depends on the child's age, safety, the neighbourhood and the availability of attractive third spaces.

These three sections position me well to ask questions of contemporary youth experience and identity in low-income urban neighbourhoods in South Africa. How do young South Africans assert agency in these contexts? What are some of the common structures that enable or limit young people's agency? In the next chapter, I explain my methodology to answer some of these questions and investigate the configurations of youth identity and the circumscriptions of youth agency.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Learning from the literature

With a nod to Bray et al.'s (2010:31) study, this study shares the authors' aim "to explore the everyday interactions of children, and to build an understanding of the manner in which their actions, relationships and well-being are influenced by their social worlds, as well as by the nature and extent of their agency in shaping these worlds". Similarly, I draw inspiration from Henderson (1999:6) who positions her work as an answer to "if and how adults and children attempt to impose order on their fractured worlds; and the kinds of subjectivities, styles and agency the children bring to bear on a 'kinetic universe'". These authors recognise that young people have agency to influence their worlds, but that they too are shaped by the structures in their world. This thesis looks to use a combination of qualitative methods to gain insight into the shifting, 'fluid' configuration of structure and agency that defines youth identity.

Drawing on the previous chapter, South African youth literature asks a number of questions. How do young people constantly reconfigure their identity in relation to agency (De Lannoy, 2007; Henderson, 1999; Soudien, 2007)? What hinders and what enhances their capacity to assert agency (Salo, 2018; Swartz, 2009, Bray et al., 2010)? In line with children's geography, how do young people make meaning in their own cultural locations (Moses, 2005)?

This chapter is inspired by these authors and investigates a variety of topics embedded in the concept of agency:

- Agency as self-worth (Bray et al., 2010; Swartz, 2009): How do young people conceive of themselves?
- Agency as making good or 'right' decisions (Bray et al., 2010; Swartz, 2009): What is the morality that underlies choices young people make? How does this play out in the social arena, when choosing friends (De Lannoy, 2007)?
- Agency as the capacity to aspire: How do young people understand the transition from teenager to adult (Bray et al., 2010)? What does success look like (De Lannoy, 2007; Ramphele, 2002)?
- Agency as independence and responsibility: What are the factors that extend or limit young people's agency? How does gender, class, age, neighbourhood, safety, the

availability of third spaces and family composition affect independence and responsibility configurations (Bray et al., 2010; Ramphele, 2002; Moses, 2005)?

Learning from other youth studies' efforts to answer these questions, I surveyed the methodologies used by others. What was evident in these studies was that there is great variation in the use of the category 'youth'. Development psychology divides the human life span into distinct stages, based on approximate age – infants (conception to birth), infancy (first two years of life), preschool period (2 to 5-6 years old), middle childhood (6 to approximately 12 years old /puberty), adolescence (12 – 20 years old/relatively independent from parents), early adulthood (20 – 40 years old), middle adulthood (40 – 65 years old) and late adulthood (65 years and older) (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:4). However, even within developmental psychology, there is recognition that these ages are approximate and vary across cultures and societies. Youth studies reflect this variation. For example, Bray et al. (2010:41) note that their categorization of young people into children (up to age 13), adolescents (14-17 years old) and young adults (18-22 years old) was "ultimately arbitrary", given the complexity of transitions from childhood to adulthood. Henderson (1999) refers predominantly to 'children' in her New Crossroads study of 11 – 16-year olds; while Ramphele (2002) refers to young people, adolescents and teenagers interchangeably in the same study. Moses (2005) refers to 'children' in her study with 6-18-year olds and De Lannoy (2007) refers to the participants in her study, ages 14 – 22 as 'young adults', 'youngsters' and 'young people' interchangeably, similarly to Soudien (2007) who also uses 'young South Africans'. Salo (2018) uses 'young women' and 'young men', but also 'young people' and 'adolescents'. Statistics South Africa defines adolescence as ages 10-19 years old (Toska et al., 2019:81). Given the age and gender of the participants in my study (14-15 years old, all female) and their hesitancy to embrace being a teenager, I refer to them as "girls". Given the great variation just in these examples of what the developmental psychology life stages term middle childhood and adolescence, I have chosen not to locate my research participants within this framing. I use the term "girls" in part to recognize that while they are teenagers by some standards, they are very much at the beginning of this formative stage but are not quite children or even 'tweens' (Anderson, 2013) still, but somewhere in-between. This is also the term that the girls use to refer to themselves. This is not used in a pejorative sense, as it was in the racist language of apartheid where all women of colour were referred to as 'girls', regardless of

their age. To investigate youth agency in my study, I chose to employ a number of qualitative methods which I discuss in the next section.

Building on qualitative methodologies

Qualitative methodologies differ epistemologically from their quantitative counterparts because they do not assume from the outset that "there is a pre-existing world that can be known, or measured, but instead see the social world as something that is dynamic and changing, always being constructed through the intersection of cultural, economic, social and political processes" (Limb and Dwyer, 2001:6). Importantly, the focus of qualitative methodologies is to "understand lived experiences and to reflect on and interpret the understandings and shared meanings of people's everyday social worlds and realities…. They seek subjective understanding of social reality" (Limb and Dwyer, 2001:6). With this in mind, I began investigating the everyday worlds of youth and how they assert agency.

Due to the practical requirements of listing my research questions in my research proposal in order to be granted ethical clearance from the university, I followed Morris' (2015:41) advice in preparing research questions prior to beginning fieldwork. My research questions going into the fieldwork were as follows:

- How do young people assert agency in low-income, urban neighbourhoods?
- What are the logics, motivations and geographies that define an 'ordinary' youth experience?

Research design

In order to answer my adjusted research questions, I elected to use the following methods in an effort to capture youth agency *visually, spatially and descriptively (orally).* They are intended to particularly appeal to teenagers and illustrate individual choices (individual photo-voice submissions, mapping and interviews) and peer influences (focus group discussions). In following with Moses' work (2005), the starting point for this study was to discover young people's perceptions of their everyday lives and environments. A key focus

was recognizing youth as cultural producers, which requires understanding young people from the perspective of their own 'multiple lifeworlds' and recognizing that their values about place and space may differ dramatically from those of adults (Matthew & Limb, 1999:68).

To gain sense of the varied nature of youth experience, I had hoped to have 10 – 20 participants ages fourteen to sixteen, of both genders in my study. However, as I detail later on, this did not materialize. My sample was four grade 8 and 9 (fourteen to fifteen-year-old) girls. COVID-19 and the national lockdown (including schools) also complicated recruiting students at a later stage. Although I had hoped to have a larger sample size, the small group allowed me to gain rich insights into these four girls' lives, and thus is in keeping with the in-depth qualitative approach and thick descriptions of other youth studies (for example, Salo, 2018). My methods were chosen and adapted accordingly, as I explain further in the next section.

Photo-voice journals via WhatsApp

I intended to use photo-voice as a method to provide context and description in answering my research question of how young people assert agency to navigate their environments. The photo-voice method was chosen as it engages with "the possibilities of perceiving the world from the viewpoint of the people who lead lives that are different from those traditionally in control of the means for imaging the world" (Ruby, 1991:50). This was particularly in an effort to recognize the expertise and knowledge that participants have, and to bring it to the forefront of research design. Using this method positions myself as the researcher, and the participants as 'co-learners' (Hergenrather et al., 2009:697). In particular, photo-voice as a participatory process legitimizes popular knowledge developed outside of formal scientific structures and challenges assumptions that youth (in this case) do not possess knowledge about their experience. In addition, photo-voice can communicate powerfully what is sometimes beyond words and allow for sampling of different social and behavioural settings, that are sometimes not available to researchers (Wang & Burris, 1997:372). Photo-voice has frequently been used to engage with youth in South Africa (as detailed by Mitchell, 2008). While photo-voice has been linked to mobilizing for social action, it was not intended for this purpose in this study. Rather it was chosen here to engage youth to accurately understand and describe how they assert agency and make sense of their own experience.

It is appropriate to use photo-voice over WhatsApp as a form of data collection because this is a platform in which youth already engage and allows for a real time narrative to emerge. In addition, cellphones can be an area that youth have a degree of privacy and independence (Anderson, 2013), which lends itself to the research question of illustrating how youth assert agency. I acknowledge that requiring participants to have a feature phone (that has a camera and can use WhatsApp) meant that I was not engaging with youth from the most vulnerable financial situations, but I take that to be in line with my research of *ordinary* youth, rather than atypical groups. I detail this further in my ethics concerns table, at the end of the methods section. Although I was inspired to use the full Photo-voice method initially, this did not translate in reality. As such, the cellphone photos that the girls sent ultimately became catalysts that sparked conversation in the focus groups, as it gave me insight into what they considered important to share. It would be interesting to see how successful other studies that use the full Photo-voice method on virtual platforms (such as WhatsApp) overcame some of the difficulties I faced in connecting the photos to narratives.

I assigned themes for each week of the photo collection. These were as follows:

Week 1: Introduction to your life
Week 2 & 3: The self, home and friends
Week 4: Family
Week 5: Decision-making, being a teenager and the future

These topics were chosen to try to draw out examples of agency in their participants' lives, as they are linked to the concept of agency, as discussed early in this chapter. Although these helped some of the participants, I was still not receiving the number of photographs I had hoped for. At the advice of a colleague, I created photo challenge tick-lists, see below:

Photo Challenge leaflets

Figure 1: Photo Challenge 1 issued to the participants.

Figure 2: Photo Challenge 2 issued to the participants

Qualitative interviews

I made use of two different types of qualitative interviews to richly capture the everyday, and to provide description and understanding of the logics and motivations behind how young people assert agency. The intention of these methods was depth, and the findings are not intended be generalizable or to reflect a random sample of participants (given the small size of my sample). This combination of focus groups and individual interviews is done in line with studies such as Hecht (1998:11), who found that in the group interviews he conducted with street children, that "the group interviews had a group dynamic, since children, like adults speak differently among their peers than in private conversations". Unlike Hecht, I found that the participants were not particularly more forthcoming in the individual interviews than they had been in the focus groups.

Figure 3: Photo: Focus group mapping exercise. Taken by the author on 14/02/2020.

Focus groups

Focus groups provide a useful platform to talk with people, and gather information in a "self-conscious, orderly and partially structured" way (Longhurst, 2010:103). In particular, they provide an opportunity to listen and pay attention to what people have to say, by creating a comfortable environment to share. I conducted focus groups with groups of youth, approximately every week for five weeks (the first school term), on a Friday afternoon in a high school classroom. These were semi-structured, as I facilitated the discussion to keep it on topic (with some carefully crafted questions drawing on common themes in the WhatsApp photo-voice journals), but otherwise allowing the group to be free to explore the topic from all angles. I chose this method particularly to investigate the interactions between participants and the influence of peers more generally.

Individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews

Noting the potential sensitivity of the everyday life, I conducted individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the participants, to further explore some of the themes that emerged from the WhatsApp photo-voice journals and focus groups. The selection of this method was intended to allow for relaxed, free-flowing conversation and to allow participants to tell their story in their own words, with some careful probing from myself (Morris, 2015:3). I chose to conduct the individual interviews towards the end of the research, once I had a chance to get to know the participants.

Participatory Mapping

To answer the question of the geography of the everyday youth experience, and how youth navigate the after-school space, I had planned to engage in a participatory mapping process, in the form of a mapping workshop at the end of the research time. This unfortunately could not take place as the research period was cut short by the Covid-19 national lockdown. As such, I was only able to make use of the arts-based mapping exercise done during one of the focus groups, and not a physical mapping exercise using printed maps as planned. This method was chosen as it can be facilitated relatively easily and is a versatile and powerful way of expressing knowledge that otherwise can be overlooked (Chambers, 2006:2). This method has been used to engage youth in other studies, as Gordon, Elwood and Mitchell (2016) and

Lundine, Kovacic and Poggiali (2012) demonstrate in their work on children's geographies. I was also inspired by the use of arts-based methods, particularly mapping, used in the Bray et al. (2010) study of teenagers in the Fish Hoek Valley.

Method adaptations

While I carefully considered my methodology and research design before beginning the field work, a number of methods had to be adapted. This was in part as is to be expected as research processes translate form theory to on the ground, but also as a result of the extenuating circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic and the accompanying national lockdown that limited movement and required schools to close physically for around 5 months (from the end of March until the end of August 2020). The first difficulty that I encountered was recruiting research participants. The school suggested that I recruit participants by pitching the research project to the Grade 8 and 9 assembly (approximately 700 learners), which I agreed to do. It proved a difficult setting to pitch my research as the learners were restless after listening to lots of other announcements, and uncomfortable sitting on the ground in the school quad trying to listen without any mic or projection. I was delighted to see some of my former pupils from primary schools I had worked with. I struggled to explain what my research project was in a way that learners understood. I explained that I was studying Geography at UCT and that I had to do a big project for marks, where I wrote a book, and that I needed their help. I struggled to find a reference point for what I was offering for the learners (an extra-mural? A job?). I explicitly did not mention that I was offering WhatsApp data as an incentive, on the advice of my liaison teacher who felt that I would be inundated with participants otherwise. I asked the learners to meet me after assembly, where I gave them some more details about the project and handed out indemnity forms. I was glad when one learner asked "What's in it for me?" (much to the horror of the other learners) and I explained that I was offering WhatsApp data if they remained active participants in the project. This generated a flurry of excitement, and I was overwhelmed with learners trying to take a parental consent form. The form explained the research in greater detail, and what was required of the participants. As the participants would be minors, the form required that a parent or guardian give permission for their children to take part, as well as the participant

themselves. I had brought 40 forms, with the hope of recruiting 30 participants, and soon had to make additional photocopies for learners to collect from the office.

Despite the great interest, none of the learners returned the indemnity form to the school office by the due date (five days after the assembly pitch). This was further complicated by my liaison teacher being absent from school. At his suggestion, I returned to the school assembly to remind the learners to return their form, but the school assembly structure had changed and I had limited time to walk classroom to classroom. In the end, seven indemnity forms were returned, and four girls formed the focus group, despite my efforts to contact the other three (complicated by all being in different classes, the school not having a working intercom system and the learners not having reliable contact details). The four girls who did attend the focus group did not know why the take-up from their peers had been so low. I speculate, based on my previous experience at recruiting learners in Mitchell's Plain schools for an after-school Maths program, that it may be due to a number of reasons – unfamiliarity with research processes and what was required of them, administrative difficulty of collecting forms across grades in a big school (over 1000 learners) and without a centralised meeting opportunity (e.g. assembly) or communication line (e.g. intercom) as well as learners of this age having varying levels of ability to return forms timeously.

My liaison teacher advised that I have the focus groups either on Wednesdays (when school finishes early for extra-murals) or Fridays (school finishes early) as the learners who take transport could then take part and learners who live locally would not have to walk home after 4pm, when it can be unsafe. After consulting with the four focus group participants, we agreed on Friday after school at 12.30 – 1.30pm, as Fundiswa could easily arrange that her transport pick her up at 1.30pm.

I had pitched my study to the grade 8 and 9s as a study about food after school. It was clear that the four girls who became part of the focus group knew that this was the focus groups, as I overheard Nakita tell her friend with all the self-confidence and sass of a teenager, "It's about where we go after school and what we consume". As the focus groups progressed and the photos were submitted, it became clear that the girls did not have much to say about food after-school. Rather, they wanted to tell me about their lifeworlds, and what it was like

to be a young girl growing up in Mitchell's Plain in 2020. After some initial efforts to press them about food, I acknowledged that in writing about youth agency, I needed to acknowledge the girls' agency in their decision not to share about food. As such, the study shifted to focus on youth agency and experience.

Despite these challenges, I was able to collect the following data for analysis:

- 63 photographs submitted via WhatsApp from research participants. Most did not include captions/narrative.
- 4 self-made maps
- 3 drawings of the self (Aurelia did not attend this focus group)
- 4 x approximately 1-hour focus group transcriptions and field notes
- 1 x short (failed) WhatsApp call focus group notes (only Nakita attended and wanted to meet in person)
- 3 x approximately 40minute individual interview transcriptions and field notes - 2x in person, 1 x on WhatsApp call (Fundiswa did not respond to requests to set up individual interview)
- 2 x 1-hour key informant interviews transcripts (liaison teacher, principal)
- 3 x background information interviews notes (doctoral candidates Alicia Fortuin and Alison Pulker and researcher Dr Mercy Brown- Luthango)

The table below explains what method was intended, how this had to be adapted and a potential reason for these changes:

Table 1

Planned method	**Adapted method**	**Reason**
Photo-voice journals via WhatsApp – each girl submits daily photos with captions on weekdays for 5 weeks (4 x 5 x 5 = 100 photos)	Cellphone photography as entry points for discussion in focus groups. 63 photos in total, limited captions.	Although having their own feature phone was a requirement to participating in the study, it became clear that the cellphones were often shared across family members and not permanently in

		their possession. I provided the girls with airtime to convert to WhatsApp data bundles, but it took a while for them to realise how to do this, and they often used the data up more quickly than I had anticipated. They also did not seem to understand my interest in the banalities of their everyday lives and needed the clear prompts of the photo challenge to generate photos. Often, they told me that they had simply forgotten, despite my daily message reminders. I pressed the girls but was unable to ascertain what the reason for their resistance was.
Qualitative interviews: focus groups x 5	4 x focus groups took place as planned. Only Nakita and Nadia attended all 4.	The final focus group could not take place due to the Covid-19 national lockdown and schools closing early. Although I tried to conduct the final focus group on a WhatsApp call, the girls proved difficult to track down. After much sleuthing (calling various relatives at different times) to set up a time, only Nakita then answered the call at the agreed upon time. She did not want to discuss over the phone and seemed bored at home. She asked me to meet in person, which at the time was illegal to travel to her neighbourhood.
Qualitative interviews: individual, semi-structured x 4	2 x in-person individual interviews (Nakita, Nadia), 1 x virtual	Aurelia was not able to stay after school for an individual interview before the lockdown began. As a

	WhatsApp individual interview (Aurelia)	result, we conducted our interview over a WhatsApp call, with relative success. Fundiswa could not meet on days other than Friday after school, as she had arranged transport that left immediately. She was difficult to contact via WhatsApp/phone calls.
Participatory mapping workshop	Used self-made maps from first focus group activity instead.	Unable to take place as scheduled for last focus group activity (schools closed early). After difficulties in setting up virtual WhatsApp focus group and long-term lockdown, made do with self-made maps from the first focus group.

Ethical considerations

As the participants in this study were minors (under 18 years old), it was particularly important to exceed the minimum requirements of the University of Cape Town's ethical approval. The University's process required that I present my research proposal to the Environmental and Geographical Sciences Department for questions and scrutiny. Once approved, the proposal as well as a detailed Ethics Statement form was submitted and approved by the UCT Science Faculty Research Ethics Committee (see appendix A[5]). I applied

[5] All Appendices reflect the initial focus of the study, to use food as a lens to understand how youth assert agency in the choices they make (inspired by Rocha's (2008) food security definition including an agency pillar). Early on in the fieldwork, it became clear that the participants did not have much to share with regards to food. Rather they were interested in discussing their experience of entering teenagehood and the everyday details of their lives. While this was a finding in itself, I did not want to force this approach and chose to adjust my research questions to focus on how and why the participants did assert agency. This shifted the focus from food to the youth experience. As a result, the initial literature review which included food environments literature has been jettisoned. My methodology remained largely the same but has been adapted in part from my initial proposal. As such, my research questions shifted to omit food as a lens.

for and was granted permission to conduct the research at the high school by the Western Cape Education Department (see appendix B) and the school principal. To assist me in the research process, a teacher at the school acted as my liaison. As detailed in the table below, I also obtained parental permission and agreed to have the participants approve the research before publishing. As Moses (2005:28) notes, "ethical provision is not just about preparing appropriately, but required ongoing sensitivity towards the dynamic nature of power relations and lines of authority". In light of this, please find my reflections as a researcher in the "Being "in-between": reflexivity in research" section of this chapter.

Table 2 captures the ethical concerns that I anticipated in my research project, and how I responded to each:

Table 2

Ethical Concern	**Response**
Safety: study requires participants to take photographs. This could require using a feature phone in a public space and could be unsafe, depending on the area.	Safety was discussed with participants and arrangements made that they only take photographs when they feel safe.
Safety: for both myself and the participants staying after school could be dangerous given the isolated nature of school spaces in the afternoons.	Partnering with a local school and teacher provided me with a safe location to meet the participants and minimized the travelling required for the participants. At the advice of my research liaison at the school and in communication with the participants, we agreed to meet on Friday afternoons as the school finished earlier. This made it safer and easier for transport arrangements for participants who did not walk home.
Invasion of privacy: personal nature of information (e.g. home location, income levels	I served as a filter for this, to make sure that no identifiable personal information or photographs were released into the public domain. This

etc.) and photographing by participants risks compromising anonymity	required clouding out faces and anonymizing certain aspects of the photograph. All collected data was safely stored, as per my Data Management Plan, developed in consult with the Digital Library Services at UCT. Pseudonyms are used throughout the thesis to preserve anonymity. Additionally, each participant received a copy of a selection of the thesis with each time that they are mentioned, for them to approve and request changes as needed.
Consent to research minors	Participants returned a form granting parental/guardian and personal written consent (see appendix C) for them to participate in the study in any capacity. This form included an information letter, giving them more information about the study and who I was (see appendix D). In addition, I confirmed consent before every focus group or individual interview, and participants could indicate if they would like to say something off the audio record (by waving their hand), and the recording was paused. The information sheet included in the informed consent form provided additional support services and the school contact details to participants/their parents or guardians.
Wellbeing of researcher and participants in light of Covid-19 pandemic	Just before the end of the agreed-upon research period (the first school term), the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a national lockdown, closing schools and restricting movement between neighbourhoods. In keeping with the State of Emergency law and so as to ensure the wellbeing

	of everyone involved, the final focus group mapping workshop could not happen. I conducted the last of my fieldwork virtually on WhatsApp – a final interview call and messages explaining what had happened. I remained in intermittent virtual contact with the girls over the next 5 months (with movement still restricted) and was able to deliver their thesis selection copies for their approval once schools opened for orientation in August (following all protocols with screening, masks and social distancing).

Limitations of the study

This study was primarily limited by the sampling method and Covid-19 constraints. Allowing the participants to self-select creates bias, however, it is more interesting to note that of the 40 eager grade 8 and 9 learners who took home consent forms, only six returned them and only four girls ultimately took part in the research project. It seems that of those interested (a mixture of boys and girls), girls were more likely to return forms and show up for meetings. Self-selection is less problematic in an small qualitative study, as the intention is not to claim representative sampling (Moses, 2005:29) but rather offer thick, rich descriptions of a particular (not generalizable) experience.

Covid-19 also limited the study by cutting short the time available for fieldwork. I had hoped to gain data through a final mapping workshop on the last day of the first school term, as well as have an opportunity to go back to the girls to ask follow up questions into the second school term. This was made impossible in light of the social distancing requirements and the girls' irregular cellphone and data access. While this does limit my fieldwork research, I have reinforced my findings with those found in the South African (specifically Cape Town) youth studies literature.

Analysis

Based on my data and research questions, I made use of thematic inductive analysis. This required me to code and group all the data I had (transcripts of individual interviews, focus groups and key informants, fieldwork notes, photographs and drawings/maps) by themes as they emerged. Select themes were then further categorized and conceptualized, using Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) conception of agency and in conversation with my supervisor and colleagues. The themes were named using direct quotes from the girls' themselves (see the body chapters – Chapters Four, Five, Six), in an effort to place their voices at the front and centre of the study. Finally, themes were divided into categories guided by the research questions into three chapters – logics (the *how* of agency), motivations (the *why* of agency) and the geographies (the *where* of agency). The next sections provide context for the qualitative analysis conducted and introduce the participants who informed the research.

Introducing the context

Mitchell's Plain lies on the south eastern part of Cape Town. To get there, I leave the leafy, wealthy suburbs where the University of Cape Town is set on the slopes of Table Mountain and drive just under 30km into the Cape Flats. After a brief period on the national highway (N2), I turn off onto Jakes Gerwel Drive, passing Vanguard Mall, the fruit sellers on the side of the road and the Coca Cola packing factory. The road cuts through a mixture of residential and industrial areas, on the back end of more well-to-do coloured neighbourhoods of Athlone and Ottery. As I go along further, the landscape changes to open fields of green land, used for logistics warehouses, informal settlements and a wetland nature reserve (Edith Stevens). I drive alongside Philippi, shacks and houses on the one side of the road and the other dotted with women working in the fields of the Philippi Horticultural Area. Eventually I reach Mitchell's Plain, the second largest area in Cape Town (Brown-Luthango, 2018:2). I drive past a mosque, some petrol stations, a mall and residential housing. Informal stores sell vegetables, bulk cleaning products and giant bags of chips along the roadside.

The high school is situated at the southern side of Mitchell's Plain, right at the coast line of False Bay, although you wouldn't realise this as the large sand dunes prevent you from seeing the sea. I drive past a number of schools, stopping for the batons of the self-important

learner-led scholar patrols that many primary schools use to ensure that children cross major roads safely. Primary schools have just ended for the day, and grandparents and elderly relatives are collecting children with their school bags almost as big as they are. Drivers wait at their mini-buses and kombis wait to fill their vehicles with children to transport along Spine Road to their homes in Khayelitsha and Philippi. Eventually I turn off to the high school, signing in with the school gate administrator and parking in the paved teacher's parking lot. The school is laid out in the apartheid-style blueprint for coloured and black schools - three long, double-storey buildings, interlinked by outdoor corridors with a sandy sports field and paved, bare quads. As the bell for the end of the school day rings, the corridors flood with teenagers, abuzz with excitement for the weekend.

Historical context

Mitchell's Plain is a large, low to middle-income residential area on the Cape Flats. It first came into existence in 1974 to house coloured families who had been forcibly removed under the apartheid Group Areas Act. Originally desolate coastal sand dunes, the 3 100-hectare property became the "instant coloured city" (de Bruin, 2016).

The high school falls within Ward 43, in the southern part of Mitchell's Plain, according to the City of Cape Town's ward demarcations. There are approximately 40 000 residents in Ward 43, with the average household size of just over 4 people per household. The population is predominantly coloured, and almost all households live in formal dwellings, with access to piped water, a connected flush toilet, refuse collection and electricity. Approximately half of those older than 20 years old have completed Grade 12 or higher, and 85% of the labour forces (15-64) is employed. This paints the image of a comfortable middle-income area, however 24% of households had a monthly income of R3200 or less, according to the 2011 Census data (Statistics South Africa, 2013). Approximately 40% of the population are under 24 years old.

Although Mitchell's Plain is historically a coloured area, its good schools draw learners from beyond the immediate area and over time, black families have moved into the area, although this is rare. Black migrants from other parts of Africa also choose to stay in the area, as in many other coloured or white neighbourhoods, in an effort to avoid the xenophobia

associated with black townships. Although a small study, my focus group represents some of the diversity of Mitchell's Plain.

Every Friday afternoon, the girls would meet me in the foyer of the school, hovering at the entrance as they are not allowed into the area generally. I would collect the classroom key and together we would walk up to the classroom, where we would re-arrange the back of the classroom to form a circle of chairs. As the school emptied for the weekend, I grew to know and enjoy spending time with four girls, who I will now introduce. I do this in an effort to challenge the idea that research participants are 'objects' to be studied and to humanise the study (as Salo (2018) does with introducing her chapters with quotes and stories from her research participants). Rather, I present them with photographs to directly bring the participants into the forefront of this thesis, still as the subject of enquiry, but to show that the girls form the centre of this research. The names used are pseudonyms and their faces are blurred to ensure anonymity, in keeping with the ethical concerns discussed in Chapter Three.

Aurelia

Aurelia is a warm and friendly Zimbabwean-born, South African-raised grade eight student. Aurelia describes herself as a "happy person because (she) talks to herself". Her Christian faith forms a big part of her identity – she describes herself as a 'Child of God' and her youth group friends are whom she feels most comfortable with.

Figure 4: Aurelia loved selfies.

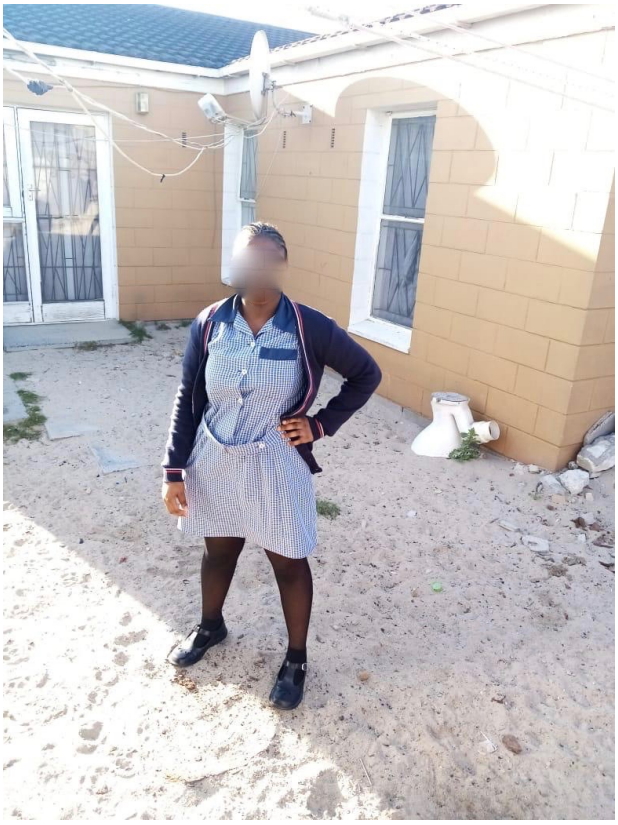

Figure 5: Aurelia outside her family's home.

Family and home

Aurelia lives near the high school with her mother, father and younger brother. Both her parents are employed – her mother works as a nanny for a family with a young baby and her father works as a long-haul truck driver. She describes her family as loving, fun and caring.

She finds it challenging that she is much louder than the rest of her family, and she is chastised for singing and making a noise in the house by her mother.

Figure 6: Something that represents family for Aurelia.

Friends and school

Church activities keep her occupied – youth group on a Friday night, church on a Sunday morning, a smaller after-school program on a Wednesday afternoon and a Wednesday night church service. Her closest friend is her cousin, who she describes as her 'secret keeper'. Although she has lived in Mitchell's Plain for most of her life, she was not as well-acquainted with the area as some of the other girls in the focus group. For example, her map of the route between school and home was the least populated of the group, only including her home in a cul-de-sac, the hair salon and barber (where she goes to accompany her younger brother for regular haircuts), the Shoprite, one large field and her school. Outside of youth group, she spends most of her time after school and on weekends at home, occasionally visiting the mall as a treat. At home, she does her homework, reads books and argues with her brother about what to watch on TV. She enjoys school, but sometimes worries about marks and forgetting what her teachers have explained.

Fundiswa

Fundiswa is a quiet and reserved Xhosa grade nine student. She lives in Philippi with her mother, two aunts, younger sister and cousin who are both five years old. She seemed lonely, saying that just like her mother, she did not like friends and did not have any close friends. She enjoys playing netball in her neighbourhood and attends church on Sundays. She is almost entirely self-sufficient – preparing and cleaning up all her meals, as well as the family evening meal and taking arranged transport to get to and from school. She did not share openly in the group, and often seemed unhappy.

Figure 7: Fundiswa (right) and her friend (left) on their way to the local spaza shop.

Figure 8: Fundiswa (right) and her sister (left) at their home.

Nadia

Nadia initially presented as a shy, grade eight, Muslim student. As the weeks went on, she became more confident and open.

Figure 9: Selfies from Nadia – the heart is her edit.

Family and home

Her parents are separated, and she mostly stays with her mother in a Mitchell's Plain suburb during the school terms. They live in a Wendy house, one of three houses on her grandmother's property shared by approximately fifteen family members. Her father stays in Delft, and she visits him some weekends and during school holidays. Nadia has two younger brothers, who frustrate her to no end by disobeying their mother and bringing friends to their house and wheedling money out of their father. Her mother works long hours as a cleaner, leaving at 5.30am and returning as late as 7pm. Nadia shares the household responsibilities with her mother. After school, she spends "the whole day inside almost", napping and

sometimes making coffee and a snack for her grandmother across in the main house. At her father's, she watches movies all weekend because "there is nothing else to do there".

Figure 10: The bed that Nadia shares with her mother.

Friends and school

Nadia likes her high school, although she was nervous about being bullied when she first started. Her favourite subject is natural science. Although she has some friends, she is sometimes teased at school for having hair that sticks up and a phlegmy cough. She misses her friends from primary school and is still finding her way at high school. She stays nearby to Nakita, and they are friends and walk to and from school together. Like Nakita, she is familiar with the area from walking around it, mentioning many fields that she crosses on her journeys to and from school. However, unless she is going on an errand to the shop for a family member or neighbour or to school, she does not leave her road.

Figure 11: Nadia's home.

Nakita

Figure 12: Nakita outside the surgery where her mother works.

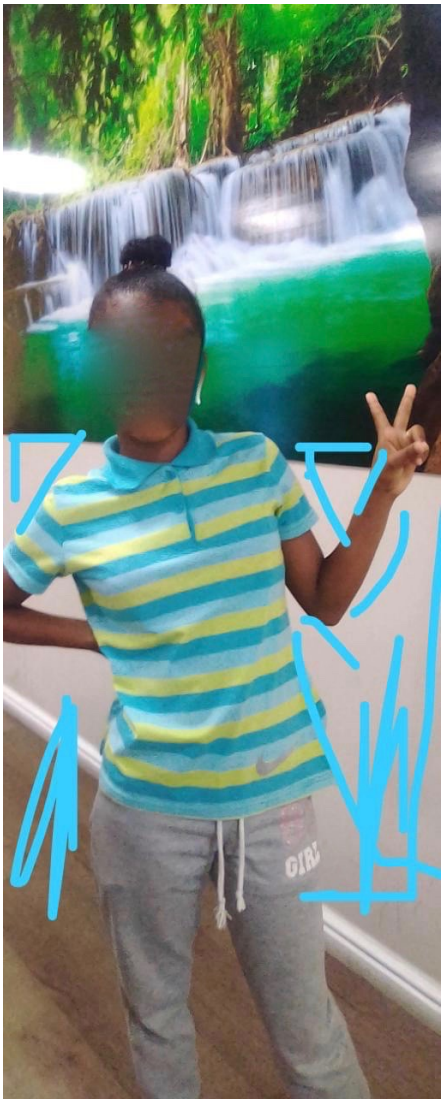

Figure 13: Nakita liked to edit her photos too.

Nakita is a petite, confident grade eight student who comes from a large Afrikaans-speaking Christian family. She shared the most openly in the focus group, as is evidenced by the many stories of hers that I present throughout the body chapters. Her Christian faith is very important to her, and she describes herself as a "Child of God", who is "inquisitive" and "mischievous". She was eager to take part in the study, and I first encountered her confidently informing her classmates about what the research was for. She recruited Nadia to take part in the study, mostly because they walk home together. She is actively involved in a church youth group, athletics (sprint training) and spiritual dancing.

Figure 14: Nakita's bedroom, which she shares with her sister.

Family and home

Nakita describes her home as a happy place and feels supported by her family. She has four older brothers (ranging from 17 to 33 years old) and a sister ten months younger than her. Everyone except one of the brothers lives in their household. Her mother works for a local surgery recruiting boys for a public health circumcision campaign. Her father is a pensioner and her youngest brother is training at the School of Skills. Her sister is her closest friend, and people often mistake them as twins. The family enjoys celebrating small events with celebratory meals (a *braai* (barbecue) being most popular), such as her mother inheriting some money and her father winning a battle against a cellphone network.

Figure 15: Nakita with her mother (right). The caption reads: "Like Mother Like Daughter".

Friends and school

Nakita maintained that she was popular at school, with lots of friends. She likes that everyone wants to be her friend and pushes off those who like to lean on her because of her short stature, saying "No, I'm not your hanger." Of the group, Nakita had the most freedom outside of her street - she visits friends' houses, practices athletics on the nearby soccer field and goes to the shops. For the most part, she plays with the other children in her street and assists her mother in recruiting boys for a public health circumcision program run out of a local surgery (for which she earns some pocket money).

Figure 16: Nakita (centre) and her friends in her room.

Figure 17: School emptying out on a Friday afternoon. Taken by the author on 14/02/2020.

Being "in-between": reflexivity in research

I began my research process aware that "knowledge is situated and partial" (Limb and Dwyer, 2001:8) and that when going out into the "field", I was not really at the beginning, but rather in the *betweenness* (Perramond, 2001:156) of someone's everyday life:

> "But in retrospect, we can never begin at the beginning, because we find ourselves in places and communities in the middle. This is true in a historical sense. Rarely does anyone arrive at the true "beginning" of any event, process, or story. We geographers also find ourselves stumbling into the very middle of places and spaces, where we may not understand the importance of spatial context and meaning. In a very real sense, fieldwork involves a *betweenness* of place, an awkward step into communities and environments unknown to us."

This *betweenness* extends to how my presence as a researcher affects the research participants. I resonate with Bennett's (2002:141) understanding of the field as "a space of inbetweenness because it is not the unmediated world of the 'others', but the world between ourselves and the others". Our subjectivities become "entangled" (Bennett, 2002:141). Bearing this in mind, I wanted to try to minimise the impact of my subjectivity and tried to let the discussions be led by the girls themselves.

In preparing for the field work, I took seriously Bennett's (2002) emphasis on the importance of reflexivity and how my being there would affect the field work. I was acutely aware of my positionality as a young (but old to teenagers), white, English-speaking, Capetonian woman, and how that was likely to be perceived by learners and teachers in a Mitchell's Plain high school. This played into what I wore – dressing relatively conservatively (for example, long trousers or a long skirt), similarly to the teachers at the school, but a bit more informal (T-shirts and jeans) in an effort to move beyond the teacher-student power dynamics. Despite my requests to call me by my first name, the girls continued to refer to me as "Miss". This perhaps reflects how the girls made sense of my role in the unfamiliar terrain of research.

I am very aware that my own judgements based on short-term interactions will become a formalised version of 'truth', written in a formal, academic thesis document. Challenged by

this task – how to do it respectfully, as well as truthfully, I drew on Myer (2001) in recognising that I may not represent the 'truth' but can only offer what I know. He stresses that it is impossible to try to provide an objective account, as my 'truth' will be immersed in relationships and personal judgements.

Perhaps a balanced view is to try to tell the narrative as the girls told me, rather than trying to impose a judgement based on my observations and own analysis. This is in line with Selmeczi's (2014) epistemological challenge in her work with Abahlali baseMjondolo – that the knowledge lies with those experiencing urban poverty, not those researching it. Even with this awareness, my own judgements are intricately embedded in how I received and wrote up my discussions with the girls.

I am aware that my reflections of my adolescence are implicitly evident in this thesis. While I have tried to mitigate explicit comparisons, it must be said that my childhood was materially different. I grew up in a close-knit, predominantly white, middle to upper income Cape Town suburb. I have however, found it fascinating that despite such different contexts, many of the stories resonate with my own. Perhaps the most significant difference is that I was desperate for autonomy from my parents and had the freedom and privilege to push the limitations of my family's culturally validated narratives. The intention is not to pass judgement or apply a universal framework of developmental psychology (as Banks, 2020 does), but rather to acknowledge the similarities and differences of a growing up in two Cape Town neighbourhoods, twenty minutes and fifteen years apart.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have drawn on the methodologies employed by other South African youth studies to answer my research questions of: How do young people assert agency in low-income, urban neighbourhoods? What are the logics, motivations and geographies of these choices? To do this, my research design made use of a number of qualitative methods in an effort to capture youth agency *visually, spatially and descriptively (orally).* The methods were selected to particularly appeal to teenagers and illustrate individual choices (individual photo-voice submissions, mapping and interviews) and peer influences (focus group discussions). I

go on to detail how the methods had to be adapted, the ethical considerations and limitations of the study, as well as to explain the methods used in data analysis. The second half of this chapter provided context for the research site by giving a brief overview of the history of the area and introducing the four research participants. Finally, I close the chapter with my own reflections on reflexivity as a researcher. The body section which follows, is made up of three chapters which combine my findings and analysis in an effort to answer my research questions.

Chapter Four: Logics: the 'how' of youth agency

Introduction to body chapters

As discussed in the literature review chapter, research in New Crossroads in the mid-1990s illustrated how young people develop innovative and creative but, for the most part, insufficient strategies to navigate the systemic violence, poverty and the lack of opportunities that they face (Henderson 1999, Ramphele 2002). Bray et al. (2010) offer a more recent account of how young people in post-apartheid South Africa develop agency, in its broader sense, one of which is that teenagers express agency through a sense of self-worth. This research builds on the legacy of youth studies in Cape Town, to offer a theoretically enriched contribution to understanding youth agency in Cape Town's low-income neighbourhoods. In the next three chapters, I show *how* the girls exert agency in the logics and strategies they employ (Chapter Four), *why* they assert different forms of agency in light of certain culturally validated narratives (Chapter Five) and *where* they assert their agency (Chapter Six).

In framing the body chapters, I draw on the concept of waithood. While waithood studies often focus on older youth (for example, Honwana (2014) emphasises the length of waithood into people's thirties and forties) and economic opportunism (see for example the "hustle economy" in Thieme (2013), Jeffrey (2010) in his work in young, unemployed "timepass" men in northern India and Finn and Oldfield (2015) in their work on young men "straining" in Sierra Leone); my study falls at the very beginning period of a "youthscape", where the girls' primary occupation is being a high school student. The girls are waiting to become teenagers, waiting to find their identity and waiting to find connection and be accepted in high school. In this waiting, they are still asserting agency as they transition, in a "dynamic waithood" (Finn and Oldfield, 2015:31). This study aims to challenge the assertions about how young people think and act, and illustrate how these girls view themselves as ordinary, *almost* teenagers. This thesis is one thread of many contributing to how "African youth have gone about piecing together their own geography and a narrative that attributes to them a new meaning and significance" (Diof, 2005:231).

Waiting on the prospect of teenagehood, the girls employ strategies to navigate their everyday lives. They draw on iterative (past), practical evaluative (present) and projective

(future) agency in shifting configurations to maximise their agency in the environment they find themselves. Although their agency is limited by structures such as safety concerns, parental and familial expectations, culturally validated narratives of success and historically and geographically peripheral neighbourhoods; the girls find ways around and through these limitations by strategically utilizing their temporally embedded agency. The next three chapters makes use of stories from the girls' everyday to illustrate the shifting configurations of agency, adding richness to a youth study by focusing on the how (logics), why (motivations) and where (geographies) of youth agency.

Introduction to Chapter Four

Drawing on Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) temporally embedded theory of agency, I argue that the girls employ multiple strategies, some deliberate and others not, to leverage their agency. The three aspects of agency – iterative (past), practical evaluative (present) and projective (future) - shift and reconfigure in a chordal triad, increasing and decreasing their capacity accordingly. These strategies draw on "separate but not always harmonious" aspects of agency (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:1002). In this chapter, I use this temporally embedded conception of agency to illustrate how the girls assert agency through shifting strategies in their social identities, navigating their parents' views on friendship and rejection of romantic relationships. These strategies reveal an adaptive *logic* that gives insight into their configurations of agency.

These shifting strategies reflect the constant repositioning of identity that youth engage in – as Henderson (1999:160) argues "the constitution of the self… is a constant process of formation, loss and reconfiguration". This is evident in this study – as the girls navigate the dynamic of their personal and social identities in figuring out if they belong or are being alienated (Soudien, 2007:7). Soudien (2007:99) is careful to emphasize that most young South Africans do not have the luxury of space to experiment with their identities. While the girls in this study do not fit the profile of middle to upper class white South Africans who take gap years, they too are experimenting and in a space of beginning to 'play' around with their identities. De Lannoy's (2007) work on *kinetic fragility* and Henderson's (1999) idea of *fluidity* are illustrative here of how this constant shifting informs youth identity. This iterative process

of forging an identity resonates clearly with Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) conception of agency.

"When I'm with them, I feel more like me": shifting social identities

Fluidity and fragility were prominent features of how the girls made sense of their social worlds. Their identities shifted and reconfigured depending on the context. Echoing Henderson (1999:25), Nakita made use of fluidity to create a sense of coherence in social identity. Throughout the focus groups and photos she sent me, Nakita maintained that she was popular and had lots of friends.

> Nakita: I have 5-6 friends, and I must say that they are very jealous, they just want me for themselves. They say I mustn't play with anybody else and they are very loving and caring and sharing towards me… It make me feel good and happy Miss. Because everybody just wanna stand by me, because I'm short and they wanna hang so (demonstrates leaning on someone). And then I say, "No, I'm not your hanger!". Always.

Nakita positioned herself as confident to stand up to bullies and "do what is right". She shared how she had tried to stand up for someone who was being bullied about not having the cool Nike sneakers. Nakita was the most confident of the focus group and shared stories that demonstrated her agency within her group of friends. However, she sometimes felt silenced when she was put down for her small size. She continued to stay with this group of friends, despite disagreeing with what they did – hovering around them to maintain the safety of popularity. However, at a later stage she sniggers at and outs Nadia as someone who is teased for having hair that sticks up, allegedly having Corona-virus and for wanting to name her child "Shamiela". This fluidity was evident again in Nakita's use of different social identities. At first, Nakita presented herself as someone who stands up for those who are being bullied, albeit not altogether successfully, and later on she relishes telling the story of her friend being bullied. This shifting of social identity is illustrative of the 'tactics' (de Certeau, 1984) of practical evaluative agency.

Later, in an individual interview Nakita admitted that she only feels her one friend supports her, who attends the same high school. Her other friends are not "fair weather friends" but she felt that this one friend was special, and inspired her:

> Nakita: She give me words of encouragement, um when was this, when I was feeling sad Miss, so she gave me a little bit of encourage.

This resonates with Hecht's (1998:11) findings, who found that in the group interviews he conducted with street children that "the group interviews had a group dynamic, since children, like adults speak differently among their peers than in private conversations". In this case, Nakita did not assert her social identity as confidently in a setting removed from her peers.

Similarly, Aurelia shifted identities fluidly, reconstituting her social worlds as a migrant and as a naturalised South African. As a black Zimbabwean raised in South Africa, people often assumed that she spoke Xhosa. When people speak to her in Xhosa, her school friends and her basic knowledge of the language help her understand. Her school friends are mostly Xhosa, and despite their efforts to speak English to her, and helping her learn Xhosa, she felt strongly that she was sometimes left out. She gave the example of feeling left out at choir at high school because it was made up of mostly Xhosa learners:

> "It's strange, when you are used to your choir teacher, and you used to the other children you used to sing with and… Like I joined and then I left because it's mostly Xhosa's and then I don't understand. And to sing with new children, it's… I'm not…(comfortable)."

She took pride in the fact that she has learnt Afrikaans, which she says constantly surprises Afrikaans-speaking people who do not expect her to understand. In this case, language helps her fit in, reconstituting some of her social world. Her church friends are mostly coloured, and not all of them speak Afrikaans, so the group speaks in English together. She feels closest to her church friends:

> Aurelia: Because when I'm with them, I feel more like *me*. Cause then I don't feel like... I don't feel like I'm being pushed away… or something like that.

It is thus not surprising that she feels most accepted by her church friends as she felt she sometimes had to work for her school friends to accept her – this 'work' to be accepted requires more reconfiguring than with her church friends. Aurelia uses her knowledge of languages to assert her practical evaluative agency as she seeks out friends she feels comfortable with, despite her iterative agency being limited by her race and nationality. This reconfiguring is also present in navigating the girls' parents' rules around friendship, which I discuss in the next section.

Parental influence on friends

The girls' parents played a key role in approving their friends. Although adolescence is typically characterised by increased autonomy, this varies from culture to culture (Fuligni, 1998). In this case, the girls reported that for the most part they obeyed their parents' wishes when it came to spending time with friends. This is an example of foreclosure[6], but with some flexibility for the girls to exert their agency and experiment with friendships. Although the girls' parents were not present in our focus groups, their sense of precarity and trying to protect their daughters (beyond just reputationally as Salo argues (2018:213)) from unsafe spaces was evident.

Nakita provides an example of how her parents' judgement prevents her from hanging out with friends who might have a negative influence on her.

[6] Using Marcia's (1966) developmental psychology classification of an adolescent's identity status, there are four statuses in the process of identity crises, based on whether or not one has experienced a crisis or not and whether or not one has made commitments or not. Identity diffusion is when adolescents have not yet gone through an identity crisis, and are unconcerned about identity issues and uncommitted to a coherent set of values. Similarly, foreclosure is when adolescents have not gone through an identity crisis, but for a different reason – they have already committed to an identity and set of values beforehand, often from their peer-group or parents. This is often done prematurely, with little thought. Marcia's categories also include when an identity crisis has happened – as a moratorium status (when actively seeking answers and raising questions) and an identity achievement status (when an individual has resolved their identity crisis and made commitments to particular goals, beliefs and values).

Nakita: Nobody actually do that to me Miss. Because I don't hang out with such friends Miss. I must bring all my friends to my mommy and daddy, to say then, what type of friends I have. That's why if my mommy see that you are not right, then my mommy tell me. Then I say "I don't wanna go play, I go play in the house".

Nakita's parents were involved in 'vetting' her friends. The criteria behind this 'vetting' process remained a mystery to Nakita and surprised me. My own memories of early teenagehood involved me fiercely keeping my social life private from my family.

Ruth: How do your parents know though? Do they spend time with your friends? Do they ask them questions?

Nakita: No, Miss. I don't know how my mommy knows, it's almost like my mommy can see through you, so Miss.

Ruth: Do you think it's about the way your friends might dress?

Nakita: I dunno Miss.

Nadia: The way they look in their eyes.

Nakita: Their act… I dunno Miss.

Ruth: Or maybe their attitude kind of thing?

Nakita: I dunno Miss… or maybe when they say a word that don't sound right for them Miss.

While generally Nakita accepted her parents' views on who she should be friends with, this was not always the case. She shared how she had experimented and disobeyed her parents' judgement about a friend of hers:

Nakita: It was hard Miss, very hard. But there was once a girl, and I was friends with her. And then this one man came, I don't know him. We were still playing in the park then, I was a little bit younger than this, maybe two years ago. And then this man told me "You two, it's almost like you don't match, you are not good friends for each other. Because you a better person than what she is. Now you are also going to become like her, because you are in her company." So I asked him, "How do you mean now? Because we are just now friends, best friends". And then he say "No" and then just walked on. And then the next morning my mommy saw her, we two were playing

> together. My mommy call me and she say no I mustn't be friends with her because she's a bad influence on me. And so, I didn't listen to my mommy, I kept on playing her. And afterwards, I start seeing myself that she's bad… She was mostly with the boys, Miss. Than she was with the girls, easier. And she wanna go places where boys is. How can I now say? Say over the parking there's that boys, then she just want to be by them. Now she invite us to play there by the parking.

This story seemed to be almost a cautionary tale to illustrate the moral of obedience to one's parents (discussed further in the next chapter). I include it here to serve as an example that by disobeying her parents, Nakita is starting to experiment with her identity beyond her otherwise 'good girl' identity. In order to navigate their parents' views on who they are friends with; the girls fluidly draw on their childhood identities to reassure their parents' concerns.

"I don't want to be big like you, you can keep being big": leveraging childhood identity

The group of girls in this study add complexity to this idea of the in-between of the all-encompassing "youth" category (as discussed in the Chapter Three), as they are *waiting* as they *reconfigure* their tween-teen in-betweenness, waiting to find their identities and waiting to be accepted into a high school space. The girls in this study are daunted by the treacherous terrain of teenagehood, and long for the simplicity of their childhood, yet are not children or tweens in the strict sense. They are somewhere in the in-between, and for some of them, this means that they cling to their childhood or tween identities that their parents approve of, while others forge ahead trying in some instances to move beyond their 'good girl' requirements, although always returning to the safety of their parents' good graces.

They are apprehensive about the changes that come with being a teenager, and much of what lies ahead is still unknown. As they navigate their present, they fluidly draw on their past identities as children, which they know and can leverage iterative *agency* strategies to navigate. As children, they have had formative social experiences (corporeal, affective, cognitive patterns) based on their identities (race, gender, sex etc.), which inform their iterative agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Embracing their childhood identities allows them to 'buy time' in this period of waithood, to begin to figure out their teenage identities.

As they step into the uncertainty of forging new identities, they long for the certainty of their childhood identities and hold onto their childhood views (inherited from their parents) on romantic relationships and choosing friends.

Nostalgia for simplicity of childhood

I was surprised to find that Nakita and Nadia expressed nostalgia for their childhood, which they felt they had left behind. Nakita "missed her younger days", where everything was easier:

> Nakita: (I miss) how I used to play Miss, play in the sand, make sand cookies. Yoh you get everything Miss, you don't need to go to the toilet, you *sommer* just pee there.

She also spoke about rejecting other girls' desire to be older, saying, "I don't want to be big like you, you can keep being big." Nadia spoke about missing how she used to look (cuter, according to Nakita) and how her mother used to do her hair.

Throughout the focus groups, I was struck by how young the girls are. They spoke of "playing" with their friends, for example. They are also very new to high school (three out of four were in the first few weeks of grade 8[7]), and being a teenager, and are still navigating these changes. Salo (2018:217) found that in her study in Manenberg, young women were categorised by life experiences rather than chronological age – those who had dropped out of school or had become mothers, and those who attended school. As in Salo's findings (2018), the girls in this study, as school-going teenage girls were childlike. This is particularly the case with friendships – friends from primary school are no longer a major feature, but new friendships are still developing at high school. In the unchartered territory of teenagehood, the girls take on their parents' views in rejecting romantic relationships but find ways to have friendships with boys.

[7] The South African schooling system divides basic education into two school periods – primary school is from Grade 1-7 (ages 6 to 13) and high school Grade 8-12 (ages 14 – 18).

Rejection of romantic relationships

Neither Nakita nor Nadia are allowed to have boyfriends. They clarified that they could have friends who were boys, but not "boyfriend and girlfriend". Nakita told us that she has one close friend who is a boy, and her father's concerns with this:

> Nakita: (shakes head). But my daddy, yoh my daddy is watching out. He tell me in Afrikaans, "Jy gaan nie ver met daai een nie" (*You are not going to go far with that one).* We just friends. My daddy don't even want me to have boy friends Miss, my daddy just want me to play with girls. But I tell my daddy, I will play with girls, but the girls they want to gossip whole time about this and how this one so… I'm not so a person Miss. I don't care how you look, I play soccer evens with the boys… cricket.

While some teenagers might disagree with this stance on boyfriends and rebel (see Salo (2018) for examples of how teenage girls used their home space to arrange illicit romantic meetings); both Nakita and Nadia chose to abide by their parents' rules and do not have romantic relationships, again a classic example of foreclosure common in early teenagehood (Marcia, 1966). However, this does not completely limit the girls' agency. Nakita and Nadia managed to assert their own agency in having boys who are friends, reassuring their parents that they are still child-like, non-romantic friendships. Nadia was aware that older groups of teenagers are separated into groups based on gender but didn't know why this was and still enjoyed playing in a mixed group. Nakita had expressed before that she was a 'tom boy' who preferred playing with boys. She felt that girls were more judgmental and gossiped, whereas the boys in her road did not gossip. Nadia agreed, saying that "they (boys) don't worry about such things".

> Nakita: No, I tell them sommer (*just)* straight in their face Miss, I'm straightforward. If I play with dolls, I don't care, I will play with dolls… You can go gossip about you and you. My mouth is still Miss, I tell you.

Nakita's desire to be more of a 'tom boy' provides an interesting contrast to Salo's (2018:214) finding that being called *jongetjiekinders* or young boys was associated with girls being wilful and less compliant. She strategically positioned herself as being a 'tom boy' as a way to play

with boys as friends (despite her father's concerns) and adhere to her own moral code of not gossiping and being judgemental. In this way, Nakita draws of the iterative agency of her childhood experiences and gender to reinforce her practical evaluative (present) agency.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated how the girls employ strategies and logics to shift identities depending on their social environment and their parents' rules. Firstly, I showed how Nakita and Aurelia strategically position themselves differently, depending on their social context – for Nakita, portraying herself as popular and standing up to bullies versus only have one close friend and being silenced by bullies; and for Aurelia, using language to include herself (Afrikaans), when assumptions about her exclude her on the basis of language (Xhosa). Secondly, I argued that the way that the girls' parents are involved in approving of their friends provides context for how Nakita has experimented with her identity, only to return to the familiarity of the logic of being a 'good girl'. Finally, I illustrated how the girls navigate various logics to embrace their childhood identities – in part because they are nostalgic for the familiarity of childhood identity and in part to alleviate their parents' concerns that playing with boys would result in a romantic relationship. Embracing their childhood identities allows the girls to 'buy time' in this waithood period, in order to configure their teenage identities.

Drawing on concepts from Soudien (2007), Henderson (1999) and De Lannoy (2007), these examples show how the girls employ strategies in an effort to leverage their agency and create room and time to experiment, as they begin to forge and make sense of their identities. In the next chapter, I discuss what motivates these strategies – the threat of violence, culturally validated narratives and vague notions of the future.

Chapter Five: Motivations: the 'why' of agency

In this chapter, I discuss *why* the girls assert different forms of agency in light of certain culturally validated narratives by investigating the motivations behind their strategies that I discussed in Chapter Four. Firstly, I discuss how the role of gender and the threat of violence mediates their mobility, and how that affects their agency (in line with Salo, 2018; Ramphele, 2002). I go on to discuss the familial expectations that inform their day-to-day activities (Bray et al. 2010, Swartz, 2009), their plans for the future and their capacity to aspire (De Lannoy, 2007; Ramphele, 2002). Finally, I consider the various combinations of independence and responsibility that define their agency (Bray et al., 2010; Ramphele, 2002; Moses, 2005) and uphold the values associated with being a 'good girl'.

"Because anything can happen": the threat of violence and the injustice of being a girl

Having read the New Crossroads youth studies (Ramphele, 2002; Henderson, 1999), I was struck by the sheer volatility and exposure to violence (or as Ramphele (2002:113) terms it "culture of violence") that defined youth experience in townships in the early 1990s in South Africa. My own findings speak to the structural violence of poverty and unemployment; and the legacy of apartheid on gang violence and crime; but for the most part, my perception is that overt violence is not the defining feature of these young people's lives. The absence of overt discussion about violence is a marked in contrast to other South African youth studies – perhaps due to the normalisation of the threat of violence or the sheltered nature of the girls' upbringing so far.

For example, while the school principal and teachers spoke of the influence of gangs on teenagers in the area, the girls did not report any incidents with gangsters. Aurelia felt that her high school had a rough reputation because of its location in Mitchell's Plain, which she reported to have lots of gangs. While she had not had any experiences with people in gangs, she knows there are gangs because of the shooting and people sitting around the neighbourhood. Others spoke of a vague sense that being involved with gangs made

teenagers make bad decisions, such as carrying a packet[8] for them. Nakita and Nadia saw gangsters as bullies who judge other teenagers for not having the perfect clothes or appearances. None of this reflected to the severity of violence in New Crossroads in the 1990s – where people did not use the main roads after 5pm and the fear being of raped prevented people from going to the youth centre (Ramphele, 2002:119).

Despite violence not being a defining feature of the girls' experience, the threat of violence hung over them, affecting their mobility (particularly because of their gender) and their affective experiences of the neighbourhood. Gender in this case limits the girls' iterative agency and their parents' safety concerns informs their practical evaluative agency, in how they move around in their neighbourhood. For example, the girls felt that their brothers (whether younger or older) had more freedom to walk around than they did. They attributed this to their parents' safety concerns, although Nakita felt that her parents were overprotective. She felt the injustice of this strongly:

> Nakita: My brothers' friends can come sleep anytime there, but my friends can't. And I also can't sleep out, *because I'm a girl*, because anything can happen. But my brother, 123 there he can go.

This is similar to Salo's (2018:215) findings that young boys who were not (yet) part of local gangs had greater freedom of movement than their female peers.

The threat of violence also restricts the girls' mobility to access extra-mural opportunities. Aurelia explained that previously she had done karate at the community centre, but when they shifted the times to later (finishing at 9.30pm) she was no longer able to attend because her father felt it would be too dangerous for her to walk home at night. Aurelia was incredulous when I asked the girls if they walk around at night, even with parents or friends this seemed to be a foreign idea. Nakita and Nadia were allowed to play on weekend evenings in the road that they live in, as Nakita explained: "Holidays, and weekends so, then the road

[8] A packet is understood to be a small bag of drugs. It is unclear from her description what kind of drugs this might be.

is alive. Then everybody is outside, and I walk around, go to the shop." Salo (2018) similarly found that young women in Manenberg knew that "*As die son sak dan moet jy in die huis wees* (When the sun sets you must be indoors)" or face their mothers' wrath.

The girls shared how the threat of violence sometimes affected their sense of safety irrationally. Despite being allowed more freedoms than others, Nakita and Nadia shared how they were sometimes anxious when they came home after school to an empty house - Nakita told us she sometimes felt scared by the sound of the wind, and worried that there was someone already in the house. Nakita also shared that she napped in the daytime because she struggled to sleep at night because she was scared. Aurelia told us that she was glad that her aunt lived nearby because she felt safe when she saw that her aunt's house was open, even if she was home alone. Most of the girls had been coming home to an empty house after school for a few years already – typically from the ages of nine and up.

The girls' desire for mobility comes up against safety concerns, exacerbated by their gender. Gender limits the girls' iterative agency and their parents' safety concerns inform their practical evaluative agency, in how they move around in their neighbourhood. This serves as a barrier for them to assert their agency. However, Nakita and Nadia find ways to have a bit more freedom by walking around when the streets in their neighbourhood are more populated. In the next section, I discuss how the girls navigate familial expectations in thinking about their futures.

"Doing what we are supposed to do": culturally validated narratives of success

Bray et al. (2010) and Swartz (2009) investigate agency as decision-making, which I link to the girls' practical evaluative agency. In this section, I discuss the influences on decision-making and what decisions the girls feel are required to achieve success and be recognized as a person. I go on to discuss how they draw on projective agency in thinking about their futures.

For many teenagers, self-determination is linked to discourses of 'right' and 'wrong' decisions, in terms of choice of friends, dating relationships, drugs or sexual behaviour. Bray et al. (2010:304) note that this moralistic dualism often sets the bar for being a 'good' person

unrealistically high. In some ways, the girls echoed this dualism. For example, a 'good' teenager focused on obedience, listening and respect for all people, according to the girls. They agreed that getting good marks at school and having friends who influence you positively were important to being a good teenager. Nadia shared the following:

> Nadia: To do what you are supposed to do…
> Ruth: What are you supposed to do?
> Nadia: Clean the house, make food – not all nights, but some nights. Do my homework. Study.

While she was speaking about what it means to be a good teenager, it was interesting to note the particularly gendered nature of her description. Cleaning the house and preparing meals were resonate with the values of domesticity in Salo's (2018) description of '*goeie dogters*' (good daughters). This is discussed further later on in this chapter.

According to Nakita and Nadia, bad decisions that teenagers make include smoking, drinking, dagga[9], going to clubs and "having sexual intercourse before the time". They also agreed that dropping out of school and being involved with gangs were bad decisions teenagers made. Aurelia felt that her church and faith life helped her decide what was right and wrong. She gave the example of a wrong decision being "…not wanting to go to school" and a right decision would be "listening to advice" (similar to Salo's (2018) findings on the importance of obedience). For both Aurelia and Nakita, their Christian faith and the teachings they received at youth group and at church gave them a clear moral code, which informed their decisions.

The girls expressed interesting views on what Bray et al. (2010:305) terms the "insidious myths that inform the transition from childhood to adulthood". The findings in my study challenge the first assumption that adhering to the 'right' and 'good' code (particularly at school) will result in success as an adult, and embody the second, that a person's moral integrity is determined by their choices. With regards to the first assumption, Nakita and Nadia both expressed nuanced views which I found surprising for their age; that the way to

[9] Dagga is the South African colloquial term for marijuana.

success was sometimes, but not always, made up of doing well at school and avoiding friends that might influence you negatively. They are aware of the factors that inform their decisions, reflecting an informed and nuanced practical evaluative agency.

> Nakita: It depends on you self also Miss. You can't just say that because of your friends, and all that stuff. It depends on how you wanna lead your future Miss.

> Nadia: Because some people that have a matric certificate already, they don't have jobs. And it's not always because of that. Sometimes the people with the matric certificates, they just lay at home and do nothing. And some that do have work… Miss see?

The findings in this study support the second assumption embedded in the moralistic dualism of decision-making – the girls for the most part held individuals accountable for their choices, and in particular for their negative choices. For example, Nadia and Nakita agreed that the reason people with matric certificates could not find work was because they were lazy. Nakita gave the example of someone she knew:

> Nakita: Because she's lazy Miss. She don't want to stand up and go look for a job. She wanna expect a job to come to her. Just be at home. You can't just be at home, you must stand up and go look, go throw your CV there in… God only help those who help themselves. Almost like the olden people say "'*Sit en kraai kry niks*" (sitting and crowing/crying gets you nothing).

In contrast to Swartz' (2009) findings, the girls did not actively distinguish between who they held accountable for positive and negative choices. While faith and family were important factors in making decisions for the girls, Nakita emphasised that she was responsible for doing what is right, regardless of it being a good or bad decision:

> Nakita: (shaking head) It's my own will Miss.

Swartz' (2009) findings spoke to a fervent belief in their own ability to escape the limitations of their environment, something echoed in De Lannoy (2007) and Ramphele (2002) who

illustrate how young people see education and achieving well at school as their way out of poverty. Rather, in this study, the girls did not openly aspire to escape their environment and aspired to be like people around them, for example Nakita's admiration of her father, Nadia's admiration of her auntie. This is an interesting parallel to Salo's (2018) findings that older women had previously been the respected moral authority figures in Manenberg but were losing their influence as their ability to leverage resources were curtailed by the macro-economic decisions of the state (e.g. housing, grants, jobs in textile factories – see Versfeld, 2012 for more details). At this age, the girls' lifeworlds are very localised as their mobility and independence is constrained by their parents' safety concerns. Although beyond the scope of this study, it would be interesting to see if this admiration of older family members shifts as the girls in this study are exposed to more of what it means to be a fully-fledged teenager.

Salo's (2018) use of the concept of *personhoo*d is useful in identifying what is at stake in navigating culturally validated narratives of success. To be a 'good girl' is the girls' path to being recognised as a person in their family and community context. This is an example of *personhood* - a "locally acceptable means of showing that one is a person, a socially recognized agent-in-society" (Salo, 2018:20). Personhood is what connects one to history, to structural time and therefore to social structure (Salo, 2018:20), in this case, being recognised as a 'good girl' connects the girls to what is expected of them as they transition from childhood to teenagehood by their families and communities. Abiding by the morality and geography that is required to be recognised as a person means being a 'good girl', much like Salo's (2018) work on young women in Manenberg who find their *personhood* in being a *goeie dogter* (a good daughter).

"But mostly, we clean": juggling household responsibilities

As illustrated in Ramphele (2002), Bray et al. (2010) and Salo's (2018) works, gender restricts girls' mobility in the allocation of household responsibilities more so than their male peers. The girls' daily schedules revealed that they have significant responsibility at home; but as the literature has argued (see for example Bray et al. (2010) and Salo (2018)), this is affected by a number of factors (household composition, stage, proximity to school and work, income etc.). Nadia is almost entirely responsible for her two younger brothers outside of school, as her mother works long hours and her parents are separated. She describes her weekend

activities at her mother's house as "mostly, we clean". Fundiswa, the oldest child in the house, is seemingly self-sufficient, and prepares all her own meals and the family meal every evening. On the contrary, Aurelia and Nakita seemed to have more limited responsibilities. Nakita gets herself ready in the morning and then some afternoon chores (washing up, cleaning the house and looking after her cousins) and Aurelia has some chores (sweeping, washing the dishes, cleaning the room and the toilet at home), but generally has more leisure time than Fundiswa and Nadia. Household responsibilities for the most part serve as a limitation on the girls' agency, but this is not excessively begrudged by the girls, who see it as part of what it means to be a 'good girl'. This is similar to Salo's (2018:213) findings that the identity *(personhood*) of young women in Manenberg is "primarily defined as subordinate to and supportive of their mothers' and their respective households' respectability… (through) their willingness to adhere to practices that uphold the values of domesticity…"

"I think I'm going to see when I get there": vague notions of the future

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) understand projective agency as evidenced in one's ability to imagine, aspire and have goals. Appadurai (2004) speaks of building a culture that enhances poor people's "capacity to aspire". In the focus groups, the girls expressed lots of ideas about what kind of careers they would like to pursue and looked up to their older family members as examples of success. While some research (Soudien, 2007:104) might identify their vague and diverse set of career dreams as limiting and a result of poverty; I present them as a strategic move to hedge their bets and an illustration of an enhanced "capacity to aspire" (Appadurai, 2004). Aspiring to be like their older family members speaks to the strong impression that family has in their identity formation.

Plans for the future

The girls were aware of the career decision-making required in their future. In fact, when I asked them to think of a decision that they had to make, careers were their immediate thought. They listed a number of dreams:

> Nadia: I can be a teacher, I wanna be a chef… a ballerina…. What's the other one… oh yeah, an astronaut. I think that is all that I can think of… (I like them because I) like

how the teachers teach the children, and they learn the children and then the children go home, and they can teach someone else that what they learnt at school. A ballerina they dance very nice. A chef, I like to cook sometimes. And then an astronaut, I want to see what's out in space.

Nakita: I would like to have, what's this you call it, a hairdresser first, Miss. And if I don't fit there, then I'm going to accounting, and if I don't fit there in Miss, I want to do design stuff, or something with designing. What is this… you um, help people, not a doctor Miss, not a nurse, but you take care of old people.

While they were informed of many options, they had not considered seriously whether these aligned with their talents or opportunities available. A good example of this is Nadia's desire to be an astronaut or ballerina – both seem far beyond the realities of her particular environment. This has been found in other studies too – Henderson (1999:139) for example argues that young people are embedded in their social environment, and they juggle existing possibilities in different ways, often reaching imaginatively beyond the boundaries of their physical location.

Both Nadia and Nakita's career aspirations echo Soudien's work, where he finds that poorer young people tended to have only vague ideas about their futures and dreams, in contrast to the strong-minded privileged young people he studied (Soudien, 2007:104). However, Aurelia served as an example of having a specific and informed career aspiration as an advocate when she is older. Aurelia wants to be a lawyer because she "just love(s) talking, so… just in case one day I'll be in court, I'll have to fight for this person…". She also said it was important to her that she earn lots of money. She had met a lawyer through a church after school program and had a basic understanding of what legal work entailed.

It is important to consider that the girls are still young, and it is quite typical for young teenagers to have multiple ideas of what they want to be in their future careers. One could argue that Nadia and Nakita keeping their options open is an example of an increased "capacity to aspire" (Appadurai, 2004) as they are strategically hedging their bets as the delve into discovering their teenage selves. This is a different interpretation of Appadurai (2004), who uses the "capacity to aspire" to argue that aspirations are socially determined, and that

the poor may lack "the [aspirational] resources to contest and alter the conditions of their own poverty" (Ray, 2003:3). Nakita and Nadia have not yet begun to reckon with the realities of the "aspiration gap" [10] (Ray, 2003) that come with growing up in a poor household and neighbourhood. While the girls do not explicitly acknowledge that their dreams might be cut short by lack of opportunities, Nakita's refrain of "If I don't fit there" speaks to a realisation that keeping her options open enhances her projective agency.

Thinking about their futures more generally, most of them considered their future as a sort of vague quandary:

> Nadia: No, I think I'm going to see when I get there.
>
> Nakita: (long pause). I don't know what job to take up actually. I don't know what to study for. Because I have a lot in mind.

Nakita shared that in her future she wants to "pass with distinctions and have diplomas and all that stuff, yes… for my degree Miss". Nadia wants to pass matric, go and study and then see what she would like to be. There is some concreteness to these aspirations, but again the vagueness could act as a safety mechanism, to protect their projective agency and themselves from disappointment, should their future aspirations not materialise.

Jumping to adulthood

The girls expressed very adult aspirations in who they chose as their role models, speaking of older family members about their parents' age. I was surprised by this, as I had thought that they would look to other teenagers or young adults, rather than older adult family members. This in some ways speaks to the prominence of family and home in the girls' lives. Nakita looks up to her father, for his Christian faith and his success at running a convenience shop out of

---

[10] Ray (2003) offers the concept of "aspirations window/gap" that links to Appadurai's (2004) concept of "capacity to aspire". Ray adds an economic perspective, arguing that "the aspirations gap is simply the difference between the standard of living that's aspired to and the standard of living that one already has. I want to argue that it's this gap—not aspirations per se, nor one's standard of living per se — that affects future-oriented behaviour" (Ray, 2003:3). He clarifies that the aspiration gap "is poverty in conjunction with a lack of connectedness, the absence of a critical mass of persons who are both better off than the person in question, yet not so much better off that their economic well-being is thought to be unattainable" (Ray, 2003:5).

their home. Nadia admired her aunt for her kindness and her role in arranging family events. While Henderson (1999:82) posits that children are exercising agency when they go to great lengths to excuse the failings of their parents and care-givers, the girls in this study chose to focus on parents and family members who inspire them and meet their needs.

Again, when sharing dreams of the future, the girls seemed to skip adolescence and early adulthood for relatively adult goals.

> Nadia: … and then after that, then I'm gonna get my own house, my own car. And then after having my own car, then I wanna get married. Have no children, live happily ever after. If I do get children, then I only want two. Because if I only have one, then that one's going to be lonely and if I have two, then they not going to be lonely. If it's a boy and a girl, Shamiela…. No (Nakita bursts out laughing)

I found it interesting that despite having vague ideas about her future, Nadia expressed the details of the stage of life that she aspired to - determined by acquisitions of wealth ("my own house, my own car") and of a husband and family of her own. Her focus was not on perhaps what is considered to be an adolescent aspiration of independence and freedom from one's family. She did speak of some travel dreams (Paris, Germany) but again these were vague notions. This resonates with Salo (2018) whose work with young women in Manenberg illustrates how young women find recognition of their personhood by embracing accepted adult identities (for example, as a mother). In Salo's (2018) work, older men tended to be absent and it is interesting to contrast her findings with Nakita's role models of her father and brothers.

Similarly, Nakita spoke at length about how she admired her older brother for his success. What particularly impressed her was the many new appliances her brother had in his home, especially given his status as a newly-wed couple, whom Nakita expected to have very little. Again, this speaks to a much more adult understanding of what is considered successful – not name brand clothes or cellphones that adolescents are typically aware of as status symbols (for example, Dolby (2001) and the teenage girls' cosmopolitan dreams inspired by television soap operas in Salo's (2018:252) work) and is contrary to Moses' (2005:87) findings in Ocean View that brand name purchases provide self-worth and self-esteem in light of apartheid's

dehumanizing legacy. This reflects an embracing of a certain kind of projective agency that shapes their everyday lives. There is a marked contrast between the concreteness of the material models of success (appliances) with the vague notions of the future. Spaces that provide personalised career guidance, such as Aurelia's youth group, are rare. Nakita and Nadia's vague notions of the future perhaps again speak to the desire to "buy time", to delay having to make concrete decisions until they have developed a more coherent teenage identity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the girls' agency is affected by the threat of violence and their gender. The role of gender is evident in the culturally validated narratives of what it means to be a 'good girl' that shape their everyday and their future aspirations, and by the diverse factors that shape their household responsibilities. These values, rules and expectations are embedded in their social environments, and help explain *why* they employ the strategies discussed in the previous chapter. The vagueness of their future plans could act as a safety mechanism, to protect their projective agency and themselves from disappointment, should their future aspirations not materialise. I contrast this vagueness with the concreteness of some of their material aspirations, as an example of 'buying time' to figure out who they want to be. Much of how the girls conceive of themselves and their moral code is rooted in where the girls spend time and assert agency, which I discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Geographies: the 'where' of agency

Building on the previous chapters which illustrated *how* the girls exert agency in the logics and strategies they employ (Chapter Four) and *why* they assert different forms of agency in light of certain culturally validated narratives (Chapter Five), in this chapter, I discuss the geographies (the *where*) of agency in my findings. Understanding the geography of agency gives insight into the morality of spaces, and how that ties culturally validated narratives of being a 'good girl' to being a at home. School and approved third spaces (youth groups, free Wi-Fi spots and sports) provide spaces for the girls to begin to tentatively experiment with their identity and agency. I go on to argue that while the legacy of apartheid planning might lead one to assume the neighbourhoods in Mitchell's Plain to be peripheral, there is a strong sense that the girls are completely immersed in their lifeworld, in the way that they talk about their neighbourhoods and their love of selfies.

"Always at home": morality and geography

Swartz (2009:79) notes that morality is often tied up in where youth spend time – whether they are off/on the streets before/after curfew (usually 10pm), in/out of home and school. This understandably results in incoherence in living by certain behavioural codes, and a high 'failure' rate, as young people feel they have failed themselves and their families.

The morality of spaces was evident in this study - all four girls were regularly attending school and spent the after-school time at home. This echoes Swartz' (2009:70) category of good girls being 'Mommy's babies' who were predominantly at home, as well as Salo's findings in Manenberg, who found that "as young girls take responsibility for household chores, especially after school, their mobility becomes increasingly restricted to the household and its immediate vicinity" (Salo, 2018:214). The girls explained this: "I don't come quite so much out of the house, so…", "whole day inside almost", "I just go home", "always at home". Nakita was somewhat of an outlier as she had slightly more freedom, including visiting friends to do schoolwork, practising athletics or playing in the road with children in her street.

> Nakita: But for me, I must work for my mommy and if I don't do that, I go to the shop, which is not in our road, but by me Miss, at the back… Or I go to the soccer field to

> practise my (sprint) training. Or I go to my friend's house to work or study or do homework there. But further on, I do nothing. Or I just play in the road with the children.

Bray et al. (2010) found that in poorer neighbourhoods, teenagers have more independence and spend most time outside the home (albeit nearby). This is not the case in this study, as the girls' independence is for the most part limited by safety concerns and household responsibilities. Like the children in the Valley in Bray et al. (2010)'s study, the girls did not spend time with their friends at home – in accordance with their parents' rules. For example, Fundiswa said this was because her mother does not like friends, and Aurelia explained that her parents felt that her friends might steal and be a bad influence on her. Even Aurelia's church friends do not come over either and she is not sure why, but "it's just the way it is". Nakita reported that she was allowed to, if she first checked with her mother. While she checks with her mother, her friends have to stand outside, and she emphasised "I can't even bring them water, because then I get a hiding". Nadia was allowed to bring friends over, but only when her mother was home. She was frustrated that her two younger brothers do not abide by this rule, and frequently bring lots of noisy friends over. They do not listen to her when she tries to send them away, saying ""No, no, no, no! Really my friends must stay inside". Salo's (2018:214) observations that young boys in Manenberg are automatically recognised as persons-in-the-making (because they are members of a respected household or family), while young women have to earn the recognition of their personhood through practising *ordentlikheid* (respectability) rings true here. Nadia's sense of injustice is illustrative of how the double standards of gender pervade in many areas of the girls' lives.

The girls did not speak to if they disobeyed or worked around their parents' rules. Salo's (2018) work in Manenberg shows how teenage daughters used the fact that their mothers were at work to arrange illicit gatherings with friends and sometimes romantic liaisons. Despite many of the girls being home after school alone or without adult supervision, my sense was that the girls were generally obedient to their parents' wishes and adhered to the limitations on when and where they were allowed to be with their friends.

Even in arenas where youth might be expected to have some agency, it was clear that for most of the girls they yielded to their parents' control. This was evident in how the girls chose friends, as discussed earlier where their parents would 'vet' their friends before they were allowed to spend time with them or limit their access to friends. This strict control pushed the girls to develop strategies to seek out approved friends or areas to access friends. School is considered the appropriate space to access friends. Interestingly, the girls did not complain about being bored as a result of not having many places to go (as Salo found (2018:222)), although this did shift when school closed down as a result of a nation-wide lockdown due to Covid-19. Other areas included church or youth group, sport and some access to other kids in the neighbourhood, through approved 'third' spaces.

"8 o'clock we by the school Miss, and the day goes on": school as a social scene

School was deemed an approved space for the girls to spend time in. As such, it is an important space for the girls to assert their practical evaluative agency, while adhering to their parents' rules. Although school did not feature prominently in our discussions (perhaps as a result of the girls being in the first few weeks of high school), it often featured as the backdrop for the stories that the girls shared. As such, it became evident that school provided an important exploratory space to start to experiment with identity. Fundiswa explained that she sees her friends at school, with Aurelia specifying that most of her friends are in other classes. Nakita added that she sees her friends "everywhere she goes", and later spoke about seeing her friends after school. Nadia reported that she sees her friends at break and in class; but that she only sees her friends outside of school when she is staying at her mother's (in Mitchell's Plain). Rather than a focus on academics or teachers, for the most part the girls spoke of school as a place to spend time with their friends, especially at break time. Aurelia shared an anecdote of her school friends' breaktime "drama":

> Aurelia: They mostly fight about when the other makes a mistake – let's say the one sent the other to the shop and they make a mistake or makes a mistake by giving the correct change. Yes.

Nakita and Nadia spoke of how they felt safest hanging around the classroom, particularly as a small fish in a big pond (Grade 8 learners at a large high school). Nakita explains her expectations before she started high school:

> Nakita: I thought that children here would be rude to me, because I'm smaller than the other Grade 8s, but no, *nogal lekker* (rather good).

They felt they would not be picked on if they remained in close proximity to their home room classrooms, in the building block right at the back of the school. This is reflective of their waiting – waiting to be accepted and feel as though they belong in a thoroughly teenage space – high school. Despite these social anxieties, getting to school and time before school started is an important social time, away from the rules of their parents. Nakita and Nadia enjoy walking to and from school, "because then we make a lot of jokes, catch on nonsense". Fundiswa spoke of her favourite time of the day as when she got to school early and could sit with her friend. School is one of a few approved spaces besides home. Besides school and home, the girls had a few Third spaces that they spent time, which I discuss in the next section.

"Something awesome": Approved Third spaces

Given the safety concerns and restrictions on the home space, youth groups provided an important parentally-approved, social space for the girls. They serve as a space for the girls to assert their agency in their own religious beliefs and in their friendships. Two of the girls, Aurelia and Nakita are practising Christians, and spoke with great excitement about their respective church youth groups. The Friday night meetings are big events in their lives, as Nakita describes, "Like today, I can't wait, it's something awesome!".

Aurelia travels to her old neighbourhood nearby to go to youth at her family's church. Most of the other children who attend live in the neighbourhood and attend the same high school as she does. She explains the arrangements that facilitate the event:

> Aurelia: My uncle, he come fetch us. He live round the corner, there by me. He come fetch us with the van. We encourage other children not to sit outside and smoke what they do. So we do youth nights, where we go to church, we play games, have fun.

Nakita attends youth group in her neighbourhood, at their "apostle's house". She describes that the children range in age and some, but not all, attend the same high school as her. She notes that they also recruit children to join them and do fun, group activities. She explains:

> Nakita: "…it's very fun activities - like today's Valentine's day, we are going to do more fun activities. Like we going to go out, we going to make the church ground clean, we going to have movie night. Like that…"

Youth groups are understood to be church-based, and as one of the few options for third spaces for young teenagers, can exclude non-Christians. For example, Nadia is Muslim and did not have an equivalent space.

Access to Wi-Fi also drew the girls to certain spaces. Aurelia enjoyed watching TikTok videos with her friend using the church's Wi-Fi. Nakita told us that she often goes with her mother to the surgery where her mother works after school and "sits on the Wi-fi" and watches movies from YouTube and on occasion, downloads movies. Although TikTok and YouTube platforms were popular, the girls did not interact on and contribute to social media. Nakita made brief mention of Facebook, but I was surprised at how little social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp etc.) featured in their lives. In theory, the girls all had their own cellphones (a requirement of the study), but in actuality the phones were shared between family members (mostly their mothers) and thus not always a private space.

Sport also provided a third space for some - Fundiswa played netball informally close to her house, Aurelia had previously done karate at a community centre and Nakita enjoyed practicing athletics at the local soccer fields or doing spiritual dancing at her church. This in contrast with Bray et al. (2010:114), who found that sport provided access to a much needed third space for boys, rather than girls. My liaison teacher noted that the school sports' offerings were limited by access to facilities (for example, not having a swimming pool) and safety concerns in the neighbourhood in the less-populated afternoons.

"Well I don't know the areas": Peripherality and the locality of lifeworlds

Historically and geographically, Mitchell's Plain falls on the periphery of Cape Town, as a low- to middle-income area on the Cape Flats, in the south eastern part of Cape Town. During apartheid, the Group Areas Act (1950) destroyed established neighbourhood communities and led to overcrowding and widespread poverty across the country. Due to scarcity of housing, multiple generations had to adjust to living together in confined spaces. Men were forced to adjust as women became the Western Cape's preferred permanent labour force in key industries, such as canning and textiles. Nationally, women became the preferred recipients of cash grants for child welfare and state housing allocations. Post-apartheid policy reform has changed this landscape, but poverty and high unemployment levels continue to make family life difficult for many coloured and black South African families (Bray et al., 2010:49). Additionally, the remote and isolated location of coloured and black neighbourhoods (the Cape Flats is approximately 30km away from the CBD) combined with prohibitive cost of transport and lack of economic opportunity leads many young people to feel excluded from active participation in community life (Brown-Luthango, 2018; Moses, 2005:93).

Geographically, the girls were not very aware of Mitchell's Plain being on the periphery of Cape Town. Aurelia and Fundiswa mentioned the Promenade Mall in their broader neighbourhood of Mitchell's Plain and Nakita had some knowledge of going to a "Cape Town deli" for a buffet-style meal. Fundiswa knew her neighbourhood of Philippi and Nadia spent time in Delft with her father on the weekends. In one of the focus groups, I made use of a physical copy of Bray et al.'s (2010) study which showed images around the Fish Hoek valley, but only Nadia had heard of Ocean View and none of the girls were familiar with areas such as Masiphumelele or Fish Hoek. Internationally, the girls displayed some knowledge of the rest of the globe – Nadia dreamed of visiting places like Paris or Germany, Nakita wanted to go to Italy because she loved Italian food and Aurelia's sister lived in Germany. There was a clear sense of being completely immersed in their own lifeworlds (for example, Nakita went to great lengths to direct me in her neighbourhood, despite no common reference points), but without a sense of lack or comparison to other areas. Although the girls' practical evaluative agency is limited by their geographic and historic peripherality, they assert their agency through their strong sense of local lifeworlds, creating a sense of being in the centre

of the periphery (as Salo et al., 2010 propose). This resonates with Salo's (2018) findings that illustrate how the meanings that peripheral urban space hold for residents is contested and connected to the meanings of personhood (Salo, 2018:2). Like Salo, I argue that the girls' sense of agency is informed (and not only limited) in part by "their marginal location on the periphery of the urban South African landscape" (Salo, 2018:26).

"There… there and there": the inexplicable "there"

It proved difficult to map the neighbourhood with the girls as we did not share many reference points. The descriptions of the journeys from home to school were replete with "There… and there and there…". It was clear that the girls visualised themselves walking or driving to explain their areas. They almost took on the role of tour guides in trying to paint their world, despite our lack of shared reference points. This was particularly the case with Nakita who went to great lengths to try to give me directions and explain her routes, despite not knowing names of streets or specifying areas (see maps from mapping activity below). The earnestness also meant much repetition, to draw me into the lifeworld which seemed so obvious to Nakita.

Figure 18: Nakita's map

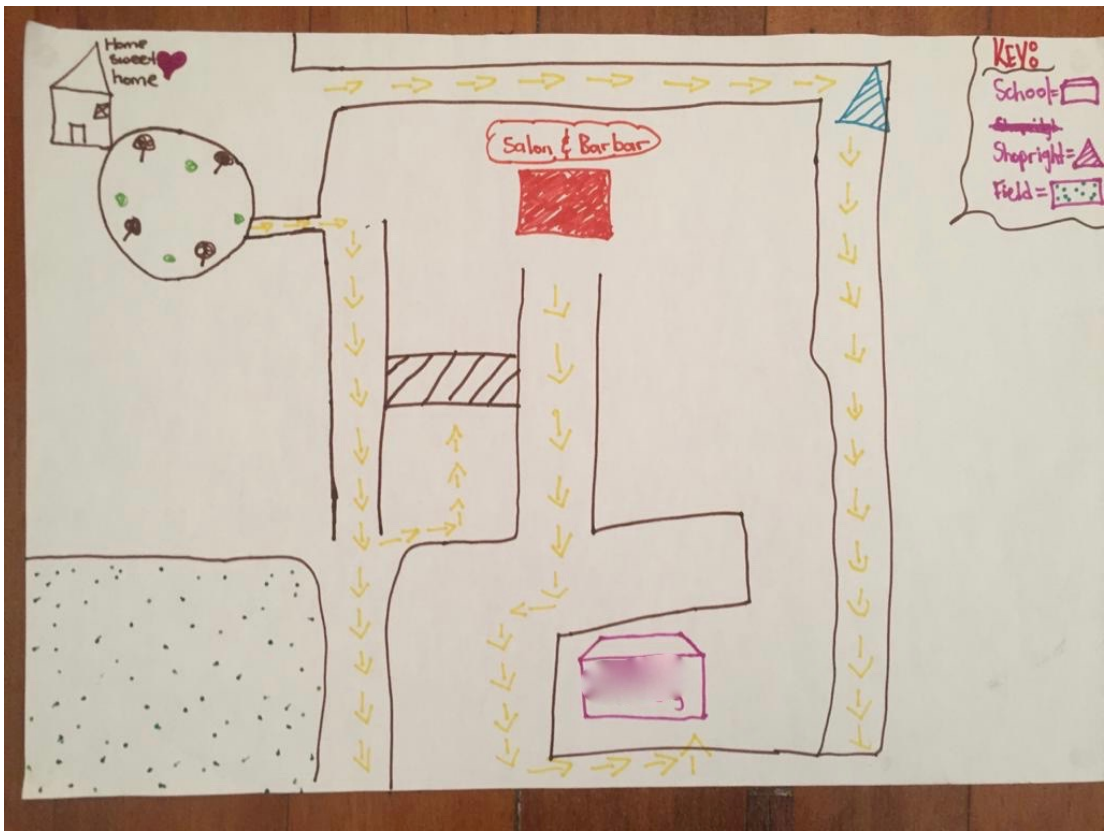

Figure 19: Aurelia's map

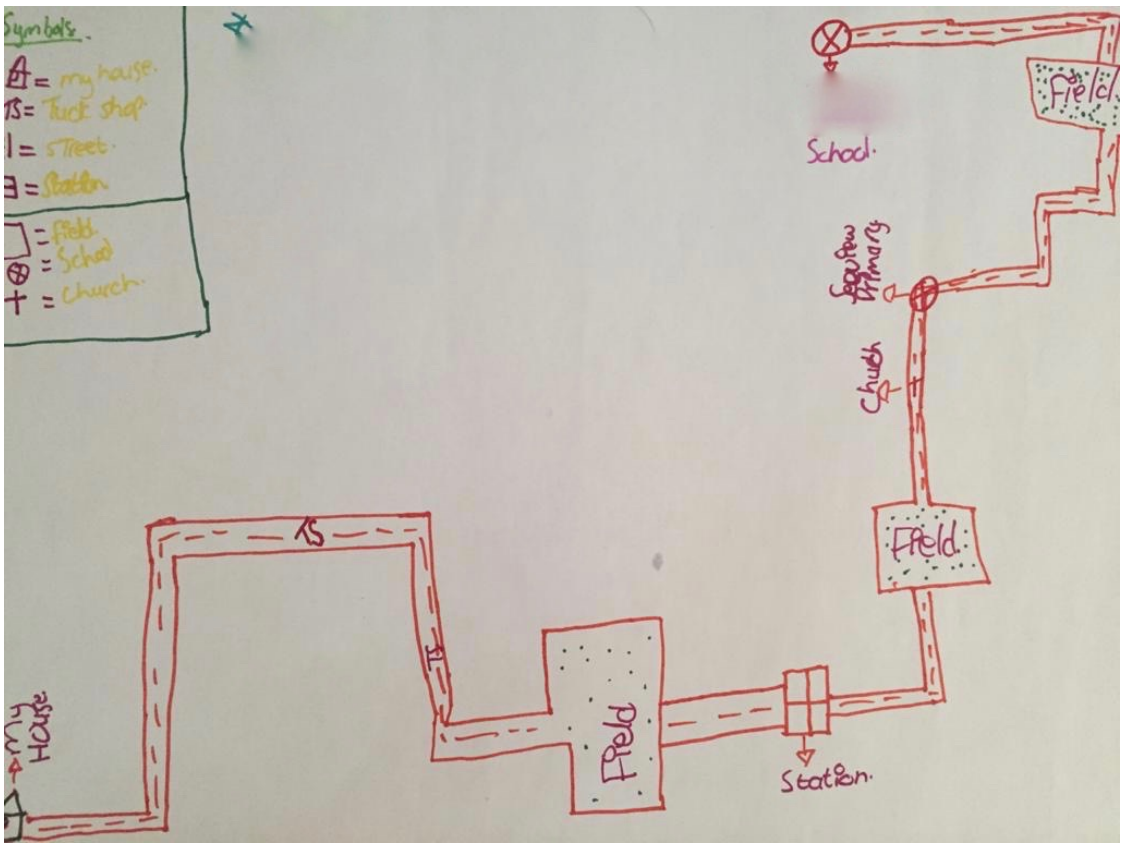

Figure 20: Nadia's map

'There' could also refer to the bad places that friends might lead you to (such as clubs or dodgy areas), as Nadia explains:

> Nadia: …She mustn't do bad things… and that's all… That she will go like there, and I don't want to go there. And there and there and there…

In this case, the vagueness in description of the 'bad places' seemed in part to reflect that Nadia did not actually have experience of these places, or that she did not want me to know about them if she had. In this case, Nadia used 'there' to buffer me from the details of her lifeworld, whereas Nakita used 'there' to try to draw me into her lifeworld. Both examples show the complete immersion into local lifeworlds. This provides an interesting tension – highlighting the geographies of where the girls assert their agency in the foregrounding of locality, despite broader assumptions of geographic and historic peripherality.

"I'm a selfie queen!": grounded in the local

The girls' love of selfies revealed an additional interesting counter to the idea of peripherality. Their insistence on taking selfies despite my requests not to, shows a determination to ground themselves in their lives. This is perhaps an effort to solidify their existence – in the same way that Puoane et al. (2005) argue that women in Khayelitsha rely on the solidity of stature (from eating and being overweight) to make themselves known and take up space. My sense was that taking selfies was what they associated with taking photos of their lives, and that they found my instructions to take photos of their environment without them in it, boring and counter to what they considered normal. This shows how they place themselves at the centre of their lives, and do not consider themselves to be peripheral in their lifeworlds in a physical sense.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have drawn on where the girls assert agency to add richness and complexity to the concept of youth agency. The morality of geography features heavily in where the girls are allowed to go, as 'good girls'. Home for the most part, school and a few third spaces are the approved spaces for 'good girls'. The girls' knowledge of areas beyond their neighbourhoods is limited, and I argue that this offers a grounding force to the assumed

peripherality of their historically marginalized neighbourhoods. Through local knowledge and a love of selfies, the girls manage to centre themselves in their worlds.

Chapters Four, Five and Six present findings that build on the legacy of youth studies in Cape Town (Ramphele, 2002; Henderson, 1999; Bray et al., 2010; Salo, 2018; Soudien, 2007), to offer a theoretically enriched and contextually grounded contribution to understanding youth agency in Cape Town's low-income neighbourhoods. In these chapters, I have shown *how* the girls exert agency in the logics and strategies they employ (Chapter Four), *why* they assert different forms of agency in light of certain culturally validated narratives (Chapter Five) and *where* they assert their agency (Chapter Six). I have woven in a theoretical conception of agency and multiple South African youth studies into my own findings, teasing out contradictions, alignments, specificities and contextualities.

In Chapter Four, I drew on concepts from Soudien (2007), Henderson (1999) and De Lannoy (2007) to show how the girls employ strategies in an effort to leverage their agency and create room to experiment as they begin to forge and make sense of their identities. I illustrated how the girls employ strategies and logics to shift identities depending on their social environment and their parents' rules. This involves using shifting social identities and language to navigate friendship groups, maximising their practical evaluative agency, despite iterative agency being limited. In an effort to maintain their identities as 'good girls' in their families and to draw on the familiarity of their childhood, the girls embrace the iterative agency of their childhood identities and 'buy' themselves time to experiment with their identities.

In Chapter Five, I argued that the girls' agency and mobility is affected by the threat of violence and their gender, by the culturally validated narratives that shape their everyday and by the diverse factors that shape their household responsibilities. I presented Nakita and Nadia's multiple career aspirations as motivated by a need to keep their options open, enhancing rather than limiting their projective agency. The vagueness of their future plans protects their projective agency and themselves from disappointment. I contrast this vagueness with the concreteness of some of their material aspirations, as an example of 'buying time' to figure out who they want to be. I argued that aspiring to be like older family

members reflects the prominence of the girls' families and homes in making sense of their lives and allows them to embrace of a certain kind of projective agency that shapes their everyday lives.

In Chapter Six, I discussed the geographies (the *where*) of agency in my findings. Understanding the geography of agency gives insight into the morality of spaces, and how that ties culturally validated narratives of being a 'good girl' to being at home. The girls spent the majority of their time at home. As a result, school, youth groups, free Wi-Fi hotspots and sports play an important space for the girls to assert their practical evaluative agency, while adhering to their parents' rules. Although the girls' practical evaluative agency could be assumed to be limited by the geographic and historic peripherality of Mitchell's Plain, they assert their agency through their strong sense of local lifeworlds, creating a sense of being in the centre of the periphery. They do this with their frequent use of "there" (to include and exclude) and their love of selfies, reflecting how they place themselves at the centre of their lives, and do not consider themselves to be peripheral in their lifeworlds in a physical sense.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This thesis follows in the wake of a number of youth studies (Ramphele, 2002; Henderson, 1999; Salo, 2018; Bray et al., 2010; Soudien, 2007; Swartz, 2009; De Lannoy, 2007), each which spoke to a particular political moment in South African history. Seekings (1995, 1996) focused on the 'lost generation' of young people during the anti-apartheid township revolts of the mid-1980s. Henderson (1999) and Ramphele (2002) illustrated how young people develop strategies to navigate the systemic violence, poverty and the lack of opportunities that defined New Crossroads in the early 1990s, as South Africa transitioned into a democracy. Salo's (2018) work in Manenberg in the late 1990s shows how young people began to seek out updated, cosmopolitan ideas of *personhood,* as South Africa entered the global arena and the older women in the community lost their leverage due to macroeconomic policy changes. Bray et al. (2010) speak to a post-apartheid moment of non-racialism and the optimism of South Africa's future as a Rainbow Nation, as well as the socio-economic struggles that persisted beyond the end of apartheid. This thesis is situated in the current political moment of disillusionment with the status-quo and widespread disappointment of the harsh reality of life in post-apartheid South Africa. This is particularly felt by youth - the 'born frees'[11] in South Africa and globally in the "smouldering political dissatisfaction within and beyond political establishments across the South and North" (Simone & Pieterse, 2017:32). The findings in this study speak to how youth assert agency in this moment, given the daily strains of being a young girl in a low-income neighbourhood in Cape Town. It also serves as a last glance at life in this context before Covid-19, and its devastating impact on ordinary South Africans and their livelihoods.

I began this thesis with my research questions of: How do young people assert agency in low-income, urban neighbourhoods? What are the logics, motivations and geographies of these choices? The young people in my study are strategic in how they reconfigure the agency available to them, despite some limitations. The girls assert their agency in the way they navigate friendships and fitting in, using language and social fluidity to be accepted by their peers and start to form a coherent sense of self. They both fulfil and tentatively experiment

[11] The term 'born frees' refers to those born after the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994.

with culturally validated narratives by strategically embracing their childhood identities at times, to reassure their parents that they are not teenagers yet, but at the same time tentatively experiment what being a teenager might involve. In so doing, they buy themselves some time as they transition into adolescence by using their practical evaluative agency to draw on their iterative agency (their childhood identity), which empowers them to utilize their projective agency in prefiguring their teenage identity. This demonstrates the value of Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) temporally embedded conception of agency, that at any given moment all three forms of agency may be present in shifting configurations, to maximise agency in the environment the girls find themselves.

The girls' mobility is constrained by their age and gender, due to the threat of violence and gendered household responsibilities. Working around and within these constraints, they find approved third spaces, expressing great excitement in youth groups, Wi-Fi hotspots and sports. These everyday stories are illustrative of how, why and where the girls employ the strategies that they do and add weight to the concept of *fluidity* (De Lannoy, 2007) and reconfiguring (Soudien, 2007) of youth identity theory.

Mirroring Salo (2018) in her use of *personhood*, in order to be recognised as persons, the girls take on the role and identity of a 'good girl'. They express maturity in their understanding of what it means to be a 'good girl' and are tentatively exploring what other personhoods might be available to them as they step into fully-fledged teenagehood. The girls shrewdly hedge their bets for their future careers and look up to older family members who serve as role models and fulfil recognised *personhoods*. The girls find ways to take up space and centre themselves through selfies; claiming their personhood regardless of the assumed geographic and historical peripherality of Mitchell's Plain.

This thesis serves as a challenge: that although youth identity is fluid and constantly reconfiguring, young people must be recognised as agents pursuing and creating new personhoods. Youth agency should not be overly moralized as good (e.g. positive choices around education) or bad (e.g. bending to peer pressure); but rather recognised for the complexities and particularities that define growing up in particular place at a particular time in a Global South city. We as scholars should resist the reductionist urge to categorise youth

thereby limiting their agency by over-determining their futures. Rather, we need to recognise that young people need space and time to experiment and reconfigure their identities, in their particular time and place.

This thesis is offered as a small, but significant in-depth study to enrich and update how we understand young South Africans. By focusing on a particular context and overlaying it with a theoretical conception of agency, it serves to complicate some of the generalisations and reductionist views about youth as one conglomerate category. This too reflects the provocation from Caldeira (2017:6) to "capture the simultaneous process of improvement and the reproduction of inequality and precariousness" and Dlamini (2009) to capture the heterogenous complexities of the urban periphery of South African townships, as more than simply a site of poverty or struggle.

The coinciding of Africa having the world's largest youth population (United Nations, 2015) and the fastest rate of urbanisation compared to all other regions (Pieterse, 2011) makes understanding the everyday experiences of contemporary urban youth a matter of priority. Everyday life for most urban Africans, particularly youth, is characterised by vulnerability, poverty and precarious livelihoods (Pieterse, 2011:21). This is held in tension with the wellspring of young people's generative capacity to assert their agency through innovative strategies. Urban theory must make sense of this complexity of everyday practice, particularly in Southern cities, which have historically not been the theoretical centre or starting point. This thesis is a response to the Southern Urbanism challenge to capture the heterogeneity of the rhythms and rituals of everyday practice in the urban periphery in writing and theory, going further to focus on youth (see Cooper,Swartz & Mahali, 2019 for more on this). This small study is a theoretically enriched, contextually grounded contribution to this challenge, offering some important insights into the heterogeneous experiences of youth.

This heterogeneity is evident in the dissonances between and within youth studies in one city, over time and place. For example, many of the studies captured the everyday life of a fourteen year old girls in Cape Town, and these differed considerably. The presence of violence (particularly sexual violence) in Ramphele (2002) and Henderson (1999) aligned with Salo (2018), but differed with Bray et al. (2010) and my own findings. While Bray et al. (2010) and

Moses (2005) found that young girls in Ocean View formed gangs as a way of building a social identity, this was not the case in my findings. Swartz (2009) and De Lannoy (2007) found that young people were desperate to escape the limitations of their environment; this was not yet a feature of the girls in my study. As researchers, we need to be aware of the richness that comes with recognising the particularities of heterogenous experiences. Future studies could further contribute to illustrating examples of this heterogeneity of experience in ordinary young people's lives, considering factors such as different ages, gender and geographies and how they affect youth agency.

Bibliography

Adhikari, M. 2005. *Not white enough, not black enough: Racial identity in the South African coloured community*, Ohio University Press.

Althusser, L. 1971. Lenin and philosophy and other essays. New York. Bloomsbury NY.

Anderson, T. D. 2013. Tweens and their in-betweens: giving voice to young people when exploring emerging information practices associated with smart devices. *Information Research*.

Appadurai, A. 2004. The capacity to aspire. *Culture and public action***,** 59-84.

Banks, N. 2020. Developmental spaces? Developmental Psychology and urban geographies of youth in sub-Saharan Africa. *Children's Geographies***,** 1-15.

Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. 2013. *Mandela's children: Growing up in post-apartheid South Africa*, Routledge.

Bennett, K. 2002. Participant observation. Doing cultural geography. P. Shurmer-Smith. London, SAGE.

Bhabha, H. 2004. The location of culture. 1994. *London and New York: Routledge***,** 5-6.

Bray, R. 2003. Predicting the social consequences of orphanhood in South Africa. *African journal of AIDS research,* 2**,** 39-55.

Bray, R. & Brandt, R. 2007. Child care and poverty in South Africa: An ethnographic challenge to conventional interpretations. *Journal of Children and Poverty,* 13**,** 1-19.

Bray, R. & Gooskens, I. 2006. Ethics and the everyday: Reconsidering approaches to research involving children and young people. *Anthropology Southern Africa,* 29**,** 45-57.

Bray, R., Gooskens, I., Moses, S., Kahn, L. & Seekings, J. 2010. *Growing up in the new South Africa: Childhood and adolescence in post-apartheid Cape Town*, University of Cape Town.

Brown-Luthango, M. M. 2018. "Stuck in Freedom Park"—youth transitions and social inclusion amongst Coloured Youths in Tafelsig, Cape Town. *Commonwealth Youth and Development,* 16**,** 1-16.

Burman, E. 1994. *Deconstructing Development Psychology,* London, Routledge.

Burman, S. & Reynolds, P. 1986. *Growing up in a divided society: The contexts of childhood in South Africa*, Ravan Press Johannesburg.

Caldeira, T. P. 2017. Peripheral urbanization: Autoconstruction, transversal logics, and politics in cities of the global south. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* 35**,** 3-20.

Chambers, R. 2006. Participatory mapping and geographic information systems: whose map? Who is empowered and who disempowered? Who gains and who loses? *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries,* 25**,** 1-11.

Cooper, A., Swartz, S. & Mahali, A. 2019. Disentangled, decentred and democratised: Youth Studies for the global South. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 22(1):29-45.

Dawes, A. E. & Donald, D. E. 1994. *Childhood & adversity: Psychological perspectives from South African research*, David Philip Publishers.

De Boeck, F. & Honwana, A. 2005. Makers and Breakers. Children and Youth in Post-colonial Africa, James Currey. Oxford.

De Bruin, S. 2016. Mitchell's Plain turns 40. *Plainsmen*, May 4. Accessed on 22/10/2019. https://www.plainsman.co.za/news/mitchells-plain-turns-40-5152485

De Certeau, M. 1984. The practice of everyday life, trans. *Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984),* 117.

De Lannoy, A. 2007. The stuff that dreams are made of... Narratives on educational decision-making among young adults in Cape Town. CSSR Working Paper No. 190, Centre for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town.

De Waal, A. 2002. Realising child rights in Africa: Children, young people and leadership. *Young Africa: realising the rights of children and youth***,** 1-28.

Diof, M. 2005. Afterword. *In:* Honwana, A. & De Boeck, F. (eds.) *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa.* James Currey.

Dlamini, J. 2009. *Native nostalgia*, Jacana Media.

Dolby, N. 2001. *Constructing race: Youth, identity and popular culture in South Africa*. Albany State University of New York Press.

Emirbayer, M. & Mische, A. 1998. What is agency? *American journal of sociology,* 103**,** 962-1023.

Erikson, E. 1968. *Identity, Youth and Crisis,* New York, Grove Press.

Fanon, F. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press New York.

Finn, B. & Oldfield, S. 2015. Straining: Young men working through waithood in Freetown, Sierra Leone. *Africa Spectrum,* 50**,** 29-48.

Forde, S. 2008. *Playing by their rules: Coastal teenage girls in Kenya on life, love and football*, Moving the Goalposts.

Fortes, M. 1993. The concept of the person. *In:* Dieterlen, G. (ed.) *La Notion de Personne en Afrique Noire.* Paris: Éditions de Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique.

Fortuin, A. 2020. Personal correspondence.

Fuh, D. The prestige economy: Veteran clubs and youngmen's competition in Bamenda, Cameroon. Urban Forum, 2012. Springer, 501-526.

Fuligni, A. J. 1998. Authority, autonomy, and parent–adolescent conflict and cohesion: A study of adolescents from Mexican, Chinese, Filipino, and European backgrounds. *Developmental psychology,* 34**,** 782.

Furstenberg, F. F., Belzer, A., Davis, C., Levine, J. A., Morrow, K. & Washington, M. 1993. How families manage risk and opportunity in dangerous neighborhoods. *Sociology and the public agenda***,** 231-258.

Giddens, A. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gordon, E., Elwood, S. & Mitchell, K. 2016. Critical spatial learning: participatory mapping, spatial histories, and youth civic engagement. *Children's geographies,* 14**,** 558-572.

Hecht, T. 1998. *At home in the street: Street children of Northeast Brazil*, Cambridge University Press.

Henderson, P. C. 1999. *Living with fragility: children in New Crossroads.* University of Cape Town.

Hendrick, H. 1997. Constructions and reconstructions of British childhood: An interpretative survey, 1800 to the present. *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood***,** 34-62.

Hergenrather, K. C., Rhodes, S. D., Cowan, C. A., Bardhoshi, G. & Pula, S. 2009. Photovoice as community-based participatory research: A qualitative review. *American journal of health behavior,* 33**,** 686-698.

Holloway, S. L. & Valentine, G. 2000. Children's geographies and the new social studies of childhood. *Children's geographies: Playing, living, learning***,** 1-26.

Honwana, A. Youth, waithood, and protest movements in Africa. African Dynamics in a Multipolar World: 5th European Conference on African Studies—Conference Proceedings, 2014. Centro de Estudos Internacionais do Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE …, 2428-2447.

Honwana, A. & De Boeck, F. 2005. *Makers & breakers: Children and youth in postcolonial Africa*, James Currey.

Jacob, D. 2009. Native nostalgia. *Johannesburg: Jacana Media*.

James, A. & Prout, A. 1997. *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood.,* London, Falmer Press.

Jauregui, B. 2014. Provisional agency in India: Jugaad and legitimation of corruption. *American Ethnologist,* 41**,** 76-91.

Jeffrey, C. 2010. Timepass: Youth, class, and time among unemployed young men in India. *American Ethnologist,* 37**,** 465-481.

Jenkins, R. 1996. *Social Identity,* London, Routledge.

Jones, S. 1993. *Assaulting childhood: Children's experiences of migrancy and hostel life in South Africa*, Witwatersrand University Press.

Kroger, J. 2004. *Identity in adolescence*, Routledge.

Kruger, J. S. & Chawla, L. 2002. "We know something someone doesn't know": children speak out on local conditions in Johannesburg. *Environment and Urbanization,* 14**,** 85-96.

Lam, D., Seekings, J. & Sparks, M. 2006. The Cape Area Panel Study: overview and technical documentation for waves 1-2-3. *The University of Cape Town*.

Levine, R. A. 2007. Ethnographic studies of childhood: A historical overview. *American anthropologist,* 109**,** 247-260.

Limb, M. & Dwyer, C. 2001. *Qualitative methodologies for geographers: Issues and debates*, Arnold London.

Lloyd, C. 2005. Growing Up Global: The Changing Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries: Executive Summary. *ends Countries., POTTAID, Committee on Population and Board on Children, Y., and Families & Education., DOBASSA) The National Academies Press, Washington, DC***,** 1-14.

Longhurst, R. 2003. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups. *Key methods in geography,* 3**,** 143-156.

Lucey, H. & Reay, D. 2002. A market in waste: psychic and structural dimensions of school-choice policy in the UK and children's narratives on 'demonized' schools. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education,* 23**,** 253-266.

Lundine, J., Kovačič, P. & Poggiali, L. 2012. Youth and digital mapping in urban informal settlements: Lessons learned from participatory mapping processes in Mathare in Nairobi, Kenya. *Children Youth and Environments,* 22**,** 214-233.

Maira, S. & Soep, E. 2005. Introduction. Youthscapes: The Popular, the National, the Global. Philadelphia: University of Pennnsylvania Press.

Marcia, J. E. 1966. Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of personality and social psychology,* 3**,** 551.

Matthews, H. & Limb, M. 1999. Defining an agenda for the geography of children: review and prospect. *Progress in human geography,* 23**,** 61-90.

McDonald, D. A. 2012. *World city syndrome: Neoliberalism and inequality in Cape Town*, Routledge.

McNamee, S. J. & Miller, R. K. 2009. *The meritocracy myth*, Rowman & Littlefield.

Meyiwa, T. 2011. Constructing an alternative family unit: families living with HIV/AIDS redefine African traditional parenting patterns. *Social Dynamics,* 37**,** 165-177.

Miles, M. B. & HUBERMAN, A. M. 1994. *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*, sage.

Mitchell, C. 2008. Getting the picture and changing the picture: Visual methodologies and educational research in South Africa. *South African journal of education,* 28**,** 365-383.

Modisane, L. 2011. *The Visual Black Atlantic? Trope-(ing) Black Identity in Yizo Yizo (1999, 2001)*, Ann Arbor, MI: MPublishing, University of Michigan Library.

Morris, A. 2015. *A practical introduction to in-depth interviewing*, Sage.

Morrow, V. 2001. Using qualitative methods to elicit young people's perspectives on their environments: some ideas for community health initiatives. *Health education research,* 16**,** 255-268.

Moser, C. O. 1996. *Confronting crisis: a comparative study of household responses to poverty and vulnerability in four poor urban communities*, The World Bank.

Moses, S. 2005. *How do space and place matter?: the role of neighbourhood level factors on the everyday lives of children and young people living in a Cape Town community established under apartheid.* University of Cape Town.

Myers, G. A. 2001. Protecting privacy in foreign fields. *Geographical Review,* 91**,** 192-200.

Nyamnjoh, H. M. 2018. Food, memory and transnational gastronomic culture amongst Cameroonian migrants in Cape Town, South Africa. *Anthropology Southern Africa,* 41**,** 25-40.

Perramond, E. P. 2001. Oral histories and partial truths in Mexico. *Geographical Review,* 91**,** 151-157.

Pieterse, E. 2011. Grasping the unknowable: coming to grips with African urbanisms. *Social Dynamics,* 37**,** 5-23.

Prout, A. & James, A. 1990. Constructing and reconstructing childhood (pp. 7-34). *London, UK: Routledge Falmer*.

Puoane, T., Fourie, J., Shapiro, M., Rosling, L., Tshaka, N. & Oelefse, A. 2005. 'Big is beautiful'–an exploration with urban black community health workers in a South African township. *South African Journal of Clinical Nutrition,* 18**,** 6-15.

Ramphele, M. 2002. *Steering by the stars: being young in South Africa,* Cape Town, Tafelberg.

Ray, D. 2003. Aspirations, poverty, and economic change. *Understanding poverty*, 1:409-421.

Rocha, C. 2008. Brazil-Canada partnership: building capacity in food security. *Center for Studies in Food Security, Ryerson University, Toronto*.

Ruby, J. 1991. Speaking For, Speaking About, Speaking With, or Speaking Alongside An Anthropological and Documentary Dilemma. *Visual Anthropology Review,* 7**,** 50-67.

Saldana, J. 2011. A survey of qualitative data analytic methods. *Fundamentals of qualitative research***,** 89-138.

Salo, E. 2003. *Taxi Queens and Gangsters: negotiating personhood in a post-apartheid Manenberg*, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town.

Salo, E., Ribas, M., Lopes, P. & Zamboni, M. 2010. Living our lives on the edge: Power, space and sexual orientation in Cape Town townships, South Africa. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy,* 7**,** 298-309.

Salo, E. R. 2018. *Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters: Producing persons in Manenberg township South Africa*, Langaa Rpcig.

Scott, J. C. 1985. *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. Yale University Press.

Scott, J. C. 1990. *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*, Yale University Press.

Seekings, J. 1995. Media Representations of 'Youth' and the South African Transition, 1989-1994. *South African Sociological Review***,** 25-42.

Seekings, J. 1996. The 'Lost Generation': South Africa's 'youth problem' in the early-1990s. *Transformation*.

Seekings, J. 2006. Beyond heroes and villains: The rediscovery of the ordinary in the study of childhood and adolescence in South Africa. *Social Dynamics,* 32**,** 1-20.

Selmeczi, A. 2014. Dis/placing political illiteracy: The politics of intellectual equality in a South African shack-dwellers' movement. *Interface: a journal for and about social movements,* 6**,** 230-265.

Sigelman, C.K. & Rider, E. A. 2009. *Life-Span Human Development*, 6th edition (eds).

Simone, A. & Pieterse, E. 2018. *New urban worlds: Inhabiting dissonant times*, John Wiley & Sons.

Sommers, M. 2010. Urban youth in Africa. *Environment and urbanization,* 22**,** 317-332.

Soudien, C. 2001. Certainty and ambiguity in youth identities in South Africa: Discourses in transition. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education,* 22**,** 311-326.

Soudien, C. 2007. *Youth identity in contemporary South Africa: Race, culture and schooling*. New Africa Books.

Statistics South Africa. 2011. Census Data - Ward 043.

Statistics South Africa. 2019. SA population reaches 58.8 million. Accessed on 27/10/2019: http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=12362

Swartz, S. 2009. *The Moral Ecology of South Africa's Township Youth*, Springer.

Thieme, T. A. 2013. The "hustle" amongst youth entrepreneurs in Mathare's informal waste economy. *Journal of Eastern African Studies,* 7**,** 389-412.

Toska, E., Hodes, R., Cluver, L., Atujunad, M. & Laurenzie, C. 2019. Thriving in the second decade: Bridging childhood and adulthood for South Africa's adolescents. *In:* Shung-King, M., Lake, L., Sanders, D. & Hendricks, M. (eds.) *South African Child Gauge 2019.* Cape Town: Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Twum-Danso, A. 2005. Invisible Stakeholders: Children and War in Africa.

United Nations, D. O. E. A. S. A., POPULATION DIVISION 2015. World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables. *Working Paper No. ESA/P/WP.241.*

Van Zyl Slabbert, F. 1994. Youth in the New South Africa. Towards Policy Formulation. Main Report of the Co-operative Research Programme: South African Youth.

Versfeld, A. 2012. Generational change in Manenberg: The erosion of possibilities for positive personhood. *Agenda,* 26**,** 101-113.

Wang, C. & Burris, M. A. 1997. Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health education & behavior,* 24**,** 369-387.

Ward, C. L. 2007. Neighbourhood indicators: Monitoring child rights and well-being at small-area level. In: Dawes, A., Bray, R. & Van der Merwe, A. (eds). *Monitoring child well-being: A South African rights-based approach.* Cape Town: HSRC Press. 73-92

Western, J. C. 1981. Outcast Cape Town. *Outcast Cape Town.*: Allen & Unwin.

World Bank. 2006. World Development Report 2007. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Appendices

Appendix A: UCT FSREC Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

Faculty of Science
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
South Africa 7701

E-mail: shari.daya@uct.ac.za
Tel: 021 650-2880

28 November 2019

Ms Ruth Brain
Department of Environmental and Geographical Science

Navigating in-between spaces: childhood and adulthood, school and home, and structure and agency - using food as a lens

Dear Ms Ruth Brain

I am pleased to inform you that the Faculty of Science Research Ethics Committee has approved the above-named application for research ethics clearance, subject to the conditions listed below.

- Please ensure that WCED permission is received if it's a requirement.
- Implement the measures described in your application to ensure that the process of your research is ethically sound; and
- Uphold ethical principles throughout all stages of the research, responding appropriately to unanticipated issues: please contact me if you need advice on ethical issues that arise.

Your approval code is: **FSREC 110 - 2019**

I wish you success in your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Shari Daya
Chair: Faculty of Science Research Ethics Committee

Cc: Dr Gareth Haysom (Supervisor)

Appendix B: Western Cape Government approval

Western Cape Government
Education

Directorate: Research
Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za
tel: +27 021 467 9272
Fax: 0865902282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20191212-2717
ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Dear Ms Ruth Brain

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: NAVIGATING IN-BETWEEN SPACES: CHILDHOOD AND ADULTHOOD, SCHOOL AND HOME AND STRUCTURE AND AGENCY – USING FOOD AS A LENS

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **20 January 2020 till 30 April 2020**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

    The Director: Research Services
    Western Cape Education Department
    Private Bag X9114
    CAPE TOWN
    8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard
Directorate: Research
DATE: 12 December 2019

Appendix C: Consent form

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL & GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
PRIVATE BAG X3
RONDEBOSCH 7701
SOUTH AFRICA

RESEARCHER/S: Ruth Brain
E-MAIL: brnrut005@myuct.ac.za
URL: http://www.egs.uct.ac.za/

Informed Voluntary Consent to Participate in Research Study

Project Title: Navigating in-between spaces: childhood and adulthood, school and home and structure and agency

Invitation to participate, and benefits: You are invited to participate in a research study conducted with high school students in Mitchell's Plain. The study aim is to understand the food choices that teenagers make after school. I believe that your experience would be a valuable source of information, and hope that by participating you may gain useful knowledge. By taking part in this study, you will be provided with a WhatsApp data bundle for two months (February – April 2020) as well as refreshments at focus groups. Additional benefits include learning to understood research and research in practice, as well as a letter of reference for completion. This study will be conducted in English.

Procedures: During this study (February –April 2020), you will be asked to:

a) Submit one photo daily (weekdays only) and 2-3 lines of text of what food you consumed after school, and why; via WhatsApp
b) Participate in approximately 6 x 1.5 hour focus groups after school
c) Participate in 2 x 30min individual interviews after school

Recording: We may take photographs and/or record audio as part of the study. These will be used for data analysis, and some (non-identifiable) content will be included in the final write-up. If you object to this, please indicate below.

Risks: There are no potentially harmful risks related to your participation in this study. Given that this study is about agency, should participants identify any potential risks, they are encouraged to cease the potentially risky action and report back to me, and how to resolve the issue will be discussed. This is in line with the study's efforts to go beyond due ethics approval, and to rather embrace an ethicing process throughout the study.

Feedback: If it is feasible, an event will be held where you will receive feedback about the results of this research in a presentation to participants following the dissertation submission (approximately August 2020, TBC).

Disclaimer/Withdrawal: Your participation is completely voluntary; you may refuse to participate, and you may withdraw at any time without having to state a reason and without any prejudice or penalty against you. Should you choose to withdraw, the researcher commits not to use any of the information you have provided without your signed consent. Note that the researcher may also withdraw you from the study at any time.

Confidentiality: All information collected in this study will be kept private in that you will not be identified by name or by affiliation to an institution. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained as pseudonyms will be used.

What signing this form means: By signing this consent form, you agree to participate in this research study. The aim, procedures to be used, as well as the potential risks and benefits of your participation have been explained verbally to you in detail, using this form. Refusal to participate in or withdrawal from this study at any time will have no effect on you in any way. You are free to contact me, to ask questions or request further information, at any time during this research.

I agree to participate in this research (tick one box) ☐ Yes ☐ No _____ (Initials)

I agree to be photographed ☐ Yes ☐ No _____ (Initials)

I agree to be audio-recorded ☐ Yes ☐ No _____ (Initials)

I agree to the use of properly anonymized photographs/audio recordings, where identifiable personalized data will not be shared in any capacity, and participants will be assigned numbers and pseudonyms to protect identity

☐ Yes ☐ No _____ (Initials)

_____	_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature of Participant	Date	Contact number

_____	_____	_____	_____
Name of Parent/ Guardian of Participant	Signature of Parent/ Guardian of Participant	Date	Contact number

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature of Researcher	Date

Please return this consent form to the school office by Monday, 3rd February 2020.

Appendix D: Information letter

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am a Masters student at the University of Cape Town (UCT), where I study urban food security. For my thesis research project, I am focusing on how young people make choices in Mitchell's Plain. This research is done in partnership with **your high school,** with permission from the Western Cape Education Department and the UCT Faculty of Science Ethics Committee. The study will require participation from February – April 2020. To take part in this study, your child must be willing to commit for the full duration of the study, and have access to a feature phone (that has a working camera and can support WhatsApp). If your child is interested in participating, they will be required to keep a food journal of what they eat in the afternoons after school, which they will submit daily via WhatsApp. They will also be required to attend (focus) group discussions every second week (day to be confirmed) after school, and to participate in up to two individual interviews and mapping projects. It is hoped that this study will help future researchers be better informed about how young people make choices, and teach your child about how research at a university level is done.

Please complete the above consent form to grant your permission for your child to take part in this project. **Please return the consent form to the school office by Monday, 3rd February 2020.** If you would like any further information about the study, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor at UCT, Dr Gareth Haysom. Alternatively, you are welcome to contact from the **liaison teacher** through the school office number or contact a school social worker from the Western Cape Department of Social Development Mitchell's Plain branch on (021) 001 2674.

Warm regards

Ruth Brain
MPhil Southern Urbanism Candidate
African Centre for Cities