Rural, Black, and Female: Educational Possibilities under conditions of severe constraint

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Plagiarism Declaration

I declare that this minor dissertation, is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Letitia Andreas

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Dedication

To my mother Katrina Andreas and my late Grandparents:
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Abstract

The purpose of this minor dissertation is to investigate how a rural Black female from the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa achieves academic success in relation to a Historically White University (HWU) despite conditions of severe constraints. A narrative methodology is employed to contextualise the life experiences of three rural Black females in the broader context of South African histories of education, race, rurality, and gender. The study tracks the complex educational journey of a rural born South African female learner as she navigates between two disparate geographical, educational and social spaces. In this study, the data forms used are interview narratives generated from semi-interview transcripts and personal diary notes from interviews with the three rural Black females from the Eastern Cape. This research contributes to the fields of education, sociology, history, gender, rurality, and postcolonial studies. For data analysis of the three Rural Black Females' narratives, a narrative analysis is employed.

The study shows how a rural Black female learner aspires to academic success in relation to schooling and a/an Historically White University (HWU) by drawing on a range of resources. In the face of many socioeconomic conditions of poverty in the Eastern Cape, a province still impacted by the violence of the Dutch and British settler colonial projects in South Africa, she frames an aspirational disposition. The aspirations of the rural Black female learner born in post-apartheid South Africa emerge from the rural context and schooling conditions that have socially and economically deprived the Black female aspirant body of adequate resources. The study finds that the rural female learner who attends a Historically White University is committed to academic success because she draws from the cultural context of an impoverished rural community in the Eastern Cape that is deeply under-resourced, but more importantly, she draws from the humanness that is the 'human resource' (social network) around her that comprises her mother, sister, teachers, friends, peers, and a university support programme. She relies on her strong social relations and networks, as well as her agency and resilience, to navigate the legacies of racism, rural and urban spatial realities, personal dilemmas, patriarchal systems that discriminate against female bodies, and a range of family circumstances such as landlessness, livestock theft, poverty, unemployment, and migration. The study advances that rural learners' educational journeys are often under-theorised in relation to what constitutes 'resources' available under conditions of resource-constraints, and posits that the network of human-centred support is crucial to insert into such studies. The study demonstrates that, despite many constraints, there are a range of resources available to rural-born learners in order to foster an aspirational disposition toward achieving academic success.

Key words: ***Rural, Black, Female, Education, Aspiration, Eastern Cape, Resources***

Contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The title of this study is "Rural, Black and Female: Educational Possibilities Under Conditions of Severe Constraints". Embedded in this title are three key concepts that inform the research, namely, 'rural', 'Black' and 'female'. This study focuses on a rural-born South African female learner who navigates between two geographical, educational and social spaces, i.e., the rural and the urban. The study investigates the range of 'resources' available to her to aspire to academic success.

The thesis makes use of a qualitative research method, in particular the narrative method, as a key methodology. Creswell (2007:58) states that in a narrative study the researcher must gather extensive information about the participants so that a clear understanding of the context of the individual's life is obtained. There are multiple ways to collect data for narrative studies, namely, "autobiography, journal, researcher fieldnotes, letters, conversations, interviews, stories of families, documents, and photographs" (Creswell, 2007:131).

The history of Black women's experiences has been rooted in the deep and painful history of South Africa in which they continue to face marginalisation as a result of their race, gender and class (Ntwape & Kriel, 2018:168; Akala, 2018:7). This study embeds itself explicitly within this historical frame when looking at rural-born South African female learner experiences.

To more fully understand the educational possibilities and educational aspirations of a rural-born female learner in post-apartheid South Africa, it is important to note that the three concepts located in the title, namely 'rural', 'Black' and 'female' emanate from the apartheid system that perpetuated structural violence in which, at one level, rural Black females had unequal access to resources and opportunities. This study situates the apartheid system within the larger Dutch and British settler-colonial projects in South Africa. In particular, the study locates itself in this settler-colonial frame as it determined, and continues to circumscribe, the social spaces and opportunities that were and are available to rural Black women (Christie, Wagner & Winter, 2001:1). Thus, this study focuses on the resources that are available to rural born learners as part of the range of artefacts (both tactile and intellectual) that potentially enable academic success at an historically white South African university (HWU).

Rationale for the research

Fataar (2015), in his book *Engaging Schooling Subjectivities Across Post-Apartheid Urban Spaces* indicates that:

> the sociology of South African education lacks a rigorous account of the educational subject. Addressing the following questions is foundational to such an account: Who are the teachers, students and managers in our schools, universities and colleges? What worlds do they come from? How are they positioned to encounter and engage in the process of education? And how do educational institutions engage with the complex subjects that now come through their gates (Fataar, 2015:4)

The primary aim of this study is to understand how a rural-born South African female from the most impoverished rural communities in the Eastern Cape in South African encounters and engages with many complexities as she actualises academic success in relation to an HWU. More importantly, this study seeks to understand what worlds this educational subject comes from. Academic studies routinely locate subjects as either 'urban' or 'rural'. This study looks more closely at this binary and places at its centre the educational aspirations of the most disadvantaged segment of the South African population, namely the Black female from a poor rural area. This study situates itself within the scholarly field of the sociology of South African education which has sought to provide an account of young South African persons.

This study gives voice to this 'Black female from a poor rural area' in tracing the educational challenges that facilitate or undermine the educational aspirations of this category of post-apartheid learner in succeeding academically in relation to an HWU in the post-apartheid era. The main research field of this study is the Eastern Cape province of South Africa which has been ranked as the most impoverished province out of the nine South Africa provinces (Omar & Badroodien, 2020; Walker & Mathebula, 2019). Education provision in the Eastern Cape province demonstrates characteristics of a "continuing salience of class, race and rural-urban divides in structuring access to education" (Meny-Gibert, 2018:67).

There has been very little specific scholarly attention paid to the impoverished rural girl learner in South Africa as a unit of analysis. This study has chosen three rural born females from the Eastern Cape as its research participants. The first participant is 'Learner 1', a graduate of a HWU. The two additional participants in the study are the female parent of Learner 1, and 'Learner 2', a high school graduate who hails from the same village as Learner 1. The narratives of the three rural Black females as respondents in this study foreground the gender characteristics, alongside many other social markers, such as rurality, race and class. This is

important as “the nature and character of (the) gender map in education are not known” (Soudien, 2012:152).

DeJaeghere (2018:253, in Zipin et al. 2015:252) states that:

> Zipin et al., 2015 call for theorizing and understanding aspirations as they are lived in more complex socio-epistemological processes, meaning drawing on multiple sociocultural resources so that alternative futures can emerge. This study suggests that understanding aspirations and agency needs to be examined over longer periods of time and in relation to others (DeJaeghere, 2018:253)

This study seeks to theorize and understand how aspirations for a South African rural-born learner are achieved amidst social, economic, and historical conditions. The literature points out that learners from poor or impoverished communities with especially few resources are unlikely to have clear aspirations or career navigational pathways; this is the scenario that is assumed for mostly the impoverished (Walker & Mathebula, 2019; Appadurai, 2004:68-69) whilst aspirations are clearly defined for learners that come from wealthy families since there are numerous resources accessible to build these aspirations and career navigational pathways.

In another body of literature, it is quite clear that Black female learners' aspirations were frustrated and quelled in colonial and apartheid projects introduced by Dutch and British settlers. The purpose of these colonial projects denied the full development of Black female learners' latent abilities and to subvert their aspirations in the process of social development of these projects (Akala, 2018:237; Soudien, 2007:4; Kallaway & Swartz, 2016:187; Rakometsi, 2008:34; Mager, 1999:212; Tabata, 1960). Within these projects, the dominant cultural narrative has been described as repressive, suppressive, and harmful to women and children.

Appadurai (2004:84) argues that aspirations should be understood as cultural capacity and by doing this the futuristic component within culture as concept is reintroduced. Thus, this allows for an understanding of culture as a factor for democracy and development. This study delves into the narrative of one South African rural-born learner from an impoverished rural community in the Eastern Cape to understand how this learner draws from the resources and the cultural context to create capacity to aspire in relation to higher education. Locating this study in the context of colonialism and apartheid helps to understand milieus of colonial violence and the legacy of apartheid that continues to persist in the Eastern Cape province as a former homeland of two Bantustans (i.e., Ciskei and Transkei). Thus this “past provides us with alternative ways of thinking about the past, and about land, politics and history in a post-apartheid South Africa” (Crais, 2011:162).

This study contributes to the broader political economy of education as it contextualises education within the broader aspects of history, politics, economics, gender, and, most notably, rurality in the South African setting. This study situates itself into this bleak landscape and seeks to contribute to an in-depth understanding of the narratives of rural girl learners as they aspire to academic success.

I have personally schooled both in the rural Eastern Cape and urban Western Cape, both provinces characterised by a very rich history of education in South Africa. It is within these two provinces that I have also worked with different schooling improvement initiatives around communities and within different university structures. This study arose out of personal and work experiences in these two social, geographical, and education spaces. This study of one Black, female learner from an impoverished rural community in the Eastern Cape could contribute to the still-sparse but growing literature that focuses on the educational biographies of rural born learners in South Africa.

Research Questions

The main research question driving the study is: How does a rural Black female from an impoverished community actualise academic success from an impoverished rural community into a Historically White University (HWU)? The study is guided by two sub-research questions, namely:

(1) What resources does a Black female from an impoverished rural area draw on in order to produce an aspirational disposition in relation to entry to an HWU?

(2) How does a Black female from an impoverished rural area navigate her complex identities across vastly under-resourced rural educational landscapes, into an urban higher education space?

Aims of the study

This study investigates the experiences of a rural-born learner in accessing and academically succeeding in an HWU in post-apartheid South Africa. It explores the complex educational journey of this rural learner who, despite severe constraints on several fronts, sees education as something to aspire to. Through examining the lived experiences of this rural born female learner, this study attempts to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges that facilitate

or undermine the educational aspirations of rural Black females in succeeding at HWU's in the post-apartheid era.

The structure of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters.

Chapter One introduces the study by providing the title of the study and identifying the key concepts embedded in the title; the research questions, and outlines the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter Two is a review of the literature that frames the study. The bodies of literature that inform the study are (1) colonial education in South Africa; (2) 'race' and education in the Eastern Cape; (3) gender and the female learner in the Eastern Cape, and (4) education and the aspirational body. The literature review also looks at the emerging concepts from the literature that inform the conceptual framework of the study. The significance of situating this study into four bodies of literature is that it allows for a better understanding of the emergence of three concepts: "rural" "Black" and "female" as well as how such learners experience education in South Africa, particularly in the rural context.

Chapter Three addresses the research methodology employed in the study. The study is a qualitative study which uses a narrative methodology. The data sources that are utilised in the study are data from semi-structured interviews that are transcribed, as well as personal documents. The sampling strategy utilised in the study is purposive sampling (Creswell, 2007:125).

Chapter Four reports on the findings from the transcribed data from the semi-structured interviews. The data is presented in relation to the research questions that the study seeks to answer. This chapter traces the spatial realities, schooling experiences, religious influences, gender constructions, and a variety of other constraints in the rural Eastern Cape. This chapter discusses the learner's years of schooling in the rural Eastern Cape, her agency, her use of the space to produce aspiration, how she engages with resources around her, her teachers, her family's strong relationships, and other institutions in society she draws on, all of which are important to achieving academic success in relation to an HWU.

Chapter Five is a discussion and analysis of the data in Chapter Four. The analysis is conducted on the basis of the literature surveyed in Chapter Two, as well as from the concepts that emerged from the literature.

Chapter Six concludes the study and identifies the critical conclusions about the findings in relation to the research questions which the study sought to answer.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter focuses on four key sections of literature that inform this study. The first section of this literature review examines Colonial Education in South Africa. The works of Kallaway and Swartz (2016), Soudien (2012), Crais (2011), and Tabata (1960) are extremely important in highlighting the history of education in South Africa. The second section of this review of the literature focuses on Race and Education in the Eastern Cape, drawing on the works of Soudien (2012) and Omar and Badroodien (2020). The third section of this review of the literature addresses Gender and the female learner from the Eastern Cape. The work of Thornberry (2019) foregrounds this. The fourth section of this literature review looks at Education and the Aspirational Body, through the works of Appadurai (2004), Fataar (2015), and Walker and Mathebula (2019).

Colonial Education in South Africa

The aim of this section of the literature review is to establish the South African Colonial Education background before moving on to discuss the rural Black female in the Post-apartheid South African context. Reviewing key aspects of this colonial history allows us to see how the three concepts "rural", "Black" and "female" emerges organically from the literature.

Locating 'Colonialism' and 'Education' in the Cape Colony

Slavery education formed part of the earliest forms of colonialism in the Cape Colony, which was effected through the arrival of European settlers in the mid-17th century. Soudien (2012) in his book titled *Realising the Dream: unlearning the logic of race in South African school* states that one of the distinctions in early initiatives of schooling is the relation between school and identity. He further argued that when looking at these initiatives, they show characteristics of inclusion, exclusion and of othering. Soudien (2012:99) states that the Dutch East Indian Company (DEIC) was instrumental in driving the slaves to their master's world. The DEIC managed to bring slaves in following ways:

> DEIC sponsored voyages from the Cape obtaining slaves from slave outlets in Madagascar, Mozambique and East Africa; DEIC return fleets that brought Asian slaves from the East Indies, Batavia and Celyon; and foreign ships and foreign slavers who sold Madagascar, Mozambique and East Africa on their way to the Americans. Convicts from Asia and Indonesia were also sent to serve out their sentences at the Cape and they too counted among the slave population. (Booyse Roux, Seroto & Wolhuter, 2011:60-61)

The Cape region was the economic hub of the Colony at the time in which the slaves were imported. The DEIC passed a requirement that education was compulsory for slaves' children that were under 12 years of age, and those that were older received instruction twice per week. The contents of education were inspired by the Dutch language and religion of the masters. The second school aimed "to provide education for colonists' children and to a lesser extent their household slaves, as well as ex-slaves who had managed to buy their freedom" (Molteno, 1983:26). This formal schooling marked an introduction to class division between slaves and colonists: this was deeply unequal (Molteno, 1983:24). Within this division, lessons were further separated according to gender as female learners were instructed in domestic duties whilst the male learners were taught more trade-related things (Molteno, 1983:24). Soudien (2012:101) argues that this second phase of schooling depicted characteristics of segregation as there were "two separate trajectories for Black and white education". Soudien (2012:101) argues that this kind of education

> [..] was weak and uneven in its provision; white children were groomed for control. Slave children, by contrast, were prepared for servitude and docility. The period was marked by callousness and disregard for the identities and histories of the slave people. This was its dominant characteristic (Soudien, 2012:101)

Here one begins to see how education, in a very deliberate sense, played a critical role in producing 'different' identities for both white and Black people, as they were classified by the colonial masters. This formal schooling introduced new social relations under colonial rule (Molteno, 1983:23). Violent measures such as the supply of alcohol to prepubescent slave children, and the further stripping of identity were used to ensure that slaves were obedient and did not run away from this schooling encounter.

Missionary education in the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony

Missionary education was never separate from the overall colonial project. It served colonialism alongside the numerous colonial wars on the Eastern frontier of the Cape Colony, launched by the British colonial forces which had by then replaced the original Dutch colonisers as the pre-eminent colonial presence in South Africa. These wars resulted in massive dispossession of indigenous lands, with cattle theft and killing amongst the prime weapons loosed upon the amaXhosa tribes on the Eastern frontier (Crais, 2011:63; Majeke, 1952:20). Clifton Crais in his book titled *Poverty, war and violence in South Africa* argues that by reducing violence "to the logics of white dominated capitalist development" we are simply reading history backward (2011:64). Crais (2011) further argues that violence in scholarly work

continues to be under-theorised. These wars in the region led to "irreversible consequences far beyond the short-term destruction of human bodies" (Crais, 2011:45). Crais (2011:58-59) points out that,

> In the 1850s, we can suppose that gender and generational bias played an important role in determining who died and when they perished. During famine crises, food is often directed away from children and women, who often suffer disproportionally in relation to men. There are of course exceptions. The available information, however anecdotal, indicates that children died in very high numbers. Gender bias is more complicated. On the one hand, women were largely responsible for agriculture and for cooking. On the other hand, their control over crops declined following harvest. In the crisis following the Cattle-killing, men probably had greater mobility and thus probably had a better fortune in terms of scrounging for food than women who had may have been left caring for weakened children. Data suggest a pattern in which children, the sick, and elderly died first, followed by women and then men. (Crais, 2011:58-59)

What is evident from the above quotation is that while on a larger perspective Africans within the Eastern Frontier were severely impacted by the wars, women and their children were most severely and disproportionately affected. Crais (2011:162) recounts this aspect of the history of colonial violence even though it has received relatively little scholarly attention. What is evident is that it has powerfully shaped emerging patterns of poverty and inequality in the Eastern Cape province from the colonial period to the present. The narrative of the key participant in this study sits at the centre of this history of violence in the Eastern Cape, given that she emerges in the space of these colonizing atrocities that play out in subsequent generations.

During the period of the colonial wars of dispossession, missionary stations increased as the British government encouraged the establishment of mission stations on its frontiers in order to control the Black population (Kallaway, 2011:90). Missionaries provided elementary schooling, enabling converts to gain elementary knowledge of reading and writing, and most importantly scripture reading (Bukwana, 1998:23). It was their induction into modernity.

Thornberry (2019:34) acknowledges that the colonial conquest in the Xhosaland was "crushingly violent and colonial rule even more so". She describes this conquest thus:

> The Eastern Cape was also an important early site of missionary activity, a place where the international networks of Christian evangelicals experimented with proselytizing strategies and gained new "knowledge" about African culture. For all of these reasons, Richard Price has claimed a central role for the Eastern Cape in shaping a broader culture of imperialism, as missionaries and colonial administrators translated their

> experiences in Xhosaland into new understandings of African culture and racial difference. (Thornberry, 2019:34)

The Eastern Cape colonial frontier as a site of evangelical experimentation and the gaining of new "knowledge" by the missionaries, and by extension, the colonial project as a whole, is a crucial insight here.

Thornberry (2019:97) explains this conversion of amaXhosa:

> This type of conversion narrative was a staple of the evangelical movement in Britain. Missionaries themselves recounted conversion experiences in which they recognized their sins and, with the help of God, began to lead a more righteous existence. However, the conversion narrative took on new meaning in South Africa, where missionaries looked on the entire African population as being in need of salvation. Xhosa culture itself was considered degraded, the "national customs" a source of "error" for converts who did not adhere closely enough to the new standards of conduct demanded by missionaries (Thornberry, 2019:97)

In condemning an entire cultural system as "degraded" and "in need of salvation", the Eastern Cape missionaries assumed a place of massive authority as self-proclaimed 'servants of God' sent to convert an entire population to Christianity and thus tearing this population away from their African beliefs and culture. Thornberry (2019:285) concludes that:

> Widespread conversion to Christianity also shifted social understandings of female extramarital sexuality, substantially narrowing the limits of acceptable sexual behavior for women. Perhaps the clearest example of this shift can be seen in Christian attitudes toward *ukumetsha*. It was not only colonial courts that assumed that women who had engaged in *ukumetsha* were to blame if they were sexually assaulted. From the earliest days of their efforts in the Eastern Cape, British missionaries had identified *ukumetsha* as a depraved and licentious practice that fostered fornication and put young women at risk of rape. (Thornberry, 2019:285)

The practice of *ukumetsha*, which involves a form of sexuality without intercourse between young people engaged in ritual courtship, was simply one of the cultural practices deemed not "acceptable" to the values and social mores of the colonisers, more particularly their missionary front. There was a keen interest in protecting women's rights with regards to set of practices related to marriage and sexuality (Thornberry, 2019: 92-93). Missionary Education was therefore instrumental, *inter alia*, in shaping Black female sexualities on the Eastern Frontier.

Native Education

Isaac Bangani Tabata (1960:6) in his book titled *Education for barbarism: Bantu (apartheid) education in South Africa*, describes Native Education in South Africa in the following ways:

> Before the introduction of Bantu Education, the Blacks were subjected to what was known as 'Native Education'. This meant inferior institutions, poor conditions and pitifully low allocations. However, from the secondary school to the University level, the syllabi were the same as for the Whites. The racist regime however resented even the possibility of a few who managed to acquire university education despite all the obstacles placed in their path. Its resentment stemmed from the fear that these students had been introduced to a system of education which extols the concepts of rights, equality and freedom – weapons which capitalism employed in its fight against feudalism. (Tabata, 1960:6)

Native Education for Black people was provided at a very low quality as Tabata argues that it meant "inferior institutions, poor conditions and pitifully low allocations". The intent was to educate Black learners to assume subordinate positions in the economic structure. An example that illustrates this intention is the state expenditure on education: an amount of £50 cost per head for every white child was allocated by the state, whereas the education of an African child was funded at *£7* cost per head (Tabata, 1960:14).

Kallaway and Swartz (2016:2) in their book titled *Empire and Education in Africa: The Shaping of a comparative perspective* argue that the history of Colonial Education in Africa has received little attention and this history can be "satisfactorily explained if it is related to social, economic, and political changes in the imperial heartlands and the specific circumstances of diverse colonial contexts". These changes were also instrumental in shaping thinking about Native Education in South Africa, further explained in the following manner:

> In the nineteenth century, the complex web of forces embracing the evolving political, social and economic trends associated with the industrial revolution, the political and social revolution at home, the emancipation of slaves, the role of religion and missionary enterprise, free trade ideology, rights of man discourses on economic and political issues, all influenced debates about the nature of educational provision at home and abroad (Kallaway & Swartz, 2016:3)

What was key to these different trends and changes was to provide access to education for the indigenous persons and this education focused on "the needs of rural life and work in a traditional African context" (Kallaway & Swartz, 2016:5).

Bantu (Apartheid) Education

Tabata (1960:11) describes the apartheid ideology in the following way "…(it) prescribes a rigid demarcation between White and Non-White and sets a ceiling to the development of the Non-White population. Of course, Apartheid does not mean they do not utilize the labour of the Non-Whites in their undertakings". This ideology was imposed on the non-white

population, which included Africans, Coloreds, and Indians (Tabata, 1960:11). The apartheid system divided schools along racial lines and established separate education departments (Lemon & Battersby-Lennard, 2009:514). The intentionality of Bantu education is described by Tabata (1960:19-20):

> This brings us to the second part of Dr. Verwoerd's far-reaching schemes, namely, Bantu Education, which is to wrench the African from the progress of the civilization of mankind and condition him for life in a backward, tribalized community. In other words, it is education for barbarism. These schemes are so diabolical that it is difficult for the ordinary civilized man to treat them seriously. He tends to dismiss them as the aberrations of a sick mind and fails to realize that while he goes complacently about his daily business, a machinery of State worked out to the minutest detail is already set in motion to create an intellectual gas chamber for the children of a whole people numbering more than nine million. (Tabata, 1960:19-20)

Tabata (1960:20) maintains that this Bantu Education system was an education for barbarism. The Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953 and the Bantu Authorities Act No.68 of 1951, both were effective in suppressing Black communities and mandating inferior education. The Eiselen Commission Report of 1951 also aided the process of taming Black people's aspirations through its "carefully planned policy of segregated socioeconomic development" (Christie & Collins, 1982:59). This policy was consistent with the National Party government's goal to "quell the hopes and desires of Black people" who opposed apartheid and the education system (Soudien, 2007:40-41). Tabata (1960:52) gives a picture of Black people's resistance in Zeerust in 1957 to what they saw as the imposition of an inferior education:

> To those who know how much the Africans are prepared to sacrifice in order to educate their children, such an act dramatically brings home their deep resentment of Bantu Education. Those flames that destroy the schools must for them symbolize their consuming desire to rid themselves of this monstrosity. (Tabata, 1960:52)

This occurrence, as well as many other demonstrations in the country at the time and some twenty years later, such as the June 16 Soweto uprising in 1976, attest to the resentment that led to many young Black people standing against a very repressive regime. According to Tabata (1960:54-55), the apartheid regime changes the social, political, and economic landscape in the country. There was an urgent need for skilled Black individuals in health, education, and other state-run institutions. Bantu Education was instrumental in effecting this change. The significance of Black women in furthering the idea of separate development was recognized,

as was their ability to contribute to the economy through education and health sectors (Kallaway & Swartz, 2016:188). Kallaway and Swartz (2016:192-193) concluded that:

> The gendered development goals of apartheid education would shape South Africa's Black middle class in significant ways. [….] The significance of African female teachers and nurses to schemes of 'separate development' enabled increasing numbers of young people to attend school - even as Black education was neither free nor complusory, and as the classroom conditions that most faced Black females students at all levels than Black male students, even as deep gendered inequalities persisted within and outside classrooms. (Kallaway & Swartz, 2016:192- 93)

It should be highlighted that the pressing demand for competent Black individuals intensified these class distinctions amongst the Black communities (Tabata, 1960:53). This resulted in an increase in the enrolment of female learners within rural Black schools. This entry into formal Western schooling provided the possibility of entering into paid professional employment as a teacher or nurse. Despite such possible opportunities for Black female learners, Jacklin and Graaf (1994:15) argued that we know little about how male-dominated institutions affected women, especially female teachers and students who worked alongside these male figures. In addition, the education governance which served as reporting lines were also male-dominated in the education sector. Despite increased access to secondary schooling for young females in remote rural areas, there remains significant disadvantage for rural female learners in terms of limited opportunities, which often materialise in the form of domestic services, and as agricultural and industrial labourers.

In summary, this section of the literature review has foregrounded the history of Colonial and Apartheid Education in South Africa with a specific focus on discussing schooling for rural Black female from the Eastern Cape. The next section looks at Race and Education in the Eastern Cape.

Race and Education in the Eastern Cape

This section is an introduction to 'race' relating to education of Black females in the rural Eastern Cape. The section will firstly look at resource disparities in schools and aspects of gender.

Race and its importance in understanding educational provision disparities in the Eastern Cape

Soudien (2012:6) closely examines the history of 'race' in South Africa with a specific focus on how 'race' is introduced and embedded through education. He mentions that "race has come to assume special status in South Africa of a master signifier" in that it is embedded in many people's life stories. This study conceptualizes race as a signifying factor in determining schooling for Black and white children. The National Party (which came to power in 1948) was determined to sustain a "racial myth of white superiority" (Tabata, 1960:13). When it came to education, there was a huge disparity in state spending when it came to Black students. "School fees were introduced to supplement the cost of Black education. Black people, the poorest were expected to contribute financially to the education of their society, children, irrespective of whether they could afford it or not." (Seroto, 1999:34). Black people were educated in Bantustans which lacked basic infrastructure. In Black schools the learners and teachers were responsible for school maintenance. This included mainly cleaning (Tabata, 1960:39). Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, the Minister of Education, stated the following:

> Broom, pick and shovel are the tools they must be familiar with. It sometimes happens that children spend as much as a whole week in the brickyard making bricks for school buildings. (Tabata, 1960:39).

The responsibility of maintaining schools rested on learners, and teachers were made to supervise such work as well. In addition, there is undeniable evidence in the literature that Black teachers were demoralised as they received poor training (Kallaway & Swartz, 2016: 188; Fiske & Ladd, 2004; 235; Tabata,1960:43). This was apparent "in rural schools as many of them (teachers) were poorly qualified or not qualified at all" (Tabata, 1960:44). Seroto argues that "it was the intention of government that teachers must remain underqualified, so as not to provide quality education to Black children" (1999:39).

This discussion reveals that 'race' was instrumental in the lives and educational possibilities of Black youth, and 'race' was used as major factor in determining education provision in South Africa. The disparities within rural schools in the Bantustans are evidence of the racial ideologies of the apartheid regime.

Defining Race in Post-Apartheid South Africa

The dominant theoretical approach cited by many scholars in South African focuses on race as a social construct. This study adopts a similar approach in understanding race as a social

construct (Omar & Badroodien, 2020:182; Soudien, 2012:124). Soudien (2012:124) explains how race has been socially constructed in democratic South Africa:

> Race remains at the forefront of the pedagogical imagination and its work and the social expression it takes in schools. I make a distinction between those schools that are sites for the production and reproduction of dominant identities and those that are sites for subordinate identities. In making this argument, however, I move away from the conflation of 'white' with dominance in an attempt to capture the shifting character of domination in South Africa with the elevation of class as crucial factor in the redefinition of race (Soudien, 2012:124)

Race has taken a class character, and class is now a major factor in understanding schools in South Africa. Soudien (2012:129) states that class-based theories "proceed from the premise that all individual and group relations in society take their character from the imperatives of the economy, particularly its mode of production". Soudien (2012:147) further states that "class provides an important framework for understanding how integration is conceptualised and effected in South Africa". The social and economic resources to which families have access are a critical structural aspect that influences where their children attend school (Soudien, 2012:149). Fiske and Ladd (2004:233) argued:

> Most Black families continue to reside in township and rural areas that were part of the apartheid system, and the overwhelming majority of Black learners still attend schools with inferior facilities, poorly trained teachers, and inadequate supplies of textbooks and other teaching resources. (Fiske & Ladd, 2004:233)

It is clear that "racial equity in education remains elusive in south Africa" (Fiske & Ladd, 2004:234). Soudien argues that "it is critical that we ask what realities we are to unify and to integrate. Can it be any reality? All realities?" (2012:132). This study allows us to examine the reality of rural female learner who aspire to and access education despite conditions of severe constraints.

Resource disparities in rural Eastern Cape schools

Rural schools in the Eastern Cape province continue to face challenges regarding education (Omar & Badroodien, 2020:183-184; Walker & Mathebula, 2019:3 Ruiters, 2011:255). This study draws on an understanding that "resources can be person-based (individual strengths), family-based (household income, employment), school-based (infrastructure and expertise), community-based (institutions, services, beliefs) and society-based (policies and structures)" (Ebersohn & Ferreira, 2012:33).

Omar and Badroodien (2020:188) assert that:

> Operationalizing a resource-deficit discourse that pivots on the deaths of young rural South Africans who had drowned by falling into pit-latrines at their impoverished schools (Mail and Guardian Online 2018; Pijoos 2019), the school principal immediately contextualized the nature of one immediate form of violence that her teachers and students had to daily experience at the school. In that respect, school toilet facilities, or rather the lack thereof for the country's poorest rural school-goers, were not only positioned as disgraceful but also deliberately harmful.'

Due to the lack of proper facilities, many young rural learners' live have been at risk. Omar and Badroodien (2020:186) argue that the "conjoining of a toilet narrative with massive under-funding, large budget cuts to already impoverished schools pointed to a seamless social cohesion/resource discourse that sits at the heart of a classic political economy approach to education in relation to discourses of 'peace' and 'violence' in South Africa".

A report by Sayed, Badroodien, Omar, Balie, McDonald, de Kock, Salmon, Singh, Raanhuis, Nakidien, and Robinson (2017:34-35) titled *Engaging Teachers in Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Contexts – Evaluating Education Interventions in South Africa* states that:

> The attributes of rurality that adversely affect the quality of education include a lack of qualified teachers, multigrade teaching, adverse teacher-learner ratios, irrelevant curricula, and competing priorities between accessing education and domestic chores. (Sayed et al., 2017:34-35)

Their report highlights that teacher are expected to play a key role in ensuring good quality education by upholding the principles of democracy and social justice when teaching (Sayed et al., 2017:39). These are prospects which are only imaginable. The reality of the school environment is different. It is far removed from the ideals of democracy and social justice. The quotation cited above highlights the challenges that teachers face under conditions of rurality and deprivation. The Eastern Cape has seen numerous cases of late delivery or non-delivery of study materials in several academic years, resulting in delayed curriculum delivery, and learners sharing textbooks (Legal Resources Centre, 28 February 2022; Ruiters, 2011:257). These issues are evidence that the education received under such conditions is far from the ideals of democracy and social justice, which the South African Constitutions aim to achieve.

In light of this, Omar and Badroodien (2020:184) explain the reality faced by these rural schools:

> Notably, one school had recently lost its student cohorts for grades 10,11, and 12, and only offered classes from grades 1–9. The school had been established in the post-apartheid 1994 period. Moreover, falling student numbers suggested that the school would lose its grades 8 and 9 classes in 2017 and be re-classified as a primary school. It was a scenario that has become a growing trend in the Eastern Cape rural hinterland where schools are shut because they are deemed to be economically unviable, and where students and teachers are routinely relocated to schools that are supposedly close by but that involve a complete dislocation from established and recognized communities. (Omar & Badroodien, 2020:184)

This remains a trend throughout the Eastern Cape, with rural schools being closed by the provincial education department due to falling enrolments, forcing learners and teachers to move to other schools (Omar & Badroodien, 2020:184; Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 07 March 2017).

Research conducted by The Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005:45) indicates:

> Poverty conditions the ability of families and children to engage with education. The rural poor in our study are mainly women living in households facing food-insecurity on a daily basis. They live in those areas of the country with the highest levels of poverty and unemployment and rely on meagre sources of income derived from pensions, social grants or migrant labour. Land and livestock remain vital to their sense of themselves and for survival. Household decisions to send children to school are strongly influenced by these economic, social and cultural contexts. In the absence of income, employment and food-security, families have to rely on the labour of children to help make ends meet. There is a deep underlying support amongst parents and communities for the schooling of children, but this support is constantly undermined by the conditions of life imposed by poverty and unemployment. (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:45)

The quotation illustrates that there are many realities that undermine the education of rural Black learners, namely poverty, unemployment, and generally low income. Rural Black females continue to struggle in accessing quality education, as the continued realities of resource disparities within rural schools in the Eastern Cape, together with parental decisions about the viability of education as a vehicle for social mobility for their daughters, makes accessing schools for young Black females in rural areas an ongoing challenge

The next section focuses on gender and the female learner from the rural Eastern Cape.

Gender and the Female Learner from the Eastern Cape

This section introduces a discussion on ‘gender’ by tracking its history in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The aim is to understand the social constructions of gender in this history and understand the experiences of the Black, Rural, Female learner in Post-apartheid South Africa.

Locating 'gender' in the history of the Eastern Cape

Thornberry (2019) helps us understand how traditional structures and missionary education both exerted control over female sexuality and how gender was conceptualized in the history of the province. Thornberry (2019:74) states that:

> Women's reproductive capacity had economic value, which their families sought to control. The discourse of custom granted male household heads far-reaching rights over the sexuality of the women in their households, while political leaders claimed both direct control over the sexuality of their subjects and the right to adjudicate disputes over female sexuality. The concept of custom, or *isiko*, linked chiefly authority to familial control of female sexuality. (Thornberry, 2019:74)

The quotation posits the different structures that controlled the sexuality of women in the Eastern Cape. These structures were explicitly patriarchal in nature, with male households overseeing customs and chiefs as over-rulers. These structures presided over women's sexuality to matters pertaining virginity testing, bride wealth, extramarital marriage, sexual violation and fertility (Thornberry, 2019:66). In similar ways, Akala (2018:230-234) argues that:

> […] Having noted the above, patriarchy has subordinated women in all spheres of life, whether private or public spaces. Social institutions and cultural practices reassert and reproduce male dominance and female inferiority. They allocate women roles and positions that are explicitly and predominantly feminine and inferior (Butler 1990). (Akala, 2018:230-234)

This quotation posits that patriarchal structures have perpetuated gender inequalities especially for Black women whereby "male dominance and female inferiority" has been reproduced (Akala, 2018:230-234). It is noted here, however, that there are examples of matriarchal structures on the African continent. Danese (2021:39) in his paper titled *Matrilineality and Matriarchy in Africa: an Advance for Gender Equality or Utopia for Western Democracies*, argues that, while these may be minority societies around the world, there is a long history of female power-significant social structures in these societies. One example that Danese cites is the Bemba tribe which is one of the main tribes in Zambia. In the Bemba tribe, female parents must provide for the rest of the clan, and they guide the relationships in the entire community by sharing wisdom with their daughters, who must then marry and carry on this female-centred social legacy (Danese, 2021:11-12). The husband who marries one of the daughters must leave his home to join the clan of the wife and the house he joins is an embodiment of the woman

herself with traditional arts which are symbolic of their fertility and expanding the clan with many more daughters (Danese, 2021:12).

South Africa's long history, on the other hand, reveals a strong patriarchal culture with a strong presence of male authorities who frequently dictated ideas and practices around women's sexuality (Thornberry, 2019:74; Akala, 2018:231). The dynamics of patriarchy shifted with the arrival of missionaries, who asserted divine authority in shaping women's sexuality with Christian moral codes. According to Kelly (2020):

> For missionaries, civilizing indigenous peoples was a gendered project. Missionaries fought for labor reform for Africans prepared to embrace Christian civilization—but legislation brought African workers under greater control. For African women, conversion offered a "way of escape from some of the constraints of pre-Christian society and yet a firm incorporation into the domesticity and patriarchy of Christian family life." Mission stations such as Bethelsdorp attracted social marginals, including women who rejected arranged marriages, abandoned or abused wives, or widows refusing the levirate. (Kelly, 2020)

This quotation demonstrates how women shifted from one type of patriarchy to another, where they had to accept domesticity and patriarchy of Christian family life under colonial rule while rejecting pre-colonial traditional norms that supported arranged marriages, abuse, and so on. Thornberry (2019:92) states that "missionaries emphasized women's right to withhold consent from sinful acts but did not put forward a general defense of women's sexual autonomy". In addition, Kelly (2020) further explains how the dynamics of gender in terms of work also changed for women:

> These gendered cultural views shaped the incorporation of isiXhosa-speaking women into the Cape colony. Most women arrived as dependents of men seeking work on the docks and roads, but others came on their own in search of wages. Coercion, pressure on land, and displacement in the midst of violence on the frontier compelled both men and women into wage labor, but mission-influenced definitions of gender roles shaped the entry of women into domestic service in the Eastern Cape; this was unusual because elsewhere in southern Africa at the time, African men dominated this form of labor. On the frontier, Xhosa and settler women interacted more than in the heart of the colony, laboring alongside one another. (Kelly, 2020)

Missionaries, as integral components of the larger colonial enterprise, introduced the concept of 'work' for IsiXhosa speaking women. This defined new gender roles for women as they took on domestic work in the Cape Colony. The nature of this work still speaks to the embedded patriarchal norms that confine women to family and domestic chores. Omar and Badroodien

(2020:183) acknowledge that patriarchal norms continue to define conceptualizations of gender even in post-apartheid South Africa:

> While patriarchal traditions continue to dominate educational institutions and their curriculum offerings through the perpetuation of traditional gender roles and patriarchal relations of power, what tends to be most worrying is the extent to which associated patriarchal values continue to be embedded within successive generations of school-going children (Leach 2000; Kabeer 2005; Unterhalter 2005). […....] Notably, debates about gender have become infinitely more complex with the systematic rupturing of previous binaries of male and female and framed by new ways of conceptualizing gender. (Omar & Badroodien, 2020:183)

This study utilizes the same understanding as quoted above, namely that gender is socially constructed, and that at the heart of this are traditional gender roles and patriarchal structures which are still deeply embedded. Soudien (2012:152) points out that:

> Of all South Africa's modes of social differentiation, gender has received the least attention. There are very few studies that look at how schools have been constituted as sites of gender construction. […] As a result, the nature and character of the gender map in education are not known. This is not to say, however, that gender is absent as a marker in the definition and reconstruction of schools and schooling in South Africa. (Soudien, 2012:152)

This study contributes to a greater understanding of gender framing in education, with its specific focus on rural education, in post-apartheid South Africa.

The 'female-learner' in the rural Eastern Cape

According to the World Bank (2021) there are multiple barriers that impact girl learners' accessing and completing education. Amongst these barriers are poverty, violence, child marriage, lack of schools, inadequate infrastructure, unsafe environments, limitations in teacher training, and diseases such as HIV/AIDS (World Bank, 25 May 2021). The still under-researched impact of the ongoing Covid-19 global pandemic adds yet another disastrous element to this complexity. The Constitution of South Africa (Act No.108 of 1996) affords everyone the right to education. However, the reality is that efforts to keep children in school and to succeed are very difficult, as some of these barriers are realities that many female learners are confronted with (Akala, 2018; Ruiters, 2011:260*;* Fiske & Ladd, 2004:235).

The experiences of rural female learners from impoverished communities in the Eastern Cape in South Africa are no different. The Nelson Mandela Foundation's 2005 report titled *A report on Education in South African Rural Communities* provides a useful profile of education in three South African provinces, namely the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal (2005: xi). This report details the challenges faced by poor rural communities and learners who access desperately under-resourced schools. In specific areas in the Eastern Cape, the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005:29) found the following:

> Parents reveal that 'they wanted to go to school but in the olden days education was not taken care of. People were looking after the cattle and schools were scarce. The girls were not sent to school because parents used to say that the future for girls lay in marriage.' A youth researcher from Peddie added, 'most of them are not working because they did not go to school'. The same was found in Bizana. Most of the parents are illiterate, she says, because of the lack of schools, long distances they had to walk to go to school, domestic labour, and the belief that schooling had very specific purposes, namely to prepare girls for marriage and to enable husbands and wives separated by migrant labour to correspond with one another. (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:29)

Schooling prepared girls and boys for different purposes. Education for girls had strong discursive relations with the institution of marriage and the maintenance of the household, including child-rearing. The quotation that follows illustrates that education continues to play a key role in preparing females for specific gender roles:

> The relationship of education to marriage features as part of the explanation of why the chores expected of girls at home and in school are domestic, while those for boys are agricultural. Early pregnancy and marriage can be seen as a way of securing the girl's future. Education can be ambiguous as it can be seen as either improving the chances of marriage or damaging them. (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:39)

From the powerful insights in the quotation above, it can be seen that, even in post-apartheid South Africa, strong gender norms continue to hinder the education of rural female learners. The following quotation (Porter et al, 2010) illustrates how female children are domestic anchors:

> Rural children were found participating significantly in domestic/family labour in Eastern Cape (as in all our research locations) from about 6–7 years. Water carrying, firewood collection, and cleaning, are basic tasks that girls are required to undertake, though young boys also assist: it is a norm among almost every household that a girl child has the responsibility of collecting water and firewood before she comes to school... for girls it starts at the age of five. In winter when the nearby streams are dry

> they are compelled to travel some kilometres to the river [woman schoolteacher, Mtambalala] (Porter et al., 2010:1093).

Girls have to juggle between heavy domestic chores and schoolwork. In many instances girl learners drop out of school or their school attendance and performance is severely affected (Porter et al., 2010:1093; Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). In addition, Porter (2011:70-71) argued that "clearly, in remote rural areas with poor and expensive transport services, like those described above, the barriers faced by many children in accessing even a basic education are impossibly high". This might be due to the rural landscape as many homes are far from school, and thus many rural learners are forced travel vast distances to school. Porter et al (2011:68) observed that in the rural Eastern Cape, girl learners face challenges including crossing dangerous streams and rivers, walking through bushes, facing severe punishment for lateness, and sexual harassment. The impact of distance between home and school, states Porter (2011:77-78), on learning achievement has been overlooked, and the linkage between education and physical mobility needs further research.

The risk of travelling such long distances pose multiple threats to girl learners, especially in light of pervasive patriarchal views of male assertive sexuality. This contributes significantly to female school-dropout, relocation, or facing the might of sexual harassment which might possibly infect these young girls with HIV/AIDS and increase the scope and frequency of teenage pregnancy (Porter et al. 2011:71). Girl children between the ages of 15 and 24 were more vulnerable to HIV infection and high-risk forms of sexual behaviour (Porter et al. 2011:71; Mahabeer, 2008:6). The patterns of HIV transmission were very often the effect of misunderstandings and myths such as "having sexual intercourse with virgins and girls younger than 12 years will cure of the disease" (Mahabeer 2008:40). Amid these it is important to also note the political stance with regard to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS during the Mbeki presidency, as these beliefs have become embedded in many social structures:

> Many people believe that the HIV and AIDS response in South Africa has been hindered by 'AIDS denialism' among top political leaders, who have heightened the climate of ignorance and confusion with their views, and reversed years of awareness development regarding the pandemic: President Thabo Mbeki constantly denies that HIV is the cause of AIDS. The President and Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang consistently emphasise the value of a healthy diet and eating plenty of garlic and beetroot to fight off the illness, which downplays the significance of anti-retrovirals (Mahabeer, 2008:38)

An estimated half-a-million individuals required treatment for HIV/AIDS and an estimated 370 000 people died of AIDs (Geffen & Cameron, 2009:2-5). The HIV/AIDS epidemic changed the family dynamics of many South African households as many adults died, leaving behind thousands of households to be headed by children (Mahabeer, 2008:41). In most cases these children who head these houses are female children who were very often forced to drop out of school to look after siblings and the rest of the household. A 2010 study indicated that more robust sets of indicators are needed to understand the issues faced by female learners in the Eastern Cape, particularly in relation to teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS (Makiwane & Chimere-Dan, 2010:174).

Education and the Aspirational Body

This section begins by conceptualising 'aspirations' and then discusses how rural Black females in post-apartheid South Africa navigate rural-urban spaces to access better educational opportunities. In a book chapter titled *The capacity to aspire: Culture and the terms of recognition*, Arjun Appadurai delves into the concept of aspiration (2004:67):

> Aspirations certainly have something to do with wants, preferences, choices, and calculations. And because these factors have been assigned to the discipline of economics, to the domain of the market and to the level of the individual actor (all approximate characterizations), they have been largely invisible in the study of culture." (Appadurai, 2004:67)

Appadurai (2004:63) describes aspirations as a "strong feature of cultural capacity" in his work, and he goes on to say that these factors can also be assigned to the study of culture. In the following quotation, he proposes how we can begin to consider these aspirational factors in the study of culture:

> [….] By bringing the future back in, by looking at aspirations as cultural capacities, we are surely in a better position to understand how people actually navigate their social spaces. And in terms of the relationship between democracy and development, this approach gives us a principled reason to build the capacity to aspire in those who have the most to lose from its underdevelopment - the poor themselves. (Appadurai, 2004:84)

Appadurai contends that viewing aspirations as cultural capacities will help us understand the actual people who navigate social spaces. Appadurai (2004:67) notes that "aspirations are never simply individual (as the language of wants and choices inclines us to think). They are always formed in interaction and in the thick of social life". The capacity to aspire, particularly for the

poor and marginalized members of society, has received very little attention. When it comes to aspirations, Appadurai highlights the realities of the poor versus the rich:

> But here is the twist with the capacity to aspire**.** It is not evenly distributed in any society. It is a sort of meta-capacity, and the relatively rich and powerful invariably have a more fully developed capacity to aspire. What does this mean? It means that the better off you are (in terms of power, dignity, and material resources), the more likely you are to be conscious of the links between the more and less immediate objects of aspiration. Because the better off, by definition, have a more complex experience of the relation between a wide range of ends and means, because they have a bigger stock of available experiences of the relationship of aspirations and outcomes, because they are in a better position to explore and harvest diverse experiences of exploration and trial, because of their many opportunities to link material goods and immediate opportunities to more general and generic possibilities and options. They too may express their aspirations in concrete, individual wishes and wants. But they are more able to produce justifications, narratives, metaphors, and pathways through which bundles of goods and services are actually tied to wider social scenes and contexts, and to still more abstract norms and beliefs. (Appadurai, 2004:68)

Those with more resources can easily envision navigational pathways and desirable outcomes, whereas for the poor, it is difficult to envision these navigational pathways due to a lack of resources. Most importantly, Appadurai (2004:69) point out that "I am not saying that the poor cannot wish, want, need, plan, or aspire. But part of poverty is a diminishing of the circumstances in which these practices occur". In this regard, Appadurai contends that the poor's aspirations are met with constraints as they negotiate their social lives.

Similarly, Fataar (2015:129) contends that "a young person's educational aspirations are thus shaped by the cultural context of which they are a part". Fataar (2015:10) is specific about which youth he is referring to: his work focuses on Black youth subjectivity. Subjectivity, he defines, involves "processes of institutional and individual becoming…" (Fataar, 2015:10). Fataar (2015:4) explains that South African education sociology lacks a rigorous account of the educational subject, and the schooling context is important in helping us understand these youth subjectivities. Fataar's (2015:116) work demonstrates that navigations across rural and urban areas for Black youth reveal fewer aspirational nodes and thinner pathways through which to enact their desires for mobility. Fataar (2015:120-121) points that:

> The aspirational maps of these rural children are operable in relation to other texts such as rural subsistence, itinerant migrant labour and unemployment, as is more and more the case in the post-apartheid cultural landscape (Fataar, 2015:120-121)

An illustration of this is a case -study Fataar utilises in his work:

> Fuzile Ali's morphing could be described as accumulative and future orientated. He was able to bring together the skills, friendships and networks in each space into a formidable capacity to aspire. But he also acquired the ability to identify new opportunities and skills which he deemed necessary for his journey. He always sought out ways of maximising the opportunities that inhered in his environments without becoming wedded to them. His is a mobile identity based on the anticipation of becoming successful in the future. Space is coincidental to his aspirant mobility. […] It is not the physical environment that is important to his self-formation, but what he can become in the environment and how it can be maximised. (Fataar, 2015:127)

Each environment in which Fuzile found himself was crucial in developing his capacity to aspire, as was his self-formation and bodily discipline for his schooled career. The importance of this brief narration of the life of Fuzile Ali is that he is from a poor rural village in South Africa's Eastern Cape province. Fuzilw had to adapt to the changing circumstances (Fataar, 2015:119) of his always-impoverished village life. Acting agentically, Ali constructs around him a series of "fortuitous circumstances" which enable him to gain access to the city and its social practices and networks (Fataar, 2015:119-128).

Walker and Mathebula (2019:3) argue that "the rural context thus presents a significant challenge for students who aspire to go to university". In interviews conducted with 30 rural students from three provinces, namely the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo, they identify several factors that shape the rural student's well-being and agency in accessing an urban university. These factors are, first, resources in the form of income, wealth and schooling; Second is what they name 'conversion factors': "…these are… factors such as structural constraints such as social norms, other people's behaviours, race, class, schooling, and university teaching arrangements" (Walker & Mathebula, 2019:4). Third, "general factors include social welfare like pensions, or government bursaries and generally the historical effects of disadvantage" (Walker & Mathebula, 2019:4).

The significant persons such as teachers, NGO members, family members such as siblings, cousins and other close relatives, play a crucial role in fostering the aspirations of rural students (Walker & Mathebula, 2019:4). Walker and Mathebula (2020:7-8) noted that these aspirations are not formed early in their lives but rather:

> Their choices seem quite serendipitous: a bursary funder (usually government and usually for teacher education) came to the school; an NGO gave a talk and helped with applications; or a teacher encouraged them in a subject in which they were doing well… Pathways are circumstantial rather than planned and linear and we do not find the more

> typical long-term aspiration of middle-class families where it is assumed that university is the next step after school. (Walker & Mathebula, 2019:7-8)

What is clear is that just as in the case of Fuzile Ali (Fataar, 2015), the interviewed 30 students in Walker and Mathebula's (2019) study speak to how aspirations are formulated in the most uncertain and challenging ways, where there is no script written for them as they construct a tenuous pathway to educational success.

Conceptual framework emerging from the literature review

In this section, I will provide definitions of key concepts that have emerged from the literature review, and show the significance of each concept to the study.

Rurality

For the purposes of this study, Walker and Mathebula (2019:2-3) define rurality in South Africa, particularly the Eastern Cape, as a deeply under-resourced, under-developed space shaped by a

> long history of colonial wars, labor migration, and apartheid resettlements to eliminate 'Black spots' in designated white areas (Ross 1999). As a result, the concept of rurality reflects the larger history of colonialism and dispossession. Walker and Mathebula (2019:2-3)

This concept of rurality allows for the contextualisation of conditions of constraints such as poverty and inequality in the rural Eastern Cape, where the three rural Black females grew up (Walker & Mathebula, 2019:3; Crais, 2011:162).

Race

This study uses Soudien's (2012) conceptualisations to define race (and class) in the context of post-apartheid education in South Africa. 'Black' is the racial category that is employed throughout the study to locate the experiences of the rural Black females from the Eastern Cape because the participant in this study self-identified as such. In his explanation of race in education, Soudien (2012:120) notes that 'race' is still a dominant signifier in South African schooling. This is evident in his words:

> …the school is instituted, at its moment of birth, as a site for reinforcing the subordinate identity of Black people. […..] Moreover, race remains as cartographic reality as children make their way to their schools every day. Their streets, their homes and their suburbs are raced. Their modes of transport are raced. Their teaching staffs are raced (Soudien, 2012:120)

Soudien acknowledges that racial social construction is still deeply ingrained in education. More specifically, Soudien (2012:149) suggests that the social character of schools is more and more determined by class, which, in South Africa, is deeply inflected by apartheid racial patterns.

Gender

In this study, gender is understood to be a social construct (Omar & Badroodien, 2020:182; Akala, 2018:239). This study defines gender as an "identity (that) is multifaceted, arising from social relations, historical factors, and cultural practices that use masculinity and femininity to determine gender roles" (Akala, 2018:239). Thornberry (2019) highlights gender as socially constructed primarily by the colonial Eastern Cape's strong patriarchal culture and Christian schooling. These were the primary institutions that moulded women's sexualities and how they interact with society and the economy in general. Violence was also part of this social construction of gender.

Aspiration

To define aspiration, I utilised Arjun Appadurai's (2004) concept of the "capacity to aspire", which he calls 'cultural capacity'. Appadurai defines aspiration as "wants, preferences, choices, and calculations" (Appadurai, 2004:67). He elaborates that "one dimension of culture-its orientation to the future- that is almost never discussed explicitly" (ibid.). In this he states that:

> […] most approaches to culture do not ignore the future. But they smuggle it in indirectly, when they speak of norms, beliefs, and values as being central to cultures, conceived as specific and multiple designs for social life. But by not elaborating the implications of norms for futurity as a cultural capacity, these definitions tend to allow the sense of culture as pastness to dominate (Appadurai, 2004:63).

In this quotation, Appadurai highlights that these approaches to 'aspiration' have historically narrowly inserted a "future" aspect into "culture". Appadurai conceives of aspiration as navigational capacity. This conceptualization of Appadurai helps us understand that there is a complex relationship of the poor and the marginalized to the cultural regimes within which they function. This conceptualization enables the study to explore how a Black female from an

impoverished rural area creates navigational pathways under conditions of severe material and existential constraints.

The study now moves to the next chapter, which discusses the methodological choices and matters related to these choices.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2018:315) "methodology reflects the overall research design and the way the researcher goes about conducting the study". In this chapter, first I will discuss the research paradigms which inform this study. Second, I move to outline the research method to be employed in this study, namely an exploratory study utilising narrative analysis. Third, I will outline the data collection procedures this study will employ. Third, the analytic techniques to be employed in the study will be explored. The chapter further details the sampling strategy employed (purposive sampling); the research sites; the participants; issues of reliability and validity; and explores the ethical dimensions of such a study, including the positionality of the researcher.

Research Paradigm

Creswell (2007:36) states that "qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem". Given (2008: xxix) describes quantitative research as "…approaches (that) are appropriate for examining who has engaged in a behaviour or what has happened, and while experiments can test particular interventions, these techniques are not designed to explain why certain behaviors occur".

There are five philosophical assumptions that influence the researchers' choice: ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetorical, and methodological assumptions (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015, Creswell, 2007:15).

Ontology assumptions are concerned with the nature and features of reality as matter-of-fact. Qualitative researchers generally embrace the notion of multiple realities. In this regard they make use of "multiple quotes based on the actual words of different individuals and presenting different perspectives from individuals" (Creswell, 2007:18). There is a belief in quantitative research that there is a single true reality that can be measured using instruments (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015). With regard to epistemological assumptions, qualitative researchers attempt to get closer to a full understanding of the participants being studied. In practice, they generally conduct their studies where the participants live and work as the contexts is important to understand the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2007:18), whereas in quantitative research,

this relationship between participant and researcher is minimized because the researcher must maintain independence by remaining distanced (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015). The axiological assumptions guiding methodological choices sees qualitative researchers position themselves by actively reporting their values and biases in the study (Creswell, 2007:18). Researchers in quantitative research generally separate their personal values and judgment from the actual study (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015). The rhetorical assumptions guiding methodological choices focus on the language of research. In qualitative studies, researchers embrace the need to be personal and literary in their writing (Creswell, 2007:18), whereas quantitative research is more impersonal, and researchers report in a more formal style (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015).

In light of the above discussion of the assumptions related to research paradigms, this study employs a qualitative research approach as this research paradigm allows the researcher to embrace multiple realities in an inquiry of individuals to understand a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007:36). As a result, this enables the researcher to gain an in-depth and rich understanding of contexts or the individuals being studied. Qualitative research therefore allows for the researcher to gain significant detail by "talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature" (Creswell, 2007:39-40).

Research Design/Methodology

The research method that this study employs is an exploratory study utilising a narrative approach to data analysis. An exploratory study is defined by Stebbins (2001:3) as "a broad-ranging, purposive, prearranged systematic undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description and understanding of an area of social or psychological life". The narrative approach adopted within the sphere of this exploratory study is defined as a text within a qualitative research method that focuses specifically on the stories told by individuals (Creswell, 2007:54). Individuals tell their stories in many forms. These include biography, autobiography, life history, oral history and personal experience stories (Creswell, 2007:55). In the following quotation, Creswell (2007:55) provides a detailed description of each of these types of narrative research methods:

> A second approach is to emphasize the variety of forms found in narrative research practices (see, e.g., Casey, 1995/1996). A biographical study is a form of narrative study in which the researcher writes and records the experiences of another person's life. Autobiography is written and recorded by the individuals who are the subject of the study (Ellis, 2004). A life history portrays an individual's entire life, while a personal experience story is a narrative study of an individual's personal experience found in

> single or multiple episodes, private situations, or communal folklore (Denzin, 1989a). An oral history consists of gathering personal reflections of events and their causes and effects from one individual or several individuals (Plummer, 1983). (Creswell, 2007:55)

This study, then explores the narratives of three rural Black females as they reflect on and consider aspects of coming to educational aspiration under conditions of extreme deprivation that traces its roots from the colonial period and tracks this legacy of dispossession and impoverishment into the present.

Research Sites

The data used in this study was collected from an impoverished rural community in the Eastern Cape as well as two areas in the Western Cape. These two South African provinces have a very rich history that informs an understanding of the subject being studied in this research. Both these contexts also inform us about the current conditions which alienates and drives out many young Black people. These two provincial contexts provide us with a rich understanding of the conditions of education for rural Black females. The main educational context of this study is the Eastern Cape Province, where the research subjects are originally from. The history of Black education in South Africa is incomplete without foregrounding that of the Eastern Cape. The first Black school was established near King Williams Town and this town was key as the "administrative capital of the British Kaffraria" (Crais, 2011:48). In the post-apartheid era, King Williams Town continues to serve as one of the key places which administratively serve nearby towns, townships and villages. The small rural village from which the three research participants come is situated between East London and King Williams Town.

The schools in the Eastern Cape province are largely rural in nature. As a result, the majority of these rural schools have been declared by government as Quintile 1 category schools. Hall and Giese (in Omar and Badroodien, 2020:183) explain that these schools are categorised and funded by the state in terms of their socio-economic status in relation to economic disadvantage. Quintile 1 schools are no-fee schools which are "determined provincially by the Provincial Education Department; using a standard national procedure. Each school is assigned a poverty score using data from the community in which the school is located. The three poverty indicators utilised for this purpose are (1) income, (2) unemployment rate and (3) level

of education of the community. These indicators are weighted to assign a poverty index for the community and school" (Ahmed & Sayed, 2009:206).

The schools in which two of the participants studied (the mother did not attend school) fit the description of the category of a Quintile 1 school. The schools are located in impoverished village communities which have high rates of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy.

Sampling strategy

Fraenkel and Wallen (2009:99) define sampling as "the process of selecting these individuals" which is a very important step in the research process. There are four sampling aspects that need to be considered, which are: events, settings, actors and artifacts. The researcher might choose which sampling strategy is suitable for their study and "these strategies have names and definitions" (Creswell, 2007:126). The sampling strategy used in this study is a purposeful sampling strategy, in which the researcher selects individuals and sites for study because they can "purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007:125). The selection of three rural Black female participants from the Eastern Cape province provides the opportunity for gaining in-depth understanding of the rural Eastern Cape and how rural Black females aspire to academic success under conditions that are not generally considered conducive to academic studies.

Description of the study Participants

The participants of the study consist of three Black African females from the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa:

Learner 1 is a 27 year old HWU Bachelor of Social Sciences graduate. She was born in and grew up in a small rural village in Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Learner 1 went to a rural school that is categorized in the South Africa's schooling system under Quintile 1. This school is located in a nearby regional town known as eQonce (formerly known as King Williams Town) in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality. The conditions of education and various socioeconomic difficulties like under-resourced schools and poverty in the Eastern Cape forced Learner 1 to the Western Cape, where she attended an urban school and utilised the resources in these urban spaces to gain admission to an HWU. The mother (Parent Participant) and sister (Learner 2) are the significant persons who played a critical role in the educational journey and success of Learner 1. 'Learner 1' is used in this study to anonymize her in terms of the ethics protocols established in securing her consent as a participant in this study.

Learner 2 is the second post-school learner participant in the study. She has not completed tertiary studies at a university. Learner 2 is 42 years old and from a small rural town near King Williams Town in the Eastern Cape. She is the older sister to Learner 1, whom she greatly assisted in her educational path of obtaining better schooling in an urban city. Learner 2 has been living and working in the Western Cape for almost 20 years, hence she was not only able to assist Learner 1 to access urban schooling, but was further able and willing to assist her in attending university.

The third participant is the mother of both Learners 1 and 2,and is named in the study as the 'Parent participant'. The ‘Parent Participant’ is 66 years old with limited formal educational experience as a result of the apartheid government's stance toward the education of Black families in farm areas. She is a professional domestic worker with experience in both the Northern and Eastern Cape. She currently resides in the Eastern Cape. The Parent participant’s valuing of education and her persistent support, particularly during Learner 1's educational journey, is what stands out in her contribution in this study.

The three participants were chosen on the basis of key criteria. First, they all needed to be ‘Black’ and female, as I wanted to foreground and capture the narratives of females from a remote rural village. The literature review in Chapter 2 has shown that rural female Black persons remain the most structurally marginalised sectors of post-apartheid society, and the gender-criterion is therefore crucial to the purposeful sampling strategy. Second, the school-goers needed to have been born and schooled in rural Eastern Cape villages. Third, I tried to find (and succeeded) a family of female-learners with a mother/grandmother who could provide a perspective of a care-giver and nurturer to two female children. Given my familiarity with several villages in the East London to King Williams Town corridor, it was relatively easy to secure the participation of all three persons. Fourth, at least one of the children needed to have completed an undergraduate degree at a HWU in an urban centre in South Africa.

Researcher’s positionality

The role of the researcher is critical in every research project, particularly in relation to data collecting and analysis, because they bring personal beliefs and assumptions to these aspects of any academic study. I self-identify as a Black female, and was born and raised in the Eastern Cape, in a remote village that was, and is, characterised by extreme poverty and ongoing social crises due to several layers of deprivation and lack of resources. My lived experience assists me in understanding the experiences of the study’s participants as they navigate geographical

spaces and education in these spaces. I also bring a layer of academic experience as a postgraduate student at a HWU, where I have participated in mentorship programs, school improvement initiatives, and academic administration. This experience improves my awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity in this research, although I state clearly that I do not claim the role of 'expert' in this research.

With the nature of the study and my positionality, I do, however, acknowledge that maintaining objectivity is almost impossible. In approaching the data which contains the lived experiences of participants, the participants' voices were placed at the centre of the study with verbatim text from the semi-structured interviews. Each semi-structured interview was audio-taped with the consent of the participant using an electronic recording device (Saunders et al., 2003:341). I was clear throughout the writing of the dissertation that I should not analyse and interpret these experiences *outside* of the social, cultural, and political contexts in which the study's participants lived. This involved a deliberate and careful attempt throughout the study to work with the narratives of my study's participants in ways that always resonated with what the literature in Chapter 2 had foregrounded. I tried at all times to identify my emotional state when confronted with often very sad narrative of the participants. The aim of understanding my positionality was to try, as best I could, to remain academically honest when identifying and analysing the participants' narratives. In this sense, the study has been a personal journey for this researcher, who had vowed never to return to the Eastern Cape, especially its remote rural villages, after having left my own village to come to Cape Town to be schooled. A reflection on my positionality allowed me to revisit very painful childhood memories as my study's participants entrusted me with their stories. I have learnt that if I want to be part of the necessary change that needs to happen for the millions of Black female rural dwellers in post-apartheid South Africa, I have to dare to return to the sites of pain myself, and not turn my back on my own past.

Thus, the writing and analysis process in this study was a process of constantly returning to the literature for insights before my own common-sense response became the analysis. It has been a difficult but very meaningful personal research journey in this context, as I have tried to honour the participant's knowledge and narratives by placing them alongside the writing of brilliant academics, and using this as the process of analysis throughout the dissertation.

Measurement instruments

The data-collection instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview schedule. Saunders et al (2009:320-321) describe semi-structured interviews in the following way:

> In semi-structured interviews the researcher will have a list of themes and questions to be covered, although these may vary from interview to interview. […]. The order of questions may also be varied depending on the flow of the conversation. On the other hand, additional questions may be required to explore your research question and objectives given the nature of events within particular organisations. The nature of the questions and the ensuing discussion mean that data will be recorded by audio-recording the conversation or perhaps note taking (Saunders et al., 2009:320-321)

Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to use non-static questions, and depending on the flow of the interview, the researcher can also be flexible in terms of probing for additional or complementary insights from the participants. This method of data-collection facilitated access to a series of interview sessions which generated meaningful data that spoke very powerfully to the knowledge and experiences of the three rural Black female participants as the study sought to gain a deep understanding of their own experiences and thinking.

The interview schedules consisted of 153 questions in total across the three participants, with each of the three participants being asked to respond to questions from an interview schedule designed specifically for each of their specific roles in the study, namely a learner who had graduated from an HWU; a learner who had completed only secondary schooling; and a mother/grandmother figure who provided care to both these learners. The drafting of the interview questions was guided by the interview schedule in the works of Yunus Omar in his doctoral dissertation titled *In my Stride: A Life history of Alie Fataar* (2015) as well as Ashley Visagie's masters dissertation titled *Painting a picture of Possibility the transmission of symbolic violence of in an urban township school* (2019). Most importantly, the questions were developed in relation to the research title and topic, the main research question, and the sub- research questions. An MS-Excel matrix sheet was used to develop the interview schedules. The researcher was also fortunate to obtain permission to use the diaries of Learner 1 as part of the data-gathering process.

Data Collection

Data refers to the collection of information such as numbers, words, images, video, audio, and concept (Given, 2008:186). Qualitative data are generally non-numerical such as statements that are recorded on some specific numerical scale (Given, 2008:186). In a narrative study, the researcher must gather extensive information about the participant because a clear understanding of the context of the individual's life is needed (Creswell, 2007:58). Therefore, there are different ways to collect data for stories namely, "autobiography, journal, researcher fieldnotes, letters, conversations, interviews, stories of families, documents, and photographs" (Creswell, 2007:131). The data that were utilized in this study are from the transcribed data from the semi-structured interviews and personal documents obtained from the participants. Such data collection methods are effective research tools to analyze the rich personal experiences of the studied social category the rural Black female.

Transcription data from the semi-interviews

Interviews were face to face interactions which were conducted in the following periods: 19-21 August 2020, 23-25 November 2020 and 23 January 2021. The interviews conducted in August 2020 and January 2021 were conducted in the Cape Town areas. The interview in November 2020 was conducted in the Eastern Cape. Prior to scheduling these interview slots, I was in regular contact with the participants to make arrangements and take cognisance of their health and generally comply with the lockdown protocols as the whole world was confronted with a global pandemic, COVID-19. I was able to make these arrangements and buy Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) so that we could observe the COVID-19 lockdown protocols as we conducted the interviews. This was done in order to protect myself and the study's participants. I was able to buy an audio-recording device for the interviews, and each interview was audio-recorded and immediately backed up on a secure, password-protected computer that was available only to me, and was securely locked away. The participants had each signed a consent form and had agreed for the interviews to be audio-recorded and transcribed. Alongside the audio-recording, the researcher also used a small notebook and pen to make brief notes during each of the interviews in order to maintain concentration and to note moments during the interviews that I considered necessary to follow up on with additional questions (Saunders et al., 2003:339).

The interviews for this study were mostly conducted in English, especially for Learner 1 and Learner 2. This was the language in which they felt most comfortable being interviewed. The parent participant was questioned in isiXhosa and English, both of which she understands and speaks. In one instance, the researcher noted and later translated isiXhosa phrases or words spoken by the parent participant. More crucially, they were all included in the transcription, and they are all in English. What is advantageous is that the researcher of this study understands and speaks both isiXhosa and English, which helped in the conduct of interviews, particularly with the parent participant, and in general the transcribing of the three participants' interviews.

The recording device was extremely useful during the transcription process (which I completed myself) as I was able to "capture the tone of voice and hesitation" of the participants during the interviews (Saunders et al., 2003:339). These were noted in the transcription data. Transcribing the audio-recordings took time due to the in-depth interviews conducted for this study. The word-processed interview transcripts comprise over 114 A4 pages [Parent interview, 15 pages; Learner 2, 16 pages; Learner 1, 83], typed in 11-point Times New Roman, 1.5-spaced. Once this process of reproducing a written word account using the actual words of the participants was done, these documents were saved using an anonymous number and names so as to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants (Saunders et al., 2003:339). The entire transcription process was conducted and completed under the guidance of my research supervisor.

Personal documents

The document used in this study comprises the diary notes of Learner 1 which were made available to the researcher. The diary notes date back to September 2016. Saunders et al (2003:299) argue that access to a respondent's diary is a good method for deeply insightful data-collection as it facilitates a closer and richer understanding how the subject experiences the world. Similarly, a journal allows the researcher to closely look into the subject's life experiences at different stages of their lives (Creswell, 2007: 158).

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis includes arranging the data for analysis, which involves condensing the data into themes through a coding process and exhibiting the data for discussion

and analysis (Creswell, 2007:148). In this study, I coded and created themes by examining the individual's experience as well as the environment of those experiences. I started thinking about my data analysis by looking over the data multiple times and jotting down any ideas, thoughts, or remarks (Saunders et al., 2003:156). What was very helpful was the study's research title, which pointed us to the unit of analysis, the rural Black female, and also to an area in which this individual is examined, the field of education. Fataar (2015:4) contends that if we are to comprehend youth subjectivities in South Africa, the education area is a critical place to start. This provides a clear picture of the essential components that need to be analysed.

I selected five words and word-clusters from the title of the study *Rural, Black and Female: Educational Possibilities under severe constraints*, namely 'rural', 'Black', 'female', educational possibilities' and 'severe constraints'. From the selected words and word-clusters I began to generate codes. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019:244) the coding process:

> …involves identifying text segments, placing a bracket around them, and assigning a code word or phrase to that accurately describes the meaning of the text segment. (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019:244)

Therefore, codes are short words which define the data collected from the participants. In the following table I illustrate as mentioned above the way in which I went about coding in this study:

Title of Study	**Words and word-clusters selected from the Title**	**Codes generated from the selected words**	**Major themes**
Rural, Black and Female: Educational Possibilities under severe constraints	Rural	**Rurality** (Space, class, disadvantage (d), socio-economic issues, violence)	(1) Rurality and spatial realities
	Black	**Racism** (race, discrimination, racialisation, disadvantage (d))	(2) Race, racism, and racialisation
	Female	**Gender** (gender discrimination, patriarchy, femininity, sexism)	(3) Gender and Gender discrimination

	Educational Possibilities	**Aspiration** (education, rural schooling, urban experiences, class, capabilities)	(4) Educational Aspiration
	Conditions of severe constraints	**Resources** (Impoverishment, dysfunctional schools, policy/implementation, social inequalities, migration)	(5) Living resources constraints and possibilities

Table 1: Derivation of themes

It is through these codes that major themes emerge. Themes are "similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database" (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019:245). The key major themes that will direct the data analysis in this study are (1) Rurality and spatial realities; (2) Race, racism, and racialisation; (3) Gender and Gender discrimination; (4) Living/resources constraints and (5) Educational aspiration. Themes are helpful in identifying "similarities, differences and groupings of interviews with reference the quotes from the transcripts and playing a devil's advocate role in searching for possible contradictions to these hypotheses in the transcripts" (Akerlind & McAlpine, 2017:1689). I created MS-Word documents for each of the above themes and "identified sentences that seem to fit together to describe the idea, our text segments" (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019:245).

The themes' goals are to bring the narratives together and give it significance. A narrative analysis is used to examine the data elements and provide a coherent development account. Polkinghorne (1995:16) defines narrative analysis as follows:

> Narrative analysis relates events and actions to one another by configuring them as contributors to the advancement of a plot. The story constituted by narrative integration allows for the incorporation of the notions of human purpose and choice as well as chance happenings, dispositions, and environmental presses. (Polkinghorne, 1995:16)

Therefore, narrative analysis is suitable in helping achieve our analysis as it allows the researcher to synthesize events and giving meaning to lived experiences of the participants. Polkinghorne (1995:16) explains in detail what this type of analysis allows us to do:

> Narrative cognition configures the diverse elements of a particular action into a unified whole in which each element is connected to the central purpose of the action. Hearing a storied description about a person's movement through a life episode touches us in such a way as to evoke emotions such as sympathy, anger, or sadness. Narrative cognition gives us explanatory knowledge of why a person acted as he or she did; it makes another's action, as well as our own, understandable (Polkinghorne, 1995:11)

The narrative analysis allows the researcher to fully explore life experiences and take cognisance of the emotive dimension that rises from the different episodes of these life experiences. This exploration is to seek understanding of the subject's life experiences. The next section then speaks to how we treat the data as we re-tell the narratives of participants with consistency and accuracy.

Reliability and Validity

The quality of the equipment used in research is critical. Researchers employ a variety of techniques to ensure that the conclusions they reach based on the data they collect are accurate and reliable (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009:147). Saunders et al., (2003:156) state that reliability "refers to the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings". Reliability tends to ask three questions: first, "will the measures yield the same results on other occasions?" Second, "will similar observations be reached by other observers?" Third, "is there transparency in how sense was made from the raw data?". Saunders et al. (2003:157) define validity in the following way: "Validity is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about".

This study will employ the following strategies to ensure that issues of validity and reliability are overcome:

- The use of semi-interview transcriptions and personal documents was for data triangulation purposes. The use of several data collection techniques within a single study are an attempt to validate what you think the data is telling you. This is known as triangulation (Creswell, 2009; Saunders et al., 2003:258). This technique can be claimed to increase the study's validity if themes are generated based on the convergence of diverse data sources or participant views (Saunders et al., 2003:258). This strengthens reality and validity (Creswell, 2009). This is beneficial in terms of the research findings.
- Researcher's knowledge and experience will help in eliminating any biases and the accuracy of findings (Creswell, 2009).
- The research supervisor provides an objective assessment as s/he gives feedback on the overall chapters of this study (Creswell, 2009).

Ethical considerations

In order to conduct the research at the research sites, I followed UCT's ethical procedures, which was in the form of an ethics application to the School of Education's Ethics Committee, which granted ethical approval for the study. Information sheets were given to participants in which they provided their informed and voluntary permission to participate in the study, in writing. Before signing the consent form, the Parent Participant read the consent form because she understands English. In addition, the researcher took the initiative to clarify the purpose of the consent form in isiXhosa. The parent participant agreed to take part in this study.

The anonymity of the research site, the learners' identities and the identity of the parent participating in the study have been protected by the use of pseudonyms and ensuring that their location could not be identified in any way. I spent an enormous amount of time telephonically communicating with the participants answering any questions and concerns they had, and explaining the concepts of 'informed consent' and how their identities would be protected. Throughout this period, I also ensured that the participants were fully aware of the fact that they could withdraw from the study at any time without having to provide any reasons. I proceeded with scheduling convenient times for interviews. This was challenging due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions which came into effect as my data-collection was about to start. During this period, I had to regularly check on participants as the pandemic and lockdown meant major changes in lives and the ways people adapted. It was vital for me as researcher to monitor the state of being of my participants and how were they coping in their environments. Once I was able to do this, and months later, when the lockdown restrictions eased, face-to-face interviews were conducted. All interviews were conducted in observation with the COVID-19 restrictions, including the observation of the protocols of masking, sanitising, and social distancing.

In summary, this research methodology chapter has presented the overall research plan as well as how the researcher conducted the investigation. It has explored the research paradigms framing the study, and has worked through issues of sampling, data collection, data-coding, data-analysis techniques, as well as issues of reliability and validity, and the range of issues connected to an ethical approach to research with human participants.

The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of data collected from three Rural Black women from the Eastern Cape. This data provides a form of thick description which gives understanding to shared experiences in terms of setting, schooling, and subjective experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018: 58). The thick description of the data facilitates the answering of the our main research question, and the two sub research questions, which are as follows:

How does a rural Black female from an impoverished community actualise academic success from an impoverished rural community into an HWU?

(Sub research question 1) What resources does a Black female from an impoverished rural area draw on in order to produce an aspirational disposition in relation to entry to an HWU?

(Sub research question 2) How does a Black female from an impoverished rural area navigate her complex identities across vastly under-resourced rural educational landscapes, into an urban higher education HWU space?

In order to answer these questions, the chapter now engages with the findings of the data under each of the five themes (used as headers in the chapter) namely (1) Rurality and spatial realities; (2) Race, Racism and Racialisation; (3) Gender and Gender discrimination; (4) Living/Resource constraints; (5) Education Aspiration. These themes have been generated through processes (detailed in Chapter 3) using the the title and research questions of this study, as well as the literature review to generate codes which were grouped into the five themes for analytic purposes. This chapter engages with the actual interview extracts of the three participants of the study to address the research questions of this study. Each theme will be set out in sequence.

Themes

Rurality and spatial realities

The first theme describes the experiences of Learner 1 and Learner 2 in the rural Eastern Cape Province. Learner 1 described the place from which her family came:

> My family was one of the families that was forcibly removed from their homestand in the Northern Cape. Their livestock was taken away from them. Arriving in this village they had to begin building their lives again. My grandparents were very big on livestock and farming as they lived most of their lives in the farms and ended up settling in. Being forced to move into another province meant that they had to leave everything from their goats, cows and farms, houses and their land. On the day they were put on a train to King Williams Town they watched their houses being demolished in front of them. This is how my family ended in the Eastern Cape. Upon their arrival in the Eastern Cape they asked for land for farming from the government. However, this was profusely rejected as they were told to either choose to stay or go back. (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020)

Learner 1 describes her family's history as beginning in a small homestead in the Cape Northern Frontier. This was where her grandparents farmed livestock such as “goats and cows” until they were forced to relocate to the Ciskei, where they could not acquire much land to continue with farming. She recalls her grandparents’ house being demolished and livestock left behind. This was the only means of sustenance. The parent participant described the day they arrived in Ciskei. She stated that “they were thrown in these bushes” where there were “lots of snakes” and government had allocated them “wood houses” (Parent interview, 24 November 2020).

Learner 2 recalls the state of living in the Ciskei after the familys was removed from the Northern Cape:

> In those days, me and my cousins we all grew up in one house. When we grew up, we ate from one big bowl. We used to be 17 in big one house: in my grandmom’s house. All of us sometimes it’s not a lot, not everyone got a spoon but we gonna share the spoon. That time there was not many diseases even after our grandmother made porridge with sour milk. All of us would sit around and share. So, we got that bond with us (Learner 2 Interview, 23 January 2021)

Learner 2 describes a moment of sharing food amongst her siblings and cousins. They took turns as they ate from the same bowl. Not at any point does Learner 2 point out explicitly a

state of lacking anything or poverty, except to state that there not "a lot". The experience of sharing what little they had during her childhood experience in the extract results in her attributing the deep bond they developed between each other to the culture of sharing.

Learner 1, however, reflected on the state of poverty she experienced as a young girl in the rural community:

> …it is usually said that if in a home there is no sugar or tea you must surely know that there was poverty in that house. As a child who was very shy, when I was sent to ask sugar or tea at our neighbours, I felt embarrassed. There were times where I would clean at my relatives houses so that I can have food. I would sit there until it was evening. [….] I didn't want to go home as I know the food that I was eating at my relatives was not the same as the one that they made at home. At my relative they cooked meat and nice food all the time. (Learner 1 diary, 5 September 2016)

Learner 1 describes a lack of sugar and tea in a household as an indicator of poverty, and she speaks about the embarrassment she felt when she was sent to neighbours to ask for these items. What is fascinating about this is that she had the ability to fend for herself amidst widespread hunger. She took on domestic chores for neighbours in order to have "nice food" which was rarely available at her own home.

Rurality intertwines with many realities, with poverty as the key lived experience, which is a result of many interconnected circumstances described by the participants (forced removal from a well-resourced homestead in the Northern Cape; the confiscation of their livestock; and being provided with no resources except a dwelling when forcibly removed to the Ciskei). The experiences of poverty or hunger were unique to each of the participants. These also differed in terms of temporality. The experiences of the parent participant and Learner 2 are located within an apartheid context, whereas Learner 1's experience was within post-apartheid democratic South Africa. The key connector is that poverty and its effects straddle both periods, and shows how shifting political circumstances do not necessarily translate into material improvements in the lives of ordinary people.

Race, racism and racialisation

The second theme focuses on the schooling experiences of Learner 1 in post-apartheid South Africa, in the Eastern Cape. She elaborates:

> Growing up there were two schools. The primary school was 15 minutes away from my house and the secondary School was 30 minutes away from my home. However, there is only one school now due to the rationalisation policy of the Provincial Education Department of the Eastern Cape. The secondary school was closed. While growing up, most of the learners from other villages would leave their local school to come and attend the school in my village. It was normal for learners from other villages to attend school in my village. Some walked while others had organised their own transport. (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020)

For Learner 1, both primary and secondary schooling was not far from her home (a 15 and 30 minute walk respectively, as she relates). However, her classmates from nearby villages still walked much further distances to attend school in her village. Learner 1 stated that the secondary school closed due to the rationalisation policy of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDOE), and she further describes the conditions at this secondary school before it closed:

> Our school was dirty. Our school was on a large land, so the community people ended up using the school yard as a path. This led to the yard being broken down resulting in cows and goats finding a dwelling place. This was a challenge for us as learners because it meant before class started, we had to clean our classes and clean out the cow dung before even starting to learn. […]. There was a shortage in textbooks. This was due to the fact that learners were not bringing back their books. Because of this, learners had to share textbooks. [….] Our school was overcrowded because learners from nearby villages were attending the same village. I remember us moving into three different classrooms as Grade 8. One class that we were in had to be divided into two classes. Even though it was divided we would hear so much noise from the other class. (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020)

As Learner 1 narrates, the school yard was wide, and as a result cows and goats frequently entered classrooms, leaving classrooms filthy. This delayed teaching and learning as learners and teachers had to first clean before they could start with lessons. Learner 1 recalled that learners were often punished if they failed to cooperate with the cleaning. These classrooms were also overcrowded, resulting in further disruptions in lessons. Even worse, learners had to share textbooks due to the shortage of books at the school. Learner 1 relates that it was while speaking with her friends who attended schools in East London and Cape Town that she began to recognise the disparity in rural and urban schooling resources. As a result, these conversations instilled a desire in her for a well-resourced school and assisted her envisioning a future outside the parameters of her home and local community.

These experiences described by Learner 1 gives us a primary insight into and account of the schooling experience of the rural female learner from the Eastern Cape as she charted her educational path which would eventually see her registering for undergraduate studies at a HWU in an urban centre in South Africa.

Gender and Gender Discrimination

The third theme focuses on the gendered challenges experienced by Learner 1 as she navigates rurality and schooling in the rural Eastern Cape. Learner 1's childhood coincided almost exactly with the peak of the HIV/AIDS pandemic that killed countless worldwide and in South African. She describes the reality of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the small rural community in which she lived:

> HIV and AIDS was prevalent in the year 2007, 2008. The school had a prescribed book, *Whitney's Kiss*. The story revolved around a young girl who contracted HIV. In the rural areas, HIV and AIDS was such a taboo thing that families were not willing to speak about it. It was through this book that my eyes were opened to understanding sex and if one is irresponsible one might end up having HIV and AIDS. There were rumours going on around that HIV and AIDS gets healed when an older man sleeps with young virgin girls. It was really happening in villages where girls were raped. This obviously inflicted some fear in us as young girls. (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020)

Learner 1 states that HIV/AIDS was perceived as "taboo" in her rural community. She produces a wonderful moment, showing her intellectual affinity for books and the learning that can be facilitated by them, in relating how powerfully a school prescribed book titled *Whitney's Kiss* was instrumental in bringing issues of public health, healthy sexuality, and sexual safety awareness to her and to many young girls. The importance is that this learning in school, and via books, happens despite the community's reluctance to discuss matters of sexual health and safety due to customary "taboos", which are not, of course, restricted to rural areas. One of the dangerous myths Learner 1 recalled was that once an older man infected with HIV/AIDS sexually violated a young girl, the older man is cured of the disease. In the same light, Learner 2 alluded to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the rural community:

> At that time there was this disease that was starting… HIV. I got worried that this child just growing up there and the village boys like to take advantage of the small girls and I was stressed. No, I must take this child. I am scared of this thing that is now in the world, that I hear about it. (Learner 2 interview, 23 January 2021)

Learner 2 was fearful of the fact that boys might take advantage of her younger sister. Even though this was a moment of panic for Learner 2, it was also a moment of courage as she could remove her sister from an environment which could possibly destroy Learner 1's well-being and future. This matter, then, was also part of the complex processes that culminated in Learner 1 accessing schooling in an urban area with far greater educational and learning resources available to her than compared to her rural school.

In addition, Learner 1 recalls another moment of fear and concern that came with her departure:

> The day before I had to leave, I was sitting on the bed with my mother and we had a conversation. She asked me to behave and study very hard. I was her only hope, and I shouldn't give my sister trouble. She told me that I can sign a document from the councillor. She described this document as a pledge that I would be making of my conduct in the city. I have never heard of anyone before who signed this document. It was my first time hearing about this document. I understood where she was coming from. Her biggest concern was teen pregnancy, because it was quite prevalent in our villages. She was scared that I might fall into that. She told me to "always pray and speak to God". (Learner 1 interview, 20 August 2020)

Learner 1 explains the concerns of the mother as she made her younger daughter sign the document. One of the mother's main concerns was teenage pregnancy which was prevalent in the rural Eastern Cape communities. Even in this moment of uncertainty for the parent participant in the study, she was willing to let her daughter leave the village and seek better educational and life possibilities in the city. She reiterated the importance of reliance on God and prayer as her daughter travelled, far from the protection and guidance of her mother. This document which the parent participant makes Learner 1 signs before she travels is described by Learner 1 describes as a "pledge". The parent participant describes this moment and the essence of the document:

> It was the community's paper; it states where you come from and where you are staying currently. I got the paper from the councillor of the community. When you are going to another place you have to have this paper. I made my daughter sign it so that she doesn't have problems. So that her residence can't be questioned. (Parent Interview, 25 November 2020)

The parent participant describes the purpose of the document as vital for the daughter's mobility and success as she headed for the city and away from her sparsely populated and impoverished rural village. Both the parent participant and Learner 1 were not able to say whether the same "pledge" document was ever given to male children who travelled to the

cities. This raises intriguing questions about the gendered nature of the social fabric in the village from the three study's participants come, but it is not surprising given the range of gendered violence that has been inflicted on females in the Eastern Cape from pre-colonial and colonial times, through the Apartheid period, and into the post-apartheid present, as the literature in Chapter 2 has shown.

Living/Resource constraints

The fifth theme focuses on the living and resource constraints Learner 1 experienced while living and schooling in the Eastern Cape Province. The parent participant reflected on the living conditions in which Learner 1 grew up in the rural Eastern Cape:

> When I saw that my children did not have clothes, I chose to go work so that I could buy them clothes. Even when I was not working my mother was willing to help. My daughter's first school uniform was bought by my mother as I was not working at that time. I ended up working in East London because I am not a person who likes asking all the time from people. I loved the idea that I had something to help my children with. My children grew up at my mother's house. The older nieces were also there to take care of my children, so they assisted with taking care of the children when I was not there. (Parent interview, 25 November 2020)

The parent participant recalls having to leave her children with family as a result of her having to leave the village to find work in the nearest urban centre, East London, more than 100km away from her village. Having to leave her children was difficult, but she felt she had no choice but leave the village to find work in the city as her children were struggling with being provided with the minimum requirements for living, including not having clothes (Parent interview, 25 November 2020). She left the children with her own mother (Learner 1 and Learner 2's maternal grandmother) and their older nieces. The parent participant indicated that her mother assisted with buying Learner 1's first school uniform as Learner 1's mother was not working (in salaried employment, but worked all day to maintain the household) at the time and thus could not afford it. Learner 1 described it in this way: "…when we were growing up, she was still working and came once a month at home with goodies, food and clothes" (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020). When the mother was working, she was able to provide food and clothing for her children, her own mother, and her nieces. The clothes were very important for Learner 1 as a girl child, who related that it brought a sense of pride to her and that she felt

empowered to walk in the village with a heightened sense of dignity and self-worth (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020). The parent participant's employment came to an end due to her health, as she recounted below, with her distress clear during this segment of the interview:

> When I was 59 years, I left the job due to my health. I applied for government grant at the time. [….] The feeding scheme was very helpful. Our children would receive porridge in the morning, and they also ate lunch. The feeding scheme was helping the children to go to school and concentrate. (Parent Interview, 25 November 2020).

Learner 1 recounts the circumstances of this time and how the feeding scheme at school was crucial to their survival:

> There was a feeding scheme at my school. I really enjoyed that brown bread with red jam. This motivated me to go to school. The lady who was responsible for the feeding scheme was called Mama T. She would often ask for our help and give us more bread as a reward. [….] Every morning, school would start with assembly, where we have to stand in straight lines and sing. Learners and teachers would take turns in reading scripture. [….] When it is too hot, younger learners would normally faint if the assembly took long. It could either be someone from my street or related to me. The causes would be either the child was hungry, or the heat was too much. (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020)

It is clear from the extracts above that Learner 1's family relied heavily on very limited income for their sustenance as a family after their forced removal from the Northern Cape, where they had been a self-reliant family with wealth in the form of livestock and fields to cultivate. In the midst of a deadly HIV/AIDS pandemic which exacerbated the already cruel violence of systemic impoverishment, the parent participant had to leave her young children behind as she moved to the nearest urban centre to engage in salried employment to keep her children clothed. Stopping work due to health reasons forced the parent participant to apply to the state for the basics to raise her children, and was henceforth reliant on government grants to maintain their lives. The parent participant and Learner 1 recalled the feeding scheme at school as a major incentive for her to attend school. For Learner 1 and her peers, this school feeding scheme (nothing more than brown bread and red jam) was life-sustaining in feeding young learners who left homes where conditions of poverty were rife. Learner 1's pro-activeness afforded her more opportunities to eat at the feeding scheme. What Learner 1 describes in the extracts quoted earlier speaks to the conditions of poverty in the rural community which were rife.

Learner 1 paints a further picture of the prevailing conditions of poverty at her home in the rural Eastern Cape:

> When my mom stopped working due to her health, she came back to our village. I saw my mother's efforts to make us happy. She was the type of woman who would hustle for us to have a full Sunday meal. She would come with a frozen chicken from the Somalian shop; this was taken on account. She would find means to pay it. …I respect my mother so much for giving us the small things while she had nothing. I always wished I could do more to help her, but I was just a little girl. Later, being a teenager, one has rollercoaster emotions. I was not proud of our house and the state of poverty. It always brought so much shame to me. The state of poverty always felt like it was our fault that we were not doing enough. As a child I came to appreciate meals so much. After school I visited friends knowing very well that I wanted a meal that I couldn't get at home. I would visit extended family houses or small shops to do domestic chores so that I could get food or nice things. I would help with cleaning and packaging. (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020)

Learner 1 described how living in poverty as a girl child made her feel ashamed, as though these circumstances were her fault. This shows that poverty was characterised not as something structural, but as victim-shaming, accompanied by feelings of shame, self-pity, and humiliation. The mother's sacrifices are visible in the continuous effort she makes for her children despite the various forms of hardship she faced in terms of her health and lack of money at home. During these moments, Learner 1 proactively fended for herself by taking on small domestic chores in the rural community in order to be rewarded with food or things she did not have at home.

Learner 1 further recounts a crucial aspect of schooling in the Eastern Cape under these very hard conditions:

> Mr Jokwana (pseudonym, as with all named persons in the study) was the principal who was very strict. I remember this time that our class was punished because of not cleaning. So, he was the one who came to our class to punish us for that. For an entire week my hand was painful because of the beating. He also punished learners for not wearing ties with their uniforms. It was at this time that I told myself that there was no way that I am going to miss school. So I stole a tie from my neighbour's laundry line. At this time my Pep Store shoe was worn out; the shoe was opened on the one side. And there was no money to buy another shoe as the year was ending. So I had to always buy glue so the shoes can last until the year ends. (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020)

Learner 1's daily journey to school in Eastern Cape was characterised by walking with worn shoes and a stolen school tie. Learner 1's agency amid these circumstances is evident in how she got glue to repair the worn shoes and stole the neighbour's school tie to ensure that she

continued to go to school and avoid punishment by the principal. The school actioned corporal punishment for learners who did not have full school uniform. Learner 1 recalls her hand being painful from being beaten for not cleaning and for not having a school tie. (During the interview, the lowered tone of Learner 1 as she recalled her shame at stealing a tie from her neighbour was moving and difficult to work with. However, as researcher, I was honoured that Learner 1 was able to share this important story, as it helped to show how complex the story of just one young Black female from a poor rural area is. The task of further research is to establish a large corpus of these stories so that a significant body of work can be brought into the research arena so that, at a policy level, the importance of decisive policy intervention is made clear to politicians tasked with using the resources of the country to the benefit of all, most importantly its weakest and most oppressed sectors.)

Learner 1 described the conditions in which she left her mother and family when she moved to the Western Cape:

> I was excited about the journey but at the same time I was worried about my mother and my siblings that were living in an old rainy house which was of my grandparents and with little food. As young as I was at that time, I could do nothing about it. However, I made an oath that "education is the only weapon to overcome poverty and everything". (Learner 1 diary, 05 September 2016)

Learner 1 explains the circumstances under which she left home. It is inderscored by a firm educational commitment, akin to the "pledge" her mother had made her sign, but different in content: "I made an oath that "education is the only weapon to overcome poverty and everything". This is a key moment in Learner 1's life-journey. Education is the lever which she sees as key to undoing the poverty into which she was born, and from she had not been able to extricate herself or her family. She left home in the rural Eastern Cape with mixed feelings: being "excited" and "worried" at the same time, and deeply concerned about the circumstances in which she was leaving her mother and siblings in an "old rainy house" with "little food".

As Learner 1, as a very young person, begins her journey away from her impoverished rural home, she carries with her a firm conviction that her move to the city will be guided by her oath to herself: "education is the only weapon to overcome poverty and everything". Her educational journey to date was anything but positive: it was characterized by deprivation (lack of clothes, educational materials, and, and food). In addition, she had resorted to theft of part

of her school uniform in order to escape the humiliation of her poverty, and to escape the corporal punishment that was meted out to those, like her, who could not afford to buy the goods (in this case, a school tie) needed to be accepted as a 'normal' school attendee. At this point in her young life, the city beckons, but, crucially, it beckons for her as a site of educational possibility. As she leaves her mother and siblings behind, she takes an oath to make education work for to end the cycle of poverty and indignity for her and her family.

Education Aspiration

The fourth theme focuses on the aspirational body, specifically how educational aspiration and navigational paths are generated in the face of uncertainty and constraints. The setting and conditions in which Learner 1 grew up, and the path of educational aspiration that she sets her life to are seemingly non-intuitive. In her home, items such as books were almost completely missing, given that her family's economic circumstances were such that they could not sustain themselves each day, even if just one item is used as a marker of their impoverishment, namely access to food on a daily basis. Given this absence of reading and other educational materials in the home, Learner 1's access to these materials were almost entirely located in the sphere of her schooling. Learner 1 narrates:

> Miss Xeliwe (pseudonym, as with all named persons in this study) would bring magazines for me and my friends. I loved the way she would put together her outfit. [……] Reading magazines and furniture-shop pamphlets helped me to envision a life that I desired for myself and family. I used those magazines to understand prices and used them to get the ability to count as well. Growing up with friends we would use those furniture shop pamphlets and pick the furniture for our families and imagine the houses we could be staying in in the future. We would fight as we picked! (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020)

The excitement in the voice of Learner 1 as she recalled this during the interview was very high. As she talked about this teacher, a person she admired, she recounted, with great emphasis, how this teacher brought magazines and furniture shop pamphlets for her learners with which to complete assignments. For Learner 1 these were sources of inspiration. They were more than documents. They served Learner 1 as artefacts that were instrumental in shaping her social and educational aspirations, through exposure to literacy materials from the

world outside of the classroom. Her social horizons were piqued by the possibilities that access to literacy and these materials could mean for her life. Learner 1 recounts this memory:

> Growing up then, I have always dreamt about a home for me and my family that is warm and protected. I looked forward to sleeping because I could fantasise about this house. University was never a dream at first. I knew I wanted a house; I knew I wanted to provide for my family by giving them a better life. That is a warm home. Dreaming about a house has always been a thing for me. (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020)

The educational materials brought to the classroom by a resourceful teacher, operating in a context in which she had to source these materials when she ventured into the city over weekends, inspired the dreams of a home which Learner 1 describes as "warm and protected". These documents allowed her to dream beyond the circumstances of her home in the impoverished small rural community. Learner 1 also mentions that university was not something she envisioned at first, nor did she have clear plans to pursue a professional career. What was important at this stage was her recognition that education meant much more than learning in a classroom and then reproducing the same patterns of deprivation in spite of becoming more formally educated. Education was beginning to shape her thinking in ways that suggested that education and the pursuit of learning could be life-altering.

Learner 1's initial lack of educational and professional career ambitions were in contrast to that of her mother and her older sister, Learner 2, both of whom had clear goals in terms of the professions they aspired to: nursing in the case of the mother, and teaching in the case of Learner 2. Neither Learner 1's mother, nor her sister, have achieved these goals and dreams.

The same teacher who had provided Learner 1 and her friends with magazines and pamphlets also played a crucial role in influencing Learner 1's family to consider an urban school for Learner 1. The Parent participant elaborates:

> I had a conversation at school with Miss Xeliwe. That particular day there was a parents meeting. She called me on the side. It was after the parents meeting she explained: 'Please send your daughter to another school'. I think Miss Xeliwe could see that she had the potential to succeed in her studies. I wanted her to study as well. My older daughter had mentioned earlier she will take her. (Parent interview, 25 November 2020)

The parent participant notes that the teacher recognised Learner 1's "potential to succeed" and thus recommended that the family assist Learner 1 to relocate to a different school. The Parent

participant played a critical part in initiating discussion with her older daughter to consider the teacher's request.

Learner 1 recounts another teacher's role and influence on her educational vision:

> Mr Zwakele taught me in both Grade 6 and 7. Mr Zwakele had a Mini car that he used as transport for the village people to town; this was his side hustle. It was in this small car he would speak to our parents as a teacher. I remember one particular time we were in his car going back home, when he told my cousin and mother: ;This learner is so bright and will go very far'. On another occasion, he re-affirmed my potential when we would help our mother and cousin's sisters to carry the groceries from his car. (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020)

Learner 1 remembered the teacher re-affirming and encouraging both the learners and their parents in these car conversations. It is quite evident that the actions of teachers in the rural Eastern Cape showed their determination to instill the value of education amongst learners and parents. This motivated the learners and their families to take an active role in their children's education and to consider moving them away from home in the search for a better education and a better life.

As a result of these teachers' encouragement, Learner 1's family took the decision to relocate her to another school where she could continue with her education. Learner 2, the older sister to Learner 1, explains how she found the new school:

> Remember I said in the rural areas there are no libraries, there is no sports, there is no activities, it's just running and netball, and singing. At this urban school there are libraries, they go out; they get tutoring. You will never get tutoring in the rural areas. It is a very nice school. I used to pass there. Every time I used to see the principal. I used to see him in front of the gate when I go to work. [….] When I took her, I knew that school would give her an opportunity to go to university and get a job. With rural schools, it is difficult. (Learner 2 interview, 23 January 2021)

A normal day of work for Learner 2 in the city intersected with finding a school for Learner 1. After moving to the city and being accommodated by her older sister, the first thing Learner 2 noticed about her new school, into which she had been accepted, was the significant disparity in resources between the rural school and the new school. Learner 2 also states that she understood that Learner 1's proximity to an urban school would provide the learner with the opportunity to attend university and get a job, as opposed to her rural schools at which she regarded it would be "difficult". This was a lifetime opportunity for Learner 1 as she could be

able to move to an urban centre, and a far more resourced school, just like her peers and friends whom she had envied for so many years.

Learner 1 describes the family's rural-urban temporary migration history which facilitated her (Learner 1's) relocation to the urban centre:

> It was such a norm for people in my village to go to the city for employment. In each household there was someone who works in the city. In my case it was different as I came for school. My sister decided to take me towards the end of my Grade 8 year. She was willing to take me to go stay with her in the city and continue with my high school. (Learner 1 interview, 20 August 2020)

Learner 1's family members, including her older sister, were already working in the city. This facilitated Learner 1's ability to travel to the urban centre for educational purposes.

Learner 1 described the new school in the city as a place of escape from a rural life. It was also a place where she found academic strength in the midst of bullying, and where she envisioned possibilities for further studies:

> I was new in the school trying to figure my way. Here there were a few learners ill-treating me. Honestly, I do not know what made me a target. The bullies were young Black girls who spoke the same language as me. [….] For me, I started becoming curious about my hobbies. I started going through magazines and cutting pictures and having a journal where I write about my feelings and thoughts. This was therapy; it was a way of releasing. I started becoming obsessed with buying dairies and journals. It became more exciting to write everything and anything. Most of my feelings were written in poetic way. I started writing more poems and allowed those whom I trusted in my class to read my thoughts and contribute in any way. I began to feel a bit comfortable in class as a few of the learners got to know me better. The bullying wasn't that much any more as we had formed a bond now with some of the learners. […] We also formed study groups. We would study after school, weekends, and have exam study sessions amongst us. The drive and the zeal to do well was there. We had one goal now and understood that we could help each other. Remember I had promised my mother that I would do my best. I was the top learner in my village. However, now I wasn't doing very well. This is the shock I had to deal with. I knew I wanted to do well. (Learner 1 interview, 20 August 2020)

Learner 1 describes how she struggled with fitting in academically and socially at this new school in the urban setting as she dealt with the "shock" of the two school worlds which were completely different. In this new school, she was subjected to bullying. It was through these experiences that she began to open up and embrace her new identity as a learner schooling in the city. Personal writings such as maintaining a diary and journalling instilled in her a new

form of courage that made her determined to get to know her classmates and eventually develop study groups in which they could support one another academically. This shows Learner 1's growing educational agency in her new schooling environment. Learner 1 also drew inspiration from the writings of her mother who she described as her "biggest inspiration" (Learner 1 interview, 20 August 2020).

Learner 2 makes reference to Learner 1's determination to succeed at this new school:

> I could even call my sister from the kitchen and say '…come and sit with me. Stop reading. Even on weekends… you read even holiday times. It is now holidays' but she will still continue reading. She never disappointed me. You must know we lived in an area where there were clubs, there are men and drugs. She never went out on Friday night. I remember one teacher from the school called me. He said: 'I must tell you this child is a bomb'. I said what do you mean she is a bomb? He continued to say: 'I must tell you she is like a bomb. She is quiet in the class. She doesn't answer questions, but don't think she doesn't know that answer. Only when you ask her she will give a right answer. She is a bomb. You can see in her results as well and I want her to go to university.' I remember telling my sister this and she said to me 'I am not that brilliant'. Then I said to her, 'you are going to apply'. What made me push her was that I remembered what the teacher said to me… that she must go to university. (Learner 2 interview, 23 January 2021)

Learner 2 recounts how Learner 1 worked very hard at this new school such that the teacher was able to introduce to Learner 2 the idea that Learner 1 should further her studies at a university. Despite Learner 1 working hard, she still did not see that she was good enough to secure a place at a university. Learner 2, though, persisted in encouraging her young sister to work hard to be able to qualify for a place at a good university.

Learner 1 describes how another teacher at her new school introduced the local university's support programme to the school's senior learners:

> It was in Grade 11 when Miss Karuba asked us to write our names on a list. I also wrote my name on that list. I was then one of those learners who was invited to attend a campus tour. It was on a Saturday when the university officer came to fetch us from the school gate with his own car. There was a lot of information that was shared concerning degree programs in the humanities. On the same day we were allocated mentors. My mentor showed us around the campus, and she took us to a lecture room. It was my first time being in a lecture theatre. After this campus tour day I continued to communicate with my mentor who encouraged me throughout my journey in Grade 11 and Grade 12. She would call and ask me how I was doing at school. Again, the following year in July, we were invited by the same people to come to the campus computer lab to apply for a place of study at the university. With the help of the mentors I managed to complete my application. […]. I was not too excited, but my classmates were very

> excited about this. I went through the process of applying but in my head I knew that I did not belong there. I did not because in my head this university was for progressive Black people who come from rich families, very good schools and have distinctions. My friends continued to assure me that I belong. I did not believe that. (Learner 1 interview, 21 August 2020)

In relation to university, Learner 1 felt "not brilliant" and felt that she "did not belong" and that the university (which she calls 'Historically White University') was for "Black people who come from rich families" and from "very good schools". Despite having all these feelings regarding university, Learner 1 still wrote her name on a list circulated by the teacher in class, and she attended and actively participated in university workshops such as campus tours, information sessions, mentorship programmes and the application sessions provided by the university. Learner 1 was constantly encouraged by her teachers, family and friends to engage in these activities despite the overwhelming feelings of imposter syndrome she was experiencing. The crucial issue is that Learner 1 enjoyed the 'feel' of this university, a historically white university (HWU), but her social class and 'race' reared very strongly as she appraised herself in relation to the wealthy people who historically entered HWU's. In the post-apartheid period, wealthier Black students were enrolling, but she was not wealthy, and had no cultural capital in relation to HWU's.

Learner 1 describes the conflicting feelings she had about a different university she had also applied to at the time:

> In January, when the matric results came out, I was back in the Eastern Cape. I remember a classmate of mine called me to tell me that she got a firm offer from HWU, and that she will accept it. I was happy for her. She asked me if I would be accepting the offer from HWU. I told her that am not going to HWU and that I was going to Historically Black University (HBU 1). She convinced me that HWU was a much better place to be at because of access to residences and funding. After this conversation, I began to think more about this option of studying at HWU. However, I was determined to find out why HBU 1 did not send any communication to me. Arriving back in the city in January, I took a taxi to just find out what was going on exactly with my application. The administrator told me that I did not meet the requirements for both my study choices. I was so disappointed. My only option was HWU and Historically Black University (HBU 2). There was no way I was going to HWU and HBU 2. When I told my sister about the firm offer HWU had given me, she was excited as she never wanted me going to HBU 1. So my sister was happy to hear that I will be attending the orientation at University 1. Attending orientation allowed me to learn more about the university environment I was coming into and the different courses. Attending introduction lectures allowed me to make a decision about which courses I would be registering for. I registered successfully with the assistance of the university support members and faculty mentors. Even after registering, I was so scared as the journey felt

> very uncomfortable. I knew that I needed to work very hard in this university environment. (Learner 1 interview, 20 August 2020)

It is evident in the extract that Learner 1 thought through university choices after the meaningful conversations she had with her friend and sister who pointed out the difference in university resources. Despite her feelings of inferiority toward HWU, Learner 1 considered the firm offer from HWU this was mainly influenced by the engagements she had with the institutional resources such as workshops, mentorship programs, funding, residence, etc., This was different from the two Historically Black Universities- namely HBU 1 and HBU 2, firstly Learner 1 describes a lack of communication regarding her application outcome and never emphasizes the availability to university resources in these institutions as something that was easily accessible as potential students.

Learner 1 is at the point where she had just passed her Grade 12 (matric) examinations, and had received the necessary results that allowed her to gain admission at Historically White University. At this crucial and major educational success point in her life, however, she is faced with feelings of self-doubt, uncertainty and indecision. Learner 1 was also uncertain whether someone from her social and class background had the academic ability to succeed academically at a prestigious HWU. It is a serious moment to consider this from one rural Black female's perspective, but perhaps more generally to think about this in terms of the huge number of students just like Learner 1. After leaving home, embarking on a new life in the city, being bullied at the new school, and then forging a successful academic period at the new high school, she shrinks back from accepting a firm offer of a place at a leading HWU in Africa, opting instead for what was once a university for a category of 'Black' people under apartheid. These are important questions, which will be taken up in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has presented the study's findings structured in five thematic areas. All the participants of this study are from the Eastern Cape, in a rural community that was previously part of the Ciskei homeland/Bantustan during the apartheid era. Rurality and its spatial realities are described within a context that is characterised by mass migration, land dispossession, forced removals, demolishing of shelters, and livestock theft. It is within this context that the parent participant and Learner 2 had to live with the traumatic after-effects of these events which left their families fending for themselves amid absolute poverty. Learner 1, who was

born in the post-apartheid period, also defines rurality within these parameters of general poverty and deprivation, which is further exacerbated by other social ills (unemployment, HIV and AIDS, teenage pregnancy) which plague the community, especially its young persons. It is evident that poverty was not only a state of having food or not enough food at home, but that poverty was also a psychological state: how they felt about themselves and these circumstances. The overwhelming aspect of this comes across in the three participants' narratives about their feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and shame.

Learner 1 described the schooling experience in the Eastern Cape rural context as still reflecting race and class. This was evident in the neglect of school infrastructure, insufficient learning resources, overcrowded classrooms, learners still having to walk long and unsafe distances to schools, and the closure of these rural schools under the ECDOE's school rationalisation policies, which shut schools whose learner populations were deemed too low to be feasible in economic terms. Learner 1 described the journey to school as difficult, and the daily experience was one in which, and many of her friends went to school on a hungry stomach, wearing worn out shoes, and, for Learner 1, the still shame-filled recounting of her having stolen a school tie from her neighbour's washing line because her family could not afford to buy her a tie that she had lost. Her narratives of schooling in the poor rural school also includes daily before-school cleaning because of the encroachment of livestock onto the school's grounds and into their hallways and classrooms to clear dung before lessons can start. Failure to participate in these cleaning activities resulted in corporal punishment, which Learner 1 and her friends feared and deemed totally unfair. As a result, many learners left these schools at a very high rate.

Learner 1 described the rural community she grew up in as having a rural-urban interlink where the majority of people were already working in urban centres, although a minority of students had also left for the city to continue their high school careers. Outside of Learner 1, no student from the village had ever attended an HWU.

The teachers in the rural Eastern Cape played a key role in how Learner 1 was able to envision new educational possibilities for herself. The teachers' conversations with Learner 1 and the parent participant had made them realise that the lack of resources of the rural school and the possibility of attending an urban school was a definite possibility, given the fact that Learner 1's teachers had identified her academic skills and encouraged Learner 1's mother to consider removing her from the rural village and moving her to an urban centre to continue her high school career. Learner 2, who was already working in an urban centre, stated that she knew

that studying at an urban school would give Learner 1 many possibilities, including having university campuses close by, and which facilitated Learner 1 being able to access information about these institutions.

In the rural setting, the teacher's magazines and pamphlets played a very important role in the aspirations of Learner 1 as she dreamt of the educational possibilities that were available to her (at this stage, thinking purely in terms of high school and not about a tertiary educational experience as yet) and thereby creating the possibility of securing gainful employment that would allow her to improve the living conditions for her mother and siblings who remained in the village.

Learner 1's educational aspirations were not clearly articulated from the start. However, as she began to settle into city life and her new school, these aspirations grew strongly and she began to display agency in setting up study groups and the like. Here, too, she began to journal her thoughts, generating a large corpus of writing in which she reflected on her life in the village, and, very importantly, writing about her new academic prowess in the new school in the city. This is a remarkable insight into an aspect of her agency and aspiration.

What becomes important in this journey that Learner 1 is on is that she draws courage and strength from the many circumstances she encounters during her struggles in the Eastern Cape village, and from the people around her - family, teachers, peers, and friends – who encourage her when she has no vision beyond that of the village. This demonstrates an important aspect of this study's insights, namely that Learner 1's aspirations were not just important to only her as individual, but that these aspirations were more generally reflective of a community's desire for one of its own. A number of people helped Learner 1 when she felt uncomfortable, discouraged, and hopeless about the possibilities of a pathway out of the misery of daily poverty. This is clear throughout Learner 1's narrative as she journeys from the rural to an urban space, and from a new school in the city to a prestigious historically white university (HWU). Despite all the hardships and trauma that accompanies her throughout her journey to date, Learner 1, to the delight of her older sister (Learner 2) successfully registers at an urban higher education institution.

The study now moves to Chapter 5, which will discuss and analyse the findings of the study in relation to the research questions and the literature review.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

In qualitative research, data analysis includes arranging the data for analysis, which involves condensing the data into themes through a coding process and exhibiting the data for discussion and analysis (Creswell, 2007:148). Bloomberg and Volpe (2018:188) describe data analysis in a narrative study as follows:

> Data analysis in narrative inquiry is analyzed for the story it has to tell. This involves interpretation, which in turn affects how we as researchers represent our research findings. One may construe analysis and interpretation as two separate concepts, as analysis may imply objectivity, and interpretation may imply subjectivity. However, in narrative inquiry, these two concepts work in tandem because the data are analyzed in order to develop an understanding of the narrative meaning of research participants' lived experiences through storytelling, and these meanings are interpreted concurrently with their analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018:188).

In narrative study, data analysis entails the analysis and interpretation of the lived experiences of participants of the study. The researcher's task is to work with the findings from the data, analyse the data objectively and draw insights from subjective interpretation. This chapter provides deeper insights arising from the presentation of data in Chapter 4. The discussion and analysis of the data answers the research questions by using the literature review and conceptual framework to analyse the findings from Chapter 4. The following are the research questions and sub-research questions which this chapter intends to answer:

How does a rural Black female from an impoverished community actualise academic success from an impoverished rural community into an HWU? And the two sub-research questions:

(1) What resources does a Black female from an impoverished rural area draw on in order to produce an aspirational disposition in relation to entry to an HWU?

(2) How does a Black female from an impoverished rural area navigate her complex identities across vastly under-resourced rural educational landscapes, into an urban higher education, HWU spaces?

For ease of access to the narratives which are analysed, there are times when the quotation is repeated from Chapter 4. This is to enable an uninterrupted reading experience for the reader, who would otherwise have had to page back to retrieve these narratives.

Themes

The chapter now engages with the analysis of the data under each of the five-heading themes outlined in Chapter 4, namely (1) Rurality and Spatial realities; (2) Race, Racism and Racialisation; (3) Gender and Gender discrimination; (4) Living/Resource constraints; (5) Education Aspiration. The framing of the discussion and analysis under these headings is to generate a detailed set of insights for each of the themes, and then to take this into Chapter 6 where the analysis will be reviewed, and the major insights from the study as a whole are reflected on.

Rurality and Spatial realities

This study found that the rural context into which all three of the study's participants were born into and grew up in was defined by experiences of displacement, dispossession, and intense poverty, and that these events continue to perpetuate inequalities in the present, as the extract below reveals:

> My family was one of the families that was forcibly removed from their homestand. Their livestock was taken away from them. Arriving in this village they had to begin building their lives again. My grandparents were very big on livestock and farming as they lived most of their lives in the farms and ended up settling in. Being forced to move into another province meant that they had to leave everything from their goats, cows and farms, houses and their land. On the day they were put on a train to King Williams Town they watched their houses being demolished in front of them. This is how my family ended up in the Eastern Cape. Upon their arrival in the Eastern Cape, they asked for land for farming from the government. However, this was profusely rejected as they were told to either choose to stay or go back. (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020)

Walker and Mathebula (2019:3) note that South Africa's rural context is embedded in a long history of colonial settlement, with provinces such as the Eastern Cape suffering greatly as a result of "colonial wars, of labour migration, and of apartheid resettlements to eliminate 'Black spots' in designated white areas". This speaks to the essence of rurality for the vast majority of Black people in South Africa, where rurality is defined by land dispossession, displacement, and deprivation. These are primarily the events that shaped South Africa's rural landscapes, and the consequences of these events continue to perpetuate inequalities in rural South African Black communities.

The aftereffects of such events are ingrained in the experiences of both Learner 2 and Learner 1, who elaborate on the impact of forced removals in their rural community in the Eastern Cape in the post-apartheid era:

> it is usually said that if in a home there is no sugar or tea you must surely know that there was poverty in that house. As a child who was very shy, when I was sent to ask for sugar or tea at our neighbours, I felt embarrassed. There were times where I would clean at my relatives' houses so that I can have food. I would sit there until it was evening. [….] I didn't want to go home as I know the food that I was eating at my relatives was not the same as the one that they made at home. At my relative they cooked meat and nice food all the time. (Learner 1 diary, 5 September 2016)

The severity of poverty suffered by the family of Learner 1 in the Eastern Cape province shows how rural provinces in South Africa which have a long history of colonialism account for 61% of the poverty burden (Walker & Mathebula, 2019:3). Crais (2011:17) attributes this to

> the violence prosecuted by colonial forces during the nineteenth century (which) produced a crisis within African communities that led to long-term irreversible historical changes. These changes entailed the emergence of new forms of inequality and the creation of modern poverty.

This is the context in which Learner 1 develops her educational aspirations, in a complex, non-linear fashion, amid socioeconomic circumstances of absolute poverty.

Race, Racism and Racialisation

Learner 1 discussed her schooling experience in the rural Eastern Cape community:

> Growing up there were two schools. The primary school was 15 minutes away from my house and the secondary School was 30 minutes away from my home. However, there is only one school now due to the rationalisation policy of the Provincial Education Department of the Eastern Cape. The secondary school was closed. While growing up most learners from other villages would leave their local school to come and attend the school in my village. It was normal for learners from other villages to attend school in my village. Some walked while others had organised their own transport. (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020)

This extract shows the dilemma of rural schooling in South Africa. The realities of the rural schools of Learner 1 reflect deep inequalities in the Eastern Cape. The communities and learners within these schools are victims of a rationalisation policy whereby schools are closed down because of poor enrolment and being 'economically unviable' (PMG, 07 March 2017;

Omar & Badroodien, 2020:184). As a result, Omar and Badroodien (2020:184) indicate that "students and teachers are routinely relocated to schools that are supposedly close by but that involve a complete dislocation from established and recognized communities". This dislocation was very much evident in Learner 1's school as learners were scattered after the closure of the rural school, and these learners walked long and dangerous routes as these were the only way to get access to school. This shows how the arbitrary social marker of 'race', here 'Black', condemns Learner 1 and 2, and their community's children, as well as communities outside of their own, to an educational experience that is worlds away from the wealthy schools that provide their students with educational and schooling experiences that have been compared to the best in the so-called 'First World'. Racial equity, particularly in education remains elusive in South Africa (Fiske & Ladd, 2004:232-234).

In this context, Learner 1 elaborated on the state of the secondary school in the Eastern Cape and had described in Chapter 4 the structural factors of the school as dirty and often disrupted by the community's livestock such as cows and goats, hence the classrooms being dirty and filled daily with mostly cow dung. This often impacted the teaching and learning. This would, of course, be unthinkable in a well-resourced school. Omar and Badroodien (2020:186) show that

> …despite the significant amount spent on school improvement in the EC (Eastern Cape) since 1994, the combination of profound inequality coupled with persistent EC Department of Education bureaucratic incompetence means that the vastly different levels of school resourcing that still prevail could actually worsen the social divide for the majority of learners (Omar & Badroodien, 2020:186)

Learner 1's rural schooling experience included learning in an overcrowded classrooms because the school was packed with learners from nearby villages, the overcrowding interrupted classroom lessons. In this overcrowded school, learners had to share textbooks because there was a shortage. Learner 1 recognized the disparity of schooling resources in "academic conversations" with peers, the urban and rural dynamics of schooling resources were very much clear. This shows that there are different schooling resource profiles in South Africa, Christie (2016:442) indicates that:

> …in terms of schooling, provision is now more class-based, and market driven [....] Most of the former townships and rural areas have the architecture and resource profiles that reflect their apartheid past. There are still schools in rural areas without electricity or running water, serviced by pit latrines (Christie, 2016:442)

The education landscape in South Africa is clearly "class-based and market driven". This is very starkly evident in the narrative of Learner 1, in which the socio-economic status of her family played the crucial role in terms of which schools she could access. This corroborates what Soudien (2012:147) indicates in that class provides an important framework for understanding school integration in South Africa after 1994. In this framework (ibid.) social and economic resources are a critical structural aspect that influences access to education.

Gender and Gender discrimination

An epidemic such as HIV and AIDS in a rural community also becomes a strain that many girl learners and their families face. Myths related to HIV and AIDS in a rural community caused fear and panic among girl learners and their (mostly older female) parents and care-givers. This was because discussions about healthy sexuality was seen as taboo in this society (and still generally in many societies), and gave rise to many perverse beliefs, including that if older males engage in sexual intercourse with young girls, these older men would be cured of the dreaded HIV/AIDS virus. Mahabeer (2008:6) and Porter et al. (2011:71) attribute the fear and panic experienced by these girl learners and their families to misunderstandings and myths about HIV and AIDs that were prevalent in rural communities in the Eastern Cape, where young girl learners, particularly those aged 15-24, were more vulnerable to HIV infection or at high risk of sexual violation. This should also be viewed in light of the lack of HIV/AIDS awareness and the tardy and reactionary government response during that period (Geffen & Cameron, 2009:2-5).

This had a huge impact on the education of girl learners, exacerbating the already cruel life circumstances into which they had been born, and from which there was virtually no escape for the majority of these young South Africans. This also speaks, crucially, to the matter of deeply patriarchal societies where young female bodies are an outlet for toxic masculinity. This is evident in the prevailing misunderstandings and myths regarding HIV/AIDS which place young girl learners at the centre of a solution to a global pandemic! HIV/AIDS is one of the multiple barriers mentioned by the World Bank (2021) that hinders girl learners' access to or completion of schooling.

This inflection of the HIV/AIDS social dilemma and its sexual dimension was inserted into the sad moment in which Learner 1 bids farewell to her frail mother and younger siblings, and sets out on a journey away from her impoverished surroundings and towards the possibility of a better future:

> The day before I had to leave, I was sitting on the bed with my mother and we had a conversation. She asked me to behave and study very hard. I was her only hope, and I shouldn't give my sister trouble. She told me that I can sign a document from the councillor. She described this document as a pledge that I would be making of my conduct in Cape Town. I have never heard of anyone before who signed this document. It was my first time hearing about this document. I understood where she was coming from. Her biggest concern was teen pregnancy, because it was quite prevalent in our villages. She was scared that I might fall into that. She told me to "always pray and speak to God". (Learner 1 interview, 20 August 2020)

This extract demonstrates the parent participant's concerns as Learner 1 relocates to the city. As a result of her concerns, her mother requests that Learner 1 sign a document in which she could pledge her ethical behaviour (as a proxy for 'ethical' sexual conduct) in a strange city, far away from her mother's protection. Porter et al., (2010:1097) indicate that "both fathers and mothers showed considerable concern that girls' mobility, whether on the journey to school or in other contexts, could leave them open to attack. Consequently, girls are allowed much less freedom than their brothers: such physical mobility constraints have important implications for social mobility".

Living/Resource constraints

The parent participant had described in Chapter 4 the living conditions under which she raised Learner 1 in the Eastern Cape.

> When I saw that my children did not have clothes, I chose to go work so that I could buy them clothes. Even when I was not working my mother was willing to help, my daughter's first school uniform was bought by mother as I was not working at that time. I ended up working in East London because I am not a person who likes asking all the time from people. I loved the idea that I had something to help my children with. My children grew up at my mother's house. The older nieces were also there to take care of my children. So they assisted with taking care of the children when I was not there. (Parent interview, 25 November 2020)

The parent participant describes how, as a result of being unemployed, these conditions of a general lack of material items for basic living resulted in, as an example, her children not having clothes for school or for general non-school periods. These conditions were sufficient reason for the mother to seek salaried employment and leave her children with her own mother and nieces so that she could provide as a parent. These conditions should be viewed in light of the context of apartheid which tamed Black people's aspirations through its "carefully planned policy of segregated socioeconomic development" (Christie & Collins, 1982:59). This determines how one participates in the economy. An example of this is the parent participant's positionality in post-apartheid South Africa in which she struggles to clothe and feed her family. She herself had been denied an education under apartheid, and her leaving her children under these circumstances were her only options, and she left the village to work as a domestic worker in East London, only returning home once a month. As Chapter 2 has shown, and as the narratives in Chapter 4 have illustrated, the colonial legacy which shifted into apartheid oppression was seamlessly evident in the lives of rural, Black females in post-apartheid South Africa.

Learner 1 gives a clear description of these conditions in the rural Eastern Cape:

> When my mom stopped working due to her health, she came back to our village. I saw my mother's efforts to make us happy. She was the type of woman who would hustle for us to have a full Sunday meal. She would come with a frozen chicken from the Somalian shop; this was taken on account. She would find means to pay it. [….] I respect my mother so much for giving us the small things while she had nothing. I always wished I could do more to help her, but I was just a little girl. Because being a teenage one has roller coaster emotions, I was not proud of our house and the state of poverty. It always brought so much shame to me. (Learner 1 interview, 19 August 2020)

Learner 1 describes these living conditions as a "state of poverty" in which she felt her mother was trying by all means to feed them. However, as a girl child she felt ashamed, unproud, and as though these hardships were her fault. Crais (2011:9) argues that inequality and poverty in the Eastern Cape Province have risen since the dawn of democracy in South Africa. Learner 1 describes the hunger at her home as being at a level that she was borrowing food items from neighbours on an almost daily basis. In the face of these deprivations, Learner 1 agentically took on domestic chores around the community in order to eat.

Learner 1 recalls how these conditions at home penetrated into how she experienced schooling in the rural Eastern Cape. In Chapter 4, she had narrated how school uniform items such as

shoes and ties became barriers to access to schooling, and caused learners, including she herself, to not being able to attend school. The inability of Learner 1's family to buy these basic school uniform items forced Learner 1 into making a terrible choice: becoming a thief simply to facilitate her being able to attend school. This is a searing indictment of the post-apartheid South African state, and society more broadly, as the schooling realities for young Black, rural-born females are related by Learner 1. Many well-intentioned policy studies note that 'throwing money at…' does not solve anything. While the nuance behind this thinking is clear, in that multiple efforts are needed in order to undo the vast educational inequalities in post-apartheid South Africa, what is clear in the narrations of three Black rural females from a small village in the Eastern Cape is that money matters fundamentally in the lives fo the most marginalised. It is a self-evident reality that is often underplayed in education policy work, which shifts attention to teachers (as important as they are) while understating the economic disparities that characterise education for Black females in rural South African spaces.

Education Aspiration

The narratives presented in Chapter 4 show that despite the difficulties that Learner 1 faced, her aspirations are formed in the midst of extreme socioeconomic hardships. The extract below, narrated by Learner 1's mother, usefully shows a key element in the shaping of Learner 1's educational aspiration, and is useful to re-insert here:

> I had a conversation at school with Miss Xeliwe. That particular day there was a parents' meeting. She called me on the side. It was after the parents' meeting she explained 'please send your daughter to another school. I think Miss Xeliwe could see that she had the potential to succeed in her studies. I wanted her to study as well. My older daughter had mentioned earlier she will take her. (Parent interview, 25 November 2020)

This extract shows how the teachers and family members were central to Learner 1's growing educational aspirations, and in assisting her to imagine a world beyond the confines of rural poverty, deprivation, humiliation, shame, and therefore, in educational terms, beyond rural schools and her rural community. It is a teacher who first lights the aspirational path, as it were, for Learner 1 and her family in advising that "another school" be considered. It is well worth noting that this was the same teacher who had given Learner 1 magazines and furniture-shop pamphlets which worked far beyond their functional literacy uses and were taken up by Learner as materials that ignited her imagination and inspired her to envision new and better

circumstances beyond the stark poverty of her rural life. Ebersohn and Ferreira (2012:35) show how vital teachers are in allowing their students to think 'beyond' the present:

> …teachers used relationship skills to access resources and mobilise support (buoy resilience) via acquaintances, and they linked available resources to prioritised needs by means of partnerships. Relationship-resourced resilience thus indicates that teacher partnerships across school community systems were instrumental to initiate, provide and sustain support services aimed at responding to needs (Ebersohn & Ferriera, 2012:35).

The teacher was willing and able to link available resources to Learner 1, enabling Learner 1 to initiate a pathway that would see her use her individual strength, ambitions and aspirations to 'go beyond'. Moreover, the teacher was focused in terms of instilling the value of education in the parent participant, and this is evident in how the teacher suggests an urban school be considered for Learner 1. This was also evident in the narrations about a different teacher who used his car to encourage the family to value the education of Learner 1. Significant about this teacher, who used his car to supplement his income by ferrying people the considerable distance from the village to the city on weekends, is that the teachers represent (in the binary male/female terminology) the idea that both genders are pivotal to inserting in the parent the idea that Learner 1 should leave the village in pursuit of ggreater educational possibilities. While this does not undo patriarchal relations in any sense, it does point to, at the very least, the usefulness in Learner 1's life of female and male persons who see her academic potential, and who act on it in terms of encouraging her parent to send her to the city to grasp better educational opportunities for herself.

The support Learner 1 receives is also seen in the selflessness of her elder sister (Learner 2), whose own educational dreams has not been realised. Learner 2's looking out for her younger sister is seen in the following narration:

> Remember I said in the rural areas there are no libraries, there is no sports, there is no activities. It's just running and netball, and singing. At this urban school there are libraries, they go out; they get tutoring. You will never get tutoring in the rural areas. It is a very nice school, I used to pass there every time I used to see the principal, I used to see him in front of the gate when I go to work. [….] When I took her, I knew that school would give her an opportunity to go to university and get a job. With rural schools, it is difficult. (Learner 2 interview, 23 January 2021)

Learner 2 describes how she had 'found' a school for Learner 1 while she travelled to work in the city each day, and passed by what looked to be a well-functioning school that would admit

her sister should she apply. Learner 2 recognised the disparity in resources between the rural school and the new urban school. There was, as stated in Chapter 4, a strong rural-urban interlink in the family of Learner 1, as many adult members of the village had moved to the city for employment. Thus, this established 'route of migration' established by her predecessors gave Learner 1 access to an urban school. This is of great importance in this study: it shows that the aspirational maps of these rural children are operable in relation to other texts such as "rural subsistence, itinerant migrant labour and unemployment" (Fataar, 2015:120-121).

Learner 1 described the experience of transitioning into her new educational setting as she settled in the city:

> Honestly, I do not know what made me a target. The bullies were young Black girls who spoke the same language as me. [….] For me, I started becoming curious about my hobbies. I started going through magazines and cutting pictures and having a journal where I write about my feelings and thoughts. This was therapy, it was a way of releasing. I started becoming obsessed with buying dairies and journals. It became more exciting to write everything and anything. Most of my feelings were written in poetic way. I started writing more poems and allowed those whom I trusted in my class to read my thoughts and contribute in anyway. I began to feel a bit comfortable in class as a few of learners got to know me better. The bullying wasn't that much as we had formed a bond now with some of the learners. […] We also formed study groups, we would study after, weekends, and have exam study sessions amongst us. The drive and the zeal to do well was there. We had one goal now and understood that we could help each other. Remember I had promised my mother that I would do my best. I was the top learner in my village however, now I wasn't doing very well. This is the shock I had to deal with. I knew I wanted to do well. (Learner 1 interview, 20 August 2020)

This extract demonstrates that the journey for Learner 1 navigating between two educational settings was challenging. Fataar's (2015) research conducted on Fuzile Ali shows that the journey of rural learners who seek 'better schooling' in the city is complex. Fuzile Ali's self-formation is a key aspect in how he created capacity to aspire in each space he finds himself. Fataar (2015:127) indicates that Fuzile Ali "was able to bring together the skills, friendships and networks in each space into a formidable capacity to aspire. […] He always sought out ways of maximising the opportunities that inhered in his environments without becoming wedded to them".

Fuzile Ali's story is extremely similar to Learner 1's narrative. Both learners come from disadvantaged rural communities in the Eastern Cape province. Learner 1's self-formation is established regardless of the intricacies of the rural-urban terrains she traversed. She was able use skills, friendships, and networks in each space to create a capacity to aspire. Learner 1

describes how a visit to her school by a group of university recruitment staff instilled in her the (still latent) possibility of studying at a university, which is later supplemented with the help of teachers and encouraging new friends who were also there to support this possibility for her.

In Chapter 4, Learner 1 had described how this possibility of studying at a university was something that was very far from her mind as she felt she "did not belong". She considered this to be a possibility only for learners from well-off families and who had attended well-resourced, well-known schools. Despite these significant psychological barriers, she was able to maximise the opportunities being made available to her and create within her the capacity to aspire within the new schooling environment. Walker and Mathebula (2019:7-8) point to the matter of serendipity at play in the lives of learners from deprived socio-economic backgrounds:

> Their choices seem quite serendipitous: a bursary funder (usually government and usually for teacher education) came to the school; an NGO gave a talk and helped with applications; or a teacher encouraged them in a subject in which they were doing well. [….]. Pathways are circumstantial rather than planned and linear and we do not find the more typical long-term aspiration of middle-class families where it is assumed that university is the next step after school. (Walker & Mathebula, 2019:7-8)

This serendipity described by Walker and Mathebula (2019:7-8) is evident throughout Learner 1's narrative. There were always uncertainties, and her choices always seemed unplanned at first because Learner 1's navigational pathways were not linear as opposed to someone who hails from a middle or upper-class family. The interview extract above demonstrates how teachers, along with family members, played critical roles in encouraging and instilling in Learner 1 the possibility of her pursuing higher education.

Insights from the analysis

The reality of many rural communities in South Africa reflects the larger history of colonialism, labour migration and dispossession (Walker & Mathebula, 2019). Many rural Black learners are born into these rural communities that have encountered these atrocities. The findings of this study, and the subsequent analysis has shown that the displacement of, and deprivation experienced by the family of Learner 1 are embedded squarely within the history of organised, systematic, colonial and apartheid violence in South Africa. Crais (2011:17) states of this horror:

> The violence prosecuted by colonial forces during the nineteenth century produced a crisis within African communities that led to long-term irreversible historical changes.

> These changes entailed the emergence of new forms of inequality and the creation of modern poverty, as well as basic shifts in the ways people organized agricultural production and managed vulnerability. […] The origins of poverty, in other words, are to be found in the violence of colonial conquest (Crais, 2011:17)

Thus, rurality and its spatial realities cannot be only contextualised within the contemporary period without foregrounding the historical context which gave birth to many conditions of rurality in South Africa. It is within this context that all the participants narrated the emergence of the conditions of poverty in the rural Eastern Cape. Amidst these conditions, how individuals, families and communities fend for themselves in these sites of violence with very few resources show their resilience, agency, and refusal to stop their dreams, even if these will be realised only by future generations. It was clear in the study that very different modes of survival and future-orienting visions and modes were utilised by each learner as they each navigated their domains of impoverishment uniquely. However, the generational anguish and emotion had never left these learners as they spoke of the circumstances of displacement of their grandparents who had lost their economic resources, such as land and livestock, and it was also clear that a deep, lingering sense of loss, sadness and anger were still very much part of them. This was evident on their faces and voices as they re-lived and narrated these painful memories.

This study, through the voices of three rural Black females of different generations, has been able to insert the "emotions especially the feelings of people who suffered the oppressive effects and affects of that system" as these have been excluded in the histories of apartheid (Field, 2012:1-2). Field (2012:11) calls these "evocative memories of place" which are a range of emotions that rise up as result of remembering and imagining. These experiences are symbolic of dehumanisation; families are stripped of their dignify and left to fend for themselves.

For Learner 1, born in post-apartheid South Africa, poverty was not only a state of physical deprivation, but it was also about the shame she had been made to adopt in terms of victim-blaming; and self-blame and self-pity about the conditions in which she had been born. This clearly shows that how oppressive systems of colonialism and apartheid continue to severely affect young generation of Black persons as these systems shaped rural economies in South Africa (Crais, 2011:38). The generation of young Black people born in post-apartheid, like Learner 1, are deeply affected by these legacies, and the psychological traumas are ever-present as they navigate the present.

The place of early education for Learner 1 was in the rural Eastern Cape, characterised by grossly under-resourced schooling facilities. This place, the run-down rural school in this small village in the Eastern Cape, is symbolic of the elements of racialised apartheid education which foremostly differentiated education provision by 'race'. This apartheid education system underinvested in school facilities and other schooling resources in Black schools (Fiske & Ladd, 2004:234-235). Despite the larger investment in education provision for Black schools and education in post-apartheid South Africa, the quality of education provided to most Black learners is of poor quality (Fiske & Ladd, 2004:234-235). Young people like Learner 1 are deprived of basic services such as proper infrastructure in the form of classrooms, efficient and safe toilets, electricity, water and learning materials in the schooling system.

These conditions speak to inferiority in the resources profile of the rural schools in the Eastern Cape. Racial equity remains elusive as resource inequalities prevail in mostly rural South African schools. Rural schools and rural communities still reflect the legacy of racial discrimination in South Africa as the majority of learners in these areas are Black, and conditions are deeply inadequate. According to Omar and Badroodien (2020:185) these inadequate resources in rural schools point to a "resource-deficit discourse" in South Africa's impoverish schools, which sits right at the heart of "classical political economy". Schooling in this country has taken on a class character (largely still co-inciding with 'race') with social and economic resources as the key factors which determine one's schooling attendance and success (Soudien, 2012:124).

Learner 1 saw her classmates and close friends leaving the rural school to attend other schools in Black urban townships and leafier urban areas. The data In Chapter 4 showed that parental labour migration played a significant role in the relocation of Learner 1's classmates and peers as their parents worked in towns and cities. This is the reality of the Eastern Cape as a former labour reserve, and thus rural-urban migration is embedded in most people's lived experiences (Bank et al., 2020:105). There was a very strong rural-urban interlink in Learner 1's family as well, as several family members had temporarily relocated to the city for employment. Importantly, for Learner 1, this job-seeking migration route now facilitated for her a new educational pathway. The findings of this study demonstrate that the issue of rural schools not being 'economically viable' under the ECDOE's school rationalisation policy does not address equity issues. If rationalisation (a euphemism for school closure) is to serve any positive educational purpose, it has to result in better rural educational provision in the schools that remain. The situation on the ground hardly attests to this.

A further aspect that is noteworthy in this set of insights at the end of the chapter is that organised religion, in the form of Christianity, played a key role in the social constructions of Learner 1, Learner 2 and the parent participant's gender identities. This was mainly influenced by the context of Christianity brought by the missionaries as part of the 'civilising' imperative of the colonial project (Tabata, 1960). This religious mission radically shifted social understandings of female sexuality in the colonial Eastern Cape (Thornberry, 2019:285). Christian morals and principles were at the heart of the home lives of Learner 1 and Learner 2 as girl children in the Eastern Cape, and these religious values are also embodied in their selves as they navigate different geographical and educational spaces. The grandmother and parent participant's social understanding of what constituted 'acceptable behaviour' was, in the main, guided by Christianity as they both grew up in a context of post-missionary education that was prominent particularly in the Eastern Cape and Northern Cape.

The strong Christian ethic within this family was also influential in how they dealt with life-threatening social issues such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the matter of teenage pregnancy which was rife in the rural Eastern Cape. The parent participant often cautioned Learner 1 and Learner 2 about acceptable sexual behaviour as she had troubling concerns about the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and the high rate of teenage pregnancy in the village. The issue of high rates of teenage pregnancy, as outlined in this chapter, were greatly increased due to the myth of older infected men being cured of HIV/AIDS by engaging in sexual intercourse with young females, most often under conditions of non-consent. This contemporary epidemic of sexual violence in South Africa dates back to the history of rape in South Africa, especially in the colonial Eastern Cape. Thornberry (2019:23-24) states:

> In the Eastern Cape, a crisis of masculinity due to colonial pressures has been variously diagnosed in the 1840s and 1850s, the 1890s, the 1940s and 1950s, and the 1970s. [….] An ongoing crisis of masculinity has been one of the defining features of modern South African history, with important consequences for sexual violence (Thornberry, 2019:23-24)

The narrative of Learner 1, who grows up in a deeply patriarchal rural community in the Eastern Cape, show how sexual violence moves across centuries into the mid 2000s. This moment in the narrative of Learner 1 shows how young girls who access schooling in rural areas are "vulnerable to gender-based violence such as rape, femicide, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation" (TEARS Foundation, 2012:10).

In addition, the aspirations of Learner 1 are formed amidst many living constraints including going to school on an empty stomach, wearing worn-out shoes, and stealing a neighbour's school in order to make sure that she does not miss out on being able to attend school and to avoid the fear of being punished by the principal in the Eastern Cape for not wearing a full uniform. This, then, is the cultural context in which Learner 1's educational aspirations are formed.

The study now moves to the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This study utilised a narrative research methodology to explore the lived educational experiences of a post-apartheid Black Female learner from an impoverished rural community in the Eastern Cape as she navigates complex social realities. Three Black African females were interviewed; Learner 1, a graduate of a/n HWU; Learner 2, who has secondary school; and the parent, the third participant, and mother to both Learner 1 and Learner 2. Data was generated from semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews conducted with the three participants. The audio-recordings were transcribed to produce the texts from which the data was presented as the findings of the Study (Chapter 4). The diaries of Learner 1, which she started soon after moving to the city and into her new school, were very useful in providing a deeper and poignant understanding of Learner 1's educational journey and aspiration across two discrete spatial realities: a profoundly impoverished rural reality, and the new urban space to which she moves to seek a new life which is centred around better educational opportunities. The main aim of the study was to understand how a rural born South African female learner navigates between two geographical, educational and social spaces, and the range of 'resources' available to her to aspire for academic success. The research question and sub-research questions driving the study were:

Main research question

How does a rural Black female from an impoverished community actualise academic success from an impoverished rural community into an HWU?

Sub-research Questions

(1) What resources does a Black female from an impoverished rural area draw on in order to produce an aspirational disposition in relation to entry to an HWU?

(2) How does a Black female from an impoverished rural area navigate her complex identities across vastly under-resourced rural educational landscapes, into an urban higher education, HWU space?

This final chapter of the study will offer its reflection in two main sections. The first section draws on key insights from Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 which presented and analysed the narratives of the rural Black females from the Eastern Cape. The second section reflects on key components of the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3), which are (1) positionality and potential bias; (2) limitations of the study, and (3) narrative research methodology.

Main insights from the data

In Chapter 4, Learner 1, a graduate of a/n HWU, described her birthplace in the rural Eastern Cape as being a consequence of many violent events in South Africa's past. These violent acts included the forced displacement of her community, including her family, the destruction of property built over generations; the loss of their wealth in the form of their livestock which was taken by the apartheid state when they were forcibly displaced; and their painful relocation to, and, in real terms, abandonment to the elements in the Ciskei, a Bantustan. It is within this racialised context of apartheid that Learner 1 and Learner 2 described their educational and other lived experiences as embedded in conditions of extreme poverty in the Ciskei.

It is clear from the narrative of one South African rural learner (Learner 1) that it is not possible to consider the present struggle to live a decent and dignified life in post-apartheid South Africa by dislocating the present from the savage legacy of colonialism and apartheid. From a single narrative, and one home in a rural village in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, Chapters 4 and 5 have shown how conditions of impoverishment in this space are generational in nature, and are conditioned by history. In this study, crucially, apartheid and the post-apartheid democratic state were contextualised within the contexts of colonialism. It is clear that there is a strong correlation between these contexts: existing inequalities and many economic circumstances in contemporary South African rural communities are shaped by the country's history of colonial violence. As evidenced by the narratives in this study, this history has continued to “powerfully shape” the economic circumstances of, especially, the poor and vulnerable (Crais, 2011:162). This study has shown how the parent participant frequently had to find the means to feed and clothe her children, and these young female learners develop their own agencies to feed themselves in the rural Eastern Cape province. The study shows how powerfully the realities of deprivation and systemic impoverishment generate emotions of shame and guilt in all the participants’ psychological makeup. For Learner 1, the profound impact is dehumanising, and it follows her at every step in her life, including the moment when

her aspiration to enrol at a university is undermined by the intensity of the imposter syndrome that almost removes from her this moment of possibility.

Learner 1 navigates these unforgiving spatial realities as she attends school in the rural Eastern Cape. She goes to school on a hungry stomach, shorn in worn-out shoes, wearing around her neck a stolen school tie, learning in overcrowded classes, experiencing lessons that are frequently disrupted by the movement of livestock through the school and into the classroom, navigating learning in a context of a huge lack of learning materials, and frequently being physically punished for not performing tasks that, in most 'normal' schooling contexts, would be the task of designated support staff. As a young female learner, the challenges experienced by Learner 1 are such that she lives in constant worry and fear about sexual assault as a result of myths and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS, which frequently resulted in the rape and subsequent teenage pregnancy among young female learners in the rural community. This study, completed as the world enters a fourth year of another pandemic in the form of Covid-19, allows us to reflect on the tragic starting period of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa, during which thousands of people died and child-headed households became a sad reality in many rural areas in the country. This study demonstrates that memory can never be erased in the minds and bodies of learners, families, and communities. This study, then, shows how these circumstances have the dual potential to crush the aspirations of impoverished young people in the rural spaces of South Africa, but simultaneously can be a catalyst for forms of agency that can facilitate young rural dwellers to seek educational possibilities elsewhere. As a note, it is stated here that this study does not hold the view that this is entirely positive. Rural spaces are robbed of their young because of the absence of life-possibilities in these spaces. In terms of policy, this study notes that the binary rural-urban must be undone, and living in both spaces must be urgently addressed through proper infrastructural rebuilding of South Africa.

The rural secondary school of Learner 1 was also one of the schools that were closed as a site of learning and teaching down due to the rationalisation policy implemented by the ECDOE. The impact of this rationalisation policy is that learners in these so-called 'unviable' schools are forced to choose between leaving school altogether or walking long distances to nearby villages to attend school (Omar & Badroodien, 2020:184). The reality underpinning this is that rural schools continue to be neglected, and such policies exacerbate the problems faced by young people as their already-compromised education experiences are further undermined.

This was evident in the rural community in which this research was conducted: its secondary school was closed; the school yard and classrooms had become a kraal for village cows and goats, and learning and teaching was often compromised by these and systemic under-resourcing, including the provision of learning and teaching materials. Given decades of a lack support from the education authorities, the land was desolate in spite of the best efforts of the community to maintain the grounds. Trees had grown massively next to the school building perimeter. Those who walked past this school saw daily the reality of a school that was seemingly in place, but unsupported by the state and province in any meaningful sense. Abandonment and deprivation, then, are explicit features of Learner 1's experience of schooling in the village of her birth.

These conditions described by Learner 1 in rural Eastern Cape schools attests to the view that the "continuing salience of class, race and rural-urban divides in structuring access to education" is a grounding feature of the educational experience in Learner 1's village (Meny-Gibert, 2018:67). Her peers' relocation to schools in the city, and later Learner 1's relocation to the city in which her sister works speaks to the resource inequalities in rural schools that drives away many learners. This is not natural or to be valorised: it speaks to a 'running away from' systemic conditions of neglect and deprivation, rather than solely as an agentic and therefore socially positive migration. It also speaks to the centrality of class (still largely correlated with 'race'') as a key social determinant in post-apartheid South African educational opportunities. The study shows how social and economic resources play a key role in facilitating the rural-to-urban educational-opportunity-seeking migration of young people, including Learner 1.

This study shows that quality education in South Africa for all learners has not been realised. This remains elusive (Fiske & Ladd, 2004:234). The conditions under which young people like Learner 1 are educated are far from the ideals of democracy and social justice that the South African Constitution seeks to promote (Sayed et al., 2017:39). The education in the Eastern Cape's rural schools is simply a reflection of poor-quality education: a lack of resources in schools continues to frustrate the development of many generations of young Black people. This study, then, advocates that policymakers, policy analysts, and all education and social stakeholders need to revisit the often admirable tenets of South Africa's 1996 Constitution. This policy reflection has to answer a simple question and its logical extension: are the educational opportunities presented to Learner 1 and experienced by her, and young rural females like her,

a realisation of the ideals of democratic participation as enshrined in the Constitution? If not, how will this be realised, and what is the timeframe for this?

The voice of this one learner opens our eyes to the many complexities that rural learners face as they aspire in relation to educational opportunities in post-apartheid South Africa. The voices of three rural Black females from the Eastern Cape have shown that a small, localised study can be inserted powerfully into an exploration of educational provision and opportunity in the present, and locate this historically. As this study shows, the narratives of three rural female dwellers show that their 'present' is not de-linked from their past, and that their lives, in a sense, simultaneously embody the present, and the apartheid past, and the colonial period.

This study demonstrates that aspirations for rural-born learners are met both in times of extreme uncertainty and in moments of extreme resilience and vision. The paths to academic success are exponentially more challenging for poor rural learners to navigate than their young peers in better-resourced urban centres (although the study is alert to the fact that these urban spaces are not equitably resourced in relative terms - 'townships' versus leafy suburbs). Importantly, Learner 1's ability to grapple with economic hardship and personal dilemmas, and eventually use the resources available to her, plays a significant role in how she achieves access to academic spaces that appear remote at the moment of her birth, due to systemic and historical factors as have been set out in this study. The narrative of Learner 1 demonstrates that, in spite of severe constraints, academic access and success is possible; but not in ways that are part of a visible and well-articulated range of social and economic possibilities as she enters the world.

Researcher's positionality and potential bias

An important outcome of this study has been a reflection of positionality in research. As pointed out in Chapter 3, this researcher's origins are very much in line with the gender, 'racial', economic, educational, and spatial identities of this study's participants. Like the participants of this study, I was born in a rural community, raised by a community of rural Black women. I, too, schooled in both rural and urban spaces in South Africa. Similarities in biography, I believe, helped to facilitate a series of semi-structured interviews that were characterised by rigour and by feelings of trust, as the lived experiences of the participants were not being 'judged' by remote 'outsiders', as it were. In positive terms, this identification of the researcher with the study's participants, I believe, assisted in the study providing data from the participants that are meaningful. This has hopefully resulted in a study that foregrounds the voices of the participants. In practical terms, foregrounding the participants'

voices was achieved through a deliberate process of inserting text segments from their interviews that displayed context, insight, as well as the narration of events and descriptions. The research supervisor provided an objective assessment on these chapters to ensure that participants were not harmed in any way or that the data was not generalizable to subjects with similar characteristics.

It is the hope of this researcher that this study has also delivered a sound analysis of their narratives in relation to a range of literature that has been eye-opening for this researcher. When this study was first conceptualised, this researcher was not aware of the range of writings about the Eastern Cape and its colonial pasts. It may be useful to note here the serious impact on my psyche that followed my finding Thornberry's (2019) Colonizing consent: rape and governance in South Africa's Eastern Cape. After reading a few pages of this text, I emailed my supervisor and indicated that I could not read further. What has become clear to this researcher, in discussion with my supervisor, friends and other researchers, is that re-entering a research setting in which deep pain has been experienced is traumatic. However, what has become very important to this researcher is the idea that neglecting such studies because of the fear of venturing back into such painful spaces does not advance the research that is needed in order to fill in the many gaps that exist in the South African academic literature. In simple terms, this researcher's life has been changed in fundamental ways because of this study, and her own life has been contextualised in ways that, just a few years ago, were invisible to her. In this context, the researcher has tried hard to ensure that the narratives of the participants are analysed not in relation to the researcher's whims and common-sense, but explicitly in relation to the literature in Chapter 2. This can be seen in Chapter 5, when the discussion and the analysis places the narratives of the participants in 'conversation' with the literature in Chapter 2. In this way, the matter of potential bias in the study has, hopefully, been positively addressed in that the analysis is grounded in the literature which frames this study.

Limitations of the study

The findings of this study are limited in their generalisability due to the small sample size (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018:563). This sample size has, however, allowed for in-depth interviews that generated rich data, thereby facilitating the development of meaningful insights arising from the participants' narratives in relation to the literature in Chapter 2 of the study. As a result, it is hoped that the findings of this study provide a rounded overview of Learner 1's lived educational experiences, including how she aspires, navigates challenges, and

eventually achieves academic success in relation to graduating from a/n HWU with an undergraduate degree.

It is necessary to reflect here about the reality of the Covid-19 pandemic and its interruption of the progress of this study, and the interruption of many studies of this researcher's peers and friends. Due to the socially-responsible lockdowns declared during the peak phases of the Covid-19 pandemic, various challenges were encountered in the data-collection phase of this study. As the researcher was about to enter the field in the Eastern Cape in early 2020, face-to-face interviews with participants were delayed. I was unable to enter the field immediately because of the lockdown regulations and guidelines. It may have been possible under different circumstances to have conducted the interviews remotely (from urban centre to rural village), but the study's aim of conducting the interviews in the comfort-space of the interviewees, as well as the inhibiting infrastructure and economic constraints in the village did not facilitate this possibility. Even when the opportunity to conduct interviews finally presented itself once the 'hard lockdown' protocols had been eased, I had to consider a number of constraints. The first constraint was that because the research setting was a rural space, the participants' health and environment had to be considered during the COVID-19 period. Thus personal protective equipment (PPE's) in the form of masks and face-shields for the researcher and participants (provided by the researcher as the village community did not have access to or the resources to purchase PPE's), as well as sanitising fluid and sanitised wipes were utilised during the interviews. The second constraint was physical access to the vital university library resources needed to progress the study, the writing spaces that the university library provided, and the required quiet space in which to think and write. It is noted that virtual library resources were available while the library itself was closed during lockdown, but this researcher's experience has been that physical access to libraries in the way described earlier was crucial to the progress of this study. This was a challenging period for this researcher, who relied on, and still does rely on, the university library space as the space in which all my academic work is completed. Thankfully, this study has been completed in the university library space now that the lockdown restrictions of Covid-19 protocols have been eased.

Narrative research methodology and possibilities of further research

This study provides an exploration of the deep and meaningful narrations by three participants of the study in relation to their understanding of the educational contexts and possibilities in deprived rural spaces in South Africa. It offers a way of thinking about the educational subjects, geographical, educational and social spaces in which the subjects "created a counter narrative

in education" (Omar, 2015:333). Chapter 4 of this study presented textual segments from the interviews which foregrounded the participants' own voice in their narrated contexts. The narrative research methodology utilised in this study enabled the exploration of the lived experiences as narrated by three female, rural-based Black females, whose voices have been systematically erased under overlapping oppressions, including patriarchy, coloniality, apartheid and, sadly, into the post-apartheid present. It is noted that the oppressions listed previously are not discrete elements, and operate across their discursive, temporal and material framings. It is therefore hoped that the study can contribute meaningfully to the field of the sociology of education in South Africa. More specifically, it is the hope of this researcher that the study contributes to our ongoing quest to better understand the lived experiences of a segment of society whose voices have been attempted to be erased from academic inclusion and intellectual scrutiny. The narrative of the three Black females from the rural Eastern Cape province of South Africa show, *inter alia*, the interplay of education policy, history, gender, 'race', class and biography in facilitating or undermining educational success in post-apartheid South Africa.

It has been a humbling experience to not only interview the participants, but to be with them in their modest, welcoming homes as I conducted the interviews. I do not take for granted the outpouring of their thoughts and insights, giving of their time, and their immense generosity during this time. It is important to acknowledge this here. The research experience involved the sacred humanness of all the participants, and hopefully such a study will be a reminder of being alert to the need for an overall ethic that should accompany all such research. The narrative of Learner 1 is one window which offers an insight into the life of one learner whose complex, non-linear educational journey is intertwined with the legacy of colonial violence, the subsequent apartheid dehumanisation, and ongoing marginalisation, albeit with new hope, in the post-apartheid landscape. The study has, hopefully, challenged and pushed boundaries in terms of considering "economic, cultural, political and social manifestations" in education, further urging future research studies to take on the same challenge (Novelli, 2016: 859).

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