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LIVED EXPERIENCE

A study of young people said to be missing in Education and Training yet not found in Employment, Kagiso, South Africa

Viwe Gift Luxomo

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg

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Abstract

Non-participation in education, training, and employment (NEET) has become the dominant feature in young people's lives. At its launch the notion of 'NEET' was branded as a possible panacea to the identified as 'social exclusion' outcome. In many ways, this idea assisted to reinsert young people in the dominant policy discourse. However, it has not helped to address their social and economic needs. In this doctoral study, I produced substantial descriptions drawn from the qualitative research approaches that focused on the lived experience of the township youth. I explored the perceived possibilities, choices, expectation and meaning the so-called 'NEETs' attach to non-participation in education, training, and employment. I made use of interpretative phenomenology to conduct the interviews with the seven young people and fifteen persons in their circles of intimacy. The findings pointed to the outstanding barriers for accessing education, training, and employment; delayed transitions on post-school possibilities; and the constrained transition into employment. I found the construct of *symbolic violence* to be providing insightful tools for making sense of the wider challenges for accessing opportunity in South Africa, while *care* helps us to [re]imagine a world (society) that is committed to make the possibilities for human functioning ready-to-hand. These helped me to develop a model for approximating the possibilities that are intended to shift current preoccupation with discourse of skills towards *care* for humanity. I argued that raising the expectations on what young people must give to their societies, without adequately equipping them to meet the emergent demands, set them up for failure. A study of the youth experiences at a time when non-participation in education, training, and employment is increasing is important and opportunistic for three reasons: It is topical, relevant, and timely.

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Declaration

I, Viwe Gift Luxomo declare that this thesis is my own work. It has not been submitted for other degree in any other university. It is submitted on the **08th** day of **February 2022** for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.



……

Luxomo VG

Acknowledgements

This report is based on years of research and is devoted to understanding the lived experiences of non-participation in education, training, and employment. The list for the number of people who were directly and indirectly involved is endless: It includes different editors from proposal stage up to a completed thesis, young people and their circles of intimacy who participate in this study, fellow students, different academics at the University of the Witwatersrand, friends, and family members. I am profoundly grateful for all acts of kindness and help I received.

Foremost I wish to express extraordinary gratitude to my current supervisor (Prof. F. Maringe) for patience, guidance and allowing me space to think.

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Lastly, we are indebted to God Almighty for preserving the lives of the conquered African people against odds of slavery, violence, and barter, from mercantilism to neo-liberal capitalism. Thus, are confident that He will not cease to enable and ennoble these to transcend the 'wretched of the earth' status and getting lost in other people's memory, as 'the forgotten'.

Through this 'journey' the following text caught my attention:

> Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labor. Eyes and heart set on dishonest gain, shedding innocent blood, oppression, and extortion (Jeremiah 22:13, 17).

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Abbreviations

AfDB	The African Development Bank
ANC	African National Congress
CASE	Commission Agency for Social Enquiry
CoI	Circles of intimacy
COVID 19	Corona Virus Disease
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DIF	Do it for
DIY	Do it yourself
EET	Education, Training, or Employment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HCT	Human capital theory
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IFEP	International Foundation for Education with Production
ILO	International Labour Organisation or Office
JEP	Joint Enrichment Project
LE	Lived experience
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals

NEET	Not/Non-Participations in Education, Training and/or Employment
NYP	National Youth Policy
PCET	Post compulsory education and training
PSET	Post school education and training
SA	South Africa
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UK	United Kingdom
UN	The United Nations

Preface

In the beginning God worked. Moreover, the Christian Bible informs its readers that God placed Man in the Garden to *dress* it and to *keep* it. For this group, work was always part of humanity from the very beginning. The principle being that essence precedes existence. The Genesis idea behind human presence was active participation in things that would improve and sustain human and environmental existence. The envisioned humans were not to be idle *thinking* to maintain their existence, but to work. Today hard-working individuals have no guarantee of possibilities for livelihood and sustenance, as access to work has become tenuous. For many individuals, living conditions are devoid of structural relation with any expected future. Young men and women lack useful occupations helping to expand their thoughts to originate and self-determine their own enterprise. In this light, non-participation in EET emerges as an affront to these 'primordial' ideals about earth's inhabitants. Developments that occurred between time when humankind occupied Eden Garden and recent millennium turn, tell a story of how humanity drifted away from ideals of work. Today the increasing mechanisation threatens to seize human work to be shared with robots without due consideration on what will become of humans.

As consequence, hearing of lost opportunities is more common than present possibilities. Yet, inspiring stories are those that alter experiences of humble beginnings into legacies of hope, where blunders of yester years turn into new possibilities and threatening failures into success. In order to position my experience, which may either be in contradiction and on certain instances akin to experiences of the study's participants, I present foremost a short description of my own story and decisions I made in my earlier career trajectory. I do this without offering causal explanations or interpretive generalisations of my experience. I merely set out my relation to current research with no intention to make myself the research 'subject'. This part I have selected sheds light on early

influences, the ways in which I came to conceive of the world in particular ways. Most importantly, it provides insight into my not-so-easy-to-bracket relationship with the current study. Contrary to popular views, my persuasion has been that scholarship is fundamentally biographical. As such, I do not try hard to evade the dynamic interplay of an individual and social setting (Merrill and West, 2009).

I am persuaded and have come to understand research as a way of 'telling stories and remembering our history and understanding how the world works' (Lambert, 2014). Self-analysis is a useful way of making sense of the social forces responsible for shaping personal life trajectory. It reveals ways of social seeing, thought patterns and self-positioning. Mignolo (2009) is right in saying that, 'all knowledges are situated, and every knowledge is constructed'. We can unashamedly write on things that affects us; as Biko asserts, we have freedom of thought (off course *within limits*) to 'write what we like' (in Khunou, Canham, Khosa-Shangase & Phaswana, 2019). The discovery does not necessarily diminish when there are interests (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 3). Bourdieu long argued that those believing in the miracle of 'pure' thought must accept that truth is also owed to prevalent conditions at time of its formation. I am pursuing an epistemic corridor made possible by people's lived experience. The accident of the birthplace provides rich contextual particularity to the human biographies. After all, subjective experience is the bedrock for all human existence and foundational to all human sciences (Giddens, 1984, p. 2). Below I give my brief biography.

P1. Personal story

The names that appear on my identity document are Viwe Gift Luxomo. Viwe literally signifies *to be or being heard*; Gift impresses the idea of a present, talent, or skill. However, Luxomo connotes a tendency to take things to a higher plane. At birth, my parents expressed their wish for

me to live a meaningful life by giving the name Viwe. This name obligates me to tell worthwhile stories about human life. To that extent, current work is about honing my abilities to make stories known, so they can be 'heard'. Through repeated action, my skill will sharpen. My readers reserve the right to judge if this story contribution is in any way *gift* or loss to humanity. My task on earth is to improve the expertise of storytelling, so that one day I will stand with a higher pitched voice that can be heard (*ide iViwe bethuna*). This is my humble calling. Contrary to widely held belief that, 'the called' always know about their calling, I knew about mine very late. Now I know that auditory faculties work with sound; if not made, there will be no hearing. In this work, my voice may come across as low-pitched. My hope is that with more practice it will be louder and clearer.

P1.1 Place of birth

I was born in Soweto in the mid-seventies at a time when youth resistance against the apartheid policies that sought to implement Afrikaans as medium of instruction in 'black' townships schools was at its prime. In fact, 2021 marked 45 years since June 16, 1976, of the Soweto youth uprising. This resistance opposed the apartheid government's strategy that sought to perpetuate a racist capitalist regime and to maintain racial supremacy through the forceful imposition of the settler's language (Afrikaans) as medium of instruction in segregated Bantu Township schools. At the time, my family had no stable home; this reality imposed on us semi-urbanites status (Bonner, 1995). We moved from one house to the next, pitching and removing our backyard-shack. The prospect of owning a house was further complicated by the migrant labour policies, which prohibited people from 'Bantustans' (especially Transkei) to stay permanently in the known republic (in which lay the Witwatersrand), and the areas that were proximal to it. The 'houseless' condition of my family added a strain to the marriage of my parents to eventually end in divorce. This breaks up influenced

my general development. I do not include all the details but move to provide a short brief into my education.

P1.2 Early schooling

I commenced my primary education in Soweto, over two decades after the introduction of Bantu Education in 1954. Later, my parents sent me (and my older brother) to proceed with our education at my grandmother's home. It could be expected that by 1980s the indoctrination of Bantu Education was well entrenched both in the teacher training as well as in rural and township schools. However, my father deemed it best to send us back to the home of his parents for two major reasons. One, he hoped that the highly esteemed Cape Education would still be impervious to the political propaganda of those days; and that student revolts would be minimal in rural Transkei. He wanted us to be equipped educationally before we gained political consciousness or engaged in its activities. This concern heightened in 1984 when news came that one of his brothers (Mthunzi Luxomo), who had joined the African National Congress' military wing uMkhonto Wesizwe (MK), was shot and killed in Swaziland. For some time, he succeeded to postpone our exposure to the politics of those days. Unlike our cousins remaining in Soweto, we were not party to the middle 1980s youth revolts.

Life became harsher in Transkei. We lived through subsistence farming championed by my mother while father navigated institutionalised oppression alone in the Transvaal[1]. Sporadically, my mother visited my father. At such times, she left us with different caregivers who gravitated more towards their own homes. Non-permanence of parental presence exposed me to all kinds of social risks including bullying and 'delinquency' at a tender age, but ardent determination to 'succeed'

[1] Prior to1994 SA was divided into four provinces. The geographical perimeter of the then Transvaal included broadly what are now the Mpumalanga (Eastern), Northwest (Western), Limpopo (Northern) and Gauteng (Central) provinces

or make it in life made a difference. In hope to motivate us to get serious about education, my father repeatedly mentioned *ayakhaba amabhulu* (Boers boot or kick). With this, he emphasised that less educated Africans were more at risk to physical abuses and exploitation by agents of the apartheid regime than their educated counterparts were. Later I learnt that white folks shared the benefits that came with Boer brutal violence. And that, the spoils of domination earned from black subjugation were not widely shared with natives. In addition, unlike males in this group who could enter any career in their self-created 'white masculinised world', Africans were limited to abridged teaching and theology.

I was socialised to believe education was a potent means for surviving the difficulties of belonging to the last category of the apartheid racial stratification (1. white, 2. Indian, 3. colored, and 4. African) of those days. At every chance, my father repeated the groan of *ayakhab'amabhulu* to us, even in letters we received in our early adolescent years. It is these letters and many other historical contextual factors that pressured me to resolve very early in my life that education was necessary for my personal and society's liberation. After completing my Matric, I enrolled for an engineering certificate in a technical college. I completed my N6 mechanical engineering training. It came as shock that I just could not secure employment. After doing so much to qualify for the said-to-be scarce-skills career path, nothing came through for me. This frustrated me. Some schoolmates after merely completing the N3 went on to secure a trade, but I persisted to complete all levels hoping to gain advantage. Alas, nothing came through! Now I can read about other persons' faulty-failed transitions (Wyn & Woodman, 2006) and postponed gratifications (Leccardi, 2005).

The relentless hold of non-participation appeared to be my lot. Unable to transcend my rather 'humble' beginnings or lack thereof, I had to accept a depressing reality. These were trying times,

which demanded one to take tough decisions, which included the consideration to wean myself from the attachment to an engineering career path. Circumstances forced me to substitute lofty ambitions with the helpless reality of being a kind of 'NEET' (then without the label). After three years of unfruitful attempts, I had to re-negotiate new aspirations and career directions. I then pursued a teaching career that required four years of training. While itself useful, it also helped to further postpone possibilities of earning paid income. Initially I applied and was accepted in Math and Science teacher training, but when I discovered that the School of Education offered the technical subjects, I moved without advice to deregister and enrolled for engineering-leaning subjects. Little did I know at the time that the standard for the latter was pitched rather too low to support my already troubled dreams. About six months in this course, I realised that it would not help to fulfill my ultimate ambitions.

I tried getting re-accepted into Math teacher training, but it was too late in the year. I received advice instead to reapply the following year. Given my mature age, I had little resolve to waste another year as that had implications for further delaying all sorts of conceivable gratifications, including marriage. I decided to persist with my technical subjects. While in training, I discovered that very few schools offered technical subjects. Most technical schools at the time were becoming comprehensive high schools. Gradually technical subjects were phasing-out despite government's emphasis on technical skills. Needless to mention, I could not secure employment for either technical drawings or mechanical works, but I had anticipated this and had added other majors which helped me to find a teaching job. After this experience, it is now an opportune time for me to study the experiences of others after more than twenty years from the repealed apartheid laws. In my view, the best way for nourishing this exposition is through lived worlds of the young people in question. As researcher, I do relate with the told stories and with the youth that is telling them.

When I began the study, Being-out-of-EET was mostly researched abroad. This being the case, I tried to approach it as 'local phenomenon' (Chilisa, 2012). As far as it is possible, I attempt to use the locally relevant constructs that would be amenable to the local experiences. This said, I am mindful that the different actors acted out different roles to widen the scope of youth research as the general field of study. As such, this imposes an obligation on my part to integrate contributions from countries abroad without losing grip on what counts as reality locally. In the first chapter, I begin by taking an environmental scan of the world wherein being-not/out-of-EET arises. I do this reverently, driven by the irrepressible desire for some greater good. I incorporate the broader issues that might have a bearing on non-participation. I then close the first chapter with thesis prospectus, which provides succinct summaries of chapters.

Chapter 1

Being young and out-of-it (or EET): the existential riddle of the 21st century

> Since no human action takes place outside of established objective reality, and since we want to achieve our objectives, necessarily we must strive to understand the social conditions that would help to determine whether we succeed or fail. (Mbeki, 2006[2])

The question, that asks "So, what do you do" (Ferguson and Li, 2018) is a loaded one. Often it is used to squeeze out occupational information. It also raises expectations on what it means to be respectable, responsible, and relevant person in a community and society. It anticipates the roles that individuals should play to advance their lives and the contribution one makes to the nation. In these terms, being young and out-of-it becomes a conundrum to those experiencing it, but also to persons in their circles of intimacy (CoI). As such, the full understanding of this riddle cannot be explained fully through simplistic quarterly statistical updates and paradigms that are slanted towards positivism. In this research, I considered a segment of this challenge. I carried out this task by interviewing those young people that are said to be OUT of education and training, yet not registered among those in employment (OTEE). Otherwise known as 'NEETs'. I tell their stories in word form (thick descriptions), rather than following what has become the norm of enumerating the groups of those who have recently joined the ranks of the so-called 'NEETs' (Cloete and Butler-Adam, 2012; Smith, 2011; Cloete, 2009). In this study, I take advocacy as my axiological stance to defend the displaced township youth. I used this introduction chapter to preselect the literature I will not find adequate space to discuss later.

While numbers have a crucial role to play, I opted to privilege the people who had undergone protracted period(s) of non-participation in EET. This gave me the permission to account for the

[2] A Nelson Mandela memorial lecture offered at the University of the Witwatersrand on July 29, 2006.

overbearing weight of the [dis]abling colonially structured opportunities on the 'conquered' African majorities. Furthermore, sanctioned approval for me to give an alternative explanation to the dominating neoliberal discourses of the skills lack and stunted economy (Kraak, 2013; Kruss, Wildschut & Petersen, 2019). I illustrated importance of this alternative by [re]telling the stories which were shared by the young people who resided in the peri-urban space often identified as the 'black township', to highlight the *lived experiences* of the so-called 'NEETs' and persons in CoIs. It has been alleged that individuals born in the same (or close enough) year are likely to share the similar experiences throughout their lifetimes, similar quality of education and labour market opportunities, but also similar perceptions on gender roles and understanding of the trade-offs between households and market production. And that, a mix of individuals from different generations promises to comingle the historical with more recent or fresher grasp (Burger, van der Berg, & von Fintel, 2015) of persistent social phenomenon such as NEET. My insertion of the CoIs, serves to recognise that human life is already intertwined with social relationships across the span of our lives.

Theoretically and methodologically this research study launched me to the intellectual circle of interpretive phenomenology (IP) (van Manen, 1990). IP afford us an in-depth understanding of human experiences, through interpreting the nexus between individual's personal and social world (Dilthey, 1985). So that, we can appreciate the embeddedness of human experience on social configurations. In terms of theoretically framework, I carefully commingled theorist from the European continent, one being Heidegger's (1996) who advanced the noble idea of *being-in-the-*[domineering] *world* with Bourdieu's (1997) notion of *symbolic violence* that serves to disclose dominance that tends to be concealed through *misrecognition*. I treated the question on the relevance Euro-American epistemologies for understanding the African realities as an ongoing

debate. An aspect of this debate that occurred to me as worth worrying about in current research was the pervasive usage of western ideas as the only means permissible for explicating the lived realities for those in the South (Cooper, Swartz, & Mahali, 2019). As humans, we experience and get to be impacted by the world's social systems differently (Moahi, 2020). At this stage my interest is not based on recruiting the disciples for either 'Asante (particularism) or Popper (universalism)', but on finding the cross-pollination of the theoretical and methodological ideas (Nyawasha, 2019) that I deemed to be suitable for understanding my considered phenomenon.

I agree with Masoga (2019), who argues that there need to be a cross-cultural balance in which the 'absence' of one form of cultural knowing reduces to promote the equal presence of cultures. Masoga insists that the African presence must be established on all the aspects of human life including politics, economy, knowledge generation and codification. In agreement with this call, in this thesis I try to align the phenomenology lens that initiated in Germany with local experience of the African youth conceptualised as 'NEETs'. In my view this forges the necessary impulse to recognise the contributions of other human thinkers from other locations, thus opening the new possibilities for knowledge-loving people to flourish together. Ethically speaking, it would be difficult (if not impossible) to represent the truth that others hold as their true reality truthfully in their absence. In particular, the young people are generally suspicious of such keenness to represent their public issues (Mills, 1959) in their absence. In this overview chapter the issues I have outlined above are important for framing everything that will follow, I now proceed with the background.

1.1 Background context

According to the United Nations, (2017a, cited in ILO, 2019) there were 7.6 billion people on the planet at the end of 2018. The global working-age population (15 years and older) was 5.7 billion,

but only 3.3 billion or 58.4 percent were in employment. About 172 million were unemployed; this figure adds up to 2.2 billion people or 38.6 percent of those outside the labour force including the groups that were still engaged in education, unpaid care work, and those in retirement (ILO, 2019). Under the current capitalist arrangements paid work has become a key driver for the material well-being, economic security, equality of opportunity, and human development. Yet much of the labour force had limited jobs options, mostly in the informal economy which paid little money and seldom give access to social protection and rights to work. The entrepreneurial activities involved miniscule subsistence activities that are pursued because of the absence of job opportunities in the formal sectors. Only 52 percent made it into industries that have better working conditions and greater income security (ILO, 2019). The report acknowledges that access to employment does not always yield decent livelihoods. In part, this has to do with hoarding of possibilities, such that the less affluent majorities depend on the minorities.

This situation is untenable: Fewer people cannot carry all the developmental burdens for majorities of the world's population on their shoulders. Their stamina would inevitable be crippled by the 'moral burnout'. In this light, Mbeki's words in the prologue provide a crucial point of entry. Humans live as woven together in the web of humanity. Trouble that befalls any part of the great human brother/sisterhood extends to all of us. Human individuals are already part of reality and are immersed in the world they inhabit (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Therefore, it is necessary for us humans to analyse their encounters in terms of the social conditions that their realities proffer. Understanding the emergent factors helps to illumine our creative imagination to fashion other kindlier conditions. As such, social change is incumbent upon social agents to strive for knowledge of the established objective reality. Humans' existence is materially and socially located in the world that these inhabit. The serious man (and woman too, *my emphasis*) is of the

world (Bourdieu, 1997). Since we know this, we should accept that human actions to access what earth has made possible, will be on the planet earth. No amount of expressed or concealed hatred, prejudice and discrimination that can do away with the being-here of others.

The worse-off groups are a given that we (as the slightly better-off) *must* rather choose to accept. Just as they are here today, chances are they will be here again tomorrow and the day after. Mbeki invites human agents to engage with the objective reality with intent to understand the social conditions it produces. Understanding the objective conditions better is mandatory. Failure to develop such firm understanding of the social conditions essentially makes it difficult to evaluate the progress and/or retrogression made. As such, a correct grasp of the encountered conditions necessarily precedes intention to alter them. The success or failure of a country supports and ascertains the merits or demerits of this initial understanding. Prior to this, Heidegger challenged the idea of centrality of thought espoused in Western traditions. In its place he proposed intentional directedness as essential to human activity. He criticised thought as ephemeral and ad hoc in nature (Larkin et al., 2006), but being useful for our intentions to actively engage the world around us. Such that, as humans, we are no longer the mere thinking things but are working entities understood for functioning and involvement. This offers us a possibility to extend the Descardian dictum 'I think therefore I am', into 'I work therefore I am'. The understanding that the human scientists choose to privilege regarding the worthiness of others is shown in their work. Today, the scarcity of the modern version of work has placed human work under siege, I return to this later.

Heidegger depicted human being as *Dasein* which means 'there being' or being there (Larkin et al., 2006). Implying that our very nature is to be there (not out-of-it), we always aspire to be *somewhere*, even as we are always located, and always amidst and involved with meaningful

context. Non-involvement that comes with non-participation is tantamount to social erasure. It is as good as non-existence. In as much as we are part of the world, a meaningful world is fundamentally part of us, better disclosed and understood as a function of our involvement in it (Larkin et al., 2006). This phenomenological slant helps us appreciate the seriousness of threat that non-participation imposes on the very foundations of our being as *working things* identified with our participation. The crisis of non-participation becomes clearer as we take a broader scan into the social conditions. Interpretative phenomenology teaches that even if it might be desirable, it is not possible to remove selves, our thoughts, and our meaning systems from the so-called objective world (Larkin et al., 2006). The social conditions heighten the centrality for human thought-action.

1.1.1 Taking a broad scan to the social conditions

As we launch into the third decade of the twenty-first century, rather than diminishing human problems are towering above us. Progress promised when the 20th century began remains a pipe dream. At end of the century, too many members of the human family languished in the squalor of poverty and depravation (Sen, 1999). Binaries that divide the humans to 'civilised' core and 'savage' periphery remain. The civilised group appropriated the conveniences to itself, some of which were unnecessary, and detrimental to health, vigour and moral strength - even causative of *its* appreciably degeneration (Rousseau, 1997). The pursued progress altered humans in the modern societies. Our generation witnesses the environmental degradation, unsustainable resource depletion, growing water shortages, erratic weather patterns and global warming. Add poverty, hunger, and deprivation; unemployment, destitution, and economic oppression; ethnic, social, and gender inequality; adult illiteracy and lack of access to quality education; and woefully inadequate health care, rising HIV/AIDS scourge and Covid-19; the geopolitical trade wars' intensification,

threatening to plague our planet in an unprecedented way along with terrorism, corruption, and globalised crime (Clammer, 2012; NPC, 2011; Sen, 1999). Contrary to reforms that were envisaged at the millennium's turn, the gulf between human lack and developmental progress is at its widest.

In their millions the young people are not secured in the so-called structures of 'opportunity' (Roberts, 2009). As 'sovereign states' search for possible ways of reshaping the social ecology of their people to respond to the existential riddle that is posed by the emergent realities, the young people's lives are stationed in a state of limbo (Cole, 2011). The United Nations (UN) MDGs set eight goals agreed upon by 191 UN member states which were targeted for 2015. This declaration committed world leaders to the developmental principles. Targets and indicators were considered, and individual countries began to roll-up sleeves to fulfill the envisaged world image. While we were watching for the fulfillment of MDGs, in 2015 we saw new targets serving to shift the goal posts to 2030. Post-2015 targets re-formulate the development nomenclature from 'Millennium' into 'Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 8 of the revised foci is 'sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all' (Elder, 2015). Target setting is not without criticism (see Jansen, 2005). Other expressions identify such practices as the 'social manipulation' of young people's aspiration (Bourdieu, 1997), it raises the expectations that give an impression that their 'world cares'. When in fact, the conditions of being young and absent in EET or out-of-it is made to be their 'demographic dividend' (Everatt, 2008).

At the beginning of the third decade in the year 2020, the world drastically changed due to the corona virus that first erupted in Wuhan, China. One anticipates that the eruption of new crises will push to the backseat much of the development thinking that came at the turn of century.

Human bodies now pose health-related dangers towards each other, and as a result we have been prepared to adopt the 'social distancing' and being marooned into solitude as a new lifestyle, otherwise known as the 'new normal'. However, such anticipated normality poses a serious threat to the human work with which we were familiar, and this might opportunistically usher-in a new kingdom of robots in which machines work and humans watch. The robot's population needs no distancing. They cannot be contaminated by the emergent 'airborne' diseases. These advances may succeed in displacing the humans from work that comes with employment, but not from work itself – since work has to do with the human existence itself. This broad scan shows that the social conditions that are threatening humans have increased, but there is a paucity of research on the human experiences and sense-making regarding the related conditions. To develop an appreciation of the young people's lack of opportunities in their world, we must have an estimate of their presence in the current world. Dealing with the big picture issues in this research overview chapter, helps with reducing the discussions of context related issues in the literature review chapter.

1.1.2 Youth population

Most of the time the reality of youth presence-in-the-world is associated with depleting, rather than expanding possibilities. Some connect this kind of pessimism to the fact that 85-90% of the world's youth population live in Africa, Asia and Latin America best known as the Global South (Cooper et al., 2019; Jeffrey, 2008a), regions from where material resources were and are plundered to develop countries in the present-day Global North. Although many thrived against the set odds of slavery, violence, and barter from the mercantilist to the neo-liberal capitalism, Africans remained at the end as 'periphery of the periphery' (Beaud, 1984, p. 44). The aftermath of land dispossession and exploitation resulted in their lack of possibilities in modern neocolonial structures, and this

manifests intensively on many citizens on the African continent – 'the youth'. The unsettling paradox in the contemporary neoliberal economic transformation is that at almost the same moment when the number of people that were formerly 'excluded' from the mainstream schooling increased, their freedom of access to education and employment opportunities is disintegrating (Jeffrey, 2008a).

In my own view, the youth expansion itself is not bad. The trouble lies with extending the modern foundational structures created without the present youth in mind. As far as the capitalist order is maintained, human challenges have become many and solutions too few. Finding innovative ways to help the bourgeoning youth to play active and sustainable role(s) in communities, societies and economies, and supporting their attempts to improve their personal well-being remains a great concern (UNFPA, 2011). In our continent, the solution(s) remain unknown and policy targeting has not helped in the past. Revising the target date to a time in which we are unable to predict social configuration might not help too. While it may be true that present-day results stem from planning in yester years, the act of postponing human aspirations to an unknown distant future such as Agenda 2063 is unsettling. It conceals lines of accountability later when the projected period lapses. When forecasting population by age, Africa has two-thirds under age 25 (AfDB, 2013). It is believed that this trend will continue until the year 2050. If this is correct, it suggests that solution(s) to African youth challenges would better be people-based, rather than institutional or profit-driven.

In contrast to the international classification of 15 to 24 (UNESCO, 2016, in Bhorat, Lilenstein, Lilestein, & Oosthuizen, 2017), SA's youth population spans individuals aged 14-to-35 years (StatsSA, 2019). We are a young nation not only in terms of democracy, but also in having over

two-thirds of our country's population below age 35 (NYP, 2019). This has meant that the 'youth-like' state of being that is characterised by the dependence on others is much prolonged. We do not know if the future of the present-day youth will be handed down to the robotic dolls, or to able humans who are already present-in-the-world. However, progress that does not first attempt to advance humans remains suspicious. We miss a point each time we try to equate human work to their productivity, when work is about existence (Heidegger, 1996). Humans work to live and live to work (Gorz, 1982). Gorz observes that conception of work under modern-industrial era shifted slightly. Work referred almost exclusively to the activities carried out for wage, no longer an activity to engage in or something that persons do but something one is compelled to do. It is 'an activity carried out for someone else in return for wage, according to forms and time schedules laid down…and for a purpose not chosen by the worker' (p. 1). The productivity talk may not always yield to the desirable outcomes of 'inclusivity' (see Dolan & Rajak, 2016).

The presence of young people in the world presents various gifts and talents, and if tapped into could boast the desired economic growth along with individual *usefulness*. When grouping SA's population into three age clusters, we distinctly note that the batch designated as youth dominates in numbers. In the last census conducted in 2011, those in the age range of 14-to-35 (21 years) were estimated at 37.6% of population or 19.5 million (Stats SA, 2012). In SA, we have exemplified wealth dominance. Majorities (both in terms of age and race) are worse-off than minority groups (Du Toit, 2003). Often the race component is attributable to the twin legacies of colonialism and apartheid, which thrived through discriminating the serviceable possibilities against the majorities. This happened to such an extent that today, even those holding the political 'dominance' do so without hegemony (Reddy, 2016). Similarly, while the young register a larger share of the working-age population than adults aged 35-to-64, those younger than 35 often have

fewer opportunities. SA youth tend to be unemployed. Apparently, they 'lack' strong social networks that may link them to the employment opportunities (Bhorat et al., 2017, p. 2). It is said their prospects of accessing employment are further prohibited by the cost of a job search for youth without savings. Furthermore, firms deem the hiring of young people as riskier, because these have less exposure or 'experience' in the job market and cannot provide proof of extensive job performance (p. 2).

The majority are the African youth who reside in the townships. To this extent, age, place and race are associated with the social determining factors for non-participation in the modern structures of opportunity. Mainly, the population can be divided into three broad age clusters. In terms of this configuration, Figure 1.1 shows a peak between ages 15 to 35.

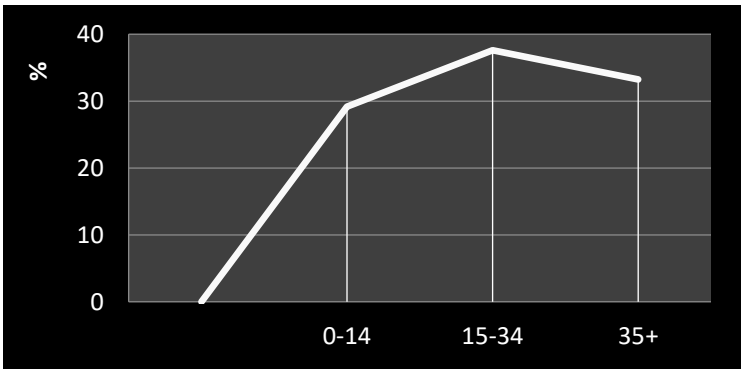


Figure 1.1: SA population by age group Source: Calculated from censors 2011 (StatsSA, 2012)

Given these statistics, it has been argued that expanding a 'demographic dividend' would be appropriate, to allow a larger proportion of the population to participate in the economy (Altman & Marock, 2008; Everatt, 2008). Youth occupies a strategic position: democratically speaking, the country is already theirs. In policy, the twenty-one years age spread (14-35) occurs as a balancing act against an asymmetrical system. National Youth Policy (NYP, 2008) categorically states, 'The motivation for 35 years as the upper age limit has not yet changed since historical imbalances have

not been fully addressed' (NYP, 2008, p. 12). While the policy purportedly seeks to cushion the young people from societal and global imbalances, keeping the bulk of citizenry in youth category might have other implications. For instance, what youth policy dubs as 'safeguard' could be an attempt to portray the state in a positive light. The idea of a 'caring state' and 'nation at work[3] (NPC, 2011) dominated Jacob Zuma speeches, at which he habitually expressed it in IsiZulu to provide emphasis as *siyasebenza*. Trouble was that the material benefits for such a working nation scarcely reached the majority citizenry (Everatt, 2008). Where youth are concerned, the reported working ended with public proclamations.

What we know as sure testimony, the current posture of SA followed years of injustice, such that our past is etched on 'everything' we see and do (Reddy 2016, p. 1). A country riddled by contradictions, that registers high gross domestic product (GDP) which measures the value of economic activity, and a dismally low human development index[4] (HDI) which measures the people's capabilities. It has glaring income inequalities by geography, race, and gender (Smith, 2011; Seekings, 2006). Human experience of being-in-this-world has dichotomy of privileged (accompanied by comfort, fear, and guilt) and 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998), the less privileged majorities deal with vestiges of squalor, frustration, and anger (Reddy, 2016). The new political elites of the African National Congress (ANC) have not resolved these sharp contradictions. In Reddy's words, the ANC 'dominates without hegemony' (Reddy, 2016, p. 107). The economic base remains untransformed and opportunities scantier. In their numbers, the young people are

[3] The 'nation at work' dominated the speech delivered by the President of the Republic of South Africa in his parliamentary opening speech in 2014.
[4] Although SA is said to be among the 50th wealthiest countries in terms of GDP, when it comes to human development it is moved back to 115 among 175 countries.

joining the ranks of those which the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), established under Blair in the United Kingdom (UK), termed as 'NEETs' (SEU, 1999).

So far, I have attended to the need to [re]cognise the widespread constraints in the established objective reality, which frustrates general human progress of the youth majorities residing in the Global South. Furthermore, I have made attempt to locate the emergent youth concerns that relate to participation in EET on broader commitments such as MDGs and SDGs, which espouse to make our inhabited world a better place for everyone living in it. Towards the end of the background section, I merely signposted the broad issues that bedevil young people in this country without delving much into detailed discussion on specific research areas. In the following subsection, my focus is on critical component of research – the research problem. The problem statement defines the root problem, together with other constructs inherent to the problem (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). It helps us understand 'the-what' of the problem from an outside viewpoint. Moreover, it may identify the need for further research, which would help to resolve existing problems in the field. I merely peep into surveys that benchmark youth categories in transition years, to confirm that youth is not a homogenous group but that youth concerns are carried over for long periods.

1.2 Research problem

Youth problems are many. The policy provides for various youth groupings with their varied challenges. These problems manifest on 1) young women, 2) young men, 3) youth in secondary schools, 4) tertiary institutions, 5) school-aged but out of school, 6) the unemployed youth, 7) youth already in workplace, 8) youth from poor households, 9) youth from different racial groups, 10) teenage parents, 11) the orphaned youth, 12) youth heading households, 13) youth with disabilities, 14) youth living with HIV/Aids and other communicable diseases, 15) youth in

conflict with law, 16) youth abusing dependency creating substances, 17) homeless youth living on the street, 18) youth in rural areas, 19) youth in townships, 20) youth in cities, 21) youth in informal settlements, 22) young migrants, 23) young refugees, and 24) youth who have been or are at risk of being abused. This classification is by no means comprehensive. On the account of limited resources, the National Youth Policy 2008-2013 prioritises categories 1, 5, 6, 13, 14, and 18 as areas requiring effort. In formulating the research problem, I seem to be straddling between 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 but my general gaze is focused on 19. In this research problem section, I direct the focus to the SA youth.

The 1990s were interesting years for youth studies in SA. This period marked a turning point from viewing youth as a problem. The gaze shifted to mechanisms through which former young warriors and *disenfranchised* youth needed grafting into the 'broad' society (Chisholm, 2004). There are two critical surveys, which pre-empted the youth programmes in those transition years. The Joint Enrichment Project (JEP) commissioned one to Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) edited by Everatt and Orkin (1993), and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) gave the other to Slabbert, Malan, Marais, Olivier, & Riordan, 1994). Everatt and Orkin (1993) from CASE established that there were three million young people between age 16-30 years of all races who were *out-of-employment* and *out-of-education*. Interestingly, Cloete (2009) later came to 2.8 million but only for those aged 18-24. The most important thing about such old surveys for my purposes is not findings which informed development of youth policy agenda, but the analytical capability to segment youth into discernible categories – fine (25%), at risk (43%), marginalised (27%), and those seen as lost (5%).

Figure 1.2 presents a pictorial model of these categories. Although age stretch from 16 – 30 missed those between 14 – 16 and 30 – 35 as per current definition, it is more wide-ranging than 18 – 24.

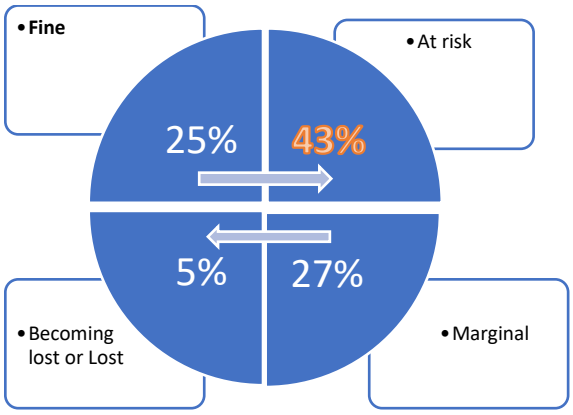


Figure 1.2: Analytical segments used to classify youth population Source: Developed from Everatt and Orkin (1993)

It is now close to thirty years since these figures were developed. Sure, the picture is different in the present context, but analytical categories are still relevant. 'Fine' referred to those fully engaged with society and 'At risk' youth meant those who were functioning but showing signs of alienation. 'Marginalised' scored high on the given twelve dimensions of concern which included no future, generational conflict, HIV/Aids, disintegrating family, exposure to violence and abuse as well as occupational, societal, and political alienation. The last group was those seen as 'Lost youth' – having slipped through social nets (Everatt & Orkins, 1993). 'Lostness' was no longer prospective but designated by young people who were thought of as difficult to redeem back into 'mainstream'. The rise of NEET phenomenon suggests shifting from one quadrant of non-possibility to the other. Some of 'fine' join 'at risk', likewise the portion of 'at risk' slide to 'marginal' and more are under threat to join those disappearing into 'lost'. The ideal would be to reverse direction to get everyone into variants of the 'fine' category. In that way, lost ones would escape the chagrin of social vanishing.

The Slabbert and colleagues report denied any existence of structural crisis peculiar to young people – 'the answer to whether a youth crisis *existed* in SA was a blatant "NO"' (Slabbert et al., 1994, p. 15). Whereas the former report defended agents, the latter proffered defense on structure over agents. It preferred to individuate youth problems, targeting instead to deflate panic about already-in-place or impending crisis. Invariably authors contended, 'Youth were not [a] unified entity with collective consciousness in pursuit of clearly defined objectives' (Slabbert et al., 1994). In this survey, de Kock and Schutte investigated life circumstances specifically for the African youth between ages 15-24, among 1019 young people in Soweto[5]. In interpreting their findings, these researchers argued that young people in Soweto had *inflated aspirations* and *expectation*, believing that their personal situations would drastically improve in the new SA. These emphasised that there were few young people who were political charged and radical. And that those deeply entrenched in poverty were unlikely to participate in 'unconventional political activity'. The political revolt was central to their brief.

Although learning how social expectation affects behaviour is still crucial, researchers recommend a kind of minimum state engagement. Needed interventions were on 'fine' youth and less 'lost' or 'marginalised'. Much focus was paid to frustrations of those seen as intellectual proletarians who had qualifications but without opportunities, they were educationally 'dressed-up' (but materially naked) and had '*nowhere* to go' (de Kock & Schutte, 1994, p. 256). Due to 'status incongruence' (Everatt, (1995), these posed a threat. Those who had chance to live between the time when the Slabbert report was released and the beginning of the third decade into the 21st century, have a privilege to learn that sweeping things under the proverbial carpet does not help to improve them.

[5] Soweto at the time was one of the two oldest townships in Johannesburg where Africans resided.

Since then, things have not changed. Instead, we have what could be the equivalent of the 'fine' category as currently thinning (or not expanding) as needed to change the trend. Deflating panic worked temporarily to calm the situation down, but emerging evidence shows that poor youth need attention (Dawson (2014). Today, it is evident from statistics that the number of young people entering what at the time came to be understood as *out-of-education, out-of-employment*, but now fashionable dubbed as 'NEET' is increasing. We now have significant numbers of youth out-of-EET (Smith, 2011; Cloete, 2009). If this situation does not change, this society would be complicit to social abandonment of a significant portion of the country's population.

In similar style, Jeffrey (2008a) distinguished about three analytical sets of young people separated around their education and employment status. The first set comprised of those occupying the thin upper stratum who acquired high-quality education in elite institutions and moved smoothly into secure salaried employment within professions and business - the 'fine'. The second group lacked access to secondary-school education and engaged in unpaid household labour, poorly paid manual service, or industrial work, often in grueling and dangerous conditions. This group fits very well the description of marginalised. The third group comprised of those who completed secondary school but had not moved swiftly into secured, salaried work. This fit being at risk or seen as 'threatened youth' (Jeffrey, 2008a). The category that was important in SA around the 1990s and continues to be critical, are those identified as 'lost'. I am not sure if present-day youth using a concoction of drugs known as Nyaope (Mokwena, 2016) together with those living in the streets are best termed as 'lost' generation. My attraction in current research is on the then 43% of those segmented as 'at risk' or 'threatened youth'.

Contrary to Blair's assertion at the launch of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) (1999), training at higher education does not always offer the best defense against social exclusion. Although Bhorat, Mayet, & Visser (2010) show that labour markets prefer university graduates, it does not follow that all that young people need to satisfy is to obtain university qualifications. Some graduates from our historically disadvantaged universities tend to be tainted by allegations of deficit that they 'do not acquire' mandatory skills (Mokgadi, 2020). Sometimes we cloak the employer preference with a ubiquitous skills doctrine that embraces 'fort pedagogy'. Fort teaches that for development to follow, outsiders must be 'incorporated or excluded' (Mnguni, 2020). As guided by fort logic, employers may choose to exclude the potential employees that they identify as unskilled, because the preserve of profit is desirable to them. However, decentering a significant segment of the country's population in pursuit of the economic stability neglects a crucial point that the economy itself resides in society. Economy does not make humans, but human actions are responsible for its growth and decline. This understanding created a doubt in my mind about the supremacy of the social exclusion construct on discourse about 'NEETs'. My hunch was that there is something deeper than the categories we privilege.

I adopted *social displacement* as it promises better explanatory power. This latter idea resonates with the experience of SA, so dubbed as the colonialism of a special type, referring to settler colonialism by two European powers, 'Britain and Holland'. The aspect of the special type was associated with coloniser election to settle in the colony rather than appointing administrators among the chiefs to administrate the colony on behalf of its remote conquerors. In this sense, social exclusion no longer appears as a neat (or NEET) construct (Furlong, 2006) for explaining the lived experience of young people's non-involvement in the southern hemisphere and in SA, where unemployment is gradually increasing among university graduates. We note a leaping increase

from 19.5% to 31.0% in the 4th quarter of 2018 there was (StatsSA, 2019) for young people in this category. This reinforces the assertion that qualifications do not always guarantee employment. Young people are encouraged to study further, post-school sector comprising of adult community education and training (ACET), technical vocational education and training (TVET), and universities to 'increase prospects of obtaining better jobs', but access to employment is not easy for those in townships.

Case, Marshall, & Fongwa, (2019), show that SA's social, economic, and political inequalities inherited from the past apartheid system reflect on all spheres of life and individual experience. The democratic government commitment to transform the system met sectoral resistance and broadcasted 'incompetence and corruption'. My trouble lies with representing abuse of public resources as a single story (Adichie, 2008). Allais (2017) has long been arguing that employers have unrealistic expectations on higher education systems' competence to produce graduates that are tailored for labour markets. Such expectations pressure education systems to prepare readymade graduates, who exit the university with skills and practical experience, which are only possible to learn at the work place itself (Allais, 2017). Heideggerian scholars help to correct this, by pointing to work as the essence of our being that can be experienced through involvement (Gibbs, 2008). Gibbs makes a crucial claim that the work-world is disclosed in the context of work. Surprisingly, skills researchers were still bent on lamenting the 'collapse of structured pathways from educational and training into work on certain key areas of employment' (Kraak, 2013). Discourse on such areas can be blindfolding in that it narrows systemwide concern into a small sector so deemed as 'key'. This creates illusion of the 'golden years' past when in fact the share for the African youth has always been precarious.

Given our racial demographics, the majority in any underprivileged category are Africans living in the townships. My current interest is not the graduates but those who made it to the last school grade; who are looking for opportunities to complete, improve or to study further; who are not in training and are not employed but are searching for possibilities. Cloete (2009) helped with raising awareness regarding the extent of the problem of non-participation in EET among young people between ages 18 and 24 years. From this discovery onwards, quantitative research approaches gained credence on almost all NEET studies (Cloete, 2009; Smith, 2011; Sheppard & Sheppard, 2012). I am arguing that preoccupation with the visible aspects of this youth helped with scaling the problem in terms of its extent but leaves a gap for investigating the subjective dimension. As such, there was perceivable under exploration of 'who', 'where' and 'how' questions which deliberately intend to understand the nature of things in lived lives of this youth. Yet, if already known as missing in EET, the immediate question becomes 'where are they' (subjectively and objectively)? In term of this broad problem, it appears that an exploration of the lived experiences of this youth is timely.

1.3 Study aims

In this study I am exploring the lived experiences that relate to non-participation in EET. My aim in this study is to provide an alternative to the acute preoccupation with the extent of this problem. To reach a particular level of understanding on their life world and to communicate this in ways that can be deemed as being in solidarity with participants, without completely abandoning analytical critique. I am attracted to the lived worlds of young people segmented as a 'threatened' group (Jeffrey, 2008a) to examine what non-participation in EET has done to and for them. I appreciate that the process of gaining access to individual experience is partial and complex. As

such, I take interest in the relationship between societal intentions of young people and their personal dispositions, then provide interpretive phenomenological analysis on the interplay to position the descriptions within a broader theoretical and social context. Furthermore, I explore how *shared* experience with others within circles of intimacy (CoIs) has helped to influence values.

1.3.1 Objectives

To achieve the already stated aim, I formulate the following objectives:

- To explore personal evaluations of factors contributing to non-participation in EET
- To determine and analyse perceived possibilities that relate to EET
- To examine choices that the youth make to enhance quality of their well-being
- To evaluate meaning young people together with circles of intimacy attach to participation

These objectives directly lead us to the research questions.

1.3.2 Research question

Research question refers to clear statements expressing what it is that the researcher wishes to investigate. Often this occurs prior to conducting research and assists with ordering what comes out in reporting findings. In these terms, the central question I am exploring in this research asks,

- **How do young people living in Kagiso experience and make sense of non-participation in education, training, and employment?** Subsequently, I broke the central question into four segments, with the intention to explore many facets of the lived experience. I asked:

- What are young people's (and CoIs') evaluations of the factors contributing to their (or to) non-participating in education, training, and employment and to whom do they apportion blame for becoming and/or being 'NEETs'?
- What do young people and CoIs perceive as ideal possibilities within their milieu?
- What choices do young people make to enhance the quality of their well-being?
- What do they think their lives' of 'NEETs' mean? (In other words, what implications (if any) do their composite lived experience with the family members and friends have for policy and practice?)

I selected the participants purposefully, guided by the promise that they would offer valuable insights to the topic of my current research. However, their understanding is experiential. It is my hope that answering these questions sheds light onto other important dimensions of the lives of young people.

1.4 Rationale

Several factors inspired me to undertake this research study. Leading among these was that it appeared there were insufficient studies of this nature in SA. Post-school education and training (PSET) studies were preoccupied with skills analysis. In this research study, I place the humans (African youth) at the centre to capture the experiences of the township youth said to be tainted by the problem of non-participation in EET. Pre-eminence of the institutions over the people they purport to serve opens for misrecognition of the people's desires to work, live meaningful and dignified lives. And so, I became distraught with the growing list of deficits accounts listed as 'skills mismatch', 'skills lack, shortage, or scarcity', 'skills elope overseas' etc. I wondered what manner of people these are who have no desire to learn about skills they know they need for

employment. Most worrying was that this segment of population was said to be without skills or suspected to be unskill[able] were overwhelming majority. In apartheid SA, citizens were clusters as African, Colored, Indian, and White. The first three grouped as either black or non-white. The 2011 census revealed that close to 79.2% of the country's current population are Africans.

As visible as these are in terms of the numbers, most were poor and invisible in the so-called opportunities. In as much as SA shared certain things with other countries, some of its social features were strangely unique. For instance, in other countries in the so-called global north the underprivileged belong to the minorities. To the extent that the Oxford dictionary has defined underprivileged as a group of people not enjoying same standard of living as *majority* of people in a particular society[6]. In SA, majority citizens are those that live in dire conditions (Goldman Sachs, 2013). According to Goldman Sachs report, there is a slight decline (9 points) of African people living below poverty from 70% in 1993 to 61% in 2008; throughout this period the rate of Whites remained below 2 and 4%. For the same period, those just above the poverty line increased from 22% to 24% for the Africans. In total, poor Africans reached 85% in the focus period. As such, race continues to be an important variable in this country. When calculating from figures provided by Cloete (2009), Africans registered 87.2% for all those in the NEET category and when combined the other three race groups accounted for only 12.8%. In part, this has to do with sheer numbers, but still the statistics show that the presence of Africans in the 'NEET' category far exceeds their population share of 79.2% with an over-representation of 8%-point difference. If close to 90% of the 'NEETs' population at least in the 18-24 age range, this statistic makes the problem of non-participation in EET an African sub-population issue. The epigram I have selected

[6] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/underprivileged, February 19, 2018.

for this chapter points us to the need to understand the social conditions that promote success or mitigate failure. In foregrounding *lived experience,* my idea is to reclaim the missing subject that is often concealed by the statistics.

1.5 Theoretical considerations

There is no lack of theory to explain this research undertaking. There are many theories across the human and social science disciplines that help to frame the phenomenon under study.

1.5.1 Socialist perspective

Social sciences (Marxists) hold that 'Men make their own history, but not under the conditions of their own choosing' (Marx, 1852). In this tradition, propertyless and unemployed young people whose methods of securing a living place them outside the productive process are labelled as *lumpenproletariat*. These were seen as exuding dispositions of shying away from work, irrevocable sold to immoral conduct such as thieving, which reveal their attitudes towards their material conditions; they engaged life without regrets (Hayes, 1988). Since the state of consciousness for any class is informed by their material circumstances which are determinants to any forms of consciousness, it follows that their purported lazy and thieving dispositions reflect the exposure to living conditions. Their agency is deployed as untoward behaviour, Coloreds and Africans are the only perceivable groups that seem to commit the 'visible' acts of corruption, and whose criminality is prosecuted by spending time in prison. Other groups afford to escape imprisonment, but Africans are made to appears as lumpens who find it easier to take the already produced products in their society without themselves showing keenness to engage in the production processes. Erasure of decency from consciousness erodes good morals that apparently

come after occupying a seat within dominant class echelons. This was purported to be the dangerous class in Marxist circles.

In keeping with this imagination, Standing (2011) has tried to revive great world-historic facts through caricature of past epochs. In the place of lumpens, he gives us the precariat dangerous class, a concept he uses to explain the precarious working conditions of the masses in the 21st century. While it may be true that the so-called 'NEETs' could share certain characteristics with the lumpenproletariat or new dangerous class perceived by Standing, they are individuals too with personal choices, aspirations, and agency. It may not always hold as true that apathy towards the system of opportunity that thrives on reserving privilege for the few, mainly along racial lines, testifies to laziness and thuggish behaviour. Thieving is certainly not a reserve for the poor, especially in SA where the dominant groups are accustomed to getting free or cheap labour, obtained title deed to vast lands without a payment and received monies for no rendered services. For instance, there were practices like restraining trade for some races, but looking away from superior race employees that ran the same business. Giving-in or admittance of tactical conquest does not strike me as analogous with the Marx's idea of lumpenproletariat. A gaze into human agency saves us from such trappings.

Social scientists defined *agency* as the capacity of individuals to act independently using their own free choice. Personal choices and individual aspirations occur within the broad structures that serve to limit freedom that human agents might have to make decisions. The structural conditions enable or constrain individuals' freedom to act in ways that facilitate their social advancement. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu further shows that in domineering societies human relations take shape from differentiated relations between dominant and subdued groups (Bourdieu, 1998). According

to him, what maintains these social hierarchies is not physical force, but forms of symbolic domination (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Often such systems of classification are misconstrued as natural, when in fact they are historical and culturally arbitrary. He terms this misconstruing as *misrecognition*. The idea of mis[re]cognition is quite useful as it etymologically implies missing (mis) another chance (re) of understanding (cognition) issues at play. Lived experience provides us with a rare chance to understand anew what is often concealed in varying headcounts of scoping the 'NEET problem' (see Cloete, 2009), the dispositions of the human agent. This takes us to humanist views.

1.5.2 Humanist perspective

Heidegger's (1996) compounded term of 'being-in-the-world' helps us to value the intersection between personal and social world being through *care* instead of conceiving them as separate and unrelated lumpens. *Care* helps us transcend the prejudices that reduce the threatened youth as superfluous, lazy and self-creating their conditions. It gives back the dignity to young people's current attempts to live. A person may not always attain certain desirable levels of furthering. Non-attainment of espoused levels does not legitimise social abandonment. Through care, we are given another chance to understand ([re]cognise]) other beings like us as human first before their obtained social status symbols. Current capitalist arrangement of 'free' markets has not freed certain groups of people. Instead, it has helped to enrich one class of people through the oppression and suffering of another. It celebrates the prowess shown in taking advantage of other people's misfortunes, weaknesses, and incompetence for amassing profit. Care repudiates misrecognition of the other as well as displacing manoeuvres in current systems of opportunity. It pushes us into mutual carrying. In what follows, I proceed to discuss useful terminologies.

1.6 Definition of terms

These definitions point us to the general debates in the field and my personal bias in selecting them. Rather being conclusive, they must be appreciated for their practical value.

1.6.1 NEET

NEET can be confusing. The lack of clarity has made it to be an elusive term (Furlong, 2006). Elusiveness arises from a swift desire to homogenise young people. Yet personal incidents that uniquely define youth lives are equally important to study. At one level, NEET describes the condition of being outside the modern structures of 'opportunity'. 'Opportunity structure' has been defined as objective structure of economic opportunity and differential advantage in the capacity of the system's participants to perceive and act upon such opportunities (Glade (1967, p. 251). In other words, it is the role of the system to create opportunities and that of youth to perceive and to decide to take them. Such opportunities are not static, but both disclosed and concealed by varying contexts within social setting that is changing over time. The limitation with this definition is that it places onus on the capability of individuals to take advantage of the situation, even when there are palpable blind spots on availability (present-to-hand) in the structures that encourage targetted participants to exploit the situation without flounder – the pre-existing context that enables success. Heidegger terms this serviceable equipment (see chapter 3).

The ideology of 'opportunity' adds to the confusion of its omnipresence across space and time, regardless of historical and economic changes. Furthermore, its attainment is the privilege that is afforded by chance. While the term removes certainty to succeed, being outside opportunity tends to be ascribed to individual deficit rather than on the opportunity itself. I find this 'absent presence' to be puzzling. Given this background explanation, in this research I shy away from identifying

the young people affected by non-participation to be embodiment of this condition – 'NEETs'. I accept NEET for its descriptive value but resist the noun 'NEETs'. Nudzor (2010) pinpoints the NOT labelling as defining people in terms of what they are NOT. This steeps into the deficit model approach. As a result, I played with various terms including 'opportunity seekers', 'EET generation', 'New EET youth', but none of these fit satisfactorily without preconceived assumption. I favour *out-of-it* (EET) for its youth outlook. However, to integrate to the wider scholarship, I opted for inverted commas. In the literature, there are endless debates about labelling youth as status zero (Frones, 2010).

1.6.2 Not or Non-participation

Throughout the paper, I use the big N of NEET interchangeably as *Not* (in EET) or as *non-participation* (in EET). Although guilty of this faltering usage, it is still possible to separate the two. The first expression directs our focus to the absence (not) of people (the youth) placement into certain (EET) modern social position(s), while the latter connotes absence of human activity to participate and tends to be limited to accessing university education. I do not hide my bias towards the OUT idea which could be adopted as out of education, training, and employment (OTEE). OTEE is even closer to the idea of 'amaOutie' (the gents in township youth lingo). It could be adopted in youth studies as 'amaOutTEE' (the OutTEEs) since we are involved in the naming game, the limitation being that this would exclude females.

1.7 Delimitation and Limitation

In everything we do, there are limitations. In doing this research, my limitation was time. Groundbreaking research in this field used ethnography (Willis, 1977), a research strategy that requires a less dispersed group that is followed for a certain period. For pragmatic reasons, I merely

interviewed research participants I met through the snowballing technique. There are a few interesting things about studying young people; however, in this study I am focusing on non-participation in EET. In terms of delimitations, I elected to interview the township youth which happened to be only Africans (in the selected site) who make up the majority of SA's youth population. Previously, these occupied the last category of the racial stratification. My approach removed them from being concealed in the-they (Heidegger, 1996). Therefore, I missed the opportunity of understanding aspects of the other-they in my elected area of focus. Perhaps I should also declare upfront that it would be impossible (and unfair expectation) for me to read the original text as I am neither conversant with Bourdieu's French nor Heidegger's German languages, so I could ONLY rely on their English translations.

1.8 Research Overview

My purpose in pursuing this study is to reclaim the subjective dimension that seems to be missing in the current youth scholarly work (NEET, PSET, and research on skills). Given the increase in young people who are without opportunities and rising youth unemployment, I understand very well why quantitative approaches tended to dominate in this area of study. However, in the long run this bias might be self-defeating.

1.8.1 Overview of Methods

The overriding premise for qualitative studies is the belief that the human world is slightly different from the natural world, and so ways of researching these two worlds vary. I paid considerable attention to describe participants' experiences. My target group in this study was young people residing in Kagiso Township. I conducted phenomenological interviews with 22 participants comprised 1) with seven (7) able young people in ages 18-34 that at the time had not been in

education, training, or employment for over six months, and 2) fifteen (15) persons these selected as those in their circles of intimacy (CoIs). The gathered stories from youth and the perspectives of their CoIs provided a picture of real people, in real situations, struggling with real problems and what their experiences meant for them.

1.8.2 Significance of research

A study of youth experiences at a time non-participation in EET is becoming a dominant feature in young people's lives, strikes me as crucial for three reasons - topical, relevant, and timely. It promises potential shifts from current methodological approaches for studying the so-called 'NEETs' in the context of SA. Phenomenologists scrutinise everyday life to gain understanding of experience (van Manen, 1990). Otherwise, it would be difficult to influence social practice without understanding the nature of the world and human experience within it. In this sense, reality is what it *is* because it is conceivable. Everyday participant(s) interact with immanent reality (Heidegger, 1996). Similarly, Bourdieu argues that everything we know about the lived world is established and developed from perceptions – 'pre-constructed and evolving according to logic of differentiation found in the social universe' (Grenfell, 2008, p. 45). While I am shy of the idea of 'giving voice', (Larkin et al., 2006), I am warm to the critique of the tendency to hush subjective voices in a struggle for representation. In current local research, young people are faceless beings merely worth mentioning as categories of unemployment statistics. My approach holds a promise to experiment new possibilities. In the conclusion chapter, I propose a model for youth development built from the lived experiences of the participating individuals.

1.8.3 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of ten chapters.

Chapter 1 orients the reader to the study. I provide a rich background on broad influences of non-participation then proceed to identifying research aims, rationale problem, theoretical considerations, significance, and end with defining useful terms.

Chapter 2 - in this chapter I deploy Dilthey to theorise the notion of lived experience. Furthermore, I explored *symbolic violence* (Bourdieu, 1997) and *care* (Heidegger, 1996) as useful for navigating the broad theoretical terrain.

Chapter 3 - in this chapter I negotiate entry into the domain of youth transitions. I am searching for youth's place-in-the-world of big ideas, but of scanty opportunities. I critiqued the skills as tactical maneuver to displace the majorities.

Chapter 4 - in this chapter I outline strategies and procedures used to collect data and theories that guide data analysis.

Chapter 5 - in this chapter I begin telling youth biographies together with their circles of intimacy (CoIs) with the aim to highlight who these young people are and what were some of the influences on their circumstances.

Chapter 6 I dealt with youth unemployment and the scarcity of work opportunities from a single case (pre-Matric cluster) to comment on hope that is sustained along with despair.

Chapter 7 – In this chapter I engage the young people's conceptions of possibilities from those that had obtained Matric.

Chapter 8 - In this chapter, I showed the difficulties of maintaining the quasi-middle-class status among the young people who had enjoyed the Model C route in their schooling years.

Chapter 9 Here I deal with the tragedy of capitalism that admits to human as subjects the status of moral worth at the same time removed from a significant segment of the population from enjoying autonomy that will increase self-determination.

Chapter 10 - in this chapter I discuss key findings and their implication for the study of non-participation young people in SA.

1.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to forge the current research into the broad policy propositions that came with the turn of the century and hinted at the work that interests itself with youth matters. This helps with the broad context, and further reminds us that individuals are not independent of the social. As such, the young people may reasonably desire to be part of 'the-it', that is prevalent in their social milieu. I also commented on the incongruence of the international target setting and resetting and the young people's realities on the ground to illustrate that their lives continue to be entangled with social conditions that are less than ideal. I showed that the problems around them are expanding (rather than diminishing) together with their population. The current policy devising that came with the spirit of the millennium turn has not adequately assisted in improving young people's lives in a meaningful way. I argue throughout the following pages of the thesis that the well-registered failure to achieve some of the millennium set targets warrants a shift on the dominant perspective - to turn to the young people themselves. In this light, my focus in this research is to understand ways the young people living in a Gauteng-based township of Kagiso experience and make sense of non-participation in education, training, and employment.

Chapter 2

Care or recognition: A social humanist gaze into Township youth experiences

This is a theory chapter. In the previous chapter I introduced the axiom on the importance of recognition for all humans, despite their geographies, class, race, and/or age. The lives of all humans, matter. Not least for those young people who reside in the so-called black townships. Interest on youth is not new: It dates as far back to the Greek and Roman civilisations, wherein young people's conduct and trajectories were described as dangerous, disorderly, and risky (Clarke, 2008). In part, this understanding was empowered by the Structural-Functional theory which is often applied when need arises to protect the prevailing order (Smith, 1984). On the other hand, conflict theories positioned young people as agents for radical change - the vanguard of the proletariat struggle. This imagination captures young people as a new class that revives the revolutionary spirit that is dissipating among the old proletariat forces (p. 43). Functionalist and conflict theories were adopted in SA when young people were viewed as 'irrevocably dangerous' (Seekings, 1996), at the same time as brand of rebels with a righteous cause (Bundy, 1987; Everatt, 1995; Marks, 1997). Historically, these theory slants impelled researchers locally to vacillate between disparaging and praising our young people for the roles they played in resistance movements.

2.1 Selecting a theory

Researchers in the intellectual circle of conflict theories have reinserted critical race theory in youth studies to highlight that the popular concepts deployed in this field such as transition, self-enterprise, and mobilities have centred the focus on experiences of the white/Anglo young people (Idriss, Butler and Harris, 2021). This one-sided biased approach served to widen scope for the

northern imagination and to normalise white experiences, yet 85-90 percent of all young people in the world reside in the southern hemisphere (see Cooper et al., 2019; Jeffrey, 2008a). Idriss and colleagues argue that identifying race and processes of racialisation is a useful way to unsettle the current fixedness with white/Anglo youth experience as a norm in the privileged theories in youth studies. This lopsided norm resulted to a call being made for the generation of a Southern theory as well as to democratise, decolonise, and/or expand imagination in youth studies (Cooper et al., 2019). This attest to the under-theorisation of the young people's experiences in the global south. Increasingly, scholars in the south critique the asymmetrical division of intellectual labour, in which the south is used as the field for mining not only minerals but also data and north as a refinery of theories. While the exploration for southern theory is underway, it may be useful in the meantime to adopt and adapt existing theories that are friendlier to experiences of young people in the south. As such, in this chapter I give considerable attention to the concept of 'lived experience'. I trace the concept back to its very origins or most popular 'first mentioning' in phenomenology. Phenomenologists have studied human experience from various angles.

In this research, I adopted the Heideggerian version of interpretative phenomenology to focus attention to the persons-in-context in terms of their relatedness to the 'phenomena at hand' (Larkin et al., 2006). In this research I consider human experience as not wide and generic, but that it emanates from the condition of non-participation in education, training, and employment (NEET). Therefore, non-participation is the broad context from which young people's lived experiences emerge. Researching the ways in which the young people that are tainted by non-participation understand and make sense of their experiences is important. However, I observe that often the *lived experience* appears as superfluous or self-explanatory or some enlightenment dead tale. I noticed that few made attempt to define, yet this concept featured regularly in the continental

philosophical tradition. I combined Pierre Bourdieu, who is often regarded as the leading social philosopher of the twenty-first century, with 20th century phenomenologists such as Wilhelm Dilthey and Martin Heidegger. Although Bourdieu wrote a lethal criticism on the 'The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger', Heidegger still appears on the list of scholars that helped him in sharpening his own theoretical ideas.

This commingling of theories that emanate from different paradigms should not be viewed as a spurious practice, because paradigms can learn from each other (Romm, 2018). Romm makes a crucial point that the transformative-oriented researchers can benefit from the constructivist insistence on ways of constructing the visions about realities. In the same way, constructivists can forge their allegiance with the transformation view of giving voice to the marginalised individuals (p. 33). Heidegger's phenomenology was concerned with the human experience (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar, & Dowling, 2016). He was among the first generation of thinkers to combine the existential matters with phenomenology, following in the footsteps of a Danish philosopher Kierkegaard (Dowling, 2007). For Heidegger, human consciousness was not separate from the world of human existence. Similarly, Bourdieu dedicated the later part of his life trying to combine his theories with practice. He offered a 'philosophy for everyman' so that humans might cope with their contemporary living (Grenfell, 2008, p. 2). In my reading, I find the two theorists useful for negotiating entry to the turn towards the human-centred agenda (ILO, 2019) to give care and recognition to all humans (whether based in the south or north).

Bourdieu helps us to appreciate inner workings within the modern institutional arrangements. In our immediate SA context, his concepts assist to make sense of how the privilege is retained. Heidegger on the other hand, provides us with ontological heuristics for imagining a shift from

institutional-based opportunities to human-based possibilities of the *Dasein* (there being). The return to the human should not be seen as isolated event. As an act of individuating the public issues but serving to evaluate the implications of the social activities at the level of humans. Thus, the analysis of the lived experience promises to help us achieve this objective. I find it particularly useful in our policy environment wherein the young people are identified through their circumstances as 'NEETs', which is liable to criticism of reducing them to social troubles and their existence as a statistical number. In what follows, I provide an extensive discussion on the notion of lived experience, with underlying burden to repudiate its current light treatment as a generic and self-explanatory term.

2.2 Lived experience

In a book compiled by Makkreel and Rodi in 1985 on the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, a German philosopher who lived between 1833 and 1911, it is suggested that as we live, we accumulate an experience of life (Dilthey, 1985). My reading of Dilthey is limited to this text. In it we get a sense that as human beings we are constantly engaged in an activity of trying to live. The very reality of being alive forces us to engage and disengage in different enterprises available in the social world we live in for survival, pleasure or progress, and flourishing. The despondency that comes with realising that the material world has imposed limitations on our ability to live as we would like, does not free us from living. Present living enables us to recount history and make projections of what our future living might be. Contrary to the views that have ascribed rationality to the human beings, that rational beings are constantly engaged in calculating the means for accumulating pleasure and avoid pain, Dilthey observes that we are more preoccupied with heightening our sense of life. Humans live their lives as those trying to understand and to improve their ways of living.

As such, non-participation may appear as a problem, in so far as it constrains involvement on specific things that add progress to the human existence.

Non-participation helps to conceal rather than disclose possibilities to improving life, yet lived life expands our scope of experience. Perceived threat to life produces sorrow and frustration. Non-participation implies inactivity, but lived experience dispels inclination to death among the living, or any lifeless idea about human life. In pain or happiness even without participation, human life is worth living. However frustrating human life may, we can deduce meaning from the stories that give testimony of the lived experience. Departing from the pervading positivism of his day, Dilthey contended that human life could not be explained satisfactorily through the explanations that are derived from the natural sciences, which appeal to natural laws of cause and effect. He proposed instead that a better way of understanding the meaning of the human activities was to integrate temporal structures of personal experience with the interpretations of the external objectifications of others. The notion of lived experience (LE) reaffirms that as humans we are situated somewhere in the world. We affect life and in turn, life affects us as we live. LE captures human subjects when relating to the objects in the world. We live as immersed in the world we inhabit.

In these terms, LE is a departure or even repudiation of the ontological distinction of subjects and objects. As people, we have the subjectivity that makes us susceptible to being affected by reality, and agency that has to do with ability to swerve that reality toward single or multiple directions. Dilthey saw this as a process. He said that the process we find in life relative to human beings is different from the process that is relative to the natural process. In a natural world you can explain phenomena of a body or objects through cause and effect – this is what physics does. In explaining human life as a process, we come to the idea of LE. Here explaining process no longer relies on

cause and effect, but to what it means to have a lived experience. Dilthey highlighted a relationship between the impulse and resistance, of pressure and reflexive awareness about what is to be furthered. He did not refer to the rationality of humans. Naturally you find yourself impulsively attracted to some things and want to resist certain things or to be reflexively aware – the idea of joy about other persons. For Heidegger (1996, p. 48), a person exists only to carry out intentional acts – the ability to question and focus on personal existence (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). Dilthey starts on a step before intentions, at a point wherein we become aware through impulse about intentions to carry out certain actions.

In defining LE, Dilthey says, 'A *lived experience* is a distinctive and characteristic mode in which reality is there-for-me' (Dilthey, 1985, p. 85). It is interesting noting that experience is not separate and distinct from the human subjects. Reality or world's objects are 'there-for-me' as if intertwined with the subject, such that there would be no world without the subject. More pointedly, the subject cannot understand herself apart from the objects since they are there-for-me. The idea of *me* (the subject), as contained in the phrase – there-for-me – is crucial. If we read this as a realist statement there are things outside of us; in other words, reality is what is out there. LE happens at a point of convergence between us, and objects out there. This produces something very specific, the idea of *affectability*. Affecting reality or interacting with it helps to multiply and generate experience. This definition speaks to subjectivity. It defines LE as a distinctive and characteristic mode in which reality itself is THERE out-there-in-world. However, Dilthey is not making a statement about the reality that is out there. LE is not about what is out there but defined relative to what is there-for-me.

I encounter reality as a being, and my encountering of this reality makes this reality there-for-me. LE allows us to collapse the disjuncture between subjects and objects. The important task is no longer about identifying objects in the world, but accepting that as a subject, there are objects, which are part of me. This repudiates the idea of self-serving reality; reality is not for itself but is there-for-me. Dilthey's perspective regarding LE rejects the perceptions of immanent disjuncture between subject and object. Where previously the subject owns the objects, he subsumes them to be part of the subject. LE negotiates the nexus between subject and object. However, this is not an abstract cognitive/psychological process. LE is not given to me in the material form, but it is there-for-me. I have the reflexive awareness of it. I do not think about it *consciously*; it is just there; I find myself intrinsically connected to the objects. I cannot think of my experience without thinking of me as connected or related to the objects. Objects are different subdivisions constituting reality. It does not follow certain prescripts or representation; it is not because I must first think about the objects before understanding. No. Reflexively, I am already aware of it; somehow, I possess it.

Individuals own reality, it is part of themselves. It is impossible to think of living without thinking about experiencing reality. As such, life in the human world admits continuities, connectedness, and self-sameness. These three elements characterise life as understood within the LE framework. There are certain continuities we can appeal to understand LE; there is connectednesses that help to share understandings and self-sameness. The three concepts hold together – whereas the natural world forces us to appeal to cause and effect. In human reality, experience enables us to understand our being in the current world, our experience in this life manifests immediately. The immediacy means that experience does not depend on cognition, not on consciousness, but on the reflexive awareness. It occurs when we have the wide-ranging experience of things. We do not experience things as segments or compartments or parts, but we experience them in their entirety. These are

neither given nor thought about. Death of a loved one involves structural relation to grief. To invoke the Heideggerian terminology in this discussion, this refers to their 'network of equipment' (Heidegger, 1996).

There is a structural relationship between a subject/agent and experience of non-participation in EET for my purposes. The awareness concerning an object about which I am uneasy about is LE. I do not think that now it is time to be anxious, non-participation is already the object of concern to the so-called 'NEETs'. Dilthey talks about impulse. The departed loved one has become the object of grieving to the close relative and friends. In the same way we experience grief, that is how we experience LE of non-participation in EET. The relationship I have with the loss or even not attaining participation immediately makes me to grieve when it terminates or whatever concern about those objects that facilitate my sense of progress. My frustration is not a thought; if anything, it is a disposition of loss or representation of LE. I do not plan to grieve: Just as it is with becoming aware of a death of loved one, I immediately become an object of non-participation when I become aware that it is impossible for me move forward in life.

Furthermore, Dilthey suggests that the notion of lived life would be meaningless if it did not imply and contain past encounter and expected future. When a person grieves for a loved one, the process implies a history with the object of grief, otherwise grieving would not make sense. Grief links to a history within the immediacy of my grief. Similarly, LE of non-participation could be frustrating (aggrieving, upsetting, and even distressing) because of the history or socially stimulated expectation (or what Berlant 2008 dubs as 'cruel optimism' in her context to refer to a condition of maintaining attachment to a problematic object) for participation with implication for the future. When no longer accessible, continuing to hope that the status of non-participation will change into

full participation in a little while without any radical change and progressive alteration, renders not only non-participation as problematic object. But also, the very thinking that different outcomes can be attained without any shift on prevailing conditions that brought non-participation in the first place. The new hope and expectations of a brighter future participation or involvement are better placed on improved conditions. This encapsulates the hope about future expressed as *kuzolunga* (things will be fine). This too can be read as cruel optimism, that is not necessarily self-inflicted but through the socially stimulated hope that the government will do and/or is doing something about it (phrased as siyabenza (we work)) during Jacob Zuma administration.

LE designates immediate experience, but the immediacy of experience does not negate past and future. In other words, what one may be doing in the present relates to the past but is also a contribution to future. It is a distinctive mode in which reality is there-for-me. We all have bodies that are susceptible to LE, meaning we could share in LE. Continuities, connectedness, and sameness make this sharing possible with spatially placed human beings. LE affirms that as humans we are situated somewhere in the world and affected by such experience as non-participation in EET. As we live, we give shape and posture to experience that can be shared with others. The limitation with this Diltheyian lived experience is the broad context in which it arises. For instance, he studied lived experience of grief. While this application is ideationally useful for framing our contextual appreciation of the concept, there is a challenge of time (past, present, and future). Unlike the death of a loved one, non-participation can linger for a longer time. Since humans are characterised by the desire to heighten the sense of life, this may lessen when young people are exposed to non-participation on continual basis. This created a doubt on whether it would be more appropriate to use ‘life’ rather than ‘lived’ experiences. Nonetheless, I formally

adopted the idea of lived experience. Below I engage an application of a Heideggerian theory in a township, in this discussion I take the defense position.

2.3 In defense of townships

In SA everything poor, dysfunctional, and lacking typifies townships (housing, education, and healthcare services). Townships are proverbial for having the notorious and dangerous streets, violence, crime, gangsterism, massive substance abuse, the long period of poverty, alcoholic and abusive parents, dysfunctionality in their homes and schools, predatory teachers, and high rates of unemployment (Swartz, 2009). Clouded by the own externalities, and the normalisation of white suburban utility, those who did not grow up and/or have no experience of living in the townships (outsiders) often struggle to identify what or things not lacking in eKasi (township) locations. As such, the young people living in townships tend to be seen as those fixed on social turmoil of car hijacking, gang-murder, robbery, drug-related violence, stabbing, and shooting (ibid). They are rarely seen in the positive light; even as protesters, the township youth is under the obscurity of 'political brokering' (Dawson, 2014). Against this background Swartz placed her academic telescope on the moral experiences of the township youth. She interrogates how this youth grapple with the notion of morality. The slant of morality was not only timely and attractive due to the political ferment that came with the so-called Zuma administration its popularity was aided. As such, her book had a wider opportunistic appeal. It attracted interest in academic circles and was widely discussed on media platforms. Opportunism of this kind is not a bad thing.

Following this, Olivier (2015) wrote what I consider to be useful paper based on the Ikasi book. In it, he takes a tour together with Heidegger to the township accompanied by Swartz (2009) as his tour guide, an event I respond to with much ambivalence. At one level I am indebted to this exotic appearing expedition in that it is this publication which helped me to navigate in my earlier

days in this research the Heidegger's dense text of *Being and Time*. Indeed, as so-called novices we build our nascent scholarship on the shoulders of giants. Olivier (2015) mined out the adaptable concepts and grounded them creatively in the empirical field of a township. He extended his analysis of this specific empirical field to the related contexts. Rather than finding his own facts, he worked on Swartz's findings, repackage them to fit into Heideggerian framework. Without any intended mischief to soil established scholarly traditions with inchoate idiosyncrasies, I need to be upfront about my discomforts. While it may be true that township people commit those crimes in this society that are 'made visible', I doubt if all townships exist for is being the workshop for criminality. Heightened visibility of township criminality hides other criminal acts dubbed with the innocent appealing label as the 'white collar'.

The assertion that townships are not conducive for learning strikes me as exoticisation. Once exotic the next thing that follows is the romanticisation of solutions to township problems. My discomfort is on created impression that the inverse would be corrective. Peaceful streets calm nerves, material wealth enhances confidence to appear in public without shame, and sober parents equate to much caring, thus supporting learning. These strike me more as simplistic solutions than being a panacea to the learning problems that are hanged on the panoramic view. I accept the argument put forward on Heidegger's world being qualitatively different from the township in terms of possibilities proffered. There is ample evidence attesting that the township is a world of lesser possibilities (Dawson, 2014; Bray, Gooskens, Kahn, Moses, & Seekings, 2010). The difference is on assigning the identified dysfunctionality. Outside observers almost fall into the trap of naturalising township problems as owed to self-creation. Yet historically, townships are the creation of colonial bullying and apartheid oppression to serve an outside agenda. As such, altering possibilities within a

township begins with identifying its teleological objective, recognising its history, and an authentic commitment to change.

Townships are on the outskirts of most towns. The original design had no higher expectation than to make township possibilities unready-to-hand. People had to be ready to receive crumbs of the outside possibilities made available by outward serving industrialisation. To date, inward industrialisation or the equivalent still depends on outside-based business value chains. It is almost impossible to do 'legitimate' business without further enriching the already rich people. Bray et al. (2010) correctly assigns outside dependency to persistent force of apartheid-instated boundaries such as separate development policies or 'economic marginalization' (Van der Berg, Burger, Burger, de Vos, du Rand, Gustafsson, Moses, Sheperd, Spaull, Taylor, van Broekhuizen, & von Fintel, 2011). When combined these factors shed light on the 'worlds apart' thesis (Olivier, 2015) regarding possibilities. Unless recognised as direct result of colonial conquest, everyday experience in townships will remain an enigma. Tiptoeing around colonialism enables or helps to limit the horizons of possibilities to create a better world for most humans. Well-meaning analysts come across as sympathetic to the system that reproduces social malaise rather than the displaced people. For me, if not serving outside interests of furthering displacement, moral scrutiny of township youth should equally elevate moral bankruptcy that brought the atrocities of colonialism.

So far, I have engaged various theoretical orientations that have been deployed to the field of youth studies in SA context. Thereafter I discussed lived experience broadly as the concept and specifically how it applied to the current research study. Lastly, I prepared the ground for a pointed reading of Heidegger, by discussing the previous work on Heidegger visiting our SA townships. In the discussion I expressed some doubt on whether development in the township contexts can

occur through heightened pessimism. I discoursed on how the lived experience as reality that has been defined as the there-for-me alters the current thinking from institutions and offers a turn to the people who must own the realities that these institutions promote and make them possible. I joined the appeal made by ILO to return to the progressive aspects of humanism, and this prepared the ground to be fertile for [re]examining the Heideggerian notion of *care*. At this point I transition to the contribution of interpretive phenomenology to the non-participation theory.

2.4 Phenomenology as theory

Interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology opens interesting ways for thinking about societal expectations that are inextricably linked to the world's possibilities. The world preoccupies the being. For the young persons' lives to thrive in a balanced way, their individual hopes must be attuned and accord with realistic societal possibilities. Put differently, for individuals to-be-in-the-world they must be at residence in it, encounter and be familiar with its possibilities (Heidegger, 1996). Viewed from this perspective, being-in-the-world has to do with belonging to a network of transparent possibilities, which are ready-to-hand. Writing in the context of marketisation of higher education, Maringe and Gibbs (2009) promote the idea of 'instrumental service' that is built on Heidegger's ready-to-hand idea. For Heidegger, being of a thing manifests as either present-at-hand or ready-to-hand (Thaver, 2010). The two phrases refer to different, but specific things. Thaver explains that the fact that things are visible enough to make their symbolic *presence* felt or gaze[able], does not guarantee their *readiness* for utility or to be used. They may lie in front of our eyes occurring as something objectively present but be inaccessible due to the capacity to use them or their awkward applicability. As such present things are not always ready. This extends to the instrumentality of the modern structures of opportunity structures including education, training,

and employment. It is one thing to have structures in place, but another making them ready for their instrumental service.

When they are not ready, the trouble arises. In that they become a problematic object that we continue to attach our aspirations on, due to their objective presence. Human lives begin to be meaningful at the point where they find something to live for or to contribute towards, wherein their time is spent on each day. Heidegger (1996) identified the human urge to live, as a drive toward. Caring humans need to find ways to make things work where they are. Our possibilities are not primarily located on Mars, but right where we are, even in our 'townships'. The reality of being alive, forces the young people to live and accumulate experience. As Olivier (2015) juxtaposes township and German worlds (current or as in Heidegger's days), to give us distinct (but obvious) impression that the latter outshines the former. In Germany, schooling assists participating persons to master practical skills such as carpentry. By contrast, townships help its dwellers to perform skilled activities as shack builders, house cleaners and criminals. This contrast seeks to show that the ordinary world of a township and the ordinary world envisaged by Heidegger are worlds of a different kind. My trouble is not with incomparable advancements in other countries, but with making their progresses to become a standard norm for all other countries. The methods various countries used may not always be a good guide. Presupposed praiseworthy and functional Germany can also be blameworthy among sensitive viewers of the Herero tribe in Namibia and the victims of holocaust bloodbath. When we commit to shaming one place, we should extend that to all.

A better reading of a township would highlight that, perhaps the political independence alone has not been adequate to uproot the legacy of exploitation, paternalism, racism, and economic

oppression. The outcomes are said to be obstinate, to the extent that they persisted along with democracy (Reddy, 2016). Without this appreciation, we fall into the trap of supposing that township issues have their panacea in education, but I see it differently. Structural racism is a serious problem in this country (Sourdien, 2007). Under current arrangements, the internal township recommended solution(s) would hardly find expression in competitive society and the globe. Education has a role, but all other factors require recognition too. Without changing the neocolonial structure, the challenges would not shift any significantly. The young rebels in the 1970s had a righteous cause when they called for 'liberation first' to highlight the important structural alignment of opportunities of those people they are intended to serve. Unfortunately, this was read in ways that incited moral panics as a call for 'liberation over education'. Under the colonial-capitalist order, even if all township people could obtain 'Harvard' degrees, certain aspects in the status quo would remain. Education is a necessary but is not sufficient means to change the character of township opportunities.

The construct of 'equipmental network' departs from seeing education for its sake outside its context of application. I follow Vally and Motala (2014) who resist the human capital theory doctrine that links education too tightly with economic productivity. I have registered my discomforts with current characterisation of township schools as organically dysfunctional, a position that is generally accepted within outsiders' representations. It is factually true that township schools do produce learners with good results in the Bachelors-degree category. If not blocked from accessing the often perceived as the superior or more 'powerful' streams of medicine, engineering, and accounting and not frustrated by the cronyism practices in private sector, the more capable in the ranks of this youth could advance with available possibilities, but sometimes they experience imposed obstacles. After obtaining the touted as superior and scarce

skills training in engineering, they still lack the practical training possibilities (Allais, Marock, & Ngcwangu, 2017). Just as it was in Heidegger's world, available possibilities within capitalist *neocolonies* are never for all. Sometimes for Africans, the well recognised credentials are 'never good enough' (Khoza-Shangase, 2019, p. 196). Olivier (2015) helps us to appreciate the disparities in terms of fair chances to enjoy present and future possibilities. Having critiqued the application of Heidegger in township, I now proceed to capture useful concept in his theory.

2.4.1 Dasein in the world

The first character we encounter in Heidegger's book is Dasein (there-being), a certain being that is concerned in its being about being (Heidegger, 1996). Its ontological characteristics include 'existentiality, facticity and falling prey' to circumstances (ibid. p.191). Dasein projects itself towards its own most potentiality-for-being, serving to recognise existence as laden with potential instead of settling on the suspicions that by virtue of residing in historically deprived areas such as black townships (so-called) certain human species are outrightly stupid, lack in intellectual endowment, lazy, and plagued with imbecility. Humans have a potential, but this can only grow in the context of active engagement. Present-self thrives in comparison with the possibilities of future-self. In other words, Dasein is always ahead of (or beyond) itself in terms of the potentiality-for-being which *is* rather being what is *not* (Heidegger, 1996). As such, the 'not' of being outside EET barricades the existential possibility of Dasein as entity from the potential-for-being. Being-in-the-world means entrusting oneself with factually belonging; it must deal with the realness of one already *thrown* in the world. Throwness impresses the idea of non-exit. Its existential options are limited to being-in-the-world. In other words, all its possibilities reside in the world into which it is thrown. This does not mean that present-in-the-world objects are as welded together with the subject, but that both are real (p. 92).

However adverse its experience, it cannot attain the status of a worldless being. It lives as thrown into the real and bounded world. Dasein is attuned to worldliness and absorbed with its *care*. This includes the worldliness of what appears as the worldless notion of being 'nowhere' (Jeffrey, 2008a) that has engulfed young people in the south. At the same time these are already entangled in being-together-with those things that can be encountered things, thus can hardly be successfully if isolated into enclaves of social exclusion. In Heidegger's mind, the being of self-features in two structural moments of care as 1) already-being-in-the-world and 2) being-together-with other encountered beings. In being here, the Dasein is together with its or the discovered world. Its imagined possibilities take their base from what is 'familiar, attainable, feasible, correct and proper' (Heidegger, 1996, p. 195). Colonial capitalism makes the already being here of the township youth to always appear as not together-with possibilities. Even for cases where their academic attainment permits access to modern opportunity (so-called), they are never 'good enough' for the colonially imagined world. Projection towards their future-self shows itself as mere wish, whose fulfillment remains as not-yet-grasped.

Dasein shows itself as lacking the understanding of factical possibilities or lost. Contrary to becoming the 'lost generation' whose existence is blamed on the grounds of moral ecology. The Heideggerian exegesis further points towards the moral ecology of the very persons who are responsible for concealing possibilities. We already know from Khoza-Shangase (2019), that certain possibilities are intentionally delayed through widening the distance between programme and participants. At times, the intentional act of delaying the progress for the other is made to appear as natural. There are forces in the field that serve to obstruct access and to ensure that young people already-in-the-world are separated from enjoying their being-with possibilities in the same way as those born to the families of the dominant groups. Such that, many young people are born

into a world that seems more ready to facilitate being-nowhere than being-somewhere-here, yet still they reside in same world where peers (born to a 'correct' race or possessing 'correct' political networks) are made to access possibilities with relative ease. For Bourdieu, this might mean *misrecognition* of the being-here of others. In turn this throws the merit-based absorption out the window and ushers-in the cronyism and nepotism as permissible means for accessing available possibilities. A careless reader will only notice that the being-here of those young people that were born to the dominant parents as heightening opportunities, but less-dominant made to appear as reducing them. For instance, continuously pointing to their skills undermines the young people's quest of being-with possibilities.

We find ourselves at a point wherein indifference reigns supreme over care for possibilities of other people's children. Unfailingly, their persistent search is interpreted with accusative discourse as discouraged opportunity seekers, lost youth etc. Instead of searching for possibilities together-with, analysts give up on humanist convictions, and join those blaming young people's 'wishes' as based on their lack of understanding of the factual possibilities (in-circumspect). This accusative response conceals the glaring limitations with respect to what is available. I argue differently, that wishing for the so-called 'NEETs' is not a problem of their own creation, but one that emanates from what was touted as available in their formative years (see Chapter 7). The lived experience approach challenges a kind existence that is liable of typifying non-life among the living: Its embrace may revive the humanist spirit. In that way, interpretations of external objectification would incorporate structures of personal experience (Dilthey, 1985), so that analysis deals also with the aspects of structurally imposed lack that render the emergent possibilities as 'never for all' but touted as 'never enough' (pushing demand higher). Heidegger's notion of *care* highlights human affectability with other people's misfortunes, miseries, and dignity. I proceed with care.

2.4.2 Care for possibilities

Heidegger (1996) separates the idea of being-in-the-world into being-with and being-of a self. For the most part Dasein is taken in and absorbed by its world. For instance, Dasein finds itself in what it does, needs, expects, and has the charge to care over in the surrounding world (p.119). Self is lost in being-together-with others when taking care of the world. *Others* does no longer refer to those from which the 'I' distinguishes itself, but those among whom one is being-there-too. In other words, others are no longer merely encountered in their objective presence but at work, in their being-in-the-world. Gibbs (2008) used the Heideggerian idea of circumspection to argue that the 'essence of work is essence of being'. Heidegger emphasised that in seeing someone 'standing around' we never get to understand who they are - their humanity. While enumerating the so-called 'NEETs' in terms of their statistically standing in objectively present way has become fashionable, their existential mode of being is meaningless, lacking heedfulness, and circumspection. After arriving at the extent of 'NEET', we still need to understand the ways in which the phenomenon affects the real humans. We cannot wish away the existence of humans by reducing them to a number.

In Heidegger's mind being-alone, such as lockdown in own social enclaves, is a deficient mode of being-with (Heidegger, 1996). The world is-shared with others. In a useful way, Olivier (2015) make this distinction of others as equipment and fellow humans. The work-world of a handworker shows other useful things for-doing the work and for whom the work is-done. A network (value chain) of equipment opens possibilities for others sharing our interest to use the similar equipment. However, *equipment* as others differs from the subjects (us) requiring solicitude, in that our concerns have positive and deficient modes. Deficient mode highlights the possibilities of being

as being against, passing-one-another by the wayside, thus not-mattering-to-one-another. Such indifference on being-with-one-another contains some negligible variations of the same kind of being. In the first instance it takes other's care away from her and put itself in her place; in this way it *leap[s]-in* for her. 'Concern takes over what is to be taken care for the other,' (Olivier, 2015, p. 122). Under capitalism, some remain defenceless subjects of 'moral worth' as such the most useful application of the Heideggerian care is in the mode of 'leap-in', because these are envisaged to be the dependents of other human agents with 'moral autonomy'[7].

Subjects deemed as only having the 'moral worth' but not the 'moral agency' step back only to step-in when the matter that concerns them is addressed. The burden of taking responsibility is removed from them. In some strange ways, this disburdenment is both freeing and oppressing, in that the freed is dependent and dominated by the freer. Self for freed is not only lost in 'they', but the right to self-determine, create, and take ownership of possibilities is denied. *Care* is taken away from her. She receives care as outcome and not as process; and participates in an already completed programme, where she has no contribution. This is consistent with the colonial project, in which the right to self-determine is taken away. For this reason, my intuition is against blaming the township equipment and people without featuring the preceding context of leaping-in. This said, I am equally aware that leaping-in extends to present day sloganeering where education-for-me is lost to education-for-all. While extending possibilities to 'they' is praiseworthy, the removed self is analogous with what Agamben (1998) termed *homo sacer,* referring to a certain being in antiquity (for my purposed the young people) who could be (*socially)* killed, but not *(politically)* sacrificed. This becomes much evident during the voting season wherein politicians compete with

[7] I borrowed this expression from many conversations I have had with the philosopher Motsamai Molefe since 2007.

resurrecting the banished youth nowhere into freed-to-vote zone where they become deal-breakers with the deciding vote. After the voting season they lose their celebrity status to become – 'the forgotten'. It is no wonder that the young people adopt the maxim that says, 'nothing is for us without us' as a salient protest on the leaping-in strategies.

On the other extreme, there is another positive concern, which does not leap-in for others but *leap-ahead* (Heidegger, 1996, p. 123). This leaping does not remove the other to take care of things without her but gives back the levers of control. This kind of care is authentic. It recognises the existence of the other, rather than seeing her in terms of what needs care around her. In this way, the other becomes transparent to herself in her care and *free for* it. The do-it-yourself (DIY) is as empowering as it is liberating from domination of getting things done for you, the do-it-for (DIF). DIY helps to make available possibilities clear to me rather than my having to be dependent on sheer luck and/or 'patronage networks' (Dawson, 2014). It orients individuals to learn 'how to do' things and gain relevant skills. In DIF mode, the self of the acting agent stands as removed. This disrupts possibilities for learning and potential involvement, a context that become the breeding ground for skills lack. The actor becomes the freeing other; the acted-for remains dormant. In the model I develop in the final chapter I feature skill as reproducing docility and work encouraging activity. To critique current discoursing, I argue that nothing can be scandalous as turning to blame others as lacking skills whose closest involvement ended with watching. True freedom allows involvement, participation, and work possibilities. It frees both the 'they' and the 'I', but this must be done intentionally and less haphazardly.

Furthermore, the notion of care helps to reverse the idea of seeing humans solely as thinking things. In taking care of the surrounding environment, others are at work or encountered in activity, 'they

are what they do'. Rather than being a mere assemblage of cognitive faculties, *doing* incorporates broader faculties. For instance, being-with-one-another is characterised by concern, so that Dasein is given over into subservience to others (Heidegger, 1996, p. 126). It takes its being away from itself to serve others. This strikes some chords of *Ubuntu*, in which a person is incomplete outside of others. Others always dominate us, here not in a sense of subjugation. One belongs to others and entrenches their power. The 'who' is incorporated in *they* as one being dissolves into being of 'others' (Heidegger, 1996, p. 127). In terms of this analysis, the-they unfolds as dictator, in that what I get joy from is what others enjoy; what I see, judgement is akin to the way they do; I am shocked by what shocks others. It prescribes the being of average everydayness to guide socially accepted views of what is proper and that which is granted success.

Humans are working things. "They live to work and work to live" (Shershow, 2005 in Gibbs, 2008, p. 423). Work is the very essence of their being. Therefore, worklessness is callously and existentially inhumane. No wonder when we get a sense that our work on earth is done, we are ready to die. Work extends to humanity a sense of worth and continuity of life. Desire to live, especially when that living follows a worthwhile course of action, it inspires human creativity to overcome circumstances rather than giving-in to social death. Bending Shershow (in Gibbs) to fit into my current study, humans derive satisfaction to do what others are doing. Thus, participation in EET is important for them. Heidegger offers us a language of what it means to be human, as being-together-with others rather than passing-one-another-by without care or in indifference. He uses the notion of domination by others positively, in the sense of affectability (being affected) by what others are doing. This is radically opposed to domination as conceived by Bourdieu, which has to do with the social manipulation of the aspirations of others, as we shall see below. In

Heidegger's mind humans belong together; rather than treating them as objects that accomplish work for others, they serve greater humanity.

We get a strong sense that no existing humans are - or whose presence-in-the-world is being - useful for nothing. Humans do not exist merely to gaze at others at work (no wonder their bodies do not comprise only of one big eye!) Similarly, no one enters the world only to become a mere reflector of the dominating person's thoughts, such that one racial group do the 'thinking work' and others act out thoughts of other beings self-acclaimed as superior. Humans connect - or ought to connect - with others and be affected by their care expressed through dispositions and actions. Bourdieu focuses on agent, what I see as culpability to act. For him, existing beings are individual or collective agents who cannot be disburdened from taking actions, regardless of whether actions taken are toward progress or not. Human life is characterised by struggle, which invites agents to act. I find habitus as having affinities with Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world. This is achieved through lasting imprints on the agents' bodies, who act to retain certain practices and representations in specific fields. I now shift gear slightly to *habitus*.

2.5 Habitus and symbolic violence

Bourdieu (1977) defined habitus, as the systems of durable, transposable dispositions acquired through elongated experience but adjusted in accordance with one's position. These durable dispositions are instilled by objective conditions that help to engender adjustment on individual aspirations and practices to be objectively compatible with those of the objective requirements. In these terms, the agents make virtue of necessity, that is, they refuse what is anyway refused and love the inevitable (p.77). He follows Hume's[8] argument saying that 'When we know that it is

[8] Hume, D. (1739). *A Treatise of Human Nature*, cited in Bourdieu, 1977, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (p. 77)

impossible to satisfy desires, the desire vanish'. He placed this quote alongside Marx's[9] analogy, arguing that, if one individual has a vocation to study, but has no money for it, in real terms such a person has no vocation at all. Habitus satisfies objective functions; it explains objective probabilities - the chance that individuals must access the reachable public goods. It accomplishes this through imposing adjustments to aspiration of the agent such that they meet exact evaluation of their success chances (p.76). It is a socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures, at the same time offers a structured situation that define interests of agents. As social agents, the township youth already occupying nowhere positions outside modern structures of opportunity, so embody a particular kind of habitus akin to their outside position.

While durable habitus is also pliable, it could be transposed to other fields including EET in which the 'NEETs' have grounds for desiring its access, because it is touted as a public good. The very advertisement of what is socially good helps to structure youth interest in particular ways. Just as it is in eyes of the public, so it is for young people. EET is good and NEET is bad. This brings up the necessity to exit the NEET state and discontinue its occupancy. Even as strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with the unforeseen and ever-changing situations, the orient of habitus seeks to balance past with future, such that the world of action appears as a universe of interchangeable possibilities (p.74). Habitus is not visible nor explicit. Habitus does not occur as 'ready-at-hand equipment' with explicit operations whose mastery can be targeted towards achieving certain goals. As such, Bourdieu appeal to Sartre's[10] idea of awakening revolutionary consciousness, by which he posits that it is not the harshness of a situation that facilitates the desire

[9] Marx, K. (1959). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, cited in Bourdieu, 1977, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (p. 77)
[10] Sartre, J.P. (1940). *The Psychology of Imagination*, cited in Bourdieu, 1977, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (p. 74)

to discontinue undesirable (in this instance NEET) conditions. Instead, it is the ability that the individuals hold to imagine an alternative. This imagination propels restlessness on the part of social agents. Perhaps this reference explains why the experience of vulnerability does not feature frequently in various descriptions of habitus.

According to Bourdieu, "Each agent, wittingly or unwittingly, is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 79). Her/his actions and works follow certain objective that s/he did not herself/himself produce, including the civilisation through participation in EET, over which s/he has no mastery. It is what subjects do, rather than what they know which holds more meaning. Consensus between agents or human practices and the world is brought by some degree of homogeneity (the-they) in the conditions of existence (i.e. living in township and sharing the so-called 'NEETs' plane), helping to bring harmony to experiences. Identical positions occupied, produce homogeneity of *class habitus* among those group of agents possessing similar schemes of production and interpretation. The miracle that habitus really brings to the fore is the harmonising effect that takes place without intentional calculation or conscious reference to a norm. Bourdieu holds that habitus is the principle behind unity of a group or class.

We cannot explain unity of practices within a group or class through consciousness as Marxists propose, when agents do not know or wish group harmony into being. Habitus laid down in early upbringing is already precondition for the co-ordination of practices and practices of co-ordination. He illustrates further by saying that even the collective bargaining of the agents would not succeed without the minimum concordance (mutual agreement) between habitus of the mobilising agent, and the dispositions of those whose aspirations and worldview they express. In a differentiated society, actions taken or practices from members of the same group have objective meaning that

is unitary, systematic, and transcending to the subjective intentions and consciousness of individuals or collective. Habitus culminates the processes of inculcation and appropriation that brings about the collective history, such as objective structures of language and economy. These reproducing themselves, in the form of durable dispositions on individuals, who are subjected to the same material conditions of existence. As a system of lasting and transposable dispositions, habitus makes integration of experience and functions possible and represents these as perceptions, appreciations, and actions to accomplish diversified tasks.

Differentiated locations or positions bring forth different conditions of existence, hence he referred to class habitus. What one group experiences as natural or reasonable in terms of the practices or aspirations, another group may find it completely unthinkable or scandalous (Bourdieu, 1977). Those who grew up outside the township fetishise township life. They are blindfolded by structures of domination including race (Idriss, 2021). Often individuals' ability to reduce the distance between social person and objective positions, which is much easier for the dominant than the dominated, tends to be interpreted in terms of skills surplus and lack of conductor networks (including rampant nepotism), or perceived as the lack of skills. In the final analysis, habitus instils the external social order (external world) into the human bodies for their obedience. Installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, help to produce the practices, which tend to reproduce regularities that are immanent in the objective conditions of domination. It adjusts to those demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by cognitive and motivating structures that make up the habitus. It serves to orient individual agents to structures of domination outside there-in-the-world, so that they appear as natural. It the end, habitus becomes the standing principle serving to separate the differences between the proletariat and sub-

proletariat groups. Therefore, habitus is an active but invisible force from which symbolic violence derives its mysterious efficacy.

Symbolic violence explains how societies function in ways that reproduce inequalities and human suffering. According to Bourdieu (1997), contemporary social hierarchies are not maintained by physical force but by forms of symbolic domination. The violence has to do with retaining dominance and subjugation without raising alarm. It generally pacifies. Drawing on Pascal, Bourdieu (1997) illustrates that the nature of the social order is generally arbitrary and haphazard. Rather than being consciously and actively discriminating, the social order inculcates docile dispositions on human bodies to obtain obedience (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 168). It is carried out by person executing it, and this does not presuppose conscious and deliberate choice of the executant as this would imply the possibility of disobedience. Most of the time it relies on the 'automaton' within us – the well-trained dispositions are prepared to recognise it practically and to give it automatic appearance. As such, the symbolic force of an order is a form of power that is exercised directly on our bodies, on the bases of previously constituted dispositions in preparatory work that is needed to bring about a durable transformation of our bodies to produce a permanent disposition that is reawakened and reactivated by symbolic action. The transformative action itself is hidden but powerful. It follows familiarisation with a symbolically structured physical world and through early experience of interaction that is informed by structures of domination.

Such structures are practical recognition through which the dominated unwittingly contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting, in advance, the limits imposed on them (shame, timidity, anxiety, or guilt) associated with the impression of regression (deterioration, relapse, worsening) rather than progression. However reluctant the dominated may be, somehow, they

always yield to the judgements of the dominant. Sometimes this may induce on them internal conflict and self-division that follows their acquiescence to stipulations of the dominant. The body slips away from directives of consciousness and will, with concealed and subterranean complicity to maintain the violence inherent in the social structures. To illustrate this, Bourdieu refers to the black novelist and activist James Baldwin. Baldwin[11] said, 'A black child learns and understands the difference between whites and blacks and the limits assigned to latter, long before the black child perceives this difference, long before he understands it, he has *already* begun to react to it, and to be controlled by it' (Bourdieu, 1997. p. 170). Every effort made by the child's elders to prepare him for the destiny from which they cannot protect him causes him to timidly wait for the unalterable fate, without knowing that he is doing so, already anticipating mysterious and inexorable punishment. He must be good, not only to please his parents and avoid their punishment, but behind their authority stands another (the system of dominance), nameless and impersonal, infinitely harder to please and bottomlessly cruel.

This filters into the child's consciousness through his parents' tone of voice as he is being exhorted, punished, or loved. In my own personal story in the preface, I have cited my own father's repeated phrase 'ayakhaba amabhulu' that seems at face value to correspond with this illustration. Social agents have a practical and bodily knowledge of the present and potential position in social world. This provides them with a sense of their place, which in turn governs the experience in the occupied place (Bourdieu, 1997). These agents know how to behave to keep the place and to keep within it. Bourdieu helps us to understand the symbolic struggles in the everyday life, that help to construct the social world, as we know it, but in ways less visible. In these terms, the lived experience of

[11] Baldwin cited in Bourdieu, 1997, p. 170

non-participation in education, training, and employment (EET) has to do with young people's representations – their sense-making of how their world works.

2.6 Conclusion

As the search for southern theory continues, youth studies could commingle theories from the dispersed paradigms as an interim solution that help to blunt the sharp contrast between subject and object. This can lead to individuating social problems and merging as social the individual troubles. The notion of the lived experience brings the reality closer to me – there-for-me. This puts human face to social ideals. Heidegger gives us an ontological formulation of being-in-the-world for a world resident that is exposed to a network of transparent possibilities, which are ready-to-hand. For possibilities to count as meaningful, access (presence), their usefulness (utility), and control (self-determine) must be satisfied. In that way the young people on the cusp of adulthood can access those possibilities that support their functioning. Habitus adjust individual aspirations. It helps the maturing young people to sift out what is improbable and unthinkable from their list of expectations. Symbolic violence helps to explain domination, in our SA context the majority are dominated by the minority groupings. Until all stories are told, we will not know what to change, how to change it and what to keep and ways of reinforcing what is good and care to recognise it for human progress.

Chapter 3

Where are they? Searching for the youth place in a world of closing 'opportunities'

> We should measure the prosperity of a nation not by number of millionaires, but by the absence of poverty, the prevalence of health, the efficiency of public schools, and the number of people who can, *and* do read worthwhile books (A quote attributed to W.E.B. Du Bois, February 1953)

In the previous chapter I introduced the axiom on the importance of recognition for all humans, despite their geographies, class, race, and/or age. According to the ILO (2019), for the economy to thrive it is essential to empower the young people with favourable conditions, which allow them to develop their talents which would otherwise get wasted. There is now a new vision to secure the future of work on a human-centred agenda to focus on people's wide-ranging capabilities (ILO, 2019). In this chapter, I join the timely call by searching for youth's place in a world of *contracting opportunities*, an outcome that can be attributed to the foundational imagination of the 'colonial modern' that shaped the access, control to the possibilities of self-determination as well as institutional form and curricular content (Mamdani, 2016) for modern structures of opportunity in Africa. As the third decade into the 21st century begins, the hype that came with what was known as the new democracy in South Africa (SA) is waning. The celebrational mood that earned us the charge of 'exceptionalism' (Mamdani, 1993) is declining. This stemmed from belief that SA's democracy was exceptional, founded on principles of truth and reconciliation (TRC), and peaceful transition. Although SA has a political landscape that is sometimes compared to the espoused liberal-democracies, such as a strong constitutionalism and a system of corporatist interest-intermediation, these co-exist with the high measures of social inequality (Czada, 2002). The social outcomes dispel the myth of exceptionalism.

We know this because in our country, the said to be wonderful democratically attained liberties exist alongside of the dreadful and suffocating lack of employment opportunities, enduring poverty and deepening inequality in ways that mirror the past (Everatt, 2008). Together with others on the continent of Africa, SA's young people experience non-participation in education, training, and employment often dubbed as NEET (Cloete, 2009). Circumstances and needs may vary according to the diverse contexts in our sub-Saharan Africa, but youth are exposed to the similar concerns as peers on the continent (see Honwana, 2013; Sommers, 2012; Cole, 2011). These circumstances restrain the full enjoyment of the freedoms and rights that the previous generations earned in renowned struggle against the apartheid regime and offensives associated with colonialism. The ILO (2019) identified equality, sustainability, and inclusiveness as major issues that may usher-in the human-centred vision. Of the three I pay attention to inclusion. To be true to the local context, I style it as placement, because it will be difficult to include majority youth in the social universe of opportunities designed for few. A search for ways in which such opportunities could be widened must begin with youth studies which frame the understanding we have about the struggles and struggling of the present-day youth. So, I begin this discussion with our local literature on youth.

3.1 SA youth in research context

I first deal with the history of youth research to show inconsistencies in practice. For instance, young people's involvement in protest tends to be more pronounced than their developmental ideals, challenges, and responsibilities. In part, this prepares for the disposition of blaming that seeks to preserve the Functionalist imaginative of order which extend to the vilification of the youth struggles. The same youth receive recognition when their actions contribute to a solution of the societal wide problem such as youth involvement in the resistance against apartheid. However,

in as much as engagements in protest action are important, they are intermittent, and to a larger extent slightly less important in comparison with the enduring development that has to do with their whole lives. Few have grappled with the question, that asks, what will happen with the young people once the struggle is over. Such disposition helps the youth practitioners to intentionally look beyond those youth identities that are crafted around their protest actions, to focus instead on their day to day struggling. The dimension of lived experience promises to disrupt preoccupation with the youth protest, in doing so open a universe of possibilities towards understanding the daily concerns of the young people as part of the human family (not just as a problem of society), including their imaginations. There is a growing body of literature generated by researchers in the southern hemisphere that challenges what occurs as deliberate occlusion of the human dimension in emergent youth debates (Idriss et al., 2021; Cooper et al., 2019). Among other things these researchers call for the [de]racialisation and democratisation of the field of youth studies to be representative of most thinkers across the global divide. To be true to the makings of youth research in SA, one must first look at its general trajectory.

3.1.1 The rise and fall of youth research

In SA the term *youth* has always been associated with involvement in the political resistance, militancy, and struggle, since the formation of the Congress Youth League in 1943 (Perrow, 2004). With the progress of time their activism was alternately jeered at as the *diabolic* actions of the 'lost generation', at other times lauded as actions of 'roaring young lions' – the rebels with a righteous cause (Everatt, 1995). To this end, we know more about the sloganeering calls they made regarding the liberation *before* education, in my view this was deliberately misread as *over* education. So that, it was possible to instigate moral panics that fed into the dominant belief that young people

were dangerous (Seekings, 1996). The moral panics were the tactical devices that were used to distract public attention from the underlying social problems and to justify an increased social control over the working-class and other rebellious segments within the society. When the attention was diverted away from the real contentions and grievances that the young protestors tabled, it was possible to validate the state's violent response. A case in point is the apartheid state police massacre of school children in Soweto in 1976. Then and now there is urgency to respond with violence, when trying to normalise without heeding young people's grievances. Instead of trying to understand the concerns raised by students internally from their perspectives, panic tends to guide government's response. Emergent skills discourse is an excuse that is sustained in the democratic dispensation, that mirrors the past moral panics.

Secondly, young people's opportunities are further curtailed by the junior statuses that comes with their age, they are seen as the inexperienced. Yet if the foundational democratic principle of the majority rule could apply, they would emerge as the rightful owners and/or custodians of major societal establishments. Instead, the majority of these are 'nowhere' (Jeffrey, 2008a) in this country. In part, this has to do with the fact that current youth cannot claim living under apartheid as their experience. They are born with a generational deficit known as 'struggle-credentials' (see Reddy, 2016). However robust their political consciousness, astute their manoeuvers to agitate for generational change, or radical their ideas, still they reside outside the authentic political aristocratic class and are perpetually junior to those who were marooned to Robben Island, dispersed in many African countries and abroad, or muzzled by apartheid's armed forces in streets of Soweto. Swartz (2008) makes a crucial observation that the older people tend to sympathise with their youth days as far better, supposing at times that the current youth bear the lesser weight of suffering. However, while human progress resolves certain challenges, we cannot underestimate

the onerous task of going through present-day struggling by those with fresh contact of it. While removed from the difficulties of apartheid, an illusion should not be created that their troubles are less burdensome. Youth stage is interspersed with struggling, even without the credentials of resisting apartheid, their lives are not easier.

In the past, conflict theories gave young people hope by identifying them as agents for radical change, as the vanguard of the proletariat struggle. This gave an impetus to imagine themselves as new class that will revive the revolutionary spirit that was dissipating among old proletariat forces (Smith, 1984). In keeping with revolution imagery, the local researchers paid attention to the political activism that stemmed from age of resistance (Bundy, 1987; Seekings, 1996), youth subcultures, as well as their complicity to criminality as comrades who are at the same time *tsotsis* (criminals) (Glaser, 2000; 2008), a term that was compounded as *comtsotsi*. In apartheid days, the supposedly 'lost generation' boycotted and burnt down schools for serving as monumental symbols of bleak futures. Concerned with pressures that came with increased urbanisation of African majorities, the apartheid state had expanded the low-quality education system for 'Bantu' or African children to manage the perceived as uncontrollable youth, deflate the escalation of crime and the possible eruption of political mobilisation (Hyslop, 1989). The Bantu Education Act no. 47 of 1953 that destined this youth for lifeless prospects was resisted. Emergent cultures that are bent towards keeping the present-day youth in precarious positions will be resisted. Young people resisted what they deemed as education for subjugation and/or social control. As it was in those days, youth actions continue to be viewed as 'instinctively' violent and 'irretrievably' delinquent (Seekings, 1993; Nkoana & Dichaba, 2017).

Similar analysis was given during the recent string of demonstrations in 'Arab countries' that were branded as 'Arab spring', and #feesmustfall. Rather than promoting youth violence, this analysis serves to illustrate that young people's expressed dissatisfactions tend to be met with resistance of moral panics. Yet at times, the often deemed as deviant actions are responses to social structural conditions they encounter as the underlyingly oppressive. In his synthesis, Smith (1984) argued that the structural functionalist and conflict theory positions missed the plot in their generalisation of young people as an oppositional force to contemporary society. In the 21st century, they are becoming the weaklings that must endure the overbearing weight of a [dis]abling structure over their seemingly 'conquered' (even if not defeated) agency. They are now seen as superfluous heroes in struggles that are not their own (Dawson, 2014). While Dawson gives no acknowledgement to Buhlungu (2006), the analysis she provides is similar. Buhlungu once lamented the 'tragedy' that comes with standing in the forefront of the struggle as 'rebels without a cause that is authentically your own'. He did this to reflect on the white officials who advanced the black trade unions struggle in a racially polarised society. Struggles and the struggling of the township youth can rather be seen as real and authentic.

Dawson (2014) writes about involvement of African youth in rapidly erupting service delivery protest around the Zandspruit area. She negotiated field access through building rapport with the targeted youth in street corners and taverns. She succeeded to conduct qualitative interviews with young protesters and found that sometimes they were used by the presiding politicians to fight for their political survival. Instead of being the political activists who protest for their own issues, she saw them as the political brokers. Their roles were limited to recruiting other young people to participate in an 'inauthentic' struggle to retain the political leadership. This makes us wonder if past is recast in present. That the young people engage the struggle only to earn the status of a

protester or agitator, but not the so-called struggle credentials which warrants politicians the 'right' to be considered for senior government positions and tenders. Dawson succeeded isolated the youth as her unit of analysis. She argued for stuck[ness] (expressed as static) that comes practices of waiting (expressed elsewhere as waithood) and growing envy to which protest became an outlet for demonstrating anger and frustrations about certain social ills including unemployment. The paper stresses the importance of understanding politics as it is lived and experienced by the young people in their daily encounters with reality (p. 882).

This paper provides an alternative way of thinking about youth who have bigger unemployment share and take centre stage in debates on non-participation in EET. This said, I am also aware that sometimes the visible aspects regarding this youth cloud the imagination for meaningful development. I take my cue from Perrow (2004) who was interested in youth development and hints that the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) sector carried much of the bulk of youth development work, but this was disturbed by the political shifts in 1990s (Chisholm, Harrison, & Motala, 1997; Perrow, 2004; Everatt, 2008). What strikes me as pertinent for the purposes of the current study is to acknowledge that the changes in the political arena shifted the local youth research from the broader focus on youth as a category and/or social force that can ignite the new imagination and agitate for social change, to a narrow emphasis on their education and training (Chisholm et al., 1997). When research lull ended, the reawakening that would occur in the 2000s began to focus on the youth success (Ramphele, 2002), the pathways or routes to adulthood (Soudien, 2003), and the moral ecology of the township youth (Swartz, 2009).

In a paper that commented on the status of youth in SA, Everatt (2008) commingled a story of the isiZulu-speaking family from peri-urban parts of KwaZulu-Natal with a countrywide youth

overview to consider the material prospects for young people in a democratic SA. He argued against the 'nowhere' position that the youth occupied. He pointed out that the current policies sometimes disregarded the young people's needs, and for him this led to postponement of their gratification. Young people were yet to enjoy their 'democratic dividend' as the majority in this society. This research does not only help with the methodological innovation of mixing wider concerns with the individual experiences but cautions against ending things at scoping the problems. Everatt (2008) and Dawson (2014) point to importance of the lived experience. Like them, I think youth experience is important to consider, so that knowledge corpus used by the various agencies to guide propositions and strategies on youth development is based on a broader base. There is a tendency to rely almost entirely on the positivist inclined paradigms. It is praiseworthy that, in this country we are able archive statistical information, however this privilege can be abused by limiting the scope of what counts as knowledge (epistemology).

3.1.2 Shifting the focus

According to (Perrow, 2004) research has tilted towards the narrower focus. We observe a shift from persons of the youth to the institutions whose existence is supposedly intended to serve them. Bourdieu (1997) has cautioned that in practice things tend to be lopsided when human agents are subsumed as subservient to the institutional-based opportunity. The new bias is even on a narrower focus of education, training, and employment (EET). Cloete (2009) championed this area in ways that added new energy to our local research by confronting the deprivation of opportunities for accessing EET, but he does not deal with the pertinent question of control or ownership of such structures. The contribution of this publication was the dexterity it showed on enumerating the young people who are labelled as 'NEETs'. There were 2.8 million young people between ages 18

and 24 that had formed part of the so-called NEET. Others stretched the bracket to ages between 15 and 24 and found a slight increase to 3.3 million (Smith, 2011). Every success in drawing attention to this issue is celebrated, these researchers broadcast their achievement (see Cloete & Butler-Adam, 2012). However, what tends to be missing in befitting celebrations for being forerunner in discovering this United Kingdom concept of 'NEET' that has become entrenched in our local jargon, is an acknowledgement that SA had already ran with similar compounded terminology such as 'out-of-education, out-of-employment'.

From scoping the problem with the intention to develop a capacity-building model for the post-school youth (Cloete, 2009), the publications that followed added to the post-school education that was identified as problem besetting the young people in this society, the 'skills training' and unemployment (Perold, Cloete, & Papier, 2012). Prior to Cloete (2009) there was a long period that was characterised by hype with skills which branded youth unemployment as almost exclusively 'skills' issue. At face value this acquiesced to industrialists' demands: Employment experience became the legitimate excuse for youth exclusion. In my view, this practice was not in-touch with reality to the extent that it necessitated a rebuttal that said, in the first place 'work-experience is gained through work' (Allais, 2017, p. 157). Demand for work experience and the skills doctrine appear to be in tandem with 'fort pedagogy'. According to Mnguni (2020), fort teaches that for the development to follow, outsiders must be 'incorporated or excluded', since skills are important for the thriving business. The fort logic makes it easier for employers to choose to exclude those they identified as unskilled employees and potential employees, to preserve not only profit but also their preferred labour or candidates.

Cloete and Butler-Adam (2012) make what I consider a useful distinction between the demand-side and supply-side through which they attribute the outcome of youth unemployment to the small number of jobs created in the economy. Then these researchers proceed to list a plethora of lacks on what they view as the supply side issues; their list includes the much-esteemed lack of appropriate skills, work-related capabilities and the higher education qualifications needed for a high-skills economy. The shift in focus from lacks in the venerable economy prepares ground to denounce humans (mainly Africans) as lack[ers] of skills for all times. Nonetheless, Kruss et al. (2019) challenge the current skills regime as exacerbating inequality and poverty, thus not useful for effecting the desired change. These researchers posit that the narrow skills planning vying for the neoclassical economic logic as not appropriate for SA's development challenges, and that the skewed patterns of access to education, training, and labour-markets contribute to unequal access in terms of material and social advantage (Kruss et al., 2019). Instead of emphasis on skills deficits, these researchers propose a shared vision that shifts the discourse away from efficient workers to development of productive and flourishing citizens. Instead of ownership these researchers anticipate that such vision will foster modification from the generic skills and specific competencies to the common underlying capabilities (p.146).

Various contributors in the book move us beyond human capability approaches, the focus of which tends to be fixated on changing one side of the equation - the supply-side. Implications for commingling the concerns for education and training systems (curriculum and pedagogy) together with employment firms' resources (technological capabilities, organisational cultures, and the occupational or sector specific systems) transcends the controversies associated with human capital theory (HCT). They identify the need to develop systems that enable the mobility and progression in ways that aim to attain the goal of shifting the past inequalities (Kruss et al., 2019,

p. 147). These researchers do not arrive on what I deem as the crux of the issue – owning and controlling the work processes as equaliser to bridge the yawning gap of racial inequality, unemployment, and poverty. However, it is commendable Kruss and colleagues (2019) take us beyond the toxic denialism of privilege. For me this is refreshing. If this spirit is maintained, it might take us beyond fort strategies of the single-sided critical gaze on government as first and the last author of the young people's perceived lacks and to consider all players. Before this publication, the skills debate appeared as another trusted theory of exclusion and displacement. It followed a linear thinking, that said, 'no economic growth - no possibilities for employment', 'no skills - not worthy for employment'. It seemed that the energy was expended on finding educated excuses rather than informed solutions.

Indeed, there are no easy solutions. However, years of the skills regime have taught us that the stronger institutions will build up the economy which will in turn satisfy the 'trickle down miracle' (Vally & Motala, 2014). Decentering humans in the pursuit of economic stability, neglects a crucial point that the economy resides in the society and not the other way around. Economy does not make humans, but human actions are responsible for its growth and decline. Young people around the 1970s had this understanding when they called for 'liberation before education'. Opposing the logic that places strong education institutions before liberation and pre-eminence of the economy over society may result in a people[less] economy. Surprisingly, we have concepts such as jobless growth (Bhorat, 2004), but local economist almost won the battle to shoot it down. Jobless growth is defined as a situation in which employment growth lags significantly behind the country's Gross Domestic Product (Datt, 1994). In SA economists prefer the middle-ground explanation that settles on the mismatch between growth in economy relative to labour force. Silencing of the debate that promised to be vibrant could be the denial of the reality that sometimes

economic growth is not panacea for youth unemployment, in that it is not always followed by mass employment. Understandably, for market economists, growth is the linchpin on which hangs the economy and all that is good in a society. Jobless growth is threat to the promise of goods that trickle down from the invisible hand. As such economists shut down the thesis as faulty and informed by erroneous data (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2008).

While pockets of absorption in the so-called economy exist, the human conditions for most young people belonging to the subpopulation group of African involve languishing in poverty with no employment prospects until they reach pension (Ngcaweni, 2017). When we tilt our gaze intentionally from the domain of economy to the broader society, we find close to two-thirds of African youth without employment possibilities (p. 3). This persists in spite of rapid fluctuations in growth cycles. Sometimes the skills-lack adherents do not adequately recognise the social exclusion or even displacement of citizens from the opportunities (see Kraak, 2013). The alliance between skills and economy may sometimes have credibility, however, when due regard is not given to the class and racial exclusion of other citizens, it becomes suspect for violence towards human dignity. Within the European Union (EU), member states have for decades interrogated the potential of social exclusion, disengagement, and disaffection of young adults that are citizens (Kersh, Toiviainen, Zarifis, & Pitkanen, 2020). In SA, from Cloete (2009) to Rogan (2018), the non-participation researchers tended to privilege the structure (PSET programmes) over the young people's agency.

Young people may be throttled by structural inhibitors, but this does not occur to individuals without agency. The definition Rudd and Evans' (1998) give to structure has semblance with Roberts (2009), but the former add the inputs from institutions at national and local levels, and the

effects of labour-markets to the influences of the broader social characteristics on social class, ethnicity, and gender. Furthermore, they acknowledge agency, which has to do with input from the young people themselves. In this way, it is possible to learn about their aspirations, and the control (or lack thereof) they might feel they have over their career destinies. These researchers argued that when young people think that the future lies in their hands, they tend to be confident, optimistic, and to feel in control of their transitions. However, when they feel that they are losing control, pessimism and blame shifting ensue - attributing their perceived 'failures' to the labour market's arrangement or other external structural factors. Their research compared the two countries of England and Germany where transitions can be 'accelerated' or 'extended', but this has remained uncertain in SA.

In the preceding discussion, I have shown that recent studies in our local context in this field paid more attention to the institutionally based opportunities, often decoupled from the agential propelled attempts that young people employ to negotiate their access into such opportunities to facilitate their upward mobilities. My aim is not to include everything ever written on the subject. I am satisfied with a cursory historical account on the developments in our local youth study. With this background in mind, I now turn to the dominant strands in the study of youth.

3.2 Dominant tradition in youth research

There are two dominant strands that have shaped youth research (transitions and culture). In this research I explore various threads within the transition literature to join other attempts that have transverse this traditional terrain. Despite differences in theory and methodology, there is overwhelming agreement the two dominant traditions that young people do no longer have the

guaranteed access to those possibilities that 'secured' their livelihood, occupations, and self-sustenance.

3.2.1 Youth transitions

Since 1960s, the notion of *youth transition* became extensively used to account for envisaged linear occupational progression that young people make from one programme to the other – in education (and training), then employment (Roberts & Atherton, 2011; Roberts, 2009). Then and now the two concepts of *choice* and *opportunity* were used to explain participation and non-participation in EET. Choice is important for humans. Daily and throughout life humans make choices (Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 2001). Such that, it is difficult to argue against the proclamation that as humans we are a product of our own choices, and choices others make for us. However, choices are constrained and bounded by the external environment structures from which we choose that define the ways we live in a society (p.1). This means that the individual *choices* are made possible (abled) or disabled by the list of available *opportunities*. On the other hand, opportunity structures are formed in inter-relationships between the family backgrounds, education, certain processes within labour markets, and recruitment practices of the employers (Roberts, 2009). Although certain shifts have occurred in these structuring institutions, but their predictive power has not diminished.

Roberts and Atherton (2011) patterned the *choice* versus *opportunity* debates into three phases. The first phase was championed by the psychologists who placed their emphasis on the role and development of choice during young people's transitions, while the sociologists stressed the determining power of opportunity structures. Everyone acceded that the young people made choices, but sociologists argued further that choice was influenced by the family backgrounds, education, labour markets, employer recruitment practices as well as place, gender, ethnicity (or

race in SA), and other determining factors (Roberts, 2009). Bourdieu (1986) had already identified these as forms of capital (cultural, economic, and social). Beyond basic education, the choice is shaped by qualifications and accessing labour market opportunities (Roberts & Atherton, 2011). When reading Willis (1977), these researchers came to understand that those young people who exercised the choices available to them to quit school after identifying opportunities in the non-skilled manual jobs realised only later that they 'applauded their own damnation'. However, job as damnation might not be a generic state for young people in SA's townships. Perhaps this assertion may be true for those that are educationally dressed-up but are materially naked (see de Kock & Schutte, 1994). Those with school qualifications but for one reason or the other without employment opportunities felt that they had 'nowhere to go'.

Later choice was reclaimed to explain the prolonged youth transitions that followed widening de-industrialisation in labour markets (Roberts & Atherton, 2011). At the time when the scope of choice was altered significantly, the opportunities became fragmented (there were frequent breaks, backtracking, and blended), less linear, and predictable. These reforms tended to be associated with the changes in education and labour markets; fewer persons had the identical sets of transitional routes. Such realities required reflexive individuals that were not shy to constantly negotiate and/or to construct their own choice biographies (Biggart, Furlong, & Cartmel, 2008; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Postmodernists advanced that the structural constraints and class-based norms that predetermined occupational destinations had weakened. At that point, the young people had entered a reflexive zone wherein they needed to construct their choice biographies (Wyn & Woodman, 2006; Biggart et al., 2008). In that process youth transitions were protracted, complex and resulted in the greater vulnerability, marginalisation, and exclusion. Elongated timespan that the young people took to 'complete' their transition, promoted the longitudinal approaches as

appropriate means of data collection (Biggart et al., 2008). While choice is widely accepted, caution is made that its over-emphasis could mask the structures of disadvantage, perceptions of risk and uncertainty (MacDonald, Shildrick, & Furlong, 2020; Leccardi, 2005; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997).

The third phase is recurrent. Policy makers have advanced another version of choice argument that seeks to explain the persistence of youth unemployment despite wider options in education and training (Roberts & Atherton, 2011). Within the social policy context, the bleak labour market prospects experienced by the young people in their emerging adult years (18-25) are tied to earlier choices made in adolescent years (14-18) that are deemed as the wrong selection. In its original form, this argument explained the emergence of the 'NEET' phenomenon in the United Kingdom (UK). Interventions that were deployed to reduce the rising of 'NEETs' failed. Policy makers in the UK added to the 'NEETs' another segment of the young people who were identified as capable but were quitting education at age 16, 17, or 18. There were competing perspectives. The assumption was that capable, rational and the ambitious young people would choose to progress into, or through, higher education (Roberts & Atherton, 2011). A sizeable number of this youth elected not to proceed with the university education (Fuller et al., 2011). This was explained as *poverty of aspiration* or *rational action*. To avoid repetition, I have incorporated aspects of these perspectives in the discussion of local youth transition.

To recap, youth transitions has been subjected to scrutiny from among its proponents (Wyn & Woodman, 2006). It is widely acknowledged that the young people no longer follow a seamless transition from school-to-employment (Kelly, McGuinness, & O'Connell, 2012). Along the transition routes there are frequent breaks, backtracking and the blending of employment and

education. Psychologists first attribute this entirely to individual choices, but more recently choice is separated between individual and societal arrangements (Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 2001). Some argued in favour of opportunity structures, and that certain policy solutions do not address the problems that the young people confronted. At times the working-class youth followed a meandering pathway within the training schemes that may lead 'nowhere' (Roberts, 2009). I first encountered the idea of 'nowhere' from research that Jeffrey conducted in India. I find it useful to explain young people's choices and opportunities in the southern hemisphere where research identified the youth stage as an interregnum phase for *waiting* prior to assuming the adult roles (Jeffrey, 2008b; Sommers, 2012; Honwana, 2013). Below I discuss our local nascent attempts to adopt the 'youth transitions' language.

3.2.2 Emerging research focus

In the South, especially in the continent of Africa, it has not become readily clear which direction the transition research follows between the choice and opportunity debate. What is slightly clearer is that the dominating voices in the field of youth studies for the Southern parts of the globe is made by researchers from Western Europe and North America (WENA) (Cooper et al., 2019). Accordingly, theory development in the South tended to be Northern gazing and the breeding ground for generating a range of concepts such as 'nowhere' (Jeffrey, 2008b), being stuck in the Zambian and Rwandan youth (Cole, 2011; Sommers, 2012) equivalent of 'lokshin management' in SA, and *waithood* (Honwana, 2013). While *choice* construct is evidently part of the explanation, to think about the 'generation nowhere' youth group of India that elected to resist giving 'applaud to their own damnation' by taking the non-skilled manual jobs (Jeffrey, 2008b) we note some divergences. However, other aspects such as the family backgrounds, education, labour markets

processes including recruitment practices employers use to attract (or block) the young people from *opportunities* promises to provide explanation power for the youth experiences in the southern block.

Already, it is widely acknowledged that SA has stubbornly remained the most unequal country in the world and that its economy depends on exporting commodities, but the proceeds are shared among a fewer number of multinational firms (Buchanan, 2019). When such economic gains are not widely shared with the rest of the population, what results is that the labour supply is made to exceed the demand by a huge margin. An economy that is hidden in the hands of the few has negative implications for the growth potential. It stunts the possibilities for citizens to participate in those opportunities that could potentially be made available. For many young people that grow up within those communities that are regarded as resource-poor, education becomes the source of hope for the prospect of escaping poverty. However, such expectations are sometimes diminished by broadcast of the poor quality of education in local schools. This creates a psychological deficit among the young people growing up in such communities who identify chances of upward mobilities 'elsewhere'. Writing in context of Peru, Crivello pointed out that migration was a common feature in the young lives. For her, migration referred to more than mere movement across the geo-political boundaries, but across 'meaningful' border to capture various movements across several domains (Crivello, 2009). For instance, youth aspirations were bundled in individual and collective, education and work, in ways that made the separation of aspirations from expectations difficult. Youth transition intersects with the personal sense of life trajectory. Central to the young people and their families are hopes, concerns, and the strategies for escaping poverty.

Our local research has entered the bandwagon of youth transitions on the backfoot. Researchers from Australia are doing their best to give a flash of light to the study of youth transition and young adulthood in SA, for it to match or catch up with the 'modern' youth studies. This ride into transitions happens along with the 'changing times and changing perspectives' (Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn, 2011). It takes place when the traditional wall separating transition and the cultural perspectives is falling. Those who may be correctly considered as the guardian parents of this tradition made a call to bridge the conceptual gulf between two-dominating perspectives in youth studies. As witnessed earlier, local research was still preoccupied with the cultural features including youth identity (Soudien, 2011), rather than aspects of transitions. I suspect that as 'late bloomers' we enter this research area with a psychological deficit, as betrayed in our ardent desire to catch up. It might take longer to demonstrate transition patterns empirically. To counteract lateness, researchers sought to adopt a methodological longitudinal[ism] (Isdale, Reddy, Zuze, & Winaar, 2016; Isdale, Reddy, & Winaar, 2018) provided by the popular Trends in international Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) as it promised a leap ahead[12] that bridges latecomer gap and validates youth transition as the triple-S of smooth, staggered, and stopped. While acknowledged, *stuck* did not make it to the title.

This research revealed that our local young people follow four main pathways, beginning with *smooth* transition which refers to the year-on-year grade progression. For others progression between school grades tended to be *staggered* by rapid grade repetition. Sometimes staggering during the schooling years pushed the young people to explore other pathways in the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges (Isdale et al., 2016). This research further

[12] In this instance I am using the concept more colloquially, not yet as the heuristic concept we find in Martin Heidegger.

showed that there was a growing number of young people who are tainted by the protracted periods of being not in education, training, or employment. A significant portion of these are those young people who were *stuck* in the Grades 9 and 10. The rest of the young people that participated were halted by various social pressures and personal circumstances. This *stopped* group was constituted by those individuals who left school without obtaining the Matriculation certificate and had not returned to it (Isdale et al., 2016). When policy makers shift their focus away from young people in general to pay considerable attention to those who had obtained university entrance, other transitional segments could be intentionally or erroneously left out. Yet these young people may be the very ones who require the policy cushioning. So far, the proliferation of the progressive policies of the post-apartheid period has not levelled the playing fields on accessing quality opportunities.

Buchanan (2019) is correct that it has not been easy for the SA government to change the deep-seated trajectory of the past exclusionary social and economic development that was built up over decades of apartheid. Quality education remains tilted downwards. In their research Isdale and colleagues (2016) relied on the data that was retrieved from the school level children who participated in the TIMSS. TIMSS gained a status of being the last authority when it comes to explaining the quality of education, especially in SA. The very mention of 'quality' tends to be followed by acronyms like TIMSS, PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) and SACMEQ (Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality). It has become inconceivable to speak about the quality of education outside predictable poor performance in these international tests. Trust that is afforded these studies, especially TIMSS, has purchased for itself an all-embracing status on things that pertain to quality. The data corpus that was generated from the TIMSS study has now entered the fray of transition research which was

traditionally the reserve of youth studies. Once again, local researchers may be latecomers to employ the metaphor on youth transition (Evans & Furlong, 1997), a discourse that is traced to the post-war period in Britain. That said, the identified conceptual gap must not be construed as lack of interests on youth: SA has a long youth research tradition.

The transition outlook is attractive: It has a wider scope of utility that extends far beyond basic education. It affords researchers a chance to make the links with post-school opportunities. In this innovation age, it is not wrong to disrupt the traditional norms especially if potential exist to chart new grounds that take research forward. From this perspective, even as latecomers to the traditional bandwagon of youth transitions that tend to expand our research in education to include labour, the ambition itself is admirable. In former years poor performance ended at highlighting the grade repetition and the related vagaries that come with humble beginnings in the low social-status backgrounds (Fleisch, 2008). Emphasis tended to be placed on educational policies such as grade progression (Kika & Kotze, 2019). Others faulted grade repetition as harmful and wasteful of the public resources (Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002; Lam, Ardington, & Leibrandt, 2007; Motala, Dieltiens, & Sayed, 2009; Branson, Hofmeyr, & Lam, 2014). Youth transitions offers a chance to transcend the contentment with physical access and tinkering with culpabilities of educational quality to include imperatives of access to the labour-markets. This said, the TIMSS corridor through which the entrance into transition research is negotiated has its own limitations.

In my view, the first limitation is the all-embracing nature and globalisation of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) as a solution to the wider social youth challenges. There is a danger of representation in which poor performance in the specific STEM learning areas is seen as encompassing of the general performance. Furthermore, there is an impression created

that the youth unemployment could be altered through means of isolated STEM. The second concern it raises is that there may be a self-imposed limitation that comes with wanting to belong to the acclaimed international body of niche research. For instance, this research revealed that poor performance in the STEM fields manifests primarily in males (Isdale et al., 2016; Isdale et al., 2018). Nonetheless, we remain unsure as to whether the male learners excel in other non-STEM learning areas, including the extra curricula activities which form part of the schooling system. These concerns may be concealed by the preconditioning factor that could come with extracting data from sources that have already proved underachievement beyond any 'shadow of doubt'. Already there is an ingrained expectation that African youth are worse-off, and to confirm this truth claim is easier. In fact, it almost assumes a taken-for-granted status given that research has repeatedly proven it (Spaul, 2013; Spaull & Taylor, 2015).

The need to provide an extensive explanation almost appears as counterproductive. Yet it came by way of surprise that in this research, young people's extended exposure to the poorer schools is made suspect for their lower expectations in terms of their perceived educational 'returns' (Isdale et al., 2016; Isdale et al., 2018). On the contrary, my intuition dictates that expectation would be higher on the marginalised groups among whom inflated aspirations tend to be a trend (de Kock & Schutte, 1994; Mizruchi, 1967). Also, the upsurge of attrition and *stopped* pathway was associated with maleness, which in recent years appeared as 'custodians of most things negative in education'. It remains mysterious how girls from similar backgrounds and racial profiles succeed to enhance their expectations on the educational 'returns', but not boys. Elsewhere, as we have seen, similar disparities are explained either through the 'poverty of aspirations' and 'rational action' (Roberts & Atherton, 2011). For instance, in England, at a time when three-quarters of young people from the higher social class strata followed what Isdale and colleagues termed as the

‘smooth’ pathway, they progressed to higher education. However, only one-in-five among the working-class youth chose the path of higher education (Roberts & Atherton, 2011). If such a thing as aspirational poverty exists, locally it has selective affinity toward boys.

If we consider the Mertonian refutation of the poverty of aspiration thesis which argued that *all people* (my emphasis) have the desire to get ahead, and this was uniformly distributed across the class structure, this will certainly apply too to the township boys, from whom ability to aspire does not lack. However, the difference was a disjuncture between the ‘socially mandated goals’ and ‘means to attain them’ (Mizruchi, 1967). Roberts (1968) submits that to differentiate and place the school leavers in various roles in the occupational system, and for them to accept new roles as workers, there is need for interventions at the entry point level into employment. This is important because the childhood roles do not always articulate well with specific adult destinations. In these terms, successful transitions from educational-to-employment institutions are those that are linked to the coordinated intentional social process of grafting novice workers into new roles. Failure to extend the means needed to attain socially mandated goals, and failure to distribute opportunities on equitable basis cannot be correctly blamed on the job seekers, as ‘skills lack’ has successfully done. A lower standard of living may affect the individual’s assurance regarding his/her own betterment (Mizruchi, 1967). However, poverty that comes with frustrated access, together with scanty opportunities for fine-tuning the so-called higher skills, does not strike me as aspirational but developmental.

Merton is right: The success in terms of transition cannot be decoupled from social processes to attain it. What first gave the impression of the ‘poverty of aspiration’ in Durkheimian anomie (Mizruchi, 1967) could in fact be the ‘poverty of opportunity’ (Roberts & Atherton, 2011). It is a

well-known fact that there are inter-class conflicts – the effort to block the social mobilities of other groups (Mnguni, 2020). Such obstacles are thought to play some role in conditioning in the non-mobile youth an attitude of risk-avoidance. 'Risk-evading' might not always mean the same thing as 'risk-aversion'. The latter gives an impression of disinterestedness when the young people could be protecting themselves from experiencing the repeated disappointment. Lower status groups have the lived experience that there is an outright discrimination against them by those persons in relatively higher-class (Mizruchi, 1967, p. 445). Sociologists have termed this stratification. Equally, it may be true that, in addition, those occupying the same class position may discourage others from moving ahead. While Mizruchi (1967) wants to read such adaptation as a social condition that occurs when a discrepancy is maintained between the goals of larger society (success) and limited means made explicit to attain it, in the empirical chapters I interpret a similar kind of adaptation as *despair*. In so doing, I resist to read it as a complete retreat into the apathy of laziness.

Although the reviewed emergent research had ambition to approximate the inter-sectoral transitions from schooling to post-schooling and labour markets, the bulk of the learners were still within basic schooling in wave 4. As such, employment appeared as marginal because at the time young people still searched for the educational opportunities in school or TVET colleges. Realistically, employment 'speak' would only be relevant in wave 5 in the year 2015 (see Isdale et al., 2018). The most arresting finding for this research was that some of those who were celebrated for a smooth progression track within the basic schooling did not make the smooth inter-sectoral transition. Up to 30.8% of learners with a 'clean' track record of no interruption throughout their schooling years were neither working nor studying at wave 5. Transition was historical rather than prospective. They transitioned well from the schooling sector in the past, but

their dexterity shown to transverse the basic education was rewarded with a 'nowhere' (Jeffrey, 2008a) trophy. This begins to disrupt the general understanding that 'achievement begets achievement' and could be used to hush the noise that indiscriminately links poor educational achievement with the lack of skills and youth unemployment. Surely the top achievers have some educational skills, but close to a third of these follow the path line of transition into becoming the so-called NEETs (Isdale et al., 2018).

The NEET category in terms of the above, is not reserved for those encountering disturbances of being staggered, stuck, and stopped along their schooling, but lingers as a threat for even those on supposed 'good track' in elementary and secondary education. If 'NEET' status has no respect for those on the smooth pathway, I find no reason to review the information on other pathways in the education pipeline. This begins to hint that non-transitions in employment might have less to do with school achievements and quality of education, and more with the structural arrangements of labour markets and recruitment practices of employers – the opportunity structures rather than individual choices. Furthermore, I force fit the styles of segmenting young people into four groups as they appear to be slightly comparable. There are clear variations with the study focus, period studied, and the youth circumstances. Nonetheless, the categories are coined such that they have features that are similar with those I have shown in *figure 1.2* in the previous chapter. The shifting terminology is important in so far as it promises to capture year-on-year grade progression over the extended period. I think that these similarities can confirm that, then and now, the educational and employment prospects of the young people have not improved in ways that approximate the ideal. The findings from such sophisticated, longitudinal research reproduce a fair number of the comparable categories with those first reported by Everatt and Orkins (1993) as I show in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1: Comparing youth categories in two dispersed periods

Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE), 1990s		South African Youth Panel Study (SAYPS), close to two decades after the democratic transition	
Fine	25%	Smooth	46.7%
At risk	43%	Staggered	39.4%
Marginalised	27%	Stuck	6.9%
Lost	5%	Stopped	6.8%

Sources: Everatt and Orkins, 1993 and Isdale et al., 2016

It is commendable to observe that over time the prospects of young people have improved slightly in terms of access and progress in education and training. Almost half of the population of those that participated in the panel study followed what has been coined as the 'smooth' track, a grade progression path that seems to be comparable with the 'fine' category that was constituted by those young people who were found to be fully engaged with the society. However, the findings that came in wave 5 of the panel study already revealed that smoothness was getting fractured in terms of transitioning to the post-school opportunities. Close to a third of those who were identified as 'smooth operators' in their transitions due to their uninterrupted grade-to-grade progression in schooling years were no longer fine or fully engaged. We remain unsure if the reduction of a third of this youth would be kept at the 25% that was established in former years or just above it. Isdale and colleagues (2016) caution that a more nationally representative figure appears in the National Income Dynamic Study and suggest that the smooth group account for a third of the youth population. Slight improvement has occurred in the twenty years that followed the democratic transition that began in mid-1990s.

The above said, we also learn that once young people exit basic education, they begin to be exposed to a myriad of risks. Those who want to naturalise intersectoral non-progression may trace the genesis of such risk back to the staggered and experience of being stuck in one grade in schooling years. Yet those that remain at school longer may be protected from being exposed by inadequacies of post-school structures of opportunity, an outcome that may be responsible for bringing an increased sense of alienation and marginalisation. Some were brought to a stop following the continued occurrences of non-progression. Stop may expose young people to deviating routes of being lost. While some shift occurred, the progress made is far from being enough. There is still a mileage that needs to be covered to improve the current status quo to approach the ideal circumstances. In my estimation, approximating an ideal outcome would at least usher more than two-thirds of the youth population into the fine-smooth categories within and beyond the basic schooling years. Within townships, success in education and training does not always link to the success in labour-markets (Olivier, 2015). Ambition to extend smooth transition into labour markets appears as farfetched when the fair share opportunity distribution and control is lagging. We have I term as 'collection economy[13]' built on values of dispossession and non-distribution serving to reproduce non-transitions and poverty of opportunity.

Sheer participation in education and training of whatever perceived status and/or quality is one thing, but transition into sustainable work possibilities another. In caste ridden India the young people who experienced the mismatch between success in education and training, and access into employment expressed their frustration in ritualistic forms of protest. Jeffrey (2008a) encountered these young men in Meerut, northern India, who had formed a club the protesting youth themselves

[13] By *collection economy* I wanted to identify a discursive terminology that could highlight those values that appear as oppositional to the virtues of wealth distribution.

named as the ‘Generation Nowhere’. They staged passive protests (perhaps this is reminiscent of the Gandhi’s passive resistance) by meeting once a month to lament among themselves the declining value of their obtained university degrees. They associated this outcome with the scarcity of employment opportunities. Members typically spent two decades in formal education but could not secure salaried work. Surprisingly, the ‘generation nowhere’ group hoped that things would change in the future. For them despair was not immediately obvious; it was masked with implicit understanding that ‘the world runs on hope’ (Jeffrey, 2008a, p. 739). Nevertheless, this youth had an appreciation that their current hoping was threatened by the other 42 000 persons that apply for a single government post.

3.2.3 Social planning

We have had a long history of human capital[14] theory which guided the manpower planners to argue that the unemployment was owed to lack of high and middle level skills (Becker, 1964). This influenced policy makers to promote expansion of education participation in secondary and post-school throughout the said to be ‘developing’ world. High participation in education was construed as a neutral means for equalising opportunities between the social classes through distributing income fairly (Carnoy, 1982). The intrinsic worth of this assertion is that the more educated had higher earnings in developing countries, and this was evidence of educational gains. In the progress of time, this assertion shifted. By the 1970s it had become apparent that little evidence supported the human capital theorist position of a strong link between extended participation in education and economic participation. Income continued to be unequal, and open

[14] ‘Human capital has come to refer to the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individual, which facilitate the creation of personal, social, and economic well-being. It includes motivation, moral behavior and attitudes…tacit and interpersonal knowledge and skills’ (Cote, 2001).

unemployment increased (Carnoy, 1977). Yet the belief that education and skill formation aided (young) people to be productive persisted, despite glaring historical failures of achieving social opportunities. Buchanan (2019) argues that skills planning alone cannot solve SA's stubborn problems. In his assessment he listed lack of jobs; insecure, low skilled and low paid jobs; and limited labour flows.

However, he hastened to recommend that it would be difficult to reach a sustainable solution without skills planning. On the side of the economy, a similar sentiment was expressed by the developmental economist Sen (1999, p. 293) who argued that without economic participation, education and training would not help countries to attain espoused expansion. Heeding this criticism should engender a different attitude of disinterested inclusion rather than exclusion, place-into instead of social displacement, and participation as an alternative to the endemic non-participation. Instead of the perennial lament of the skills shortage as a barrier to growth, Sen helps us to identify non-participation as a blockage. Rather than wishing away the skills realities confronting us, we can choose to work with what we have by improving the skills of those at our disposal. Until we recognise that, rather than lacking the so-called skills, the working-class youth could be lacking access to the places where skills are obtained (Allais, 2012). When the 'socially mandated' policy goals of participating in education and training are not intentionally linked to the corresponding possibilities of income generation and work, then the young people will forever be blamed for skills shortage and growth stagnation. Some analysts engrossed on glorifying the past.

3.2.4 The golden age myth

Transition literature recognises the nostalgic fixedness with certain periods, such as the so-called golden age in Britain (Vickerstaff, 2003; Goodwin & O' Connor, 2005). Vickerstaff took on the

intellectual expedition to investigate experiences of young males from working-class backgrounds who undertook apprenticeship around the post-war years. It is generally accepted that during those years school-to-work and transition from origin-family-to-own-family were smooth and unproblematic, as suggested by the golden-years idea. Thirty in-depth interviews with persons who had undertaken the apprenticeships between 1944 and 1982 were conducted to gain some insights from historical recollection of their experiences. Some of the interviewed ex-apprentices reported that their experiences would have been anything but smooth. In their retrospective accounts, experiences were unpleasant, violent, fragmented and based leaning more on chance and choice that was limited. Contrary to the expected 'golden handshake[15]' of the buoyant labour market, young men still took a long time to become financially independent (Vickerstaff, 2003). The apprentice wage was low and rarely afforded attractive opportunities for those in semi- and unskilled work. Even then they lacked enough money to set up homes for themselves.

Individual persons at the time still had to negotiate and manage their own career trajectory. Such trajectories were either 'traditionally directed' where family trade was followed, 'inner-directed' where pursued career matched what the individuals liked or were good at, and 'other directed' wherein the apprentice was accessed with the reference to outside source of help and information (Vickerstaff, 2003). This research found that lack of choice was traceable even for the inner-directed, resulting in mismatch between aspiration and career trajectory followed as some initially wanted to do something else. For the working-class, the so-called golden era was not so golden after all: Young people still found meaningful trade routes by virtue of chance (Vickerstaff, 2003). Through re-analysing this data Goodwin and O' Connor (2005) confirmed earlier findings. These

[15] Golden handshake is a colloquial term which is often used in relation to lucrative financial benefits individuals receive in recognition for service(s) rendered.

findings are important for the current research, not so much for their repudiation of the golden era myth, but in so far as they offer an alternative to the farfetched ideals of growth. When social engineers decide to make the work possibilities an existential given for all, then targeting skills would be easier. I now shift the focus briefly on to youth cultures so that we can appreciate historical separation in these research traditions.

3.3 Social exclusion

Non-participation is a term used for conceptualising young people's sporadic disappearance in EET (SEU, 1999; Colley & Hodkinson, 2001). The UK government imperative for widening participation in higher education (HE) (Fuller et al., 2011; Watts & Bridges, 2006; Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 2001) competes with finding solutions for the NEET. The *Bridging the Gap* report recorded strategies for tackling the network of interlinked social and economic problems deemed responsible for excluding the young people from opportunity (Colley & Hodkinson, 2001). This highlights the whims of occupying an outside position during the critical period of the late teens (16-19-year-olds) (Nudzor, 2010, p. 16). However, one does not need to be a teenager to experience the social traps that come with the NEET status. There is a general tacit understanding that these faculties are mutually reinforcing of inclusion and exclusion, and so, 'best' treated together (SEU, 1999). Sometimes institutionalised education and training loses its expected economic function, to become the basis 'for social control' serving to reconstitute the reserve army of labour (RAL) (Ainley, 2013). It is interesting to note that as the traditional 'youth jobs' wane, promotion of education and training increases. This may prepare a context for blaming the unfortunate youth, even if this is not its stated intention.

The notion of social exclusion (SE) is powerful in the European Union. The concept applies to a wide canvass of social ills such as poverty, marginalisation, deprivation, growth in inequality, and general hardship (Peace, 2001). A great deal of research has been devoted to elements of SE and the factors liable for contributing to it, often without effort to operationalise the concept directly (Burchardt, Le Grand, & Piachaud, 1999). It explains the barriers from social processes sometimes construed as self-ejection. The conceptual appeal of SE cohabits with rigorous contestation. It identifies a need to insert first time those who had never been in the mainstream, and to integrate those once included but who are no longer there (Atkinson & Davoudi, 2000). Commentators argue that the concept is unclear, and that its definition(s) are mere proxies for poverty. In the UK, the widespread buy-in to the SE doctrine is confirmed by the setting up of the interdepartmental Social Exclusion Unit in 1997 and the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE[uk]) at the London School of Economics (Richardson & Le Grand, 2002; Burchard et al., 1999).

According to Fergusson (2013), in the Anglo-Saxon world SE entered the realm of politics along with the recession crisis. Those young people who came to be labelled, counted, and responded to as NEET would be explained through SE doctrine. In many ways UK's NOT phenomenon is akin to being 'OUT' in SA's youth research. Our home-grown compound term which comes close to the NEET is *out-of-school out-of-employment* as coined by the SA's Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE[sa]). The coincidence of similarities does not end with selected acronyms of research centres; even the research areas of focus are somewhat similar. This reveals there is movement of conceptual ideas that often go without questioning (Cooper et al., 2019). I took the liberty to separate the two acronyms as CASEsa and CASEuk. While 'NEET' originates from UK, this does not mean there weas no effort locally to capture those problems that confront young people once they exit formal schooling (Everatt & Orkins, 1993). CASEsa baseline report is not

only relevant for showing-off that SA has a contribution on this topical research agenda but helps to interrogate the elected concepts. In my view, SE works best when envisaged exclusion affects ethnic/racial minorities (Mertens, 1999, p. 4 in Romm, 2020), where fairness is to graft back into mainstream the 'extracted' minorities.

SE has been defined as an individual who is geographically resident in a particular society, aspires to but for reasons beyond his or her control does not participate in normal activities like other citizens in the resident society. People living in Canada who would like to emigrate to SA but are prevented from doing so by certain immigration restrictions, are not by that fact alone socially excluded. Such individuals may be excluded from SA society but are likely to have a society of their 'own' in which they are not excluded (see Burchardt et al., 1999, p. 229). However, in terms of this definition, SA natives who are resident in this society as their country of birth but are prevented from undertaking normal activities through racial discrimination that may bring about skills deficits, do not end with being socially excluded but are outcasted. In one sense they belong to this society, but what they identify as their native home does not belong to them. They do not own means of production and are estranged in their own country. My contention is that, given a chance, all abled young people could acquire all skills, but not if they retain unbounded outcast status that comes with occlusion from the private sector.

3.4 Conclusion

The NEET phenomenon that has preoccupied policy makers for some time can be obfuscated by transporting concepts that do not directly apply to our local contexts. In this chapter I argued that, more than inclusion the youth in SA townships may demand placement – which considers the option to have something to do. I critiqued the skills lack notion as it appeared to be based on the

logic of institutionalism which brought the problem of NEET in the first place. As an alternative I tabled the under explored concepts such as ‘ownership’ which hold great promise for the control that humans have for self-determination. Township youth experience the short end in economic participation on those institutions that were created without them in mind. Instead of poverty of aspiration, I selected and justified poverty of opportunity, in the place of social exclusion, I motivated for social displacement for recognition of countervailing factors within corporate capitalism.

Chapter 4

‘To the people themselves’: A methodology for studying lived experiences

4.1 Introduction

Now that I have dealt with theoretical aspects of the lived experience, in this chapter I discuss the methodology for studying lived experiences that relate to non-participation in education, training, and employment (EET). In qualitative studies, methodology has to do with justifying philosophical and practical strategies researchers use to gain knowledge regarding a given phenomenon (Scott & Morrison, 2005). Although previously some casted doubt on its scientific eminence (Miles & Huberman, 1994), it is unsurpassable in terms of the richness of detail and explanatory power. Qualitative methodology enjoys ‘equal’ recognition as those that are inclined towards positivism. It can no longer reside in the marginalia of exploratory stages, nor justly derided as anecdotal (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The widespread acknowledgement of this methodology enhanced my confidence to adopt it for this undertaking. In terms of style, I follow the known and tested prescriptions. Creswell and Poth (2018) have adapted a useful schema from the leading scholars Denzin and Lincoln which provides for a series of activities in qualitative research process. These do not end with gathering, ordering, presenting, and explaining data.

The activities researcher follows to complete their research do not always follow a linear path, but Denzin and Lincoln (2011, in Creswell & Poth, 2018) segment the process into five phases. These include the multifaceted persuasions of the researcher, philosophical assumptions, interpretative frameworks, strategies and approaches, methods for data collection and analysis, going together with the art, practice, and politics of interpretation and evaluation. In this chapter I report the styles I have adopted as one standing on the crest to get a view for the meandering road I had to travel to

fulfill the obligations of this research. In doing this, I start with influences upon the inquirer. Moahi (2020) who worked in the indigenous paradigm makes this point quite cogently, that ways of viewing and interacting with the world differs according to individual's filtering mechanism. For her, as humans we filter the information through our lived experience and effects of the social systems around us. As we have seen, in this research I take the notion of lived experience seriously. I engaged the discussions as one seeking to claim my space, but also, I acknowledge other standpoints with view to highlight the relevancy of the approach I have adopted. This discussion is followed by the philosophical and interpretative frameworks, thereafter I deal with research strategies where I justify my selection of the phenomenological strategies. Subsequently I address the methods for data collection and analysis, then I reflect on the limits for my identified methodology. I end this chapter with a narration of some ethical dilemmas I confronted on this research journey.

4.2 The researcher in the research

I began this thesis with the preface that stipulates my relationship with the current research. I did this to disclose what I am bringing as researcher to this inquiry. I am not writing as detached inquirer, what anthropologists refer to as '*etic* other' but as '*emic* other or self' (Maines, 2001) to preserve the local imagination and meaning making. This does not mean that in this research I adopt an autobiographical strategy. I am not the research subject but write about experiences of young people who look like me both in terms of being human and the racial stratification category that is applied in SA. I am researching those who grew up in the same township in which I grew up and confront the slowly changing, but largely similar kind of circumstances. At other times, what this youth is experiencing may be better or worse than what we dealt with when we were their age. My concern does not lie only with the peculiarities of non-participation but extends to

the individuals experiencing it. This provides a shift in the subject matter in that it permits the slight backgrounding of non-participation and bringing the experiencing persons (Larkin et al., 2006) to the fore, giving a human face to the NEET phenomenon. I join the call to return to the human – people themselves. Even in qualitative studies people can be pushed backward, to 'obtain' objectivity. In what follows I discuss the two terms of objectivity and subjectivity; I incorporate what Creswell & Poth (2018) terms as philosophical assumptions.

4.2.1 On objectivity and realism

Social science as we know it oscillates between the two broad perspectives of social reality, which are objectivity and subjectivity. The two terms refer to the reality as it is and as it is imagined, constructed, or lived. The objectivist view holds that the social world consists, in part, of the objective structures which are independent from the consciousness and desires of the social agents. It addresses the quality of truth that is not tainted by imaginations, interpretations, or feelings of the subject. This perspective is purported to be without preconceived judgements, impartial, with no preferences, prejudices, or biases in the presentation of facts (Mannheim, 1936). Objectivity is often aligned to or used interchangeably with the theory of *realism*[16] positing that 'the world exists and is knowable as it really is' (Cohen, et al., 2002, p. 9). Realism conceives of things as they are, regardless of how one may wish them to be. Rather than pushing the boundaries on current status quo, the realists embrace a practical approach to life. Currently, the youth study of non-participation in EET in SA slants towards the full brown (or hands free) rather than partial realism.

[16] For an interesting discussion on objectivism versus realism see Michael Pendlebury's 2011 paper published in *The Philosophical Forum, Vol. 42(1).*

However, realism and its associate ideology of objectivity are no single lens for studying non-participation. There are equally legitimate, under explored perspectives, like subjectivity and its associate notions of *idealism* and *constructivism*. Rather than being scientifically neutral, this omission could be political. That said, there is now a new realism of critical realism, which seeks to preserve on one hand the realist's ontology - the belief that a pure real world not tainted by our beliefs and constructions exists (Maxwell, 2012). This begs the questions asking, 'How do researchers access such a world?' and 'Can we assume that the already situated researcher does not contaminate the study findings?' The critical realist evades these questions, by clasping with their second hand the constructivist epistemology, which advance the idea that the knowledge humans gain access to or about the world is inevitably our own construction created from a specific vantage point. This slant admits that it is impossible to achieve a purely 'objective' account that is independent of individual perspectives. Idealism and constructivism challenge some of the assumptions that the realists put forward.

4.2.2 Constructivism and subjectivity

Idealism argues that the world exists but people within it construe it in different ways (Cohen, et al., 2002) to push for the conception of the world as it should be – a single ideal based on ideas. What is attractive about this perspective is that as readers we are not left to second guess its political commitments. Contrary to realist's neutralist or hands-free orientation, the idealist's primary preoccupation is to change the world and possibly make it a better place for the majority rather than minority. A study on lived experience which attempts to depart from the pervasive orientation of studying the order of 'things' in the real world and *turn* 'to the people themselves' would benefit immensely from the idealists' political project. This would make it possible envisioning arrangement(s) or construction of things around 'NEETs' to appears as designed with

them in mind. The current arrangements are such that very few persons participate in the so-called 'opportunity' structures (Buchanan, 2019). Some of the existing democratic modern institutions do not adequately serve the very humans in whose name they owe their existence. Although idealists and constructivists seem to be driven by the similar interest, constructivism insists on empirical ways of studying the world. It does not end at the level of ideas. I selected constructivism or also known as interpretivism as a paradigm that best informs this study.

Subjectivity takes-off from the premise that people differ from all other things. They think, act, and create other realities that are either similar or dissimilar to their present-day encounters with the structures of opportunity. Whereas quest for objectivity reveals an 'object' that is distinct from the 'subject', the latter view sees an intimate relationship between the humanly structured object and the perceiving subject. As such, maintain that the *object* emerges for the *subject* during experience (Mannheim, 1936). Whether the choices individuals take, make any difference to what results, or are constrained by the list of limited possibilities, does not prevent the subject from experiencing itself as *perceiving, deciding,* and *choosing* (Fosket & Hemsley-Brown, 2001). Experience is both lived and real. It would be difficult to influence social practice without adequate understanding of the nature of the world and the human experience within it. Exposition of *lived experience* promises to blunt the sharp contrasts between objectivity and subjectivity.

Heidegger is associated with minimal realism (Larkin et al., 2006). He made the argument that it is impossible to ignore the subjectivising influences of language, culture, ideology, expectation, or assumption (Rennie, 1999, p. 6). Rather than being dualistically separated from the world, the human individual is an inclusive part of reality. S/he is an embedded, intertwined, and immersed entity in the world s/he inhabits (Larkin et al., 2006). As human agents, we do not occasionally

jump out of the isolated subjective sphere to impose meaning on a world (structures) of otherwise meaningless objects, but we are always-already 'out here' in a meaningful world. We are already fundamentally part of the meaningful world and when properly understood its functioning links with our involvement in that world. Meaningful world is a fundamental part of us. We get to know the world only when it is disclosed to us. As such, the proper understanding of the revealed world is a function of our involvement in it (p. 106). Heidegger's version of phenomenology retains this kind of intentional directedness as essential part of human activity. He rejected the Cartesian divide between subject and object.

This is well captured in his characterisation of human-being in terms of Dasein (a there-being) a kind of being that in its being is concerned about its very being (Heidegger, 1996). It is proper for this being, to conceive of itself as being disclosed to itself with and through its being. Its essence lies in the fact that in each instance it has to be its own being, at home with itself. In other words, the Dasein understands itself in terms of its existence, which has to do with the possibility to be itself or not to be itself. The task of existence for the Dasein, is decided in the manner of seizing upon or neglecting such possibilities. This implies that our nature is to be there, always somewhere, always located, always amidst other bodies as somebodies and involved with meaningful context (Larkin et al., 2006). What appears as own election of seizing or neglecting possibilities, does not extinguish its being to become nobody: It is there (or already here). We cannot wish it away due to our own evaluation of its bad election. Dasein is already in the world. I move with assumptions.

4.2.3 The philosophical assumptions

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), paradigms are the philosophical ideas that frame the social and behavioural sciences. Qualitative researchers acknowledge assumptions and beliefs that the

inquirer brings and incorporates in research. There are four main assumptions that have been adopted in the qualitative research approaches - ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodology. Aspects of these come from our training but get to be reinforced by the community of scholarship in which we work. The discipline of sociology has done extensive work on the young people, such that there is sociology of youth. I ride on this wagon, but I also have an ambition to join the call for the human-centred approaches in the study of youth. As such, I borrow extensively from philosophy and education scholarships. This takes us to the aspect of axiology.

I value human life and adopt as my position a strong view that human life is best shared with other beings who have ears, emotions, and empathy. I accept that there is no single view of fairness, justice, and equality, but I hope at least it is possible to forge a spirit of commitment to creating a better world with the said various offerings. I am critical of the current deferring to the encroaching use of machines in the qualitative research space. This strikes me as threatening the interpretative creativity that humans bring in the research process. This is not an outright rejection of progress, but the denunciation of progress without others. The idea that human progress is possible only when the vast majorities are no longer made spectators, as this renders able beings to be 'disabled.' It should be self-evident that I do not support the systems of colonialist capitalism and apartheid in their varied forms. I find things that threaten human progress as worrisome. Likewise, Heidegger (1996, p. 48) reminds us that the person is not a thing, not a substance, and certainly not an object, but one who conducts intentional acts. It should come as no wonder that I have tried to reclaim the missing subject in our local study of the so-called 'NEET' phenomenon. I am intentional about avoiding the engagement of the phenomenon that has 'life of its own' without people on whom it manifests. Phenomenology assisted me to engage the lifeworld of the participants and their various modes of subjective engagements.

In ontological terms, I hold that research participants construct their meaning of the social reality. And that such a reality is not deducible into the singular: We have a multiplicity of realities on the phenomenon of non-participation in EET. In terms of the above, the researcher is engaged in double hermeneutics, to interpret and construct the reality from what has already been interpreted. Multiplicity also means that the individual experience is not solipsistic but shared with others in their daily-lived realities of individual interaction (Schudson, 1995; Zerubavel, 1997). As such, I attempted to incorporate the views of the circles of intimacy (CoIs). The CoIs comprised of family members and close friends who share their own insights on non-participation (see Fuller et al., 2011). In these terms, what counts as knowledge (epistemology) is the narrative I provide on the multiple forms of evidence (inter-subjective), in an undertaking to explore the subjective representations of the lived experiences. I spent close to fifteen weeks in the research field trying to understand the lifeworld of the participants. In the empirical chapters, I provide the quotes as evidence of their understanding of that world and interpret this as internal observer rather than as an external one.

The interpretive framework, research strategies, and the methods of data collection and analysis I selected were informed by assumptions of the qualitative methodology. As such, I did not try any harder to evade the dynamic interplay between the individual and social setting (Merrill & West, 2009). I now proceed to discussion on interpretative frameworks. I use the term *interpretative frameworks* interchangeably with Kuhn's (2012) notion of the paradigm.

4.3 The interpretative frameworks or paradigms

The research world is comprised with various paradigms, such as positivism and postposivitism; interpretative, constructivism, and hermeneutics; the critical theory and cultural studies; the

postmodernism, feminism(s), racial discourses; and queer theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Education research has clustered around the five main paradigms, which are positivism, interpretivism, critical theory, postmodernisms, and critical realism (Maxwell, 2012).

Table 4.1: *Research paradigms*

Positivist/ Postpositivist	Interpretivist/ Constructivist	Transformative	Pragmatic	Indigenous and Indigenous oriented
Experimental Quasi-experimental Correlational Reductionism Theory verification (or falsification) Causal comparative Determination	Naturalistic Phenomenological Hermeneutic Interpretivist Ethnographic Multi participants meanings Social and historical constructions Theory generation Symbolic interaction	Critical theory Neo-marxist Feminist Critical race theory Freirean Participatory Emancipatory Advocacy Grand narrative Empowerment issues oriented Change-oriented Interventionist Queer theory Race specific Political	Consequences of actions Problem-centred Pluralistic Real-world practice oriented (as experienced) Mixed models	Culturally & relationally accountable (& participatory) Challenging deficit discourses Nurturing of reciprocal research relations Transformative towards (contextually considered) social & ecological justice, & spiritually symbiotic

Source: Adapted from various sources by Romm, 2018

Romm (2018) provides a comprehensive list on research paradigms. There is no agreement on which list is most appropriate, but researchers decide on suitability. What is interesting about Romm is that she presents this list with dotted lines, which serves to signify that there is no solid separation between these paradigms. As stated, in this research I adopted interpretivism paradigm

and run with phenomenology on the list of offerings. However, below I briefly discuss each so with view to justify my selection. In doing this I resume with positivism.

4.3.1 Positivism

In its rigid form, positivism takes on the realist position that of independent objective reality of the observer and endeavor to capture reality through right methods and procedures (Guest et al., 2013). The social world as we know it is regulated by laws that are like the natural world. The role of social scientist is to observe the social reality in the same fashion as natural scientist. Within this persuasion, genuine knowledge depends on the experience of senses and is made possible through observation and experiment (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 7). Its tenets include *determinism* (causal links), *empiricism* (observation and experiment), *parsimony* (simple explanation), and *generality* (truth for the wider populace) (Cohen et al., 2011). Critics charge positivism with decentering humans or dehumanising, alienating self; bankrupting the inner world; being undemocratic; silencing the debates on values, informed opinion, moral judgments; and liable to undermine the life experiences and so create a society without conscience (Cohen et al., 2011). Non-participation studies (in SA) tend to bias the positivist lens, which disregards the lived experiences. Explored scientific questions do not always aim to capture the claims and concerns of the research participants. In other words, this paradigm sacrifices the individual contexts from which research problems arise to privilege the extent of the problem. While persuasive when wanting to measure the widespread nature of the issues, positivism should never be construed as the overall paradigm. There are other paradigms that may be useful when pursuing the questions that pertain to human experience. Interpretivism is one of them.

4.3.2 Interpretivism(s)

This research approach emerged as opposition to the pervasive positivist paradigm (Cohen et al., 2011). It was conceived in works of German theorists Hegel and Dilthey, then formalised as phenomenology by Husserl, Schultz, Heidegger, and Gadamer as well as constructivism by Wittgenstein. Weber (1949, in Romm, 2018) argued for consideration of social action through interpretative methods. In this way, we come to understand certain purposes and meanings that individuals attach to their own actions. From inception, the interpretivist paradigm set out to privilege subjective worldview. The central endeavour for the paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. Interpretivists posit that the knowledge humans have about reality is the social construction of human actors. Human agency and subjectivity are expressions for being-in-the-world to act in and/or on it, either to sustain the prevailing status quo or to bring about social change. The social phenomena and actions are meaningful to the social actors. Such that, "An understanding of the world requires an understanding of experience" (Larkin & Thompson, 2012, p. 102). The understanding of the world I pursue involves taking seriously what the young people say about their own lives and the socio-political context wherein they live. Critical theory in Romm (2018) is subsumed under the broad family of transformative paradigm, but Maxwell (2012) gives it autonomy.

4.3.3 Critical Theory

Critical theory developed in the Frankfurt school after tradition set by Kant, Hegel, Marx, and Weber (Blaikie, 1993) to respond to positivism and phenomenological interpretivism. The former was criticised for preoccupation with 'sense experience,' the latter for 'communicative experience'. It argued against the neglect of political and ideological contexts of research, such

that positivist and interpretive paradigms presented incomplete accounts of the social behaviour (Cohen, et al., 2011). *Reasoning* became a way of challenging the nature of existing societies in terms of class to promote values of freedom and pleasure and is often termed as 'conflict theory' (Blaikie, 1993, p. 52). Its adherents advocate for emancipation of the disempowered groups through redress of inequality and individual freedom. Devotees of critical theory do not only endeavor to understand the situation, but how to change it (Cohen, et al., 2011). The goal is to challenge with aim to empower and transform the society (Merriam, 2009). The limitation with this orient is to render people as powerless and ideologies as powerful. Although critical research is appealing, it tilts towards the objectivists camp, thus liable to downplay the person's subjectivities. I have limited space in this chapter for discussing all of them but recognise the critical realism and postmodernism(s) as shown in figure 4.1.

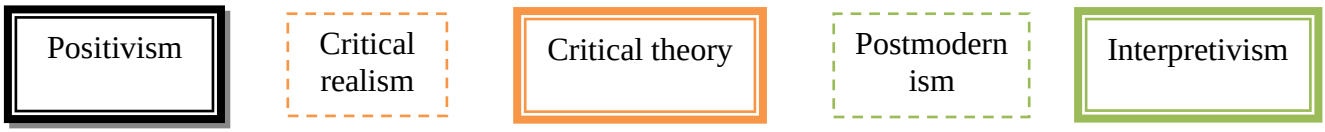


Figure 4.1: Dominant paradigms

Maxwell (2012) observes that many manifestations of *critical realism* depart from the premise that 'if' such a thing as 'real world' exists, its existence has nothing to do with our perceptions, theories, and constructions. However, epistemological representations are our constructions. Critical realists appeal to both objectivism and subjectivism. To the extent that critical realism upholds to objective reality, it is reclining towards positivism while at the same time take certain features of critical theory. *Post-modernism* challenges modern assumptions that are expressed in the representations of present reality. It rejects the corresponding views, so arguing that the relationship between the discourse and reality is never straightforward (Scott & Morrison, 2005). Standard procedures for

arriving at the valid and reliable accounts of social reality are rejected, relations of power seen as deeply embedded in (Merrill, 2009). I now return to the research approaches.

4.4 Research Approaches or methodologies

Education research relies on three methodologies – qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The latter integrates the two and is eclectic in nature to the extent that it borrows from wide range of theoretical perspectives and analytical approaches (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). It seeks to do away with the traditional separation to recognise that the qualitative studies can be enhanced by the quantitative approaches vice versa (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Essentially, the quantitative research is positivist, premised on the presumption that it is only those phenomena that can be directly observed and numerically recorded which are worthy of scientific study. It tends to focus on patterns, regularities, causes, and consequences (Scott and Morrison, 2005). Some aspects of human life are not the object of direct observation. Contrary to the quantitative methodology, qualitative research seeks to locate the researcher in inner world of the participants, to make that world sufficiently visible, to transform it into a series of (re)presentations as field notes, interviews, and recordings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

In qualitative studies, emphasis is placed on discovery, interpretation, and meaning rather than on prediction, control, and measurement (Laverty, 2003). Meaningful conversations, prejudice, history, and tradition owe their existence to human understandings. Meaning is not directly given as already packaged, instead we make a hermeneutical effort to interpret the symbolical apparatus of culture. The researcher is the principal instrument for data collection and analysis. Sometimes this is the major shortcoming for the qualitative research. In a study like one I am pursuing that seeks to place the subjective realities on the map, the qualitative research strikes me as the most

suitable methodology. It engages what the quantitative approaches deem as out-of-bounds. It allows the researcher forge relations with participants, allow them to 'determine the meaning, generate findings, and reach conclusion' (Toma, 2000, p. 177). At this point, I proceed with consideration of the study design.

4.5 Research Design

Research design has to do with the exposition of plans to execute the formulated research problem. Interpretive qualitative design includes narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Laverty, 2003). I have selected phenomenology, but I discuss each design briefly to justify my selection.

4.5.1 Ethnography

This design involves writing about a group of people (Guest et al., 2013). Anthropologists use this design to immerse themselves in a community for an extended period. Collaborations with participants allow thick description of the contexts. Ethnographers believe human behaviour is complicated phenomena that is influenced by factors such as history, context, social structure, and symbolical environment (language and shared meanings) (p. 11). This study could indeed benefit greatly from ethnography design. In fact, Paul Willis (1977) used ethnography to make the groundbreaking work in youth studies. He followed twelve (12) working-class boys from school to the industry. However, ethnography works best with persons that are already within a group to determine shared patterns and how the culture works (Creswell, 2013). In this study, I am less concerned with aspects of culture and subculture as I take on the lived experiences. It was difficult to find a homogenous group of youth with common features in the so-called 'NEETs'. As such, I did not use this design. The other compelling strategy would be case study.

4.5.2 Case Study

Case studies involves studying a phenomenon in real-life and contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through the detailed, in-depth data collection that involve multiple sources of information (observations, interviews, audiovisual material as well as documents and reports) (Creswell, 2013). Case means that the explored issue is more than individual occurrence but belongs to a larger category of other occurrences (Rule & John, 2011). The primary goal of case studies is to discover something unique to the case(s) (Guest et al., 2013, p. 14). The unique thing in this study included the categories of pre-Matric, Matric and Post-Matric to build at least three cases. Although lumping participants in this way is possible, it may be limiting the scope of analysis. In that, human experience is not case insular. We do not experience things as segments, or compartments or part but in entirety. Therefore, pursuing individuals only as cases would not only defeat my intended purpose of the current study, but could blur unit of analysis of lived experience. This said, I have adopted aspects of case studies to delineate the chapters around research questions to give participants a fair chance. The most competing design for this kind of exploration is the grounded theory. On several occasions I contemplated it.

4.5.3 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is the research design which allows inquirer to generate a general explanation regarding the process, action, or interaction shaped by views of participants (Creswell, 2013). It would particularly be helpful in the study of youth, an area that is under theorised. Until we take a bold undertaking to theorise young people's experiences afresh, we will continue to dig the debris of the foregone world. Grounded theory designs attempt to move beyond description to discover a unified theoretical explanation. This works where the investigated phenomenon has no strong

philosophical base. However, it is doubtful that every research piece can develop its own unique theory as grounded theorist seem to ascribe. If it were possible, still it would have grave implications for organisation of knowledge. As much as it is having some strengths, it has limitations including the posture of neutrality. Grounded theory rejects the theoretical and biographical situatedness of the researcher espoused by the subjective slanted approaches. In these terms, grounded theory is not most compelling for the current thesis. Another equally competing design is narrative research.

4.5.4 Narrative Research

Narrative research comes in many forms. Because its design is rooted and informed by different social and humanities disciplines, it therefore uses a variety of analytical practices (Lightfoot, 2004 in Creswell, 2013, p. 70). Narrative research (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013; Riessman, 1993) has affinities with life histories (Plummer, 1983); life course (Giele & Elder, 1998); and Biography (Merrill & West, 2009). According to Creswell (2013), this method is used to research experiences expressed in lived and told stories of individuals. Data is built by collecting stories to report their experiences and to order their meaning chronologically, using the life course stages (Creswell 2013). It is no wonder Dhunpath (2000) innovatively grouped this methodic family as ‘narradigm’, as if to pursue what phenomenologist have attained, and to elevate this research strategy beyond the level of design to compete at the level of paradigms.

I adopt certain aspects of this design. Pushor and Clandinin (2009 in Romm, 2018, p. 1) are right that narrative accounts stand as incomplete, fluid, multiple and changing, serving what narrators value and what they may deem as important to highlight at some point in time as part of storytelling about their lives. This shows that some truth claims may not just be transient and progressive but

depend on privileged view at a particular time in history, and upon circumstances that shaped individual values. I borrow the idea of biography from this design, and I have noted that data collection style has affinities with the design. The last design is phenomenology. This is not only attractive but has already made headway in terms of the conceptual framing of the current research that is based on lived experiences of young people in a township west of Johannesburg.

4.5.5 Phenomenology

There is now a growing recognition that some of the salient questions in the realm of humanity can no longer be satisfied simply by the traditional forms of logic and authority (Laverty, 2003). Interpretative or hermeneutic phenomenology is not just a research design but also a philosophy and methodology (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012; Goulding, 2005). It is defined as the study of *experience* that is *lived* and structured by consciousness (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012). In this respect, experience does no longer refer to the accumulated knowledge and exposure but what happens to us. What we encounter as humans in the world of limited possibilities. As such, phenomenological studies are concerned with the meaning that individuals ascribe to their lived experience on varied issues including the grief, insomnia, being-left-out, and others (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell, phenomenologists interpret what the participants have as their common experience e.g. non-participation. I found phenomenology as the most suitable design for the current study. I was intrigued to notice that research design is popular among pathology studies to examine the ailing patients.

As field of philosophy, phenomenology was developed by Edmund Husserl (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012; Kakkori, 2009; Van Manen, 1990). In the progress of time, it was further divided into transcendental (TP) and hermeneutic phenomenology (HP). The former proposes that the

researcher should refrain from importing external frameworks, set aside personal judgments about realness of the phenomenon, suspend personal prejudices and opinions to arrive at a single, essential, and universal phenomenon (Finlay, 2009; Kafle, 2011). The slogan, 'to things themselves' captures Husserlian phenomenology (Kakkori, 2009). Its adherents seek to free experience from conceptual presuppositions through suspending commonsensical beliefs in the quest to arrive at a pure phenomenological description (p. 21). He used reduction to make a transition from an ordinary and straightforward attitude toward the world, to a reflective attitude. Heidegger sought to find the 'genuine objective' of the nature of things.

In Heidegger, there is a slight shift from a transcendental realm of essences to the immanent world of everyday objects and concerns (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012). He crossbred his teacher Husserl's notion of phenomenology with Gadamer's (his student) term of hermeneutics to form hermeneutic phenomenology (HP). As hinted in the sub-title, HP became preoccupied with the 'people themselves'. Heidegger emphasises that as humans we find ourselves and live our lives in the world. We are compelled to ask questions the situation(s) we find ourselves in, who we are and/or are becoming. Phenomenology strikes me as original way of studying the topic of 'NEET' in SA wherein statistical measurement are overly used. It permits inclusion of their lived experiences. Understanding of the human experience strikes me as useful knowledge for informing the needed social change, rather than ending at measuring the extent of the troubles besetting young people. I address my considerations of the methods.

4.6 Reflections on methods

In this study I have treated young people and their circles of intimacy (CoIs) as 'knowers', with basic ability to describe their experience and provide insights that could be interpreted further.

4.6.1 Accessing the field

I expected fewer field challenges. In my estimation, the challenge would not have been that of finding the young people I set out to interview, after reading municipal reports which seemed to cohere with national statistics that hosts of the 'NEETs' reside in African townships. The local municipality report (IDP, 2020-21), confirmed that most of the youth in the Mogale-City region could not find work. I was convinced that this part would be the easiest. I thought that my main challenge would be to choose which individuals to interview given the extensiveness of this problem. To my surprise, those readily eager to be interviewed were those that were somewhat engaged with at least one mode of EET, and therefore did not meet my set criteria. As mentioned, I grew up in the township. I am well conversant with the colloquial languages and cultures therein, but I struggled to meet the neat 'NEETs'. As such, I had to refine my searching strategies to carry out this research. The first shift I had to do with sampling.

4.6.2 Research site and the population sample

The term 'sample' is potentially suspicious in a qualitative study where generalisation is not a goal. I use it advisedly to avoid unnecessary confusion and long justification. Consistent with the phenomenological studies, I purposively selected those participants with the qualities that were aligned to the demands of the current research (Cohen et al., 2011; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). My idea here was not to count opinions and people expressing them, but to explore different representations in hope of acquire in-depth information. Qualitative researchers are not free from obligation to conduct credible research. They are pressured as others to display values approximately akin to 'generalisability and representivity'. At times, this translates to large sample sizes, in attempts to make the study appear as legitimate when question(s) of 'how many' may be

irrelevant in qualitative studies. While defensibility of the quality of research is necessary, adequate sample seeks to safeguard depth and transferability in findings (Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis, & Dillon, 2003; Hammersley, 2007).

I did not discriminate against anyone on basis of race, gender, or dwelling place but considered all those who lived within the selected research site. Phenomenological studies differ in sample sizes: Some have one participant, others vary from three and ten, or 325 participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 157). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) recommends that beginners in this approach should limit the number to between three and seven, so they are able to compare the experiences, and to develop meaningful themes and interpretation (Smith & Osborn, 2003). I used the recommended number of seven but added to this number insights from fifteen other persons in their circles of intimacy (CoIs). I chose a sample size of seven participants to heed the caution that big samples could impede thick and rich data, at the same time not neglecting its corollary challenge that too small a sample would compromise achieving saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Saturation refers to a point during data collection when no new data or insights and/or analysis, and no further themes on the phenomenon of interest are emerging (Fusch et al., 2015; Mason, 2010; Guest, Bruce, & Johnson, 2006).

Kagiso was reserved for the African people. It is situated on the western corridor of the Gauteng province towards Northwest province in Mogale City Municipality. The ‘forgotten’ Africans in SA remain the majority, count for approximately 80% of the country’s population. Still, they disappear from the memory of the dominant, an actuality that renders them invisible or as Idriss (2021) puts it – they are minoritised subjects. Their invisibility comes in many forms including the multiplicity of terms used to identify them: Africans or blacks, sometimes the two separate terms

are compounded into Black African. Previously they were known as Bantu or Natives interchangeable and sometimes Nubians. In this confused constellation of labels, I selected African to identify young people and their CoIs. I reject the popularised composite term, which in my view makes their minoritisation and/or invisibilisation legitimate. Surely, if it is true that these registers 80% of the population there is no need to ask which African or which black. Such questions could be reserved for those fewer in number, because they can be easily lost in the overwhelming presence of Africans. African American makes sense in the context wherein these are in minority, but Black African makes no sense.

In terms of employment possibilities, Kagiso Township is neighbor to the industrial Chamdor where the biggest South African Breweries (SAB) factory is located. Chamdor and Kagiso have a street separating them, yet the two are worlds apart in terms of business ownership. The business owners and managers come each morning as regular visitors but leave after the working hours. For either convenience or safety, the outsiders who do not form part of the Kagiso community (mainly from neighbouring white suburbs in Krugersdorp, Randfontein, Roodepoort, and Azaadville where most Indian people reside) use the exterior roads to access Chamdor. If they are vulnerable on roads to Chamdor, once in it they become powerful captains of industry. Their power is inferred by the positions they hold relative to Kagiso people who are mostly the ordinary labour ‘force’. From the ecological perspective, Kagiso is situated on the south-west of Chamdor. Inhabitants are at risk of inhaling the deoxygenated air mixed with emitted industrial fumes. Those most liable to incur the most health hazards from the neighboring factories, accrue the least material benefits. In my sampling, I employed a practical technique.

4.6.3 Sampling technique

I used a snowball sampling technique and asked ‘well-situated’ young people about who could be interviewed next, but this was more circumstantial. This technique made it possible for me to reach valuable participants to obtain the relevant data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Patton, 2002).

4.7 Interviewing techniques

Data process is long, it incorporates planning and analysis for constructing a credible story. Given the interpretative nature to which the researcher is instrument for data collection and analysis, a note on the researcher’s role is necessary to clear issues of biases, personal values and background (Creswell, 2014, p. 187). In the preface, I provided my personal story with the intention to declare my relationship with the current study. Naturally, I sympathise with the participants because 1) I grew up in township and 2) had my fair share of non-participation in EET at a time when it was not atypical among the African youth. To avoid crippling this study with biases, I intently subdue my instincts to allow shared stories to illuminate the experiences of non-participation in EET as these occurred, appeared, and were revealed by the participants.

The qualitative research interview is used to gather described ideas about the lifeworld of the interviewee in ways that allow valuable interpretation to generate meaning from the described phenomena (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018). According to this definition, interviewing is more than a ‘focused conversation’ between the researcher and respondents. It is a purposive endeavour by the researcher to enter the lifeworld of the respondents and to report that world descriptively and to further interpret those descriptions. Furthermore, Patton (2002) suggests that interviews elicit data on aspects of human life which cannot be observed including the feelings, thoughts, and intentions. I designed the phenomenological interview questions which apply to one-on-one

(Patton, 2002), face-to-face (Opdenekker, 2006), or person-to-person (Merriam, 2009) and these helped to reduce the time delay between the questions I asked and provided answers. This enabled me to intervene when interviewee responses where far off the research topic, and where it was necessary to rephrase or translate questions into local languages.

I generated the data for this study from seven 'able' (no stated or noticeable disability). I gathered stories from males (4) and females (3) between ages 22 – 35, together with 15 persons in their circles of intimacy (CoIs). Two males were older: One classified as matured young adult between ages 30 – 35 and the second one as young adult between ages 25 – 30. The rest were emerging adults (Arnett, 2000; 2007) between ages 22 – 25. The three emerging adult females already had their own children, and only the matured aged young male mentioned children. Gender parity was not my aim in the sampling. I endeavored to interview whomever I was able to reach and who had the courage to share his/her story on the experience. I did not get any stronger sense on ways by which this research would benefit from the gender balance. Instead, I sought to reach those who had been in contact with, or who embodied the experience I was looking for.

4.7.1 Focus Group Interviews

I am aware about other forms of interviews such as the *Focus group discussions* or interviews (FGD) which are used in research that has six to ten people with knowledge (Patton, 2002, p. 385). Researchers use FDGs to solicit information from various perspectives to increase the confidence patterns. This strategy takes care of the limitations of one-to-one interviews such as memory lapses. Participants builds on the responses already made by others and extend their original view (p. 386). The ethics committee held the view that lived experience was for individuals not a group.

Although I held a view that this study would benefit from intersubjective perspectives on general aspects, in the end I decided not to use FGDs.

4.7.2 Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews are designed in an open-ended format to allow interviewees to express their opinions freely. It also frees the researcher to explore questions in ways that are not rigid. Traditionally, this is the strategy that is recommended when the researcher is not certain about which research questions would be relevant regarding the phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2009). Ideally, the format of unstructured interviews is most relevant in the early stages, even prior to piloting research instruments and to inform researchers about various factors to consider for the investigation, and to improve the questions for subsequent interviews. I did not use this technique.

4.7.3 Semi-structured interviews

To provide maximum opportunity for the young people to voice their concerns, and at the same time provide a structure for comparison, I adopted the semi-structured interview schedules to generate data. This style offers a middle-road. In qualitative research, an interview is not the province of the fieldworker immersed in a local setting but a tool for data collection that is comparable (Herriott & Firestone, 1983 quoted in Miles & Huberman, 1994). The construct of lived experience permits the unique aspects of this youth as well as shared experiences. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to respond to the situation at hand, such as the emerging worldview of the respondents, and to garner new ideas on the general topic (Merriam, 2009). Approaching things this way allowed me a broader control of the prompting questions and proved particularly useful when interviewees struggled with expressions that best represented their experiences. I used prompt (‘as you said’, ‘so you mean’) also to check if saturation has been

reached in term of the answers given. At the point when I felt that I was no longer gaining new insights on the NEET phenomenon, I stopped searching for the extra persons to interview. Information obtained from the interviews is also known as data.

4.8 Data processes

Good data follow good questions and alertness when interviewing (Miles & Hubeman, 1994). I used the piloting strategy to sharpen my field research questions and changed the repetitive and confusing questions. I quickly learnt in doing this research that at the field level, decisions are informed by practicalities. Initially my scope for participation included only those persons (a) who had obtained their Matric with university endorsement but did not take this opportunity, and (b) were part of those not in education, training, and employment at the time of interview. Then I changed to those without university endorsement, as this group formed a significant portion of those that counted as 'NEETs'. I conducted semi-structured phenomenological interviews (Smith & Osborn, 2003), wrote field notes, and recorded on an audio tape. The most exacting of this research was the analysis.

4.8.1 Data analysis

I needed to make sense of the data through analysis. Analysis is iterative. Humans preselect and pre-interpret the reality of their daily lives. It is their subjective reflections that allow us to engage in 'double hermeneutic', because researcher interprets the world of participants that is already interpreted. Analysis is demanding and different from attempting to understand lifeless objects. Each individual orders his/her story in a particular and unique way, but some of the unique things are comparable to others. I began this process by reading through individual transcripts several times to get a sense of the pre-interpreted content the interviews gave. Then I wrote cursory

reflective notes on what impressed me as emerging from the received data. The notes helped me to filter the content contained in the dataset, but also to capture the mood of gestures and emphasis not clearly captured on the written transcript. This process yielded a long list of things. Then I began to isolate statements that appeared to relate to the phenomenon of lived experience of non-participation in EET. The action of isolation was guided by the research questions and this process enabled me to generate the codes.

I decided not to use the available analytical software that are increasingly in use in qualitative studies. In part, this was informed by my axiological assumptions I referred to in the preceding sections, but also my sense of solidarity with the research participants. I wanted to be intimate with the data I had collected and stage some quiet resistance against the emergent strategies that sometimes threaten to wean the researcher away from the data. I have no illusion that at some point I would have to give-in to the pressure to explore MAXQDA, ATLAS.ti, NVivo, and HyperRESEARCH (Creswell, 2013). However, I decided not to begin with improvisation prior to mastering the craft. I felt I needed to master the basics of data manipulation. The 'old school' techniques still worked for me.

4.8.2 Codes and themes

The codes assisted me to identify the recurring subject matter, as well as content that is different from the rest. By subject matter I refer to factors within the society, community or family that influenced individual's 1) aspirations and their sense of accomplishment, 2) factors that shape opportunities for participation in EET and hindranceS, and 3) what non-participation meant for them or how they experienced it. I eliminated redundant themes. After making visible what is contained in the transcripts through the codes, the next step was to organise this content into

clusters of themes and interpreting them (Creswell, 2013, p. 179; Attride-Stirling, 2001). Here the themes referred to ideas that are formalised as subsets of the general answers to questions under investigation. Then I compared themes horizontally across the dataset to establish the commonalities and divergences. Comparison allowed me to provide a description of themes, and then discuss them in conjunction with external literature. The interpretation relates to the composite analysis. To illustrate the analytical processes, I provide table 4.2 below, which lists the similar and varied answers given to the question: 'What are some of the important events that influenced and shaped your life to be what it is?'

Table 4.2: An illustration of data analysis process

Participant	Interview quotes summarised	Code	Subthemes	Emerging theme
B	My mother worked in Gauteng; grandmother was a bit old to be able to partake of our educational activities. I repeated Grade 2 & 9.	Supervision, parental presence	Intensive parental involvement with schoolwork at issue, grade repetition.	School delays
C	Pregnancy. I didn't want to go to school (improve results). I just got tired and I left everything. I am losing years.	Improve results, aspirational stamina, moral stamina, regret, resignation	Lost interest, pregnancy influence, discourages personal drive	Personal drive
D	I was not good in certain subjects, chose common subjects and could not get space in tertiary.	Giving-in to self-defeating imagery, motivation; poor performer; poor subject choice	Limited opportunity; poor attainment – poor access; poor self-image	Limited subject offerings, self-efficacy
E	Resigned from 1st job following accusations of rape, 2nd job resigned chasing greener pastures, 3rd job the company closed business due to lack of sponsorship. No money to study further, poor results.	High motivation, ambition limiting space: Resignation and workplace closure	Limited resource and alternatives	Personal drive, unstable opportunity; self-furthering
F	After my Matric I was pregnant, then went to work. I did not get the information about options…out there. If I had, by now I would have been far.	Pregnancy shifts priorities. Lack of information	Limited scope of opportunity; absent information; self-furthering (far)	Limited alternatives
G	There are scarce opportunities. In other societies, young people have programmes for leisure time and this gives them extra skill, which can sustain them in future.	Scarcity arrest, outside gaze	Limited opportunities: Absent society, absent community culture, absent family, absent opportunity	Limited alternatives

H	I was involved in criminal acts basically. It was easy money, on a daily basis I could easily make R3000 to R4000 just like that, so this is what distracted my mind from focusing in my studies	Focus destructor(s)	Fraud, crime, independence	Hedonism: Instant and/or distant gratification

As far as it was possible, in constructing these themes I avoided the deficit accounts (the thirst to identify weaknesses), but I tried to respect what the participants told me. I engaged research as one in solidarity with the participants, driven by personal convictions on social justice and change (Romm, 2018). However, there were a few instances in the analysis where the circles of intimacy reported conflicted with personal story. I decided to report both accounts in keeping with truthfulness. I suppose that this can be attributed to the trappings of validity that are subtly imposed on the evaluation of qualitative studies when orientation should have been enough.

4.9 Research Evaluation

Research evaluation is needed to ensure rigour or *authenticity* (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Without the evaluation, research may lose its value for utility. As such, the emergence of a 'new qualitative paradigm' met the challenge of satisfying rigorous criteria, in ways that are similar or approximate to the 'traditional standards' (neopositivism) of inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985) convincingly argued against the language used in positivistic research – that it does not always fit neatly in the qualitative research. As a result, these researchers proposed alternative criteria for judging the soundness in qualitative research. I have listed the terminologies in table 4.3 as alternative criteria (popular). In the same table I included an attempt that has been made to produce a unique phenomenological way of evaluating research.

Table 4.3: *Principles for evaluating sound research*

Traditional criteria	Popular Alternative criteria	Hermeneutic Phenomenology criteria
Internal validity	Credibility	Orientation
External validity	Transferability	Strength
Reliability	Dependability	Richness
Objectivity	Confirmability	Depth

Adapted from Lincoln and Guba 1985, and van Manen 1997

My personal reaction to these principles is that we must concede as qualitative researchers that the positivist paradigm is 'the boss' (it leads). Such that, Lincoln and Guba (1985) deemed it fit to coin the corresponding terminology which for all their intents and purposes appears as proximal to the 'traditional' paradigm. Since the time of this publication, qualitative studies advanced rapidly, but this progress remains on the naturalist's equivalents for the 'more conventional rigour' already established in the positivistic traditions – internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2013). It almost seems as if qualitative researchers continue to hold quantitative traditions in high regard to the extent of acquiescing their jargon as normative nomenclature. At least this is the impression I had when I listed the principles in table 4.3. The idea of subordinating qualitative research as the alternative or emergent tradition in 2021 over thirty years following Lincoln and Guba's plea for recognition should be a problem. For me it hints that this form of inquiry has not completely gained autonomy as such. Yet the two traditions are driven by different interests. For instance, trustworthiness in qualitative studies does not only pursue the rigour, but also the understanding (Wolcott, 1994 in Creswell, 2013).

4.9.1 Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1985) see trustworthiness as a way of disclosing the *processes* of inquiry followed to safeguard credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. However, van

Manen (1997 in Kafle, 2011, p. 195) enlists orientation, strength, richness, and depth. Orientation has to do with the researcher's exposure to the participants' world wherein their stories are constructed. For instance, I built rapport with some participants through 'prolonged engagement' ('hanged out' with them in a car wash) to build the relations of trust and honesty. When I interviewed the participant, I was well acquainted with, I asked only one question, and he spent the next fifteen minutes speaking. I attribute this to his ability to recollect information, but most importantly to the trust we developed in the prolonged interaction in his own space, where he was comfortable. He opened about his involvement with the credit card syndicate without my ever knowing about it. He shared authentic experience that would be difficult to share with a stranger, and this made the data credible.

Credibility in qualitative studies is the 'equivalent' of internal validity in quantitative inquiry. However, in hermeneutics researcher orient themselves to adjust to the world surrounding the participants and stories they tell. This helps to compare emergent findings with the constructed reality (Shenton, 2004). There are many strategies that can be used to ascertain credibility: I opted for prolonged engagement, member checking, and quasi-triangulation with the circles of intimacy. This gave me greater orientation to the participants' world. Member checking has to do with seeking approval of the findings from the constructors on the multiple realities that are being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). Triangulation enhances the credibility of data. Then we have *transferability* which is the equivalent of external validity. It is difficult to ascertain whether qualitative findings are transferable to other settings (Shenton, 2004). What is essential is the detailed account of the field context to permit readers to make the necessary links with other familiar settings thereby judging if the findings are justifiable. Instead of transferability van Manen

offers us *strength* which refers to the convincing capacity of the text to represent the understanding of the meanings that participants express in their stories.

The next stage according to the popular view is dependability, perhaps this is comparable with *richness* in hermeneutic phenomenology. *Dependability* is the equivalent of replication or reliability. Again, this is difficult to attain, as interpretation is temporal and always open to re-interpretation qualitative research. The results change when conducted by other researchers who bring to the study different dispositions of human touch and presence. Interpretation may differ according to one's theoretical orientation. This makes it difficult to obtain a convincing demonstration on whether this study could be repeated by a different researcher and arrive at the same findings. Much of the discussion is selected and sorted by a situated researcher, who had exposure to certain cultural and theoretical universes. Nonetheless, transparency regarding the decisions I made during in the data gathering processes should suffice as the 'credible' justification (Shenton, 2004). According to van Manen (1997 in Kafle, 2011) researchers must commit to *richness* which has to do with the aesthetics of quality of the text that narrates the meanings as perceived by the participants. I described to the best of my ability, all the stories that participants shared.

Confirmability is equivalent of objectiveness. It has to do with showing that the findings come from the data corpus rather than being figments of the inquirer's imagination. I expressed the ideas and experiences of the participants. We live in a society that is obsessed with the numbers, a practice that defaces the human. Instead of seeing the young people as the real beings who can contribute to our societal progress, we see their presence in the world as a problem. As far as possible I used the longer quotations to show that ideas about human progress do not grow from

lifeless numbers, but from extended interactions with real people in real contexts where they spend their lives. I tried to deepen the concepts the participants used without losing their intended meaning. Lastly, depth helps to provide a persuasive account of the young people's lived experience of non-participation in EET. In keeping with the hermeneutical analysis, I do not take things for granted. The text is filled with idiographic expressions as my sincere attempt to elicit the true intentions of the research participants. Another crucial aspect is research ethics.

4.9.2 Ethical considerations

Universities have robust ethics committees to regulate research. Such a committee is necessary for upholding a code of ethics, primarily to shield the university against lawsuit, but also aimed at protecting the participants and researchers against any imperceptible ill-treatment and unfair power relations and the conflict of interest. I made an application for ethical clearance. When this was granted, it was possible for me to proceed with the fieldwork component of this study. Instruments received rigorous editing. Justifying intended field procedures and the requirement to submit actual research questions in writing provides space to think carefully about processes to be followed, and the questions and information one seeks to solicit. In line with ethics stipulations, I asked for permission to record the utterances the participants made on an audio-recorder and stated that participation was voluntary and not be rewarded. Participants signed consent and used pseudonyms to identify them to avoid reprisals.

4.9.3 Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations have to do with potential weaknesses of the study. There are many things that may be interesting on non-participation in EET, but my current interest is on the lived experience. Compelling findings in the field of youth research were attained through ethnographic research. I imagine one would have gained advantage by lingering far longer in the field. However, I had

personal constraints imposed by time available for undertaking Ph.D. studies and monetary resources. Moreover, participants came from disparate practices. They did not belong to a single homogenous group, had no shared practice that bounded them together, as required in ethnography research. As such, the reported understanding of the *lived experience* is limited to interview reports of participants. There are two procedural limitations that warrant recognition. The ethics contract obligates me to protect identities. In turn this limited my liberty to give wider choice to 'research participants', to elect volunteering real names and avoid using ghost identities.

Delimitation has to do with justifying the deliberate omissions. Non-participation is not a reserve of the participants in current research. I made the deliberate attempt to exclude those engaged youth who might have been 'NEETs' in the past; in doing so, I missed the opportunity to understand the strategies these used to exit this category. The participants H only partially closed this gap.

4.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I attempted to show in a cursory way that human life matters in research. I gave myself the task of describing the strategies and procedures I employed to collect and analyse the report data, to gain deeper understanding of non-participation and its dynamics on the youth lives. I began by declaring the assumption I brought to the study, then proceeded to the methodological choices, research design, and ended the chapter with ethical dilemmas I faced with my quest to return to the people themselves. I cautioned against over reliance on what used to be traditional methods. The following chapter is the first of the empirical chapters. It is based on the story of a young person who experienced difficulties with retaining a job. She thought, as many do, that this had to do with her Matric non-completion.

Chapter 5

On becoming NEET: Retelling stories of the persistently disadvantaged

Let all stories be told. (Ndebele, N. 1998, p. 27)

In this empirical chapter, I present the field data. I deal first with research questions, then proceed with data presentation which commences with biographical data then make transition to the stories. As hinted in the title, 'On becoming NEET', I intend to unearth intractable factors that keep this youth on the path of becoming and remaining the so-called 'NEETs'. Thus, my retelling of stories is intended to bring to the readers' attention the vulnerabilities and intricacies of township lives.

5.1 Consideration of research questions

Through the initial question, I sought to solicit information on participants' personal evaluation of ways of becoming and being not (or out) in education, training, and employment (NEET), I reflect together with them on their perceived causes. Authentic explication of the youth lived experiences must first give recognition to its-being and the context of emergence. In terms of this question, the existence of its-being (NEET) does not have existence that is of its own (NOT) but has a preceding context to it. After scanning through subjective viewpoints on the contributing factors ('what'), the next logical thing was getting a sense on their blame apportioning ('who' behind NEET[ing] - self/others). I thought if ways of becoming so-called 'NEET' are possible to identify, then the agency behind such becoming was still important. I acknowledge that some of the offered accounts may be 'incomplete, fluid, multiple and changing' (Clandinin, 2009, p. 296, in Romm, 2018, p. 1), but are crucial to reveal what those telling them perceived as important (at least at some point in their lives) to share.

With subsequent questions, I sought to understand what the participants perceived as possibilities in their milieu. This consideration is important as youth researchers have lauded the young people as agents, but sometimes disparage as victims of change. For instance, they are generally perceived as lost generation of the deprived; restless agents of lawlessness; yet at the same time part of the resilient, creative, flexible catalyst of grass-roots capitalism (Dolan & Rajak, 2016, p. 514). We still need to know about their personal sense of the possibilities which has to do with understanding what appears as available to and for them. I also considered the choices the young people make to understand personal intentions and some of the strategies they use. Lastly, I set out to interrogate the meaning attached to non-participation in EET. From the onset, I resisted the temptation to direct the interview conversation towards the solutions. I constructed the research questions around their current state of affairs and less on post-NEET imagination(s). Consultant research tends to be solution and recommendations driven, some of which can be make-belief theories. Taking a leap to solicit information on the young people's projected futures, only, could be misplaced as it threatens to depose data relating to young people's present-day lived realities.

I tried to place the actual humans experiencing at the centre. In terms of analysis, I attempted to tell the actual youth stories to fulfill the ambition of telling all stories. Trying to develop a single narrative from the multiple narrations threatened to defeat the effort of presenting the individual lived experiences. And this is what phenomenology is about. To circumvent this conundrum, I segment the three cases of pre-matric (Chapter 6) matric (Chapter 7) and post-matric (Chapter 8) to form a section of analysis chapters. I now present the fieldwork data.

5.2 Data presentation

Table 5a presents a general picture that took place at a certain point in time. At the time participants (mostly) had not furthered education beyond NQF (National Qualification Framework) Level 4 or

Grade 12. While H had already passed two years of a National Diploma after Matric, the fact that he did not persevere until its completion meant that he did not obtain a recognisable qualification. This equally applies to C and D, who spent portions of their youth years in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges but for whatever reason would not complete the entire programme. E, F, and G did not engage with any formal education further to Matric. The training that this township youth received was patchy and seemingly 'unresponsive' to their employment plight and to the labour market's demands. Regardless of level of education and prestige of schools attended C, D, and H were still part of 'NEETs', just like those without any kind of exposure to post-school training. The learning environment for B was limiting in terms of the opportunities for educational furthering. At glance, in table 5a we detect what appears as the fragmented education *furthering*. It provides biographical data in a summarised form for all the participants. However, this table does not yet provide details of unique aspects of the lived experience. In the immediate subsections following this broad summary, I tell succinct stories beginning with B.

Table 5.1: Biographical profile

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male
Age	22	22	22	23	24	32	29
Employment status	Unemployed	Unemployed	Unemployed	Unemployed	Unemployed	Unemployed	Unemployed
Skills	Storage	Packaging + shelving	Waiter + shelving	Merchandising, administration	Packing	Trainer + community work	Retail admin, stock taking, customer service
Education	Grade 10	Grade 12 + TVET	Grade 12 +TVET	Grade 12	Grade 12	Grade 12	Grade 12 + 2 years University
CoI 1	Mother (BM)	Aunt (CA)	Mother (DM)	Mother (EM)	Friend (FF)	Mother (GM)	Mother (HM)
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	40	42	46	46	24	51	53
Employment status	Unemployed	Training consultant	Casual employee	Food retail industry	Casual cleaner	Casual employee	Teacher
Education	Standard 8/Grade 10	Honours degree	Standard 10/ Grade 12	Grade 12	Grade 11	Standard 6/ Grade 8	Honours degree
Skills	Cleaner	Assessor moderator (SETA)	Cleaner	Cashier	Community nurse	Cleaner	Teaching
CoI 2		Mother (CM)	Mother's uncle (DMU)	Party leader (EPL)		Sister (GS)	Girlfriend (HG)
Gender		Female	Male	Male		Female	Female
Age		45	66	40		34	25
Employment status		Electric factory	Pensioner	Opposition politician		Bank loan services	Employed
Education		Grade 11	Form 3/ Grade 10	Public relations degree		Grade 12	Grade 12
Skills		Production + packaging	General work	Service delivery		Customer service	Waitress
CoI 3		Friend (G)	Dance Leader (DL)	Cousin (CE)			
Gender		Male	Male	Female			
Age		32	24	33			
Employment status		Unemployed	Unemployed	Party secretariat			

Education		Grade 12	Grade 12+ TVET	Grade 12 + Technikon			
Skills		Community builder	Arts and culture	Communication			

5.3 Retelling stories

As people, we have stories we never had a chance to tell. Our peers may know portions of our stories, told with no higher aim than self-congratulation and/or untargeted squealing. Regardless, internal storytelling is useful for expressing imagination and disburdening oneself of frustrations to cope with reality. Beyond the grand narratives, there is a scarcity of well-intentioned social redress programmes for the maldevelopment caused by colonialism and the dehumanisation of apartheid. However, scarcity is not a natural condition. It is possible to invent ways to overcome what we hear from the stories that the others tell. Telling stories strikes me as a worthwhile way for exercising democracy. It admits individuals an opportunity to voice out their troubles and thrills. I take the telling of stories seriously following a cue by Njabulo Ndebele, an African scholar of languages, who insists that in building a robust democratic polity 'all stories must be told'. Furthermore, Adichie (2009) on media warns us against the dangers of single stories, which occur when we elect to privilege a particular narrative about human experience. Rather than empowering, this practice might have a debilitating consequence of stripping away deserved dignity.

Adichie reminds us that stories were tools used to dispossess and to malign, yet at the same time in their right employ stories can empower, humanise, and repair people's broken dignity. This is particularly important in SA where, during the transition years from apartheid to democracy, we elected to pursue reconciliation sometimes at the expense of dignity. The previous disadvantaged, historically oppressed groups continue to experience harsh realities. Then and now their anger and frustrations tend to be rubbished as backward and barbaric (i.e. Afrophobia), rushed through tight deadlines of prescribed commission(s) of truth and reconciliation (TRC), then get prematurely shelved into historical archives, so that the past injustice and oppression narrative becomes 'a thing of the past'. In their recent publication, *Black Academic Voices: The South African Experience,* local black researchers are questioning

the silencing practices and exclusionary maneuvers within academia (Khunou, et al., 2019). They argue that the experiences of exclusion generate a register of victimization and resistance. I present youth experiences following a story format.

5.3.1 Participant B

B was born in a small rural village of Nqatha (pseudonym) in the Eastern Cape Province (ex-Transkei) in a region affectionately known as Emampondweni. At the time of the interview, she was 22 years old. She lived in a backyard shack erected adjacent to five other shacks occupying the yard of the old low cost, four-roomed house in Kagiso. She lived with her own child, mother, and younger siblings. There were seven families occupying a space of roughly 220 square metres. In total, there were twenty-nine about human beings living in the same yard. What stood out in her surrounding context was poverty and spatial peri-urban congestion. B spent some of teenage years without her mother. While living apart from her mother's supervision, she became pregnant at age 19. In the process, her schooling got disturbed. She only resumed a year and half later in a different peri-urban setting of Gauteng, in Kagiso Township. She exited schooling without attaining Grade 12. Neither B nor her mother, BM, was employed at the time. As older child, B thought that one of them needed to step-in for their family, but this was difficult. Her personal circumstances were less than ideal. The system was not yet adequately organised to provide an easy way out.

B described her family as poor, as one that has long been 'thrown' (Heidegger, 1996) into poverty. Her family survived through receiving the social grants for three children. She defined being poor as living with an unemployed mother who lives merely to ensure that you 'eat before you go to bed'. Their access to money was by chance. In contrast, she identified employed people as not poor. Her great concern was to *sit* in the township 'not doing anything' in fear that she ended up doing wrong things (she mentioned stealing and sexual transactions) merely because she was not working. She saw her community as ridden by mischievous peers and

considered herself as still lucky at that moment. She excused herself from being a 'committer' (one taking or making wrong choices or actions) but blamed the broader township context as a bad influence, thus responsible for any possible behaviour that may be deemed as improper. A typical day-in-her-life was occupied by nothing meaningful in terms of career advancement she expressed it as 'nix' (BFQ9). She cleaned the house, bathed, and then sat. I translated her response in the following way:

> There is nothing important: I wouldn't lie, there is absolutely nothing. Nothing is important. Nothing, I will not lie. Nothing, because you simply clean the small place you occupy, after that you sit. Sitting is not good, you don't know what to do, don't know what you will eat, with no money and [being] unemployed. It will be better if you only stayed for few days then *uyobamba* (contracted) elsewhere. As things are now, you merely sit *nje* (in vain). You just sit with nowhere to go really. (BSQ9.1)

She saw non-participation as a form of trap into limited freedom of movement, as a drill of nothingness. Having nowhere to go arrested possibilities to meet up with the relevant networks. Sitting was altogether disadvantageous, there was nothing good about it. It placed self-interest in abeyance, yet she wanted to do something. Unbecoming behaviour was easier for sitting persons because they had nothing (such as self-respect) to lose. Having nothing to do seemingly tempered the imagination to project her future life, to dream or aspire. The absence of paid work victimised her family, it imposed difficulties when it came to accessing food. For her, paid work promised to structure their lives better. Access to employment was sporadic. At the time of interview, B had a short employment history. She had worked between July and August of that year then their group was stopped, and she would be called back again in October. B was proud about 'standing-up' to 'hunt for jobs' expressed as 'self-marketing' (BSQ5.1). This shows intent, even desperation on her part, to resist unemployment by finding a stable income which she needed to advance other family members in her home.

During the two successive periods of employment (a total of three months) in a factory that manufactured chemicals, her role was to pour chemicals into containers of varying sizes (1l, 2l & 5litres), then attach a package label on the lid. The company received large orders. While

she did not express joy for the type of work she did, still she was keen to stay on that course, regardless of being aware of the associated hazards. Unlike G that quitted, B risked her health, to earn the personal respect and retain the dignity that comes with *doing something* and *being somewhere*. She retorted that employers were not keen to employ us (the township youth) *abasqashi* (BSQ12.1). Employers had final say on the selection. On the question of other young people not working or studying?'. The response came in a passive voice but reflected on her deeply felt suffering. She said:

> Ndingase ndiyibeke ngokuthi amathuba omsebenzi la angekhoyo, ngawo la asibulalayo, ukuthi sihlale singenz' into siyek'esthubeni. Ngoba abanye baziyekela ke kuba umntu ekhathele, omnye uhlutshwa yindima yemali ngoba kokwabo kuphilwa lompilo, esokola (BFQ18). [*I translated the above loosely as*, I can say the problem of scarcity of job opportunities is what is killing (limiting access) us, to sit and do nothing and leave school without completing it. Others stop because that person is tired, but others are troubled by money because at his/her home they live a life of suffering].

She identified 'job scarcity' as culprit. Being *tired* hints at the perceived as vain attempts, wherein the effort made did not seem to bring rewards. Attempts to complete school and the arduous search for employment only yielded *meantime* rather than substantive opportunities. She expressed her disapproval emphatically, by saying, 'Ndifuna umsebenzi mna qha kuphela!' (BSQ7.1). *Qha kuphela* means 'that's all'. She thought that, accessing stable employment would satisfy immediate needs. As such, at that point she privileged employment, hoping that there would be opportunities in the place where she would be employed and engage studying to complete her basic schooling education while working. This innovation was necessary for her, in that, the linear approach which begins with school, then pass by training and to reach employment as the last option on the pipeline would not help. If anything, it provoked a sense of failure, defeat, and a sense of being unsuccessful. The school authorities' decision to retain her in the same grade fractured her sense of efficacy.

B selected her mother BM as person in her circles of intimacy. BM was a widow who raised her children in difficult circumstances (BMSQ 1.3). Like B, BM pointed to education as the hindrance to their access to job opportunities. She thought that accessing employment, required

connections with the educated person, the one who would link them with employment. She quipped that at the age of 40 she was not too old for work, she still had 20-to-25 years before reaching the normal retirement age. Yet, at that point in her life, she did not consider education as viable option to improve ways of negotiating access into employment. Instead, she hoped for patronage alliance with 'educated person'. BM's youth years occurred during the apartheid years. At the time race was a stronger determinant (rather than education) for accessing quality education and the employment. She perceived that this reality had not improved; if anything, it regressed, because even the menial jobs that were available in apartheid days were no longer available. Although she identified the lack of patronage networks as contributing factor to her 'NEET[ness]', she was equally aware about the shrinking opportunities.

Unlike her daughter B whose birth time coincided with the release of Mandela (a servant leader who promoted that youth must return to school), she did not select educational attainment as the viable option for herself but political connection. BM did not necessary devalue education, but timing mattered. Even if completing Matric after age 40 was still possible, it was no longer a priority. BM was no stranger to pain, suffering and poverty. When she was six or seven years old, her father had died. At age 17 BM 'fell' pregnant with B while in Grade 9 (Standard 7). In the year in which she returned to school after pregnancy, lightning struck her mother, who died on the scene. From that time onwards, poverty strengthened its hold and remained a permanent fixture through youth years. After her mother's death, responsibility to provide for family needs became hers as the eldest daughter. Her mother had worked in domestic service for rural female teachers. She walked long distances to fetch mail from the local post office, then delivered it to the teachers for meagre income until BM was grown up. Her death brought end to furthering her studies. She *stayed* (*ndahlala*, BMFQ5) at home.

The root word *hlala*, refers specifically to continuing being away from school. *Sitting* signals one languishing in absence of possibilities to do something worthwhile. Mother's death brought

an abrupt change of status from youth to adult. Thus, I decided to translate it slightly different from the *sitting* of her daughter B. I opt to use *staying* to signify a shock that brings things such as education and parental presence rudely to a halt. It was as if she reached a dead-end to life itself. If education had benefits it stored for her to enjoy, her experience called for its permanent detainment. This outcome pushed her into early *ukwenda* (marriage). She derided this as 'izinto zasemekhaya' (BMFQ5) or rural traditions. As if to say, contrary to the assertion that it takes the village to raise a child, she had to wean-off her youth childhood in a crude way. Certainly, this village did not adequately protect one of its girl children who had lost her biological parents to remain at school. She stayed until she realised marriage was not working out.

Then she searched for cleaning jobs to raise her children and sister, but only accessed unstable jobs. She worked in businesses owned by Africans, Indians, and whites, which suggest that she served all humans indiscriminately, but none gave a long-term contract. Then she understood that if she was not in her own business, the right to stay longer was limited. Although at some point she tried to bulk-buying for resale and made attempt to sell liquor she met some challenges. Circumstantial victimhood defeated the courage to resist, yet the officials appeared to think that 'human problems' came as result of lack of skills. According to BM, government assistance with skills formation did not reach everyone. Provisioning was inequitable, distant, and unreachable at times and not favourable to the poor persons. BM exclaimed, 'Training was as distant as stars especially if you were not working! (BMFQ10). In her experience, to access aid provisioned for TVET such as bursaries, it was required that she carries the initial financial load (BMFQ10.1). One needed to carry the initial fiscal burden. Sometimes the government payment is only made in the middle of the year of study. She made an example of her nephew (sister in law's child) who had a bursary promise but received it late. She said,

> My sister-in-law's child was promised a bursary, but they (institution) wanted a stack (*intaxa*) of cash first. She moved back and forth not wanting to cancel the bursary, because she wanted her child to be educated. In that process accrued a heap of debts. I am not sure if the bursary paid in the middle of the

> year. [Relying on a bursary was tantamount to hanging oneself with a rope *of debts*]. It might work better to hang yourself being assured that you will be able to pay debts from piece jobs wages, and then may tighten belt a little to sleep without food. (BMSQ10.2)

The outcry here is that government bursary contributions do not provide an altogether cost-free package. Her family was in abject poverty and could not afford even the slightest contribution such as taxi fare, lunch, and other related costs. The kind of bursary that would help is one that would cover all costs. In her experience, this was not the case in current provisioning as families incurred extra costs. Some may dismiss this kind of desperation as entitlement (expecting government to do everything), but this was not the case with BM. Such insinuations do not factor-in reality that certain individuals lack the material capabilities to take advantage of a bursary that does not cater for all costs. This is particularly true for Kagiso, because there was no TVET campus within the township as participant D correctly observed. If BM was employed, even in the lowest mode of *ukubamba* in *isikorobho* (piece/contract job), she would be able to make sacrifices to support her daughter's training. In this light, training was out of question for her family, it was like gazing to the stars. Rather than personal choice, not taking advantage of the bursary opportunities was circumstantial. Poverty prohibits you from enjoying the fruits of democracy.

5.3.2 Participant C

C is 22 years old, firstborn daughter of CM. She had a younger sister. It seemed the two had no strong filial ties, perhaps owed to being raised in different homes. Throughout the interview, she made no mention of her sister, nor elected her as her CoI. C spent her early years under care of her grandmother who was employed as a professional nurse in nearby Leratong hospital. Symbolically, the grandmother waited to complete the work of raising her in that she died on the day C wrote the last Matric paper. She selected her mother and Aunt as those that help to guide her on life things in general (CSQ2.11). In particularly, she pointed out how she liked her mother for disapproving the wrong. She described CM as a forthright person who called a spade by its rightful name. Her aunt too played a significant role of motivation, especially in

terms of her studies and career options. When needing advice, she approaches Aunt CA, 'If ever I've got a problem, I tell her about my trouble, and she advise what can I do. She gives advice then it is up to me if I take it or not' (CSQ2.11). For the most part, C lived with CA.

In comparison with B, C came from a relatively less poverty-stricken family. She lived in a well-refurbished house in a home with slightly richer cultural capital. The proverbial 'match box' 42 square-metre, four-roomed house constructed by the apartheid government was made bigger, spacious, and good-looking. There were no shacks but decently constructed backrooms, used by male family members and not rented to the public. In total, there were eight persons in this household including children. Although CM did not live with her daughter in the same household, C was stranded. Her mother and uncle had income, and CA could generate income from the consultation jobs. If there were unmet needs, *at least* daily meals and neat shelter were still available for her 'temporal usage'. Around the time of the interview four years had passed since she exited Matric. She 'completed' school with only one year repeated, that was linked to teenage pregnancy. For her grade retention was more circumstantial. The responsibility that comes with pregnancy is carried by girls and less by their male counterparts. This point to the fact that, suburban schooling does not always *rescue* the young people from township whims.

C had chance of returning to school to improve on her results. For instance, admission policy stated that learners should not repeat twice per phase (made of three grades), a principle adopted in the National Policy on Progressed Learners, which permits an older learner to be progressed to the next grade without meeting set requirements (DBE, 2011). This Ministry's 'education amnesty' permits those learners close to Matric completion to remain in the system. However, educators resist this as lowering of the standards or as responsible for compromising education. Yet at the same time, education without completion is as good as *nothing*. As attested by B and BM, non-completion was faulted as liable for not accessing post-school opportunities as well as the labour markets. Instead, it helped to keep non-completers stuck for longer or sometimes

permanently. For C, it was the 'what' of success which mattered more than 'when'. She exuded an amazing confidence that she would be successful anytime.

She wanted to become a medical doctor but seemed less preoccupied by pressures of the time limits. Perhaps those occupied with the deadline of things are likely to miss the everydayness of life. As if to say, as part of the conquered species, exactness of effort did not remove threats of a *nowhere* life outcome. As such, she would not be guilt-trapped by non-accomplishments. Things identified as necessary were not all of life but only part, that should not deter her youth delights. While a danger of double miss (opportunity and more sustained enjoyment), she chose not to sacrifice present pleasures at the altar of unperceived or not yet available possibilities. For sure she was 'losing the good years'. She said, 'I am supposed to be gaining experience for what I want to achieve *for* my future…goals and dreams' (CSQ5.1). One may depart with a strong sense that C lacked inward-drive and/or clear strategy to reach out and ground her feet firmly onto the aspired middle-class lifestyle. I highlight what strikes me as resistance to the mainstream logic, rather than to place emphasis on deficits. Postponement of duty and of taking certain 'necessary' actions appeared as her greatest hindrance.

> I think a lot about how I have *fared in certain periods* of my life until today. I realise that along the way I made some mistakes and learned from them; that's why I say I don't regret. (CSQ17.1)

Her motto was that life was rather too big to understand. What seemed easier was to live it. In the same way, she did not understand rugby, but her enjoyment was not deterred by the yet-to-be attained, full grasp of the sport. She would not self-exclude from living her present life-made-possible, by entangling herself in chains of what could-have-been. The brutal sport she loved was consistent with the rough life (*kurough la ngaphandle* (CSQ18.16)), to which she had been exposed. At the age sixteen, while in Grade 10, she gave birth to her child during examination time. No one knew about her pregnancy until around the eighth month (CSQ2.6). The incident did not stop the brave C from continuing with exams. She gave birth on Thursday;

on Monday of the following week, she sat for the last paper. Unfortunately, she did not obtain the examination scores that would permither to proceed to the next grade with the rest of her classmates. This outcome does not eliminate the important lesson that a brutal life requires the daring kind that are not easily deterred by mishaps of pregnancy. It happens among people.

Moreover, individual *worrying* did not occur to her as a good strategy for breaking the frontier of non-participation. C admired honesty and believed, 'When you are truthful as a person *you have a chance* of seeing life in better ways or realistically' (CSQ18.1). We should not read *truth* here moralistically but as a practical understanding, which was the personal sense she used to oppose *ukuzijuta* (CSQ1.1), youth slang for *self-deceiving*, used to help them avoid vain hope. Only those accepting lies are misled (CSQ18.4). When stretched further, this street wisdom invites us to discern resistance, here used to oppose accepting public proclamations. For her, misdirection succeeds due to credulity. On the other side, even though questioning has its place, suspicion could be misleading and responsible for sowing seeds of mistrust, leading streetwise persons to miss 'genuine' possibilities in suspicion of *ukujutana* (deception). We get a strong sense that C gave up on wearying self by trying to understand life. What occurred as easier was to live it. Just as youth-thinking encourages, 'Get the life, girl!'

This manner of social seeing challenges the damning practice of *self-shaming*. C understood that she had one chance to live. Thus, she was resolved that amidst myriad challenges that came with not-being part of EET, she would not postpone engaging the portions of life still accessible to her. At first glance, the story of C (and to some extent H) could be classified simplistically as stories of 'relative privilege' gone wrong. However, this slant misses some nuances. C had her own ideas of running her life which appeared misaligned with the normative standards of 'noble' upbringing, which rested on acquiescing to the middle-class values. Her grandmother, mother, and aunt gave into the pressure of middle-class appropriation and sought to extend the same to C. However, reality in the immediate environment outside their home repudiated such

envisioned higher-class orientation. Regarding interesting things in her life, C mentioned her 1) son, and 2) attending parties. It is remarkable to note that the highlights of her life were the things the adult family members considered as her downfall. She refused self-blame (CSQ2.5).

We encounter C as one who has taken control of rather than responsibility for her choices and action. It seems she did not always take the necessary actions to advance her career but invested in cover-up explanations. She acknowledges mistakes without apportioning blame. If there was culprit, it was life itself, because life was rough (CSQ18.16). C defended her vulnerabilities. Indeed, the blunders of yester years can become new possibilities, and threats of failures turned to success. This happens when youthful follies and mistakes are de-stigmatised. C rejected the pressure from adult members but acknowledge her need for their support. As if to say no human subject can give what they do not have. Often parents and society demand accountability from young people without any sense of shared responsibility. C rejects such malpractice, and this refutation points us to *disburdenment*.

5.3.3 Participant D

D was 22 years old at the time of interview. He lived with his mother, sisters, uncle, and aunt (to his mother) in an old low-cost, four-roomed house. In their yard, there were three shacks, two were rented out, one used by family members. The family derived its income from the old age grant of two pensioners, rented shacks and the casual jobs of his mother. In terms of family networks, D was not far from B. The difference was that his mother DM unlike BM, was not a recent rural immigrant. She grew up in a township house that had shacks of tenants that boosted the household 'revenue'. Moreover, DM had obtained Grade 12 (or Standard 10) even though employment experience was drawn mainly from the janitor jobs. At the time, DM did not have a permanent place of work. She did sporadic washing and ironing for various persons. To this extent, she did have a form of income, she could be classified as semi 'NEET' if inventors of the term permit. DM lived in the township all her life yet accessing long-lasting possibilities

of employment in the nearby factories seemed out of her reach. She worked as domestic worker just as BM who had no matriculation certificate. She attributed unemployment to systemic letdown. Stories of the two parents (DM and BM) winded down to employment insecurity and scanty chances for self-furthering.

She resolved to give firstborn son a strong educational foundation. Alas, things did not work as planned. She afforded sending him to 'multiracial' early child development (ECD) centre, but not the schools. Misfortune persisted throughout his education years, over his employment life stage, up to the time when he participated in this research study. Possibilities that appeared to be there-for-him in the sense of being available to access were always less than what he wanted. Most of his primary and secondary education took place in the township. As eldest son, he was under pressure to find the stable employment so he could contribute to the family income. Four years had passed since he completed Matric, but he had not advanced his career in any significant way. He was concerned about becoming a financial burden to someone else in the long run - either to the welfare system of the state or family members. He wanted to be financially independent. On the main, his story highlights unmet aspirations, he illustrates this in the quote below:

> I had a huge dream at primary [school]. I had this picture of being a doctor…you get to high school and realise *ukuthi* (that) many years you are going to spend…for this type of career and what you going to have to provide when you are at school to become this type of person it's going to take hard work…like I said I was an average student *esikoleni* (at school). I won't lie and say I was very, very clever. The way I see it, subjects required to be a medical doctor, I am not that good at them. *Sinama authi esikoleni* (together with school peers), we used to say *bafowethu* (gents) when we get through to tertiary it is safe that we rather take careers that we know we gonna try and excel [in], not get into a faculty where you will struggle, then you waste money, waste funds, with repeated failure, hence I have thrown away the issue of becoming a doctor. (DSQ2.1)

DMU his mother's uncle confirmed that D wanted to become a doctor (Dermatologist) because in his childhood years he had some allergies when he ate certain foods (DMU18). He was candid and honest about his average school performance. He opted to apportion the blame to himself as not good enough on those subjects which would afford him access to the so-called

‘scarce skills’ career of medicine. In dealing with his self-perceived limitation, he decided to change the selection of subjects that would allow medicine career path into more practical ones. From what we can assess, it seems, he was influenced by peers, but also by the family burden as the first-born child. What counts more for me is that he was willing to embrace consequences of the decision and hold them as his own. After all, no one else would live his life: He had to live and experience it at times without spectators and advisers. His childhood choice career (CCC) altered to a practical choice career (PCC). Unlike C, who clung to CCC even when the prospects seemed to be shutting, D shunned creating false hopes for himself. We can view the shift from CCC to PCC as *maturity* – the ability to recognise what-works-for-me. This involves a thorough assessment of the prevailing conditions and resources at hand.

He could not find satisfying job neither the opportunity to proceed with post-school education, specifically accessing a university. At one point, he decided to personally go to one university to ‘push’ his application through by being physically present in the institution where he sought for access. While on that mission, he lost money in the train on the way to the institute where he had chance of acceptance. In some universities access could be gained by making oneself a nuisance through forced-recognition that came with being-seen-there, and appeal to sympathy of various university personnel. The much-vaunted online applications could only afford him a student number. Hence, he sought to make himself visible. Unfortunately, his well-targeted strategy was met with the misfortune of wallet loss. This incident was so crucial that both D and the hustling comrade in his circle, DL, mentioned it. DL further hinted that the lost money was fundraised by the members of their cultural dance group (DLFQ 3). The intention was to support one member at a time to ‘push’ each-one towards achieving personal aspirations. We remain unsure why D chose to rely on peers for raising money. However, peer support itself is commendable: It shows that, the young people best understand each other’s struggles.

For the rest of that year, D remained without access to university-based opportunity. The issue of visibility was not entirely innocent. It was linked to the culture that was creeping in some universities. It is important to highlight this issue briefly as it sheds light into ways in which some of the deserving candidates may be prevented from accessing the opportunity to study in some of our local universities. There was growing malpractice of asking for bribes from already poor applicants. Inability to pay such 'access tax' either due to the individual's personal ethics or scant resources posed threat for processing applications in a fast-tracked way. This practice affected mainly borderline applicants with weak Matric results. University staff preyed on this disadvantage by imposing a dirty tax on the already desperate, non-qualifying applicants. They promise them place in otherwise closed opportunities. With hope to leap to the front, ahead of those on the waiting lists, some fall for this unprincipled trap. Given that D had struggles with money, the temptation to yield to bribery was unlikely. He opted rather to be present-there to speak for himself, make necessary follow-ups, and to push his application forward.

Furthermore, D pointed to the non-presence of a university structure in Kagiso. He compared his locality with townships such as Soweto *or* Soshanguve wherein university access is made real and reachable by the visibility of a physical structure within the township. In that way, the university option is known by many young people, thus less dreaded. He thought that ocular the presence would itself be advantageous to the township youth not only for facilitating ease of access, but also their aspirations formation on university education. Physical absence is here seen as detrimental for accessing the serviceabilities of a university. In quote below, D lists various campuses of one Gauteng based University.

> Actually…let me take UJ specifically, I have always asked my friends how many campuses UJ does have - Doornfontein, Bunting Road, Kingsway, and they *even* have [a] Soweto Campus. I have always wondered whether they have it in their plan to bring one much closer, perhaps here in Kagiso. There is vacant land to build a Kagiso campus. (DSQ7.10)

For me, this quote does not end with D's general knowledge, but hints at his hankering after accessing university possibilities. He made it his personal business to familiarise himself with the opportunities he aspired for, because he thought that one day, he would join one of them. However, his yearnings for university education remained unfulfilled at the time of interview. He knew about various calls to consider TVET College, but for him, these posed a threat to 'downgrade' his target of gaining access to the university. At some point D yielded to pressure and considered for himself TVET as alternative. However, such consideration did not quench his hankering for university. In a society with well-entrenched experience of colonial invasion, even such basic things like accessing university appear as 'merit-based'. Partly *merit*[*isation*] of access follows colonially inherited dispositions of exclusion, but also needed for selection to manage the demand. However, the imperative to widen university participation signals that inhibiting access will soon be outdated. For instance, ageing global North indicates desperation to attract student who were previously denied. In my reading, this takes place under the guise of social justice.

In SA, the fallist (#feesmustfall) cohort taught us that young people condemn delayed justice as good as denied. We continue to wait with anticipation as the imperatives of access mutate. The stipulations that followed outburst of Covid-19 might force the world universities towards virtual-learning. In turn, this could reduce the current resistance towards massification in public higher education. If not, the private providers will pick for themselves the fees revenue 'falling' from public universities. D's story helps us to challenge the venerable explanations that have attained orthodox status. Contrary to known accounts, D thought that the youth in Kagiso were at a disadvantage, in that some ended with hearing about possibilities elsewhere, and could not separate statuses of university from that of college. He saw this as contributing to limiting aspirational horizons of the post-school education, owed in part to the widespread presence of colleges. All neighbouring towns (Carltonville, Westonaria, Randfontein, Krugersdorp, and

Roodepoort) in the Greater Westrand Municipality had colleges, (that were based in the Town or Urban) and not one public university. We learn that the young people's aspirations required validation of physical presence. Youth aspirations require visible present-*to*-hand possibilities.

Attractive possibilities seemed farfetched and waning, but unwanted possibilities were rapidly growing and easier to access. This created the aspiration-possibilities mismatch. Within the employment markets, D was dissatisfied with opportunities that undermined his intelligence.

> …if I could get a job *nje ezokwazi ukuthi* (just a job that will help me to), okay let me just say, for now because I am desperate. Because it's close to year end, *umsebenzi engingawuthola nje* (any job I may find), but still *ungabi* (should not be) an insult to my intelligence. I want something that is going to challenge me – it's that kind of job I would want. (DSD6.9)

Some of the jobs that were accessed with difficulty were insult. Nevertheless, he was willing to do something meantime as he waited for real possibilities that were worth yearning for. He wanted a challenging job that promised to contribute to his career growth and not those that threatened to erase already gained skills (deskilling). He was concerned about transferability of skills learned in one workplace to other environments. In other words, he did not protest waithood, but aspired for jobs that promised to improve his 'adaptive capacity' (Buchanan, 2019). In that way, he would avoid being part of the statistics of young people associated with deficits of skills. Meantime work was not inherently bad, but needed to provide the springboard for subsequent, fulfilling career engagements. In that way, D anticipated that current vulgarity (insult) prevalent in emergent possibilities could afford a stepping-stone for him to advance into meaningful possibilities. I now proceed with telling the story of E.

5.3.4 Participant E

At the time of interview E was 23 years old. He lived with his mother and younger brother in a four-room house shared with relatives. He was musically talented. Perhaps this was owed to the fact that, he grew up in a home where church members congregated on the weekends. This exposure to things of the church gave him a platform to hone his music talent and hobby. At

one point, he was the director for the home-based youth church choir that mostly sang what he termed as ‘clap and tap gospel’ music (EFQ1.2). His mother EM revealed that music the talent ran deep, as his late biological father was renowned throughout the Kagiso township as a most able choir conductor. However, the township would not help him to make music as a career of choice. He was limited with respect to making a living out of the music. He decided to leave the things-of-leisure to leisure. And began to search for ‘serious work’ as the rest of entry point participants. Unlike many, he did not have to search hard before he found something to be busy with in the year immediately following his Matriculation year, he was able to join his mother’s employment. This almost immediate access to employment was not coupled with longevity, his stay was short-lived.

He grew up like other township boys, exposed to its possibilities and limitations, functionalities and dysfunctionalities, espoused traditions, and aversions. At school he skipped classes just as the other boys next to him. Reflecting on his schooling years, he said that he wasted time at school, he was now regretting. This realisation came after he encountered some challenges with the life of adulthood. He thought, he would master certain challenges of the afterschool life, if he paid attention at school. He blamed himself for looking down on what his teachers taught. He reckoned that the present glitches he was experiencing had their solution located in the past. He said, ‘I wish I didn’t skip classes’ (EFQ9.2). However, sociologist place a useful separation that helps us to identify the ‘personal troubles’ and ‘public issues’ (Mills, 1959). He does well to take the responsibility for his personal actions, but as analyst my hunch is that experience of non-participation in employment has many facets, some of which are not in any way related to the sporadic skipping of classes and/or other youth age truancies. The fitting explanation may lie closer on the structural arrangement, prevailing ideologies, and coordination of the societal practices. He said:

> I have realised after my schooling that sometimes I wasted my time *eskoleni* (at school). When I encountered challenges in life, I noticed that there are certain things I should have mastered from school. At that time *bengisaphethwe yilangqondo yobuntwana* (childish way of thinking incapacitated me). I did not pay adequate attention to somethings teachers would say. Now because it's in the real world, that moment comes *ukuthi eish* if *benginga* dodge (anga) some classes (if only I did not skip classes). I think school environment for me (as I am telling you the background), was a secured place for me more than home. (EFQ9.2)

Additionally, to the same utterance, he illustrated how school was for him a secured place, in that he was able to be an ordinary child, an aspect he missed at his home. He was candid in alerting me that, sometimes in his previous home (they were no longer staying in that home) he had to deal with obtrusive moods his stepfather which hindered living peaceable as members in the same household. He took it upon himself to defend his mother and young brother from being 'abused' by someone he called as dad. His troubled home life manifested into other social spheres he interacted with at the time and later in his life course. Nevertheless, he appeared to be a responsible young man, one that wished to compensate for the time he thought he had lost at school, by entering the university route to negotiate the emblematic success that the young people in the township require to avert being stuck. He calibrated this into timeframes as if he was in absolute control. By the age 25, he wanted to have his own home, car, and able to help his mother and younger brother. University education was practical way for attaining this ideal.

Many boys can attest that at some point in their course of life, they were bent towards mischief, but this did not necessarily determine their social destiny. This is not to say that there are no risks for actions taken (good or bad), but that explanation(s) ought to be analytically proximal to reality. This part of the story wherein E makes close links between past behavior and current adulthood life, can be told differently. Without taking away his personal sense of how life out there is organised, this cannot be a conclusive explanation. As we celebrate as praiseworthy his willingness to take responsibility rather than to blame someone/thing else, we must disburden him from carrying the weight of the system on his shoulders. I see his regrets in different light, I make the distinctions between socially promoted goals and individually pursued interests. Thus, deem unfair to close link his patchy skipping of classes in the education sector as entirely

responsible for causing the overall failure in the labour market. About the good story in his life, he mentioned that:

> Mmmm okay, the great story is that, actually [it] is not even a great story. Alright then, no, it's a great story because of I have managed to pass my Matric though it was not with marks I expected. This happened because of the background I had when I was doing Matric with my stepfather and stuff. To tell the truth I didn't expect that I would pass my Matric because of the life I was living, but I have managed to pass my Matric. I think that is one of the great stories I have, because of even during my Matric I was even arrested. (EFQ3.26)

Instead of focusing on his studies together with the rest of his peers nationally, he had divided attention during examination of Matric. His stepfather wanted to get him arrested by accusing that he broke into the house to get-into what at the time was his home. The family feud between wife's older son and husband led to the separation of his mother EM with stepfather. Once the Matric hurdles were over, EM sent a good word about his son to her employers, but as discussed this would not be sustained for long. E himself did not think much highly about the job he was doing. He thought he could do better. The outlook of democracy in the country presented a new set of aspirations among the 'previously' oppressed groups. As difficult as non-participation can be, sometimes there are sporadic breaks that afforded the township youth short periods of exhale. These were not breakthroughs, but short breaks. Likewise, E was employed (not for long) in an education project that sought to extend the teaching of Maths from another country to be adopted in SA's schools. However, projects are temporal by definition and predetermined. Unless the organisation had other project, permanent employment was already predefined as irregular. Yet he thought that discontinued project had to do with 'inadequate education' which made certain opportunities difficult to retain.

> My last employment was last year around November. I was working for some company that deal[s] with educational facilitation. I did facilitation for a project that was based [on] Maths but in a manner of computers. According to stats they say for the past twelve years Singapore has been leading other [countries] in terms of the Matriculants that pass Maths. So, the vision of the company was to use some of the strategies that are used in Singapore for teaching Mathematics. They were trying to implement it here in South Africa. So that project only ran for one year – last year. Initially it was adopted in private schools and later extended to public schools. They identified Odirile Secondary which is based in Swaneville. It was the first school in which they ran a trial of the project. The project was sponsored by a nearby casino, when the sponsor pulled out, the project had to end, and then the project failed. That left me unemployed (EFQ1.4).

Sometimes, the trumpeted crisis in education imposes risks of inviting charlatans who wish to push for entrepreneurial goals by making initiatives that are not sustainable, uncoordinated, and which can be alien to the adopted system of education. These are presented to government officials as opportunities yet prove as opportunistic. Many hands that fidget with education in the name of improving quality could lead to a bigger crisis or contribute to existing ones including non-participation in EET. While trialing foreign curriculum might have its negatives (and positives), these do not take away E's experience. He thought that employment of that kind helped him to make a significant contribution. Unlike packing the same products in the shelves, the later job was intellectually engaging. He was required to give instructions and do some basic analysis of data. The project allowed him to administer Mathematics interventions. Working in a school had extended benefits, it revived his career aspirations. It is not surprising why he preferred this job above the rest of those he was exposed in his post-Matric years.

Persons in his circles of intimacy further revealed that E had the inclination to help people. If he had means he would 'help people with many things', said her cousin CE. Even her mother EM emphasised that 'he deeply cares for people' (EMFQ3.1). I find this revelation interesting that E, who was familiar with daily struggling as part of the so-called NEETs, had time to care for others. CE further illustrates in the quote below,

> I noticed him because they were doing a project. A project that he established himself of washing dustbins together with other young people. I do not know where it ended up. He always tries things, even when you send him somewhere to do some stuff for you, he will want to know why you are sending me there, what is happening there. He will seek information. He is the kind of person who always wants to be informed. He goes out to find information for himself even in the newspapers. You will hear him telling you that hey, I am going to do such and such a course. Like now, he just told me that he went and did a call centre course, he got the information from the newspapers, and it was a free course. He did another one in teaching, they were teaching computer; he searched for the opportunity himself, he went and trained at Quest; after that they employed them, unfortunately the job ended. (ECFQ1.4)

He was keen to do the dirty work where he had control, but criticised the menial jobs done for someone else as insult to his intelligence. This begins to hint on his desire for ownership that many township people were deprived. Whilst working towards a stable[r] and fulfilling career,

he needed money to get-by. Even if the money was only enough to buy the township's favourite *kota* (a quarter of a loaf of bread that is sandwiched with fries, picked vegetables, sometimes with a slice of cheese, as well as chicken or pork products), it would still be useful. Pittance received from the dustbins project did not give them financial independence, it helped to while away non-participation miseries. At some point they discontinued their own initiative. Perhaps because, progress means abandoning entry level, low status for newest beginners. I proceed with brief summaries of other participants. These are brief because, the shared stories were not necessarily equal.

5.3.5 Participant F

F is one of the only two participants who were not firstborns. She was last born daughter and about twenty-four years old at the time of interview. She is E's cousin, their mothers being siblings. After writing Matric she had a child and had found employment where she worked as a general staff in the food producing factory so she could provide for her child. At the time F had mothered two children and had no 'stable place for home'. She was particularly concerned that things were in disarray in her family. Her parents were both unemployed. Her mother had gone back to the home of her parents. She informed me that her father contemplated returning to his Northwest-based home. F worried about ways of providing for her two handsome boys, and to protect them from being acquainted with the negative aspects of a township lifestyle. She mentioned sex and liquor. Five years after Matric, her career course was far from what she wanted, and she had no adequate means for counteracting what she identified as threats.

It was encouraging noting that amidst her challenges she was able to pinpoint what she wanted to do. She aspired to become accountancy teacher. Developments that had occurred in her life threatened to push this ambition further away, somehow F succeeded keeping her goals against the vexing odds of precarious employment. She endured being setbacks that came with broken employment contract that occurred as tactics of easing retrenchment and employment benefits.

Just as B has already mentioned. She was made a sporadic employee who was pushed in and out of work at convenience of the employer. When she got wearied by it all and quitted the job. After all, the coding and packing skills 'accumulated' in this manufacturing sector would not count in the education sector she aspired. When she succeeds to become a teacher, she would start at the post Level 1 as if she had never worked. As such, she felt her time was being wasted. She retorted that her children deserved better. She wanted to 'get better education, get my own house, to have my own things' (FFQ7.6). The current employment-unemployment existence would not help her to attain all these basic things of human existence. Now I proceed with G.

5.3.6 Participant G

G was 32 years old at the time of interview. He lived with his mother (GM), older sister GS and children in the settlements colloquially known as RDPs (Reconstruction and Development Programme). He had twin boys and GS had one girl child. In total there were six people residing in the house. The staying together of two young adults who should be in their own houses might have its challenges, but certainly had advantages too. In his family members gave support to each other. Both G and his older sister, who worked for a bank at the time, and contributed to improve their mother's house. This status that is often perceived as setback allowed GS ample time to refurbish her mother's house. GM earned income from working as a domestic worker through which means she managed to raise three children as single parent. The younger sister was a university graduate and did not stay with her maternal family any longer. She got married ahead of the older siblings. At 32 G identified the success of his own family as something he 'mostly wanted' (GFQ8). Secondary to this, he desired to fulfil the dreams of a self-sustaining business. The strength of his family was the support they had for one another and unity.

What happened within the corridors of his home stayed there. When they started in that new settlement around 1994, at the time his community was one. The new neighbours were kind to each other. There was a sense of support and solidarity, but with the progress of time things

changed. He attributed his perceived division into the groupings that occurred after settlement. Individual community members began to look after their own individual interests, and in that process neglected membership duty toward community. Unity served to recognise humans as colleagues, members, or partners rather than competitors searching for a chance to overtake and get ahead. The spirit of [over]taking was a threat to the communitarian solidarity. It seemed communal spirit waned affecting relations with others. G liked working with people; for him quibbling and classing each other into arbitrary hierarchal sets affected stability and the ability to rely on each other. To reinvigorate the spirit of unity, G named his business (and vocation) as UJIMA production. The last participant was H.

5.3.7 Participant H

H is 29 years old, and first-born son of HM who was a professional teacher. Ups and downs of life pushed him to run a small car wash business for food and rent. He grew up in a relatively 'well-resourced' rural home in the province of Mpumalanga. His home was a six-roomed house; his mother was a professional teacher and his late father a businessperson who had many cattle which at the time belonged to his uncles. Like B, C, D, E and G, H too was firstborn with three younger siblings, two brothers, and last-born sister. He attended most of his high school education in an ex-Model C school. After Matric, he left his hometown and province to pursue further studies in Gauteng. Unlike some who struggle with post-school education, he coped well. However, later he did not produce good results. In the first year he obtained distinctions for all the modules. However, in the third year of his studies H decided to leave the university residences to explore alternative accommodation. This exploration profoundly disturbed his academic tempo. Both H and his mother attributed the drop in academic attainment to the wider exposure to city life. Around his third academic year, H decided to leave university residences to explore other things. This decision proved to be costly, and directly linked to his fragmented furthering. New flat tenants were persons that had carved for themselves alternate possibilities

outside the mainstream structures of EET. They thrived on crime. His new associates gradually roped him into criminality.

From that point onwards, he had exposure to extended syllabi in the school of life. He said that the environment in which he lived was risky - there were sex workers and drug traffickers all around him (HFQ6). Social threats came both from outside and inside as roommates were involved in a credit card syndicate mastered by a person of Nigerian origin. One of the 'crime brokers' (to invoke the expressions used by Dawson, 2014) friends came from Kagiso. When that one learnt that police were searching for him, he ran away from the city. Frequently H visited his ex-flat mates, which ultimately led to his staying with them in Kagiso. This meant that he would travel daily to the Technikon[17]. Initially, he was not attracted to the aspects of crime, but to immoderate lifestyle, which attracted many township girls. As time progressed, he came to notice that his friends made loads of money and seemingly got away with it. Slowly he entangled himself in their criminal activities. This resulted to his imprisonment, at which time he became part of the host of young people that are known as 'NEETs'. Surprisingly, police arrested only him (H) out of the five brokers. It is unlikely that H could not discern that his new friends were leading him astray. But most assuredly, he could not bring himself to a point of deciding to leave them. He enjoyed the benefits of the pleasurable lifestyle he received as nominal *tsotsi* (criminal). He gradually detached himself from the benefits promised to the university graduates. As fate would, only newcomer H got arrested, but the old-timer brokers (together with the Nigerian owners of the syndicate) were kept from incarceration. After some time (six months), he was released (HFQ3.2). Introduction to money and attractive lifestyle was his initial entrapment.

> All that while my mother thought I was still at school, and I had a job on the side. I lied to her. Because I could send money home – enough money. Then I got arrested in this thing, not knowing that all along

[17] Prior to the mergers that occurred in higher education when Prof Asmal was the minister, 'Technikon' was widely used in the place of what is now termed 'Universities of Technology'.

> there was some private investigation on us. We stayed as group of boys known as FS (pseudonym). I think maybe you heard about it. We were a bunch of guys, we used to do a lot of stuff. You know, when still growing up as boys staying alone. We rented the whole house; we would spend money just on booze and stuff, but I did not drink nor smoke. Then I was arrested because of fraud *le ebesiyenza* (that we did). I was imprisoned around September. I spent six months [at] eBerg in Krugersdorp prison on trial. Lucky enough that case ended in a good way because I did not get [a] sentence. The case just ended (nje), because of I don't know, I can say it was my luck or God. I did not get a criminal record because that case was dropped just like that. (HFQ3.1)

The second aspect we come across in this story is the burden to maintain firstborn status. It made him proud to provide for his mother's family. He was incredibly indebted to her for raising them up as a single parent. He deemed it more criminal not to assist back home. In his grading at the time, lying to his mother to legitimise crime money was less offensive than the 'witchcraft' of neglecting his family. However, some lies are short lived. At some point truth came out that he used dirty money (even if one may doubt if such a thing as clean money ever existed!) Unbeknown to them, while *they* enjoyed liquor with girls, the eyes of our sometimes-selective law watched their steps. Someone investigated their lifestyle. This led to H's arrest. The syndicate owners together with the long-serving brokers were untainted. I am unable to confirm whether they sealed some deal with the law practitioners to sacrifice the one without criminal record, so that the case would be lighter as he would not know much about length and breadth of the syndicate, or he was just lucky. H attributed his release to superpowers of the Almighty. On exit he went back home. As we know, a crisis may expose the individual's make-up or character. So, H reverted to his belief systems.

At the time of interview, H lived with his girlfriend in a backyard room and gave priority to ways of earning legitimate income while attempting to complete his Marketing Diploma. He grew up in a relatively 'functioning' and 'well-resourced' home. He knew about good family values. My fascination was that he was willing to do what some would perceive as 'dirty jobs', working in his own car wash. He had life skills that helped him to decipher that job status itself mattered, yet finding *something* to do in self-created *somewhere,* was much better. One interviewee not included in this analysis, because she had a contract job, spoke very well about

H. The neighbours extended their support to his initiative, one supplying him with water and electricity while the process of applying for his own supply from the local municipality was underway. Even though he had not reached his desirable *somewhere*, he had *something-to-do* in the meantime. While this is praiseworthy, we remain unsure why he chose not to prioritise completing his university education. His mother HM had already obtained an Honours degree and contemplated proceeding with the Masters. H was very proud about it but had not chosen education at the time as a priority for himself.

5.4 Conclusion

In the preceding chapter, I present the field data to retell the stories of the non-participating youth and their circles of intimacy. In a cursory way I highlight the struggles the young people undergo in searching for alternative ways of income generations and other aspects that hindered the young people's progress. Some of their struggles and struggling were similar, but other were different as the experience spending some months in prison. All participant desired to have a better life, but the processes for attaining that life were curtailed by personal choices, government provisions and business effectiveness income collection and indifference to income redistribution.

Chapter 6

On anticipation: the living and perishing hope

In the previous chapter I presented biographical data for entry point participants and persons these selected as those in their circles of intimacy. In current chapter I am transitioning to the analysis of issues that were raised in what I segmented as clusters to address the question of what non-participation means. In this study, I have three clusters that are sub-divided into pre-Matric (comprising of a young person and her parent), Matric (consists of D, E and F) and Post-Matric (has C, G and H). Of the three, I dedicate the current chapter to issues that were raised in the pre-Matric cluster constituted by B and BM. At the time of interview B was not attending school or engaged with any of the three opportunity structures which when combined form the composite term of NEET. She typified the category of persons who were counted with those not in education, training, or employment. She exited school in the previous year without completion. Although there are now researchers who actively push for the demoralisation and depoliticisation of work (meaning employment), as I show in discussion chapter 9, surprisingly I have not come across any activists who dare to agitate for anti-schooling. This was strange because schooling is often promoted along the lines of employment. We are accustomed to education and employment being treated as structures in tandem. It is surprising that the worth of one (education) seems to be retained and for the other (employment) sacrificed in the emergent anti-work doctrine.

Notwithstanding these development in the work literature, B and her mother BM continued to hope (but sometime giving up), even when they were outside those structures that are meant to encourage hope. In the few pages that will follow we get to appreciate, that, the very hope that lives, at other points it perishes along with the unpredictable variations of the present life. We learn that B persisted with education against all odds of poverty and limitation that came with starting her primary education in a mono linguistic IsiXhosa culture but had to proceed with

education in a more plural cultural contexts where the dominating language and general outlook was no longer what she was familiar during the primary school years. The dissonance that came with unfamiliarity did not end with disorientation that emanated from what could be identified as cultural shock. Seemingly the change also eroded her resilience in education to the extent of exiting school without obtaining the emblematic senior certificate that endorse matriculation. In this process, her hopes and career plans that were directly linked to first obtaining the vaunted Matric certificate were ruined. However, like a rolling stone that would not gather morass, she transplanted her education hope to a revised list of aspirations. She anticipated for a better life and improved chances of survival.

Given that she had already left school, the remaining wish was to get a job, even the part-time lot that could be low status, demeaning and sometimes dangerous. However, this practical and sensible aspiration was not without hindrances. Several attempts made to access employment were unsuccessful. Apart from obtaining the Grade 12 certificate, often used as gatekeeper for accessing employment, she did not have wider alternatives on actions she needed to consider. She desperately searched for any type of available job. Picking and choosing was the kind of luxury she never had. What would help to conceal the shame associated with education non-attainment was a *symbolical conquest*. If the 'perfect' society does not exist, it is not too much to ask for a 'good one' – the best that the imperfections and limitations of human thinking and conduct would conjure as a possibility (Clammer, 2012, p. 169). Similarly, B needed assurance to overcome certain situations such as the haunting threat of poverty. Her troubles became an impetus for a vigorous search employment opening, but even more her hunt seemed to refract opportunities to become scantier. 'Available employment' in the retail sector were less possible to access without the attainment of Matriculation certificate.

Right away, we note that the young people represented by B conceived of non-participation as shortfall or lack. There were no additional advantages she could identify that were associated

with the shortfall of lack. At least from the perspective of what B reported, non-participation was owed in part to the non-possession of the Matric certificate. The idea of matric centrality as the prerequisite for accessing employment corroborates what researchers like Haroon Bhorat and colleagues believe. To this end, B joins the social stimulated expectation that perhaps if she had managed to obtain the Matric certificate, her life would be in a better position. This is what the discourse of lack has done: It points us to 'what-could-be' rather than 'what-will-be'. However, we remain uncertain as to why persons whose work is to deliver plates filled with food in a restaurant require the Matric-level knowledge. In my view, this demand would make sense if employers had extended commitment to develop education levels of persons in their employ. Otherwise, Matric requirement becomes the good weapon for exclusion.

The desperation to access employment was linked to the fact that BM was unemployed and at the time, the alternative income generation endeavours had halted. She said, 'When your parent is not employed, there are certain things you want but cannot have' (BSQ15.1). From this we learn that some contemplations may be important, but difficult to pursue when 'there-for-me' benefits are distanced. The distance between societal expectation and capacity building on the young people imposed a shortfall on her own sense of efficacy and personal achievement, such that B was unsure of what she needed to do to succeed. On probing what she had in life apart from schooling, she expressed the answer in her home language as 'andenzanga nto' (BSQ2.2) [I have not done anything]. She used the deficit and lack-language to describe her story. She had nothing to show both educationally and materially. Yet she hoped she could still succeed with the school education, but equally expressed concerns about her age. She thought that at age of 22, the schooling stage had passed. This further challenged the hope to complete school education. Difficulty stemmed from the fact that she did not know in the first place what caused her grade retention or failure. In class she thought she wrote well, but she was not granted the expected right to proceed to the next grade.

As such, she envisaged that access to longer-term employment would help her to deal with both the educational non-attainment and poverty issues. Since her mother was unemployed, B wanted to redeem her family from enduring poverty stigma. Accessing employment for those few weeks helped (even though it was short lived) to change her occupation status from being a learner searching for possibilities of returning to school, to an unemployed young person. So far, I have covered that youth conceptions of non-participation were rather negative, revealing lack rather than possibilities. This seems to challenge the thesis advanced by scholars such as Gorz (1982), who argued for the 'liberation from work', especially work done for earning a living. For B, freed time afforded by unemployment was less humanising. On the main, in this story, we learn that the attainment of Matriculation certificate was crucial, but it seems the state had not been able to promote it as a basic right for all citizens and for it be attained through stratified adult education provision. For instance, the so-called Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) examinations run once a year between May and July, when they could be run twice in a year, intentionally to expand opportunities of Matric completion for the adults. B shared thoughts on career aspirations.

6.1 A subject with moral worth

There are many lessons B learnt from the school of life (BSQ6.1), mostly the shared life lessons related to morality. B deemed it as morally right that everyone has a thriving livelihood and be able to take care of personal and family problems. There are many ways of making money, both ethical and unethical, but B believed in earning money from working for it, rather than relying on social alms or 'blessings' from employed males. (The rising 'blesser' phenomenon involves elegantly looking young females receiving money from relatively rich-older-males in exchange for the up-to-date sexual adventures). B reflected on her life morally: She decided that she would rather plough into and harvest her money from the workplace. However, she did not have the so-called useful networks (which can be interpreted as the glorified nepotism)

in the form of employed friends who could introduce her to relevant employers. She conceived of the type of friends within her milieu as an inconvenience, in that, some liked talking about other people more than engaging in substantive issues. As result B elected to avoid them. This hints that, in her case, the network approach for gaining access to employment was constrained. When stretched beyond the immediate utterance, shying away from friend might occur when individual personal pride is low, perhaps due to having nothing to show and/or to give.

B was aware that she was not alone in the Out-of-EET category. In part, she attributed it to non-availability [I prefer to use *scarcity*] of job opportunities. Non-engagement usurped the ideal of progression to the *somewhere* plane that allow young people to be socially functional and substituted it with stagnation that she branded as 'sitting and doing nothing'. She knew about other young persons that were not working or studying but was suspicious that some of these would not be governed by the same morality or system of values. Some take short routes and are successful. She wanted to become a traffic officer but had many hurdles that came as preconditions. For this young person, the meaning of non-participation inured her to the social disorder that produced social *death*. She believed that scarcity of job opportunities was killing youth (BFQ18). Unfortunately, the social death toll was increasing rather than diminishing. For me this implies reliance on merchants for life sustenance of all citizens as not being tenable. Certainly, there were better periods, but the 21st century is ushering in a new threat of human robot overthrow or displacement in the workplace. It seems as the agents of change merchants lately prefer the robots labour. This is attested for by the new hype and much celebrated fourth industrial revolution. Nonetheless, the global capitalism will have new lessons to learn, that so long as humans shall live, they will never cease to work.

In this research, I put forward an argument that may appear as paradoxical at glance, that paid labour may well end when it ultimately ends, but humans will continue to work to the end. This is all humans exist for, thus know as reason they live. In the current capitalist order, it seems

all is lost for human workers. Merchants seem quite resolute to giving human work to robots. Indeed, young persons like B will continue experiencing the travesty of defeat for a time, but hands will always find things to do. A glance into history tells a story of how kingdoms rise and fall. Even the present-day threatening robots' kingdom will see its demise. Because people never cease to work. While my scope in this work is limited, I thought I should nibble on that nugget falling from the great feast of revolutions, but I realise I do not have a gate pass to comment extensively on emergent revolutions in this work. Even though participants B and BM did not reflect on the looming threat posed by robots, I thought it useful to flag it without getting too deep in it. The broader structure of opportunity made possible under the so-called global capitalism is not absolved from the question of morality. We learn that young people may well be victims of historical and social structural forces, but they are also safeguarded by their moral selves.

I now turn to participant BM who is the mother to our hostess in this chapter. Her insights help to corroborate B's story. Ideally, I should have included BM right at the beginning. However, I thought it was necessary to foreground the young person B who reserved all rights to invite whoever she wanted to co-reflect on her life. In these terms, BM has a guest status in the story of B, but lives and experience certain aspect of the trajectories together with B. She knew about B's successes and disappointments. Some aspects of her own life story may or may not directly relate to how B fared but are testimony to the context and time in which B grew up. BM adds the dimension of victimhood and identify the object of blame as government.

6.2 The begging subject

BM never really enjoyed what could be ascribed as ideal working conditions. She characterised her working experience as *Ukuphuma-engena* (exit-enter) in various places of employment. She understood that, given her education profile and impoverished networks she was obligated to engage in some work irrespective of the low status. She had no trouble until such time when

the exited state elongated its stay and entering appeared no more. Burdened by the emergent circumstances, BM imagined that rather than allowing herself to endure a trap of lengthy *stuckness*, precarious jobs were far better. The threat for sentient, living humans without work does not end with idling: The workless state has far-reaching, debilitating implications on equity of purpose, virtue, and dignity. This meant that all household adults needed to share the responsibility of family support. In other words, the baton of family care was surrendered to B prematurely, in the same way it was handed over to BM by the aftermath of her own mother's death. This explains why B desperately welcomed even temporary bouts of employment. We cannot miss the understanding afforded us by the exit-enter imagery. It gives new life to the emergent notion of waithood. It challenges the reciprocity of advantage implied by the notion of 'opportunity', and instead depicts perpetual unsettlement. Precarious jobs remove the sense of permanence, but people must eat.

Furthermore, we encounter BM as one with experience of the suppressed or denied good life. It was as if material deprivation was in open conflict with self-gain or happiness. For instance, years later after exited from her early ukwenda (marriage) she married another gentleman who worked as a taxi driver, but he too (like mother and father) died prematurely in an accident. Relationships and jobs escaped her hold. Watching events unfolding in her daughter's life, she could observe a similar trend. The difference being that unlike when her mother died, BM was not spared the torture of watching the delayed or downright unfulfilled aspirations, un-furthering of education, and general lack of progress in her daughter's life. She was losing the composure learned in years of deprivation. Recurring grade retention shocked BM whose understanding of her daughter was, 'She was never dumb' (BMSQ7.7). She really did not know what to attribute the repeated low grades and infrequent grade promotions to - whether it was lack of mastery of the vernacular language used at her new Gauteng-based school, uncaring

teachers, or being haunted by the bad spirit of Satanism, because she never used to 'fail before' (BMSQ7.7).

She tried to motivate B, but equally understood the difficulties associated with returning to school when being overaged. BM too got pregnant while at school and did not proceed beyond Grade10 (not that school endurance until the last grade makes much startling difference for rural-raised African woman). We can only postulate that at least it could boost confidence to search for better jobs. Fortunes to lead a prosperous life for BM died with her mother, and were further compounded by the imperfect, immediately available option of *ukwenda*. If for B, once-in-a-lifetime employment in a chemical factory subdued the prospects of returning to school, it was ukwenda for BM. Ukwenda itself is not taboo, but if entered with hope to *escape* material lack (which occurs when one tries to solve issues unrelated to the marriage), the institutional mandate may fail. Interestingly, BM's long-term solution to her predicament did not include pursuing education and work at the same time, perhaps because this option was difficult, rare and sometimes completely not viable. Nonetheless, she hoped that this could be possible for B. BM was confident that B's success would extend to everyone in their home, and that she would not abandon them. Some might want to associate this expectation on the part of BM with emergent youth concerns about the so-called 'black tax'. However, I suspect that this term only applies to those who have already accessed employment opportunity.

Although the 'black tax' arouses disdain, it seems a life of poverty legitimises the parents' present and future dependency on their children. She said, 'I know her, she cares deeply about me. She doesn't want to see me suffering. It's only that if she is not employed, she does not have much choice. There is nothing she can do about our situation' (BMSQ7.7). An elongated sense of stuckness affects emotions. Frustration competed with desperation, while a sense of helplessness gave rise to despair. Over the years, cleaning jobs' wages helped to support her children. Although BM was still in good health and able, a time came when she could no longer

gain access to paid work - even the lowly paying, insecure, and precarious kind. This exposes the character of a colonial structure of work, otherwise dubbed euphemistically in SA as spatial inequality. Serving to conceal that lesser educated compatriots who belong to certain races have wider access to opportunities than their relatively educated counterparts from the black townships and rural areas. Mechanisms to improve persons doing low-status jobs so that poor persons develop a quality life of dignity were either scarce, or dissemination of information was at fault. As such, BM's personal evaluation of factors contributing to non-participation in employment remained absence of paid work (any) opportunities.

In a way, BM placed blame on government. However, this struck me more as the language of desperation than the much disdained 'entitlement'. She was willing to roll up her sleeves and do work. Contrary to the derision out there in everyday speak that the poor citizens give more births in order to access more government social grants, neither BM nor B wanted to earn income only through government handouts. Precisely, because this was insufficient for taking care of all households needs. Rather than being content with becoming permanently begging subjects, these participants wanted to work. However, this anticipation was only sporadically attained, but they required elongated continuity with work. The following subsection highlights the difficulties the members of this family experienced in their attempts to earn a decent living.

6.3 The desperate subject

BM hinted that her daughter B understood the financial struggles in her family. This grasp tamed her aspirations, such that she merely wanted to obtain Matric then pursue a driver's license so that she could train as a traffic officer. BM saved money towards the cost of a driver's license. They both agreed this would work faster to rescue the family from material anguishes, but when she could not attain the Matric, she searched for other possibilities. At one time B informed BM about an opportunity in the Carltonville municipality, but employment 'brokers' wanted a cash bribe. BM cautioned B about the illegality of bribes, especially in government,

but their desperation dictated otherwise. As if when aspiration is revised downwards the moral acumen downgrades in agreement with adage that ‘desperate time call for desperate measures’. They agreed that there was nothing else to do: Bribery had become a new way of doing things, including obtaining a driver’s license and accessing jobs. Their victimhood justified complicit criminality and bribe-paying was worth risking. BM had saved money towards the driver’s license amounting to R7000. She vowed that she would never use for any other purpose. After fraudsters made their presentations, BM as B were alike interested. They wanted to work for the municipality, so they paid a total of R9000.

All that money was spent but no job was forthcoming: They had been coned. This crushed her, because now they had to pay the borrowed R2000 used to top up the bribery money. She recalled wise words that ‘everything has its own time’ and opted to accept the situation. The precautionary measures that she had used (such as writing down the car registration number) did not help: The fraudsters were unreachable on mobile number, and they could not be traced. That is when she realised ‘Mandichithe amanzi ibalekile lenkukhu’ (BMSQ 12.1), an idiom denoting throwing water away after realising that the chicken that was to be slaughtered had escaped. She gave up hope, lost desire and the inclination for further attempts. More appealing was death itself. It should not be thought that all BM ever wished for was employment. Outside employment, she started and ran a thriving liquor business for years (unspecified) where she made money, especially during the festive season. Money received in the liquor business was adequate for her to take care of children. However, she had to give it up because police officers disrupted it because she had not acquired liquor license. She continued trying other means of survival.

6.4 The conquered-displaced subject

Furthermore, she tried to buy goods in Johannesburg for reselling in rural areas closer to her home village of Nqatha. Her experience was that it was difficult to do that kind of business

with the ruralitarian people due to fierce competition with the recent Pakistan, Lebanese, and Ethiopians immigrants (which she labelled as *kwelekwele*, a slur used for 'foreigners'). In that, her customers used an informal credit system of seller-trust, which allowed them to acquire goods from various small business marketers without the means test for affordability and a credit check. At the agreed time she visited debtors' homes to collect money but noticed that rural people priorities were towards the so-called foreigners for payments. Failure to collect at agreed time meant that she was unable to purchase goods again. Just like the liquor business, she gave up this credited goods venture. In that, somehow, persons identified as foreigners had the upper hand in business. They did not only drive or possess better cars than the so-called local folks but resided in well-positioned affluent areas closer to town and seemed to have savvier methods for their debt collection including threats using *amayeza* (some enchantment herbs which she suspected).

Such persons identified as foreigners enjoyed some of the best things the country had to offer. For instance, in the field of education, feeder-zone policies designed to block township learners from accessing suburban schools did not always apply when it came to children born in other African and Asian countries. This meant that some of the internally unresolved racial issues became a disguised blessing for the newcomers. Some hold that the current disadvantaged positions occupied by the so-called local people follows their laziness, an analysis that strikes similar chords with discourses of divide-and-conquer by the apartheid regime. At that time, employment access in certain private multi-national companies was constrained for some groups because of suspicions of 'laziness' on certain tribal groupings. It is difficult to imagine a whole township occupied by most lazy persons. This said, BM's insights are useful as they help us turn the lens to see and identify the newcomer properly, no longer as alien but as *fore-reign*[er] meaning the one who will rule or pass-the-local persons in their less savvy survival adventures. This linguistic analysis tempers with *for* (that means on behalf of), into *fore* (which

refers to ahead of time). It also eliminates the misplaced marginality associated with foreign to identify him as the one who will soon *rule* (reign). The recent demonstrations in the Westrand Munipalities (Mogale-City, Randfontein, Westonaria and Merafong) that followed accounts of repeated rape[18] of eight women who were part of the crew that sought film a music video in the mines dumps allegedly by a group of fore-reigners that is publicly identified as Zama-Zamas (try-try) which can be interpreted as denoting trying again is a case in point.

Analytically speaking, this meant that those who reign in the mine dumps would not permit the local women to try in the region they had conquered to become their sovereignty. In order to displace them permanently from trespassing criminally attained region of reign they had to rape them repeatedly. This helps to shift the one-sided discourse of Xenophobia where only foreign bodies were seen to be at risk of being hatred by the local people into something which can be labelled for lack of terminology as locaphobia. This speaks to our overarching conception of the displacement of the so-called locals. Not so very long ago, 'local' fathers worked in the mines; working away allowed them latitude to make mini homes with other women. In the process, the stability of families came to be undermined. According to Bonner (1995), the groupings such as *Amalaita* and *AmaRussia* displaced the so-called local fathers in those mines. It seems displacement did not end then: Today it is much more sophisticated and often garbed in victimhood, but it is pathway to reigning over so-called locals are slurred as 'lazy'. It was only recently, wherein we witnessed what popularly came to be known as 'state capture' following actions of one Indian family that threatened to topple all the country's government practices through displacing its systems, cultures, and laws.

[18] Police probe gang rape of 8 women in Krugersdorp | eNCA, accessed on 17 August 2022

This typified fore-reigners reigning through fronting others to become criminals for the relative pittance of a few million, while securing billions for themselves behind the scenes. It would be criminally appeasing if the-so called locals had reserved some billions for the local distribution. However, the nature of the system of reign by wealth (*timos*) is such that wealth accrues to individuals. Wealth individualism distorts genuine solidarity. It occupies social time with scheming for out-manoeuvering rather than building with others. Just as the of foregrounding disinterestedness in academia (Bourdieu, 1998), the field of immigration is not free from the combatant field games. For instance, it thrives on victimhood and is blind to the victimisation of the local people by the astute for[e]reigners. There are individual wars of self-positioning that may result in a divided front and collective defeat. Once upon a time, the so-called locals managed Spaza shops, but today from Nelspruit to Kimberly on the N12, Messina to Cape Town on the N1, Gqeberha to Durban on the N2, Alexander to Pietermaritzburg on the N3 these are in the hands of the newly reigning comers. Attempts to earn own livelihoods by such individuals as BM tend to be swiftly displaced by the unified force of the fore-rulers who sometime masquerade to be in solidarity with the local people in their struggles against, racism, sexism and other forms of inequalities, but this is made to be sensitive issue. However, analysis of lived experience helps us enter worlds and ways of social seeing of the displaced persons such as BM. We see her as falling prey to the local fraudsters, in unfair business competition with for[e]reigners, without prospects of regaining employment, and with dashed hope.

6.5 Subject with perishing hope

When I asked a question based on her general impression of her daughter's direction (*uyaphi* – where she is going). The answer was, 'Hayi atshabalele amathemba' (BMFQ2), denoting that hopes perished. I pause to look at the *conductor employment* issue. This statement launches an overarching theme pervading through the interview. Employment possibilities were dwindling and scarce. She said, 'Umsebenzi wanamhlanje unzima' (BMFQ8), highlighting that finding

work these days was hard. If you were not well-connected and known in certain echelons, it was almost impossible to be granted access to jobs. She felt at 40 years she was not too old, as such she still wanted to work. Moreover, she did not have the slightest pain, but was concerned that soon she would be sick from stress. She blamed government for culpability in closing job opportunities. In particular, she condemned the practice of demanding Grade 12 certificates when selecting candidates. This was applied even in what she considered as 'light jobs' or jobs that required low skills (BMSQ8.1). She saw this as born of desire to give some formality to 'exclusion' practices. She protested,

> Ngubani ofundileyo omaziyo ngoba kaloku funek' ukuba ubenomntu ofundileyo okwaziyo ozohamb' ekuvela kengoku uzofakwa. Uba awunamntu ozokufaka ke chith' utyiwe! (BMSQ8.3). [*I translate this loosely as:* Who is that educated person that you know, because you need a connection with educated person who knows you, and will recommend you to the employers. If you do not have your own person to install you, forget it!]

The government position of dominance was viewed from an individual rather than collective perspective. It offered two possibilities: Either helping pluralised individuals since one's being dissolves into being of 'others' (*me* pronounced as *the people*) to facilitate change for all; or to attract me-blame because of being left out. In her view government strategy of cadre selection or deployment precipitated candidate selection from the networks of the known. In turn, this legitimises unlawful acts of nepotism, which is a disadvantage to person(s) like herself, less known in certain circles especially in Gauteng province. A network or connection-approach rendered certain individuals as conductors of opportunities, others as non-receivers of those opportunities. The latter group consisted of the individuals within a nation, province or region who were insulated by either political process, tribalism, racialism, and by a preference for recent immigrant candidates from accessing even 'light jobs' (restaurants, cleaning services

etc.). On the other hand, employment conductors by-pass all kinds of red tape; even if not meeting the set criteria, they connect candidates to available possibilities. Non-receivers are encouraged to create their own, from apparently vast, but not yet available opportunities.

BM's selection of words was quite revealing; hope was not merely ruined but had perished in terms of the fulfillment of her daughter's adult roles. Previously she was able to provide for them through wages received from cleaning service and piece jobs. Now those jobs were no longer available: As a result, hope perished. Her state of despair eroded self-assurance and efficacy. She made several attempts, and no longer knew what or where else to try. As a rural-raised person, she was strongly considering returning her family back to the Eastern Cape (EC). Lack of income generation meant limited options and protracted suffering. This turn of events prompted her to consider the familiar place as a form of relief from urban failure. She conceded there was nothing better as such in the EC: However, she had considered it as a better place to die. Losing hope meant that what was most certain was death itself. Since at that point she did not have decent livelihood, her consolation was a yearning for a decent death. From this we get a strong sense that unemployment was esteemed as good as death. Not that there was nothing to live for: BM had children and grandchild, but death offered promise to remove her eyes from watching the never-ending humiliation of lack of *self-progress* and threatened *further[ment]* in her daughter's life. She was running out of patience with waiting and watching.

She had no or fewer persons in Kagiso (than at Emampondweni) that were close enough with whom she could share her frustration. The assertion of perishing hope contradicts the espoused reassurance that is expressed as, 'ungalilahl ithemba' (do not ever lose hope). Its assurance is that even in the roughest and most unpromising settings, so long as life still lingers hope can be rekindled. The process leading to the hope perishing was heralded by the unfortunate state of non-existence best expressed by adapting the popular Descartes dictum (I think…) into 'I work therefore I am'. Worklessness is seen as good only for *zombifying* human life. To live is

to work. It is in context of work that human thought patterns develop. When engaged in work, humans make reflexive connections to improve existing practice. To this end, any kind of human development that is worth its name must necessarily involve work. When stretched further, this finding repudiates the current rush to replace human work with robots work in the hyped-up 'artificial intelligence'. In terms of what BM has said, such entrusting intelligence to the machines will most likely undermine human existence. Craze with robots will not advance humanness. A closer gaze into shared troubles takes us beyond work-for-its-sake to broader questions on human existence. BM realises that the warfare against worklessness was bigger than herself, and in a helpless state she plunged into the despair of perishing hope. On her own, she had made several attempts but, for one reason or another, these could not be sustained. Over time, her failed attempts crystallised into perishing hope. This being so, human experiences do not perish along with hope, and so she lived on as sitting.

6.6 Sitting as waiting subject

Sitting is a social posture. It does not refer to the sedentary physical posture of inactiveness but relates to the inability to participate in those things that matter. Rather than the physical sitting, ukuhlala relates to the social inactiveness. It is akin to Honwana's (2013) notion of *waithood*, although, waithood conjures an image of a temporal sitting for a person that anticipates relief, hoping to gain emancipation from current situation. Rather than wishing away the-thing-itself in haste for an external relief, *ukuhlala* invites us to spend time understanding the state-of-being outside its potential resolve. This includes the inability to meaningfully project one's life into the future. Ukuhlala exposes the artificiality of the colonial-like type of civilisation that produces nowhere for most young people residing in the township. The limitation of waithood is potential culpability to escape the present reality through projecting imagined hypothetical future. In ways that remove wait for the unreal things. Understandably, waithood is built on the

shaky foundations of the developmental stages that form the bedrock for what is a normative behaviour, including the social and physical maturation (Arnett, 2000).

Sitting has other affinities with what Heidegger (1996) termed *thrownness*, the difference being that thrown persons have a recognition of the limited scope of possibilities and have reached personal resolve to take care of the world. In so doing, they create possibilities for the future generations. However, those in the state of sitting have not yet reached this resolve but remain still in a shock that their un-furthered youth lives might become wasted adult lives. Regarding those sitting, one notices childhood expectations becoming unfulfilled in terms of material accumulation, status improvement or progression. Choosing careers in earlier grades amounts to malicious deception that under prepares young people for the stuckness of sitting. Instead, it helps them to embrace the false promises and to wait for non-existent or no longer available possibilities. In this process, the virtue of persevering with education may erode as they appear to be rewarded with the mockery of sitting. Youth thrown into limited possibilities are under constant threat of having their individual dignities dethroned. Removed from the pursuit of active work many find themselves steadfastly sitting nowhere, where the human endowment of the capacity to work is weakened, if not 'emasculated' (this time for both female and male participants).

In his Rwandan research Sommers (2012) helps us appreciate the mockery of ukuhlala as producing the less revered youthman, which refers to adults in age but not status. This kind of juniorisation of young men, owed to their encountered struggles, imposes a double burden of survival concerns and status attainment. This said, it seems the status issue arises with concerns that related to the educational rewards. There comes a time in a young person's life where educational credentials matter less, but here-and-now matters of survival take centre-stage. The stories of H and G substantially depict this. They were dissatisfied that, while being youth, they carried adult status and responsibilities. Following this displeasure, they sought ways to fast

track their livelihoods through other means. From this, we note that there comes a time in young people's life course when immediate poverty concerns far outweigh the modern Man status. It should thus come to us as no wonder that B was preoccupied with concerns of alleviating or reducing poverty, rather than giving priority to following all stages of transition in a linear format.

6.7 Conclusion

In the preceding discussion I have tried to account for youth unemployment and the scarcity of work opportunities from a single case (pre-Matric cluster). I presented some of the insights that were gleaned from the utterances the participants made and added to them my co-reflections in trying to make sense of the scourge of non-participation in EET from the perspectives of the subjects. In my view, this approach is a radical departure from familiar discourses of unskilled workers, which often lend to the solutions of upgrading human capital, and the structure of the economy which identify as solution giving incentives (to bribe or lure) employers to hire young people. My adopted approach lends us to seeing the human subject as morally upright, who has at the same incurred a reduced to status of a beggar waiting for the breadcrumbs that fall from the table of a precarious welfare system. In turn, the subject makes attempts to alleviate itself from the dire straits through strategies of desperation. However, its problems are too many in that some of its attempts to escape the prevailing conditions are outmaneuvered in displacement by for[e]reigners who have siege currency of victimhood and further curtailed by the obstinate structural constraints. When combined against the township subjects these opposing forces hurl (thrownness) the township subject into despair where hope perishes. In the end this subject is left as the victim of its own anticipation.

Chapter 7

Hankering after authentic possibilities: the youth aspirations

Grade 1: I want to be a doctor; **Grade 12**: *Nase Shoprite kuRight* (Even Shoprite is fine)
Imlumile iMaths neScience (Bitten by Maths and Science) (Sbu Faya, August 15, 2018, Fb status)
😂😂😂🤣

Having dealt with concerns that were raised in the Pre-Matric, I now have opportunity to attend to the aspiration of the young people in the Matric cluster. In current chapter I deal with those who had attained matric and were searching for the possibility of accessing the university education. My focus is on three young people that yearned for possibilities. Seemingly these harnessed their aspirations on the belief that, '… They will never be what they want to be'[19] until they access into university education. To fulfill the objective set for this chapter, I combined three participants D, E, and F who had similar background. These three grew up in the same neighbourhood, attended the same primary and secondary schools, and therefore are well acquainted with each other. For instance, E and F are cousins (their mothers are sisters), whereas D and E were the desk mate friends at secondary. F was one grade ahead of the two friends. All obtained their Matric from the same school, had some employment experience, and were searching for the better life and greater 'opportunity', but had to begin at the university. Interestingly, the three of them had the single attraction to pursue teaching as a career. However, their inordinate desire for accessing what they termed as 'tertiary education' did not seem to be an easier option to attain. They had to wander about, yet this was purported to be the most equipping path for their career aspirations.

To bring life to the chapter, I first discuss the opportunity as a sought-for right that has not yet manifested on all young people. Those who grow up in the so-called black townships are sometimes left behind, and less considered as the focus tend to be on institutions. Often, they

[19] This expression is borrowed from one of Martin Luther King's speeches that challenged pervasive inequality in America in the 1960s.

feature in these debates as a number that updates new statistics, putting aside the promises they were made to believe at the beginning of their schooling careers. When children enter school, they are encouraged to dream widely when choosing employment careers. However, often when they reach senior school grades, the school conditions sometimes compel them to revise the content of their aspiration downward to suit the prevailing context towards what they perceive at that point as reachable possibilities. This revision of aspiration coincides with the humorous inset that I borrowed from facebook social platform (facebookers comment about anything without restraint!) In this instance, a comment was made regarding the lived realities of a fictitious person that had higher aspirations in his/her early schooling grades, but as s/he progressed to senior grades these shifted slightly from doctor to a 'lowly' retail employee. The inset shows the disparities between aspiration formation and actualisation. It almost seems that a chasm existed between the ambition formation in formative school grades and the reality on the ground. Initially I missed the actual message conveyed through this comment. In my first read, I thought it meant 'imlum[*l*]ile (weaned-off) and not 'imlumile' (bitten/sting).

It is this misreading which well captures the essence of the message in stories that will follow. Social media (like this example) feeds the stereotype that Math and Sciences z*iyaluma* (they bite) and that 'not all able youth have capacity' to avoid their sting, only one with specialties of being part of the 'bright and best'. This belief is based on false assumption that individuals dispersed in township spaces lack innate ability to grasp these subjects. This typifies the general messaging by the policy makers. In foundational grades children are generally encouraged to reach for the skies in terms of aspirations, but without fail every year prior to the release of Matriculation results the government officials, researchers, and other commentators actively encourage young people against the university pathway as the sole means through which career dreams are attained. This nighttime advice helps not only to distort aspirations formed in earlier school grades, but to admit that the much-broadcasted education rewards were a hoax. This is

like the miseducation about Santa in kindergarten years from which they are later weaned-off. The aspiration-bubble is made to burst at school exit point.

7.1 Opportunity as right

As hinted in the title of 'Hankering after authentic possibilities', I intend to unearth some of the inconsistencies in the doctrine of 'rights' and 'opportunities' of democracy. Human rights are at the core of modern democracy. In fact, the very first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that, 'All human beings are born free, equal in dignity and rights' (UN, 1948). It further asserts that, 'They are endowed with reason and conscience and should thereby act towards one another in *the* spirit of brotherhood'. The human rights framework further encourages 'state power to take positive measures of ensuring an environment that all people (youth included) enjoy basic human rights' (UN, 1948). Article 23 goes on to list the right to work. The generation of the so-called 'bornfree' youth in SA was born at a time when the talks on democratic rights and resultant opportunities were heightening. They grew at a time when human rights and democratic entitlements were supposedly no longer denied. Yet this was a time when expected radical changes in their lifeworlds seemed distant (Reddy, 2016). Given this background, it occurred as reasonable to me to pursue the following question:

> What are the young people's and CoIs' conceptions of possibilities within their milieu (what counts as possibility for them)?

My reflective notes from reading and re-reading of the transcripts enabled me to reduce data through coding of the basic themes. This approach afforded me an appreciation of the young people's and CoIs' evaluations of factors that contribute to non-participation in EET. Through their subjective engagement with the social world, it was possible to see how participants *cared* for different things and how they were concerned and distressed by them. I gave careful and sympathetic attention to being-in-the-world, in terms of their relatedness to and involvement

with already meaningful objects. In these terms, being human is not something that begins and ends at the objectively present level but recognises the potential to do. According to Heidegger (1996, p. 144), the modal category of the objective present possibility impresses what is not yet real and not always necessary. However, being human as an existential possibility no longer refers to the free-floating potentiality of a being with the 'liberty of indifference'. As humans we are thrown into definite possibilities of taking care of the world and having concern for and about others. To this extent, freedom is about discovering and extending one's own possibilities to do, in ways that retain the character of serviceability and usability and coming to appreciate the detriment of access that is symbolical rather than meaningful.

From this perspective the political optimism about democratic gains since 1994 is meaningless, when those possibilities that were created fail to serve humanity, in ways in which they could attain freedoms to connect the things at hand to fulfill the for-the-sake-of-which humanity exists. As such, the detriment of their non-reach or restriction must be exposed or unconcealed. Given that humans always understand their reality in terms of possibilities, the ways in which township youth that are Not-in-EET conceive of the possibilities within their milieu matters. If being-in-the-world exposes and enables us to belong to the networks of transparent possibilities which are ready-to-hand (Heidegger, 1996), searched-for possibilities for these young people seemed far and distant to access. In part, access was tainted by 'social manipulation' of young people's aspirations (Bourdieu, 1997) or social abandonment. In formative years an impression was created that this youth could attain anything they aspired to be, but at transition point the prevalent tendency is to dissuade them from pursuing such-anything they were socially assisted to imagine. When possibilities are viewed as the basic human right, then we forced to assign real possibilities to the young people.

The subsection that follows outlines certain categories for my analysis. For instance, I devote attention to perceived possibilities and expectations necessary to consider when thinking about

youth development. The idea of reality that is there-for-me compels the researchers and policy planners to no longer neglect the youth in whose name the planned interventions are made. The varied contributions of the participants build a single case of the young people hankering after possibilities. At first, progress with pursuing their aspired-for careers seemed deterred by earlier opportunities. As a result, we hear more stories on their wandering in determent, rather than approximating their aspirations. My aim in this segment and others is not to provide a fair distribution of their views to offer some idealistic balance narrative. As a result, one participant may be dominating in one discussion, in that certain utterances may stimulate more in-depth discussions over others. I made a choice to allow the participants in this research to speak, and in ways that represent their own experiences best.

7.2 Individual encounters

A word of advice from D was that the younger youth without Matric may want to take was that, if it happens that one fails (or does not achieve) the grade, the cleverest thing to do is to repeat. This guidance shifts slightly from some of the practical thinking he harboured while at school. At Further Education Training (FET) phase they encourage each other as peers to aim to succeed in education against all odds. This conviction influenced him to realistically adjust his career aspirations and subordinate them to the imperative of completion. The performance that was required for him to attain his medical doctor childhood dream did not match the then current reality. He thought that, perhaps he was not good with those subjects which would give him permission to do medicine. Further to this, that it would take him more than just hard work but also longer years to accomplish a medical degree. As such he needed to change his selection to take those subjects, he had self-confidence in, so that he could gain higher symbols. He had no luxury of staying in education longer than needed: He was a firstborn child, and other family pressures awaited him. He needed to relieve his family from the squalor of poverty. Thus, he

was not at liberty to dream wildly and in ways that are not realistic. He needed to make sure that he accomplished the tasks at hand.

7.2.1 On recognition

The story that participant D shared point us to the difficulties associated with the extended time of *entanglement* in the web of constrained possibilities. He shared similar experience with his close allies including DL (dance leader in the cultural group he was part), E, and F. Regardless of the social disturbances he experienced, D still strongly believed in 'education of a special kind'. Just as he had a multiracial crèche start, he believed that where a thing begins has some relationship with where it ends. Thus, for him, university education needed to precede all kinds of conceivable pathways into accessing opportunity later in life. However, structural limitations were such that a positive attitude towards education still did not help to secure a place in higher education to achieve teaching career aspirations. D signaled those academic qualifications served a bigger purpose. This is the reason informing importance of the Matriculation certificate. He thought what was learnt at school was necessarily transferrable to the workplace environment and adapted to different work settings. He argued from a vantage point of a person who had already obtained Matric. He said:

> It's going to be a little hard *nje* (you see), but according to me *ukuthi* (the thing is) without Matric, hence there are *such* options as the supplementary exams. When you fail then you can supplement. (DSQ1.6)

We note that he doubted if other young persons who had not achieved Matric would have the same adaptive capabilities as those holding it. According to this insight, D perceived education qualifications as a necessary means used to select suitable candidates in the job market. And were an informed basis for applying accumulated knowledge in the workplace situation. Ideally the system of education served to equalise the possibilities afforded to humankind in general,

and specifically to the youth. However, this did not always hold as true in practice. Instead, the obtaining of a Matric certificate did not guarantee anyone the higher regard to the employees over the rest of youth without it. For D and E, this posed a problem of recognition. On noticing that as Matric bearers they were not treated in any way significantly different way to those without, they seem unsettled. Such an act occurred to the two friends not only as a devaluation of their qualifications, but a mockery to years dedicated to education. I find this to be a crucial finding. It hints that aspirations and expectations are not homogeneous but can be differentiated according to the level of education the one seeking for possibility has obtained. He further said that:

> Well, I think education *nje*, I don't think you could go to SANDF with no academic knowledge, because *mawufika laphayana* (when you get there), they won't start you from scratch as much as they do at school, they would expect you to deliver (make some contribution), so I think you should have schooling. (DSQ1.2)

D had knowledge of the general spectrum of the youth opportunities. He mentioned the cadet military programme from the South African National Defense Force (SANDF). In connection with this, he mentioned various offerings such as the airforce, engineering and technology, and had information on the skills sets that were required for accessing certain programme offerings. For the technical programmes, 'scientific and mathematical skills' were required (DSQ1.3). He said, 'You can only acquire *these kinds of skills* when you have an opportunity to attend school' (DSQ1.3). His expectation was that accumulated school knowledge would have a bearing on the engagements with post-school education and employment. Ideally for him '*recognition* of prior learning' was important, not only for gratifying affirmative action but for *continuity*. To his dismay, this was not always the case. 'Better educated' persons like himself who had gone through education to reach as far as Matric level were given the same tasks as those colleagues that could be perceived to be less educated. This occurred to him as an affront to the very name

of education. He had thought without being able to build from the previous school knowledge base, one would necessarily be incompetent as one would find it harder to 'deliver'. I read this to mean productivity (or contribution).

He accessed irregular employment in the restaurants sector where he worked on a casual basis. His longest employment was from a reputable retail store which paid him abominably meagre wages. To his surprise, even in such establishment there was no apparent recognition for the qualifications he had obtained. He bemoaned the fact that employers made no attempt to align the school subjects with the task for which responsibility was given. Yet it was difficult getting employed without school qualifications. He resolved this paradox of youth life by adopting the practical attitude that, if it was already hard for him with Matric level education, things would be even harder without it. Society has greater demand for education success, and failure is not tolerated. Matric is made to be the bare minimum that everyone needs to have, but there are no corresponding opportunities that were earmarked for those persons who have made the effort and stayed the course up to its completion. This absence renders it as the qualification for its sake. Sometimes there is really nothing more to it. The township youth are made to watch the selected few (with or without) flourishing. His advice to the displaced youth is that not making it in first, second, or even in third attempt only means one can still gather the courage to go back until this leviathan is achieved. To my surprise, his views on education did not shift when he was faced with subsequent disappointments. He maintained his positive views.

According to D, education had a conduit function to link us (individual youth) with the broader world. Nonetheless, the employment market operated with different logic. Qualifications were used for sifting, selection, and/or rejection. As such, this only seemed relevant at the point of entry. This troubled D who had gone through 12 years of schooling. His idea of *education first* suggests some kind of 'linear progression' which does not always hold as true for displaced, subdued groups. D was not engaged in any activity he would esteem as meaningful for securing

a sustainable career. His leisure time was occupied by African dance and church music. It took him three years before yielding to the TVET programme. This gives us a hint that TVET was not his desired possibility. He wanted to see himself pursuing a teaching qualification in one of the 26 universities.

7.2.2 Decision making of self-reliance

In this work I am unable to make any claims on inherent capabilities. Practical decision should not be misconstrued as lack of innate abilities. Rather it had to do with a practical understanding of the situation at hand. While personal doubts on subject mastery encouraged a compromise from pursuing a medicine as a profession, these had to do with the calculated practicality of minimising the uncertainity and maximising certainty. They do not prove lack of ambition. To the contrary we note that D, together with his ambitious peers, encouraged each other to make it to the doorsteps of a university and to be sure they get through it. They had self-determination to succeed in their tertiary education, and to avoid wasting the funds through multiple failures. This group of friends had appreciation of the sacrifices their families had made and that the social cost of state welfare to support their post-school education should not go to waste. On their own they needed to identify and develop their own craft of excellence. This devise sheds light on the creative, selective, and even subversive strategies young people adopt to deal with the context of the scarce possibilities they found themselves. They well-knew that displaying some aptitude in the hollow knowledge of words and mathematical formulas was merited, at times even to the detriment of grasping things themselves.

These young stars worked-out that perceptions of excellence mattered in the world. And so, in the end it did not matter which course of study one had pursued at university, but if they were brilliant in it. Only through *distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984) did they stand any chance to gain recognition. After all they were ‘mere’ young Africans from the township, a mark that was historically associated with imperfection. For instance, when blended with suburban natives,

township origin was suspect to ‘unproductivity’, ‘in-competitiveness’ and ‘in-excellence’, such that discourses of massification in higher education are fraught with concerns about the presence of these as diluting the quality of education. As owed to suspicion that ‘townshippers’ were tainted by *under-preparedness*. An interested account of this perceived academic under-preparedness is documented in the compelling testimony provided by an African university professor (Khoza-Shangase, 2019, p. 49). She recollects how as the only black student in her cohort she was subjected to an ‘extended curriculum’, a requirement not imposed on the other 30 young women on the same programme who happened to be white. It was automatically assumed as necessary and beneficial for her, apparently without any consideration of the merits that were already provided through Matric results.

This single account hints at the ingrained suspicion or *habitus* within the white institutions that perpetually place the young Africans on the back foot. Unlike this professor who had to resist misrecognition of merits, D and his friends did not have the excellent grades. Nonetheless, they resolved to stage the excellence in order to gain recognition, as if already aware that all odds were against them: If they didn’t make it they would have wasted their time, family support, and government resources. In doing so, they would perpetuate the low-expectation stereotype regarding township youth. Instead of grumbling as victims of their circumstances who lacked good teachers and resources to excel in Science and Mathematics - subjects which would allow them license to pursue the ‘scarce-skills’ status careers, they opted to ride on available wagon. Rather than risking progression with a wasteful, mediocre performance. Interestingly, D never tried to improve upon the average symbols he had obtained in Grade 12. Not that the thought never crossed his mind, but he harboured the fear of achieving lesser grades. To avoid being ‘marked down’ from already low symbols, he decided to leave things as they were (DSQ6.18). This gives us the impression that success was never guaranteed, while *failure* lingered as a constant threat. The first attempt was the best time to succeed. He thought that the system was

regulated in such a way that it kicks out the late risers who wake up on second or third attempts and gives the best chance to first attempters.

Although this conspiracy theory has not been confirmed, it forms part of lived realities of those within D's network of influence. It informed his reluctance to improve Matric. One can never be sure if one's diligent effort will yield the desired results. The truthfulness of these allegations cannot be pursued in this research, but what is useful may be noting that education provisioning occurs in a toxic environment of mistrust. Emphasis on excellence outstrips the crucial aspects of developmental learning which include industriousness, determination, and diligence. It was as if education existed merely to select 'the bright and the best' and then lock the rest into a meander of uncertainty. Yet research participants had other circumstantial pressures including the colloquial 'black tax' for cushioning the parents' family. We get a distinct sense that D was not sure on whether the system was working-for-me, or for itself.

7.2.3 On moral ecology

Establishing a career is like a *finder-finder* game, wherein the point of play is in the search. D desperately wanted to escape the ever-hanging cloud of failure through the means of education, but his goal was not met. Yet he continued selecting education as the potential bridge between poverty and financial stability. At school he adopted what strikes me as a useful philosophy and/or personal code of ethics. D kept a level-head and never allowed himself to be influenced by the negative things. When some peers were attracted to truancy, carrying weapons to school, and drug abuse, he distanced himself from such things. However, his moral resolve only helped with youth cultural dangers. For instance, it did not help to recommend anyone to the better life opportunities. Keeping a level head is a personal choice which cannot be publicly rewarded. As learners at school, they to compensate for the shortfall of classroom instruction. The problem was that unguided self-learning is achieved through hit-or-miss. It may be difficult for learners to sort and order subject content according to levels of priority. Regardless of

perceivable gaps in teaching and learning, D identified education as the 'only' means by which he could improve his life and that of his family. At no point did he identify education as futile. He was aware that young people could fetch any university qualification then come back to *sit* in the township without a job (DSQ5.1). However, he would not own other people's fate as his, he was willing to try. D's insightful views help us to think deeper about analysis of the NEET problem. He reminds us that it is easier for the society to raise ambitions, rather than matching them with substantive opportunities. In the following subsection I proceed with E's ideas and experience.

7.3 Youth training

In mainstream logic, training is a pathway for preparing candidates for the job market. Instead of faulting lack in training, E blamed himself as inadequately prepared. Initially, he thought exposure in education would equip him to master most things in the vast domain of job market. Allais (2017) points to on-the-job training as the most realistic and functional way for preparing the graduates for labour markets. Contrary to the skills gap doctrines, she pointed that 'work-experience is gained through work' (Allais, 2017, p. 157). Expectation for the education system to produce already fit graduates to be absorbed in the labour market would further stretch education with reforms that will lead to its deformation. Work-based training can be more rapid, targeted, and spanning a shorter time. The widespread education faulting gives us a sense that employers are not always willing to share the training load. Strangely, employers kept on reporting that 'skills shortages' were a palpable barrier to economic growth. Implicitly, this way of reporting blamed the young people's capabilities as responsible for economic growth. The story that E shared challenged certain aspects of this belief. In post-apartheid SA young people with the same profile, thus theoretically represented by E's experience, struggled to gain and to sustain marginal possibilities which co-existed with absolute abundance of labour and relatively high levels of investment in education (Buchanan, 2019, p. 16).

7.3.1 Training relevance

In SA there only 50 technical educational and vocational training (TVET) institutions, a few community colleges, and 26 universities (DHET, 2013). The post-school system is not geared towards absorbing everyone exiting the basic schooling. The prized approximation of universal access in the primary education is yet to be mirrored in the post-schooling system of education. There are fewer secondary than primary schools, fewer post-school colleges and universities than secondary schools. Obtaining Matric CERTIFICATE already signposts strong willpower and determination to stay the course. When viewed through lens of employers, we may neglect to recognise how young people such as E made the effort. The noise on youth unemployment overemphasise their deficiency of lack, rather than the abundance of possibilities. Thus, fail to recognise what the young people already have in their hands. This noise drowns youth voices to the extent that they begin to join the chorus on 'skills deficit', that serves to legitimise their displacement in the so-called modern structures of opportunity. Absent things are celebrated over the things present (recognition of achievement); this results in young people such as E blaming themselves for absent possibilities. Weak Matric limits the post-Matric options. Most available possibilities tend to be at the TVET colleges that follow a protracted pathway into National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 5.

After a long meander in the TVET sector for no less than three years - only to obtain NQF level 4 in National Certificate Vocational (NCV) - students are permitted to do limited options of NQF level 5 university programmes. After completing NCV level 4, others pursue National Accredited Technical Education Diploma (NATED) courses. NATED courses may last for an extra year (or more) prior to proceeding with university education. Given the protracted nature of TVET programmes, E viewed these as sacrifice without blessing. He did not see how TVET possibilities would help him, as varied offerings tend to lead nowhere. Instead, he preferred to

improve his Matric results over TVET. This was important, because it served to fulfill his ambition to gain access into a university so he could further his education. While he succeeded in removing TVET as a viable option, he delayed decision to return to school. Understandably, immediately after the Matric year E found employment in his mother's place of work. It would not take long before the supervisor assigned to him played political tricks to push him out of that job. Apparently, the said supervisor wanted to place his own cadre. To accomplish that, he made D's life in that factory unbearable. My fascination here is not with the endemic acts of nepotism, plaguing both private and public sectors, but with the distractions and obstacles that are less visible.

7.3.2 Imperceptible distraction

The cliché goes as, 'early success is a bad teacher'. Similarly, we detect from these stories the extended preoccupation with the short-duration opportunities rather than an orientation towards more permanent possibilities. Instead of investing time getting the exit level certificate right, E seemed trapped in the allurement of the short-term pathway of precarious employment. Later, these early 'fortunes' attracted the need to sustain employment status without any higher education qualification. His employment experience fluctuated between the good and bad jobs, with paralysing internal politics in the first two jobs. It was his third job, where he worked as facilitator, that he perceived the good, but that one too was short lived and unsustainable. Later, he was 'lobbied' to join a community pressure group/political party that was still defining its identity. He fitted the purpose because he was no stranger to leadership roles, which had begun in youth church choir. It seemed to him that humble beginnings in the choir prepared him for other leadership roles. Unfortunately, he had not acquired the enough formal learning through education that was needed, for him to enjoy the emergent opportunities.

There may be misgivings with trialing foreign curriculum or Singapore system, but we cannot take away that he thought he was making a difference. In fact, he was proud to be associated

with the project. The job task intellectually engaged him: He needed to give clear instructions and to do basic analysis of data. Unlike packing same products in the shelved as he did in retail sector, his new responsibilities were engaging as they involved administering the interventions that sought to address what occurred to him as a persistent problem. Working in the school did not end with giving him wider exposure on issues in our local education but revived his career aspirations. He yearned even more for the opportunity to pursue the teaching career that he had always aspired for. Nonetheless, the admission bar for entering higher education was constantly being pushed higher every year. Compensatory policies such as recognition of prior learning (RPL) which target addressing injustices of the past did not apply in helping him gain access into higher education. After four years since exiting Matric, career had not taken any definitive shape. It almost seems that early employment 'successes' disturbed the decision of returning to school while age permitted.

Although, E was able to identify what he needed to pursue the teaching career, at the same time he trapped himself into wanting to maintain the status of being employed When the employment opportunity first presented itself, he sacrificed the ideal of improving his Matric symbols. The shortcut proved to be as detrimental to his 'calling'. This lands us into a paradox: How can the young people know if the course of action they pursue is right without being affirmed by adults, and how will they own up to aspirations as their own if they are dependent on significant others. In the end, his story points out that accepting certain opportunities might mean forfeiting other important ones. Initially he thought he could *wait* for what he aspired-for in the meantime space that opened in his mother's place of employment. While there, he learnt to tolerate not only low wages but also the treatment in factory floor jobs that his mother also had endured. While in that capacity, he braved ongoing sabotage that was aimed at removing him. EM viewed it as a decentering ploy to save the employer's face (EMFQ2).

In her view, employers responded adversely to democratic advances of fairness and equality by modification of employment contracts from permanent to temporal. This helped to remove pressure from employers. Nonetheless, EM had no better gift for her son in his emerging youth years, than to link him with work (EMFQ2.5). Like CM, EM had long occupied factory floor jobs, with limited political success in persuading factory managers against the patronage tricks of the shop stewards. Both C and E were pushed out of their jobs despite their mothers' long service. This seems to suggest that family networks were useful only for getting the young people to the doorpost of so-called 'opportunity'. The locus of power to sustain attained job access resided with those in positions of influence. We learn that certain opportunities detract the young people from focusing on the resolve to pursue real possibilities that they had already imagined and spend considerable period on it.

7.3.3 Community Involvement

In a separate interview I had with his older cousin, it came out that E was an inquisitive person. He distinguished himself as an individual who listened, was attentive, aspiring, liking to read, and 'wanting to know more about things that happened around him' (ECFQ2). His cousin CE mentioned that at one time E asked what the term 'service delivery' meant. In answering, CE did not end with the question but extended an invitation for E to deepen his political knowledge through involvement. In her answer, she mentioned that there was a civic organisation he could join 'to gain knowledge on all these things' (ECFQ4.1). What emerges is the principle that involvement begets further involvement, perhaps the reverse is equally true. This is particularly significant for the networks that E used to access to available things. Here I decided to select 'things' and not 'opportunity' deliberately: The former simply acknowledges an attractive, objective list one finds in one's world, but *opportunity* necessarily imposes an expectation for prospective gains. *Things* lie there with no manipulation of aspirations.

The casual talk he had with his cousin served to introduce him to 'the party' leader (EPL). In it, he was selected (rather than nominated) to facilitate youth portfolio. *Selection* here implies he was the leader's protégé rather than colleague. EPL portrayed E as a person who was able to search, identify, and pursue opportunities. He had a moral courage to take various initiatives within the community and drive them. Instead of sitting at home in self-sympathy for his non-participation, he was actively involved in those things that could contribute to improving the living standards of others in his community. What I found interesting was that rather than viewing himself strongly as a victim of circumstances, E viewed himself as agent of change, the person who enjoyed helping others. EM confirmed that, apart from musical ability, E had the inclination to help people. If he had means he would 'help people with many things'. She emphasised that 'he deeply cares about people' (EMFQ3.1). I find this revelation interesting that E, who himself was familiar with struggling, had time to care for others. As if signifying that, it takes adversity to learn about other person's needs.

Contrary to the drive for decent work, E was keen to do the dirty work and was happy with a minimum cash remuneration. He influenced his peers to make the initiative. In other words, he challenged other youths to occupy their 'meantime' space with useful activity. Whilst working towards a stable[r] and higher fulfilling career, they needed money to get-by with their present circumstances. With the little money they received from this initiative, they were able to take care of their smaller needs rather than depending on parents for everything. What is more significant is that involvement does not end with exposure but prompts serenity of *hope* to keep on trying other things, and to avoid *angst*. As such, E searched for other opportunities, as he *imagined* that he could 'do better' (EFQ3.24). Apart from the dustbin initiative, E mentioned the youth street patrol group he started in his previous home where they encountered repeated incidents of house burglary. In response, they decided 'to *do something* about it' as the youth.

They trapped the criminals and dealt with them rather harshly. While vigilantism may not be praiseworthy, E did not hide that they laid hands on the thugs.

The factors that contribute to the community members taking law into their hands are complex. My interest is on his involvement as member(s) of community. Other young people may be unsettled by-standers; E chose involvement. Furthermore, he made a leap to talk about other involvements in the newly formed organisation agitating for service delivery at local levels. In relation to this, he indicated that 'every time' annual budgets were released by the municipality for service delivery, 'n*othing* really happens' (EFQ8.3). This is becoming an accepted criticism, that the elected parties are in it for themselves rather than for the community. There are dissenting voices within and external to the ruling party. According to E there is a public envisaged reality, which may begin with local government promises but nothing happened. Perception on this mismatch launched him into opposition politics of EPL's party. He gained traction in the politics of blame, often slanted towards undermining efforts of the ruling elites, to make it unpopular in order to solicit votes for the opposition. This said, exposure is useful.

For instance, his involvement in the party exposed him to governance processes. He attended the budget speeches in the Mogale-City legislature. Along with the progress of years, what started as a pressure group matured into a fully-fledged political party legible for contesting local elections. The growth of the party brought the necessity to widen its demographic constituency. E's role was to recruit and to co-ordinate youth affairs with the sole responsibility to lead youth campaigns aimed at attracting young voters. Participant E spent most of his time on this political party work. Even on the day of the interview, while our conversation was in progress, some of his comrades came to his home. I was pleasantly surprised when he added EPL on his circles of intimacy (CoI). I had some reservations about what-was-in-it for E, given the dedication he gave to his newly found political 'career'. At this point, we are beginning to gain a peculiar sense that besides often long and costly formal training, there are informal

arrangements that take place in leisure spaces. Just as it did not take a music degree for him to sing, to train and teach others, it would not take a political science or sociology degree for him to notice what was taking place around him. While this is commendable, it also seemed that his inquisitive mind handed him over to others to use.

His personal gain remained symbolic at best and/or backgrounded. From EPL I first solicited information on how he had met E and what had been the nature of their relationship. I learned that EPL was introduced to E by his cousin (CE), who at the work for the party and responsible for the secretariat duties. It was interesting to learn that CE was a member of the church wherein EPL was the sole beneficiary, as founder and leader of the local church. As clergy man, he also wanted to gain substantive power in the local governance politics. The quote below provides a hint of how the newly organised party made use of E's abilities and talents. We do not get a clear picture of how he benefitted as individual.

> He is a youth co-ordinator. He is the one looking after youth matters, including recruiting young people to the organisation and does campaigns on certain programmes with regard to youth development and empowerment (EPL2). For now, we have trainings in a form of a workshop; last we attended a workshop in Mpumalanga for two days, he (*E*) was part of it. I observed that he was participating in the discussions, *and I* even complained why it is that all the time when there are group discussions E is the one participating more and presents or gives feedback. Basically, so far we have had two March demonstrations, and three workshops that incorporated youth and other *demographic* groupings within the organisations, *ja* (yes). (EPL2.1)

Apart from being active in the church and political party, EPL was employed in the local municipality. Identifying what E stood to gain in these engagements was not easy. Throughout various engagements the big question that preoccupied me was 'what's in it for E?' I find this to be a common missing link, not only in the story of E, but with all those engaged in unconventional possibilities. I found E to be generous with his time on those things that should have been secondary - political activities, music, and even the idea of helping others. I could

not help thinking that he needed to help himself first; in that way he would be adequately prepared to help others. It seemed E lacked the 'selfishness' of either 'me first' or 'me as well'. Outside religion, no one comes to earth exclusively for others. It was easier getting an idea of what E brought to the new party: He 'recruited youth *and did* campaigns on certain programmes that related to youth development' (EPLQ1.2). Moreover, EPL had found him useful to the cause, because E already cared a lot about the plight of others. Already he had vision for young people's potential and had an ambition to contribute to a change in their conditions.

I got a strong sense that E valued the opportunity of time he was given. It seemed he understood his party work in adversarial terms as oppositional and contrasted with the common practices of the ruling elite. In this regard, meaningful change for him was the dethronement of the existing mayor and installation of EPL as new mayor. 'Social injuries' of Kagiso people could only be healed by that kind of change. He hoped that the spiritual-political leadership of his cousin would bring social therapy to the wounds of the masses. He relied more on personality cult than the principle of change. The quote below provides us with deep insights on the total immersion of E into EPL's agenda to become a new mayor. When he met EPL he was burdened by *care* for young people's conditions. He even had a few ideas about what needed to happen to modify their voiceless[ness] and their pending threat of total social demise. Through his involvement with the organisation, he became more preoccupied with one man, and one goal: Making EPL win elections. The shift from person in desperate search for authentic possibilities, into one championing youth struggles to garner majority votes is quite surprising.

> *Uma engangena daar ku* local municipality and fight for *iposition yobu mayor*(a), then we think *izinto zizohamba* the way *thina si* wish(a) *ngakhona eKagiso*. Because of *ey siyalinyazwa maan yi* local municipality, *ey siyalinyazwa kakhulu* [If our leader could get into local municipality and fight for mayoral position, then we think things will go well in Kagiso according to our wish. Because ey we are getting *socially* harmed by our local municipality enormously]. (EFQ8.8)

The firm belief in 'substitute politics' - in particular the slant that good is from within and that any potential harm only comes from outside - is indicative of how embroiled E was in EPL's personal livelihood, and less so his own. This finding confirms Dawson (2014) who identified young people as political brokers for ruling personalities. As we close this subsection, we leave with E as one engaged ostensibly in the '*selfless*' struggle of one man to become a mayor. I also asked about the organisation's vision and mission. Below is what EPL had to say,

> Okay, the organisation started in 2007 as just a formation of community members concerned with slowness in terms of delivery of RDP houses. At first it was called 'concerned homeless people', we realised we are not homeless, we have shelters. *Then* we identified space for a civic organisation. We formed people's civic organisation the following year - 2008 in May. On the question of what is it, what does it do? It stands for the rights of the community, of an ordinary community member. The person who pays the bills to the municipality, a person who is expecting a particular service from government like receiving a social grant or how to get your ID and all those kinds of things. We make submissions to the local government and the national government. Let's talk about local government, on an annual basis the municipality would go out to seek the views of community members for input in terms of the budget and the integrated development plan. We make inputs into that, to say, this is how we think the municipality should shape our community and society. We make submissions in terms of the policies of the municipality, we make submissions in terms of the by-laws, and we make submissions in terms of any other strategic document that may come from the municipality. Then as part of remaining relevant, we saw it important that we should participate in the local government elections. But it doesn't stop there, we are going also to participate in the national and provincial elections because we are of the view that in South African politics there is no civic structure that can be a pressure group to government. We are of the view that we need civic structures that are political, we are not linked to any political party, we are just a civic structure that operates as a civic structure that represents and accepts membership from anyone. But we are also saying that because we are ourselves political, we don't want to associate ourselves with any existing party. We are not taking any membership in any political party so that we remain as a civic structure. (EPL5)

The values and direction of the party are well articulated by the party leader, EPL. It almost seemed that the party lacked its own identity with which inputs could be appropriated. In part, this can be attributed to shifting mandates that was made necessary by its evolution from being a mouthpiece for concerned residents, with double identities of being civic organisation pressure group as well as fully-fledged political party within five years (between 2007 and 2012). What appears unique about them is the straddling of roles. Currently, they are both a civic structure and political party at the same time. Their selling point was to close the vacuum created by politically aligned the civic structures, but they soon realised this placed them in a precarious position, as they were liable of being excluded from the decision-making. To avoid getting side-lined, EPL upgraded their status from mere civic structure into political party but postured as the former. In the foregoing analysis, we read from EPL's testimony EPL that he was astute in terms of creating multiple nodes of income for himself. He used loyal church congregants such as CE to manage his explorative ventures. In the process, lives of poor youth could be wasted, or certainly exploited.

Age entrepreneurship may laud the multiple nodes of income. EPL was sole founder of the party meaning he could direct the funds as he wished and a Pentecostal church all tithes and offering money was presumable his and worked for the local municipality. Mixing church and politics could be a quicker way of making money. However, improving one's own economic status through riding on the misfortunes of others should be lamented as exploitative practices. One would expect that shared experience of colonial 'exclusion' would create solidarity and fairness, but EPL did not strike me as conscious enough about the material conditions, personal troubles and struggles of his party member, E. This teaches that disengaged youth are available to advancing the trial ventures of other person without a clear gain for themselves. I now proceed to briefly address the issues that were raised by the last participant in this cluster. She had fewer words as such the analysis is shorter.

7.4 Getting stuck

Interestingly, just as with E, her imagined success was closely linked to education. However, her life was marked by parents-home poverty, timing of things (becoming a parent at a tender age and unskilled employment), and desperation. At one-point, desperation caused her to fall prey to charlatans who promised training for real jobs but took her money, gave her quasi-training that was equivalent to wind, whose path cannot be traced. What would be ideal for is being able to work and study at the same time, but the continuing education and training (CET) was still in its nascent phases to help her immediate needs. From what has been reported so far, it has become clear that young people in the emerging adult category deemed the threats as more systemic but also individual. Such blockages in the system frustrated their transitions into sustainable employment. It is one thing to be able to see and analyse the system blockages, but another being able to take appropriate action to address some of these were well known and acknowledgeable problems. However, being thrown into the world of multiple limitations also means that the meaningful actions as a group may take longer.

In terms of the foregoing analysis, the system itself appears to be at fault for creating transient rather than lasting opportunities. In turn this creates a context for the permanent uncertainties which affect personal calculation on what one needs to do to succeed. When both actions and non-actions lead to the same conclusion of non-progression, what becomes young people's new reality is social stuckness. Rather than owed to mental feebleness, stuckness was a reality that could be attributed to material lack. All seven participants were challenged by scanty resources. Although not expressed in these terms, this was viewed as systemic letdown. Physical *able*(ness) is well and good but not sufficient for activating self-help. Instead, natural abilities could be socially inactivated and rendered as disabilities through many years of non-participation or social inactivity. The youth responses varied between denial and escapism,

accepting defeat or imitating victory through hoping for better outcomes without any plan in place.

The foregoing analysis is best elucidated by the station metaphor which provides the three ways of accessing or not accessing possibilities as delayed, derailed, or arrived. The first directs our gaze to the hope that possibilities will come. The second directs our attention to thwarted possibilities. And the third has to do with what appears as false consciousness on the part of hopeful persons unable to identify real possibilities and state of readiness. The dogma holds that unless these pay attention to their initial education, nothing will open to and for them. If they do, still there are no guarantees about anything favourable afterwards to approximate their anticipated ideals. Sometimes taking strides to return to where they started is not tied to any assurance of pleasing outcomes. Instead, for them education is made to be both alpha and omega, or to be without omega. Their life start in education can go in a meander that leads *nowhere*. And so, stepping into 'free' schooling may be *perceptually* all that is widely available to participate in. Experience too matters.

7.5 Conclusion

In the preceding discussion I made attempt to account for the young people's conceptions of possibilities that derived from the Matric cluster. The pointed to the problems in the system that were sometimes construed as the limitations of the very individuals who were experiencing non-participation.

Chapter 8

Elusive or illusive status: relatively privileged youth on the path to stuck

> Early success is a terrible teacher. You're essentially being rewarded for a lack of preparation, so when you find yourself in a situation where you must prepare, you can't do it. You don't know how. (Chris Hadfield, Inspirational Quotes)

In this chapter I combine participants C, H and G coming from diverse backgrounds, who most likely did not know each other. I weave the analysis together with perspectives of their circles of intimacy (CoIs) to form a single case of young people that were 'jammed' between education and employment. Initially I was unable to resolve in my head whether the three participants I selected for this chapter were on road to stuckness or were already stuck. What occurred as an important feature was their slippery-unreal middle-class status. It appeared they tried to utilise their shared position of relative privilege to fast track 'transitions into adult roles'. However, their desire for immediate gratification became an enduring entrapment that arrested progress. When their told stories ended, we encounter them as persons who were stuck in the middle of *nowhere*, as if unable to navigate their way into a promising and certain future. Their accounts lead us to suspect that a slightly easier life of relative privilege, which supposedly shelters this youth from weathering youth struggles together with the rest, underprepared them for *waiting* (Jeffrey, 2008b). In their narrations, we witness stuck lives, selected options would not provide the desired way out.

In sympathy and solidarity with this youth, I cannot help feeling a way out is possible for them, that they should not be stuck much longer. However, I am constrained from transferring my feelings, but abler to make stories appear as objectively new, to provoke participants and others in similar circumstances to think and act differently. These participants had commonalities and differences. They were not in same age or similar life stage, were raised in dissimilar provinces, and were of different gender. All three were 'fatherless' (the father for one died and the other did not make any reference to the father figure in their lives. The two had significant persons

with Honours degrees who raised them (C and H), but G's mother work as a cleaner. All three attended school education in what we refer to as Ex-Model C schools (only high school for G), often seen as a pathway or proxy for success in terms of prospects for accessing an acceptable level of *somewhere* (antithesis of *nowhere* (Jeffrey 2008a)). It came as a surprise learning that even youth set on a noble path joined those tainted by non-participation in EET. Their deviation has to do with contradicting expected normalcy and choices they made in post-Matric years.

As evident in the title, in this chapter I am trying to comment on young people's choices and illustrate this crucial dimension of the young lives with those that I have identified as folks with relative privilege. I want to show that to attain and retain middle-class privileges can be onerous for those young people residing in the so-called black townships. I have no ambition for making as my own the task of dispelling the illusions I discerned nor giving a firm grip on what I have identified as an elusive status. Instead, I come to this chapter as a witness, one that earned the right to tell the stories of this youth with view to highlight personal predicaments that can lead us to a clearer understanding of their lived experiences. If early success was indeed the bad teacher as suggested in the prologue I selected for this chapter, relative privilege that comes with the quasi-middle-class status could well serve as catalyst for social mobility, but at the same time it can be a lesser perceived trap. In that, the reward of status attainment comes before the effort, because they already have reached it through parents' achievement. We learn in this case, that this is also liable for reducing the self-propelled pressure (personal thirst). I resume the analysis for the chapter on the point of middle-class crisis, that set apart the two of the three participants that formed this case.

8.1 The elusive middle

I have already mentioned that C and H had similarities but also stark contrasts. Both aspired for university education: One got-in but the other needed Matriculation grades boosting. In the end, none of the two could show the university earned certificate. The two missed a significant

lesson, most real to persons from township schools. Township Matric graduates are made to be distant from the opportunities and so approach them as outsiders, but those from Model C may think of themselves as natives to a system of opportunity that is colonial, in its current posture. The two did not display any desperation for recognition. At first, this seems to give credence to the stereotypical charge that South Africans are lazy, comfortable, and 'not hungry enough'. Such a blanket charge misses that temporal proximity to privilege during schooling days shapes aspirations. In keeping with this imagination, those young people from the Ex-Model C schools may foresee themselves as well cut for the system or permanent residents to it. They are thought (stereotypically) to be well cultured, thus already made in the system's image. They enunciated the English words well, were abler to articulate aspirations without flounder, and presumable understood esteemed mannerisms. In various processes of assimilation, they had gone through, they may begin to think that things of the system are already their things. Yet fewer assets were owned by the displaced Africans, as such their in-between middle status had not transcended the overarching status as the wretched of the earth (Fanon, 2004).

We encounter young people who had thought of themselves as natives to the oppressive system but received their fair share of alienation from opportunities. Unlike the two, G was to some extent lesser befuddled by the middle-class borrowed status that comes with merely attending the Model C school. Perhaps because he was slight older (34), he was aware that really there was nothing in it, and that the design did not intend to recognise them as natives. The story of student revolts, which erupted around rising fees and pushed for decolonialism (#FeesMustFall and #RhodesMust Fall) helped with awakening the young people to the reality of alienation. After spending twelve years in the suburban schools, in hope to become insiders or natives to a system of the privileged, many began to recognise the chasm that existed between themselves (aspirant natives) and white counterparts (with the universal privilege nativity). The discourse of the *missing middle* that emerged exposed the emptiness of being clothed in the middle-class

garments, but equally not being able to afford the escalating fees like others not in the category. In the following subsection, I discuss subthemes such as *moral staging* and *status incongruence* under the broad rubric of participants' current occupations.

8.2 On youth dispositions

After Matric C went to a Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), H attended what used to be a Technikon (in the new dispensation most of these became Universities of Technology but others merged to form comprehensive universities), and G started a cultural centre that catered for the in-school youth. The two did not complete their further education and training. In their sight, this contributed to being *stuck*. H stayed with his girlfriend (HG) who worked as waitress in a fast-food restaurant based in neighbouring suburbs of Krugersdorp. HG had Matric. Mother HM had a degree and worked as schoolteacher. The two continued to live with parents, G in his mother's home and C in her mother's maternal home under the care of her aunt (CA). Her mother CM did not proceed with formal education beyond Grade 11 but worked for an electric appliances factory based in the neighbouring industrial area, Chamdor. CA was an informally employed graduate. She worked as consultant in a Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) to facilitate, assess, or moderate skills training. It was not clear whether CA's informal employment was by choice or circumstantial. If the latter, it would give us another indication that accumulation of education qualifications does not always grant job access.

If former, then having qualifications prevents desperation to take anything such as precarious factory work. Such that, paid work does not have to always happen within the boundaries of the capitalist order. Transformed labour can free people's time from the bums-on-chair, where some spend their workday on solitaire, rather than contributing to the production. What is most certain is that colonial capitalism proffers constrained possibilities, especially for the materially displaced masses. As such, qualifications afforded her moderate access to a risky but time-

freeing consultancy career that permitted freedom from the constraining practices of being arrested on the office chair in what is said to be the relatively secured career. All the same, social displacement knows no boundaries: It regularly affects education-qualified persons as it does the others. HM on the other hand sought to negotiate the upward mobility by pushing to obtain a post-graduate masters research degree. It is the sacrifices of the parents that gave the relative privilege to the two participants (C and H), but G had to do the sacrifice by starting the cultural centre which he termed as UJIMA. Put differently, their cultural advantage was due to accumulated portfolio of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2006). Bourdieu argues that this capital is acquired through the cultivation of sensibilities to inculcated principles of selection that can translate into individual dispositions. In the case of C and H such dispositions were mixed with dynamism of township lifestyle, which 'contaminated' the preferred selection that the Model C route was expected to provide with stuckness along the way.

Although H was a sampling outlier, this did not disturb our methodology. Phenomenologists are preoccupied with experience. On noticing that H had the experience I was looking for, I decided to include him even though he had advanced with education beyond Matric. In fact, he asked for the interview; I was reluctant to involve him, given that he had a small business and earned some income, and so was not quite 'NEET'. I mention this deliberately to show that sometimes sampling compromise can be a blessing. I became acquainted with him because initially I tried his 'business spot' as a meeting place, as outlined in methodology chapter. Only when this strategy did not work, did I change to snowballing. Constrained possibilities appear as a mockery to young people's genuine attempts. When the analysis is isolated to their [dis]positions, in terms of the choices they made, the passing act may appear as legitimate. The temptation is to say *bazenzile*, meaning they brought the things that necessitate their being-passed-by without possibilities. However, the idea of passing oneself-by strikes me as more dreadful than occasional choices. It is a kind of analysis that may conceal dispositions of the-

passer, to place the-*passed* on a spotlight. When the-passer is kept out of sight his activity of passing is hidden. This leaves us with the excluded without the hand of exclusion, underdeveloped without under-developer, colonised without the coloniser, and skills lack as personal deficit without immanent barriers to skilling. When we factor-in broader social arrangement, we appreciate that the experience of the subject was punctuated by their personal agency as well as the structural factors.

8.3 On youth choices

So far, the received testimony suggests that C had a pressure-free life approach. From this, we construct a temporal understanding that C resisted levelling blame on herself, in what appears as lack of focus (dispirited use of 'nje' in her dialogue (CFQ5)). Understandably, individuals rationalise their own decisions and sympathise with the choices they make. On closer look, C had a burden of *inauthentic* life owed to unfulfilled expectations and doing *nothing*. She had not achieved much but planned to achieve a lot (CFQ4). She identified the need to overcome as lack of achievement but made no rigorous attempts to change her situation, as if saying to herself that things not attained yesterday were achievable tomorrow. Already we learnt that self-imposition of the burden of anxiety did not help B any more than it helped the more relaxed C. We come to the realisation that for C, the road-to-success might be both painstaking and carefree. The trick was to remain in motion. At least she was still on the road of life. Form this understanding an invitation comes we too should resist interpreting her experience conclusively as either self-ejection or social extinction. Nje logic holds that not acting upon things that matter today, does not mean she will not do so in the future.

This strikes me as new form of resistance following an elongated period of *chronic waiting* in which youth waits for years, sometimes a whole lifetime (Jeffrey, 2008b). According to Jeffrey, this youth write into their mind certain hopes, they come to see themselves as people in *wait* while opportunities for mobility wane before them. The palpable neglect of the external forces

that were responsible for their non-participation makes it easier to fall for the placatory doctrine of self-transformation. My undertaking is to tell of youth experience built on a social world that was prone to social displacement of the majority. Thus, I critique those perspectives that occur to me as complicit to the reproduction of the youth *nowhere* through overly elevating their 'skills lack'. I also read the account that C gave as some form of resistance. For instance, youth research repeatedly reveals that completing school and post-school education does not always equate to being 'sorted', in that young people do not always conform to the dominant vision of the linear life stages. In this respect, waiting can be (*nje*) 'just waiting' for nothing (Kracauer, 1955 in Jeffrey, 2008b). I link this reaction of disburdenment to perceptions about the caring-less system, which encourages the passing-by of those young people residing in townships. Pushed to logical limits, C helps us challenge the almost natural tendency of laying off burdens from society to youth shoulders. Implicitly and sometimes blatantly, young people must deal with the legacies of oppression, inadequacies, and the lack within society, transferred over to the subsequent generations. Simultaneously, when walking along with C or keeping in step with experience like hers, we come to appreciate life owed first to 'self-bad-choices' but much more extensively to the system reproducing them. In figure 8.1, I provide what I consider as useful summary for this discussion.

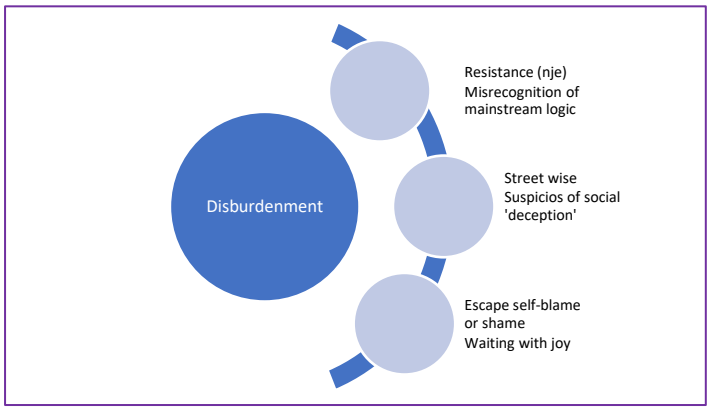


Figure 8.1: Escaping stigma of non-participation

At this point, I need to switch to the compelling circumstances of H. The compelling dimension emanates from the fact that according to the middle-class standards, H had done well. He had achieved what C's parents envied as Holy Grail path for youth development. Evidence of his success within township setting requires the display of the agility to escape it. In other words, those born in townships are born to leave. Inability to escape is proxy for failure. C provided us with *symbolic* (or *staged*) escape. H almost accomplished the first step needed, but he was entangled in a web of crime. In the end, we come to a kind of moderate *almost* escape, rather than to vigorously *at-whatever-cost* escape.

We also learn that opportunities are negotiated in mutual interactions between older or those with longer service, and younger members (fresh contact) within the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). While influence can be reciprocal between two parties, seemingly H opted to drop his resistance to short-lived crime rewards. In the process, he became an outright criminal and sole victim of imprisonment. After spending some time in the house of correction, H decided to leave the syndicate and attend church services regularly. His church involvement seemingly helped him to self-transform. Following this, he began searching for employment outside the criminal 'field'. He considered himself 'lucky' for being employed by the leading clothing retail store where he worked as casual labourer during the busy season. Later he was promoted to the administration. He became a permanent employee within a short space of time. However, this success was as short-lived just like his post-school education, following a rape accusation. This incident – a flirt with a colleague – led to his immediate dismissal, arresting his sprouting career. He saw it as a trap: Someone was not happy with his promotions when others had been queuing for longer.

8.4 Current [pre]occupations

To be true to the ethics contract, I decided to work with received data instead of pushing participants into areas where they would feel discomfort. I cannot confirm through received

data whether C did or did not complete Matric, but one the person she selected as circles of intimacy had a slightly different understanding. I am ethics bound to trace her lived experience through her own story. As such, I listed her in the post-Matric cluster according to her testimony as one who had obtained Matric. Reading through transcripts points to the difficulty of being an informer (whistle-blower or *impimpi*) on one's own life. I am epistemologically bound to 'tell all stories' by disclosing the extent to which the stigmatisation of non-attainment seemed to influence truth telling. Yet covering up (if so) also tells something about risks of exposing self through ways that may affect one's general acceptance in the world. At least the testimonies of C and CoIs confirmed that she made it to the Matriculation class, but that her grades were low.

This further confirms that sometimes there are inconsistencies between society's expectations and individual attainments. Individual may decide to be discreet about those details that may be socially frown upon to shield oneself from being identified with bad choices. Furthermore, I can only imagine that sometimes participants cherish hope that researchers could lead to some recommendation for opportunities. At the same time, there are participants like H who may not covert about exposing what may be construed as bad choices. Perhaps this accounts for another gender barrier between interviewer and interviewee or a level of comfort with the self. H had advanced so well to reach the third and/or final year in the much-admired university education but tripped and fell into acts of criminality. After prison house, he stayed as if marooned at home for moral detoxification and refreshing. HM did not want him to return to Gauteng. According to H, she thought iJozi (Joburg) was no longer enough for him (HFQ3.2). Strangely, the transformed self-did not lead him to the point of his fall (university) but to the place of his arrest (Kagiso). He managed to escape his mother's keep using the legitimate excuse of his learner's license nearing expiration. Rather than education, H's concern was with his driver's license. This may be deemed as being preoccupied with short-term things rather than enduring.

In the following subsection, I discuss the burden of moral rectitude the two participants had to stage into order to feel accepted, first by the researcher listening to their stories and second, by the broader society to whom their stories belonged and for whom they were recounted. CoIs helped me to approximate a balanced narrative. Even though I perhaps did not always succeed in this attempt due to limitation that are posed phenomenological analysis, it does not pose a threat to my wider objective of creating a portrait of their lived experiences.

8.3.1 Moral staging

In relating stories, I received, my idea is not to criticise the persons telling them, but to disclose the context of hardship in which told stories arise. While in solidarity with these young people, I do not conceal what some might perceive as their blunders. In my view, these reflect to the wider society which spawns the mistakes of youth. On the question of current interesting thing going-on in her life, C said, 'Nothing much' (CFQ3). This statement can be read as indicating modesty, but when borrowing the youth expression 'get a life' we develop a different picture. Where life does not just refer to being alive and not dead, but to living according to the living standards at the time of your living. In this latter sense, 'nothing much' means the distance left before reaching standards of living aspired for, as one with peers. Furthermore, she mentioned attending 'pool party' on the previous day in neighbouring suburb of Witpoortjie to join her ex-school mates. In this response, she gave no hint about partying on most weekends as her CoIs would reveal later. She merely said that,

> Nothing much. *Izolo ngibuya ephathini* eWitpoortjie, it was 21st pool party *yomngani wami bengingena naye isikole, si Matriculate sonke*. [Translated as, nothing much. Yesterday I went to a pool party around Witpoortjie for a 21st birthday party of my school days friend. We Matriculated together]. (CFQ3)

I took interest on this selected mention, which appears to be used to give an impression of playing down regular partying, to back up that indeed nothing much was going on. While not

preoccupied with many things, still her life was not dull. Boredom of 'nothing much' did not prevent opportunities to hook up with old school friends. As for school-loving person(s), including a student researcher from Wits University, these needed to hear that she kept good company with a distinct class. The issue being that actions (right or wrong) that are prefaced with perceived superior culture cannot be improper but are always decent, noble, and moral. As if to suggest that partying in the township was no good. After all nothing good come out of a township. All things good and noble are produced elsewhere in the white suburbs for C, and Joburg for H. I read this as escapist. The conquest by colonialism, apartheid and neoliberalism renders young people as not at home within their milieu. If there were displeasures with her adventure, the whereabouts and with-who mention served to legitimise the act of partying. Class mention helps to suppress objections, to gain the listener's approval.

The listener comprised of the community of researchers and philanthropists, who may want to link young people with potential employers. This typifies the moral burden young people have to bear, who of their self-do not count in terms of their status of existence and potential contribution, but in terms of the form or what is conferred through certificates and the *where* (place) of their issuing. To access opportunities, including the much-revered job interview, tried and tested trickery is to inflate one's moral standing and abilities in ways amenable to the general expectations. The stage calls for careful embellishment of self to suit employer-demanded character or standards. In the same account where C mentioned attending the party with ex-school mates and friends, she further said that it made her realise that 'there are so many things I still need to achieve in this life' (CSQ3.5). Like the need to acquire the obligatory qualification paper to prove readiness for an employer. I read this as *moral staging*, borrowing from what Becker (1998) termed 'tricks of the trade'. To be worthy of accessing opportunities, C needed to perform those gimmicks aimed at appeasing those attached to the establishments.

While necessary, sometimes the act of being morally cute is not always enough means for gaining access into work opportunities. Frankly, no one knows what would be enough for the township youth to be eligible for opportunities. Furthermore, her CoIs reported weekly township partying. I took note that these did not bring about any realisation that her current achievement was inadequate. However, suburban partying brought her to the plane of self-doubt, heightened awareness of no accomplishment, and feeling inadequate. Depending on lens used, if reading this utterance through a 'black solidarity' thesis (Shelby, 2005), we would be bound to accept that black role models affect aspirations and self-confidence of black youth *positively*. Townships may be lacking such persons, owing to a brain drain and escapism used to stage success. Successful people do not reside in a township. Reading this utterance through Bourdieu (1986), we note that individual biography is not static. At any given time, it may require a different type of interaction with types of individuals, precisely because it is a product of investment strategies aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly useable in the short or long term and are thus necessarily elective or subjective (Bourdieu[20], 1986).

We also notice limitations of *inclusion* as a framework for recognition, in that access requirement appears to be superseding the existential status of being human. The structurally imposed burden of achievement precedes existence. Recognised success is tangible, visible, and paper based. C had nothing to show on this list, and as such did no longer belong in an authentic way with those who were made superior by their suburb education. The *mngani* (friend) aspect shows that C longed to be reinstated in this network, perhaps as a self-defined strategy to navigate her own future. In these terms moral staging is a strategy. Similarly, in H's story we gain some insights on moral uprightness. We know that he came back to Gauteng on

[20] Bourdieu, P. (1986) The forms of capital, in: J.E. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*. Greenwood Press.

the ticket of completing his driver's license. He mentioned that he failed the pre-driver's test because of not having money (or refusing) to pay bribery. Afterwards he did not return to his home, instead choosing to endure a life of bankruptcy and pauperism that comes with doing *nix* (nothing) and 'just sitting'.

> Then I came back this side around June, *ngingasenzi nix* (not doing anything), just sitting. My life at time was not right. I survived (*bengiphila nje*) through people, when they offered me money for *ikota* (quarter of a loaf of bread with relish fillings, cold meats and condiments). I would take the money, then buy ikota later so that *ngilale ngidlile* (eat before I sleep). Because *bengingasafuni ukubuyela ngenze lento ebengiyenzile* (I did not want to return to things I used to do) *such as* icrime and stuff like that. *Ngifuna ukuzama ngilungise i* life *yami* (I wanted to try to rectify my life). Around December, one of my friends informed me that one of the clothing retail stores. It was a norm in retail shops to look for casual employees in December. I went with the CV I had at the time; it was blank without any work experience but only my tertiary education. I borrowed school shirt from of my boys to wear with my black pants, and then put on my brown shoes. We were about seven. We were all hired as casual workers and placed in different roles. (HFQ3.2)

H worked slowly towards achieving the quality of relative uprightness, the son of a deceased businessperson who owned the local grocery shops and cattle of sizeable number and a caring government-employed, professional mother chose the moral cushioning pauperism over crime. Although he had ample time to consider his past conveniences that came with a life of crime, he refused to go back. To be sure that he had conquered all temptations, he needed to return to the same place where he tripped to criminality, so that he could symbolically atone for his 'sins'. After five months of asceticism, during the busy month of December, he got a small break from just sitting. However, on 31 December, casual work term ended. H mentioned that on that day he went to local Baptist church where he celebrated the dawn of a new year. All things had become new: He was a new person, transformed being who had conquered the 'fortuitous cleansing ritual', who was fascinated by the church life, and who had attained non-

criminal status. On January 4, H received a call to go sign a new contract where he had worked. He resumed work on January 13. I imagine, by then he had confirmed to himself that he was a new creature.

In narrating his story, he said, 'I was now one who wakes up and to go somewhere (*umuntu ovukayo* (HFQ3.4)). This suggests that non-participation does not end at subjecting the youth bodies to the docility that comes with inactivity, but to a kind of cultural sleep too. Although wages were not satisfactory, walking is certainly better than sleeping. He who wakes up saves himself from a long-lasting sleep that symbolises death. The payment was hourly. Initially, he earned R15 per hour for six hours daily, amounting to R450 per week. From the daily R90, he needed R20 for lunch and transport money. In his days of crime, he managed to make R3000 – R4000 in a day (of course not every day). He was by this time law-abiding citizen, and there was a lesser risk of incarceration. The paradox is that the price for the good life appears as abominable, but moral; however, wages received from crime desirable, but immoral. Pittance wages frustrated H. He said, 'I felt small, useless, and stupid' (HFQ3.4). Nevertheless, he maintained his resolve to part ways with crime. Slowly he taught himself different roles throughout the store; by the end of first year, he could handle most things with relative ease in most departments. Then H was moved to work in administration where he worked for the next nine months.

The manager had been promoted to head office, then H was seconded to assist in management. This leap (of five steps ahead) was short-lived. His status improved from casual to become a permanent staff member. The new post afforded him decent salary, such that he was able to send money to his home. He started having plans to buy himself a car, complete his outstanding studies, and to prepare himself to go work in more rural areas so he could accumulate requisite experience. There were only two positions above his level remained: He served in a position

of stock manager and had ambitions to become the store manager. Unfortunately, if his way up was quick, his way out was much faster.

On fateful Tuesday of February, an incident happened. H had befriended a female colleague, a young woman in same age group as himself. Prior to the incident, the two colleagues used to call each other almost daily. He enjoyed the attention he was receiving, without suspicion. One day he hugged this colleague freely from the back in the open, an act that would be used as enough evidence to boot him out of the job. H alleged the attention he received all along was well-orchestrated ploy to get rid of him. In March following the incident, he received a straight dismissal that was linked to the charge of sexual harassment. Although he had fast-tracked his promotion, he had not gained enough experience in workplace professional conduct. Moreover, he had not accumulated enough money for lawyers to contest the disciplinary action that had been meted to him. This pushed him back to the life of 'nix, just sitting' and being unemployed for most of that year. Then he thought of trying a car wash to circumvent the lingering cloud of nix. While acknowledging that gender politics that relates to sexual harassment remains sensitive, I dare not stretch my analysis too far.

My burden in this work is not to act as crime detective, but to listen to told stories and to retell them. In terms of the provided narrative, H was displaced from his work through the scheming of the Human Resource manager who allegedly plotted against him. He saw himself as victim of jealousy over his success of fast-tracked transition or leap from casual employee to management. He said that some people think years of service in employment doing the same things is supposed to give you promotion (HFQ1.1). He disproved this and had shown instead that hard work pays. What he did not know was that mastery of policies governing his employment was as important. Well-meaning policies can be used for displacing others. In the preceding sub-section, I dealt with a subject's self-positioning to normality and discursive practices that young people must perform in attempts to negotiate social acceptance. Through

the sub-theme of moral staging, we discerned covering up of choices and creative tricks of presenting the self as morally upright. In the following subsection, I turn into status incongruence and distinction. I illustrate those perceptions of being ahead of others hazes the immediacy of reality.

8.3.2 Status incongruence and distinction

Apart from theatrics occasioned by the desire for access, awakening to necessity to do more points us to already known aspects of *status incongruence* and *distinction*. Incongruence here stems from attending suburban schools, a pathway regarded for acquiring middle-class *status*. However, sustaining this middle status proved an onerous adventure that required several take-offs from the periphery of the township. *Status incongruence* has to do with identifying incompatibility with envisaged resultant benefits of the deemed as 'better' schools, and current position occupied. I have already mentioned that C was no stranger to partying. The singling out of suburban partying served to highlight the *self-importance* that comes with a sense of *distinction* (Bourdiue, 1984). It seemed C came to realise that she was no longer driving on the middle-class lane that her parents had carved for her. This captures the burden of *distinction* weighing down on a person with relative privilege, the obligation to uphold normative values which are not supported by material accumulation. Perhaps, this is akin to the burden academics carry. Often, they attain status that comes with holding Ph.D. qualifications, but some have material lack.

In quote CSQ17.6 below, we get a further hint of how C struggled with self-regard. She appeared as condescending to the very idea of mingling with her neighbours. For Heidegger this would be strange, in that he grounds knowing oneself to the understanding of being-together-in-the-world. Strangely, C was proud of partially engaging with the neighbors. She only acknowledged their visibility – *sanibonani* – a partial greeting satisfying the minimum mode of passing-one-another-by. The disregard of other hints at bigger issues of *care*. It hints

at personal resignation to the very idea of being subservient to others. In perceiving humans as thinking-things (Descardian mode), we lose sight of what they do, and by extension what they could do for me. Yet humans need each other. In its primordial form human life is complementary: What one has, others often do not have. This creates human wanting to depend on one another. However, human thoughts are independent. My thinking is mine; I am under no obligation to share it. Contrary to own thoughts, things we do are exchangeable. In the quote below, C discounts the basic requirement to acknowledge existence of others through greeting.

> Generally, in my street I know very few people. I hardly know them. I just greet people *sanibonani sanibonani* (hi), that's it. You will never find me *nje* (randomly) entering people's houses without a reason. I am saving myself from something I do not know. I can plan to go somewhere, prepare everything, and myself but when it is time for me to leave, I lose interest. I just stand at the gate...and turn back. At that time, I would be carrying my bag…stand at the gate for an hour then decide to turn. When I get to the house, I climb on the bed. Many people around here like going to church. I too used to like church. [I am] *not sure* what happened. …when I don't feel like doing something I don't want to do it, when my heart is not open into certain things then I do not do them. (CSQ17.6)

In isiZulu, the greeting expressed as *sanibonani*, denoting 'I see you', goes deeper than seeing an object. It gives an idea of a traveler who suddenly encounters a fellow human, someone with whom s/he can identify for cheer, interest, or sympathy. Visibility of neighbours is not limited to being-seen but extends to recognition of their concerns. When expressing this gesture, one proceeds to enquire about the life and wellbeing of others at the home of the greeted persons. The trifling *sanibonani* is accepted on exceptional occasions, such as when hurrying for public transport. For C, partial engagement with neighbours is a motif to live by. Outside observers might run with C's paranoia 'to save herself from what she doesn't know', then pursue a narrative of fear among township girls. Such analysis would be partial. Since we already know that C was out in the open on almost every weekend, we cannot completely disregard her

deliberate *self-ejection* owed to *distinction*. I find it easier to associate this with self-isolation or shame owed to 'peculiarity' that comes with immersion in perceived as higher status.

Not going to other people's houses strikes me as staged shyness born of desire to perpetuate the youth fallacy of 'being different'. Difference that removes oneself from others to create enclaves of isolation, although it can be celebrated elsewhere as individualism, it has problems. Relational exclusion from others on bases of class, style, or even preference to render them as invisible is akin to apartheid's mores. The first principle of existence holds that humans belong together, therefore relate. In SA, neighbourliness with other races is a façade we learn hastily on grand events such as the 2010 soccer world cup, but that fizzles out quickly. Perhaps it will take a catastrophe of earthquake to remove physical and/or dispositional lofty and elaborate walls (known in SA's township as 'stop nonsense') of separation to build one nation. Meantime before nature responds, humanists have the task to educate the world that influenced C to see nonsensical aspects about the wall. C was proud that she hardly knew people in her own street, yet proud to 'chill' across the ridge in Witpoortjie. It is interesting this takes place in Africa: A zone in the world that prides itself with *Ubuntu*, the idea that 'a person is a person through the other' persons. Minimum exposure to the perceived-as 'superior' culture had already prepared C for the distinction with which acquainted persons deem themselves to be a cut above rest.

By contrast, the idea of *affectability* pushes her to make intentional strides, interact with the reality that affected her and *neighbours* in the township. The innocent quest for better education opened for superiority dispositions and the damning threat to depose neighbourliness. Although C ostensible struggled to relate with locals in idle talk, we know from CoIs' testimonies that she mingled with them to the extent of avoiding sleeping at her home for days. However, when asked to reflect on plans, she had to create escape routes from immediate setting. The promise of quality that would heighten opportunities of accessing a better lifestyle with relative ease had not been fulfilled. Instead, we learn that it created the thirst to alienate self and to assimilate

distant cultures. Embracing locals threatened prospects to become a suburban native. For the rest of this chapter, I weigh up contributions made by CoIs. In electing to include the CoIs, I received my inspiration from the UK-based research that sought to establish whether decision making (in their case in higher education) might be embedded within social networks consisting of family members, friends and work colleagues (Fuller, Heath, & Johnston, 2011).

8.4 Reflections of the circles of Intimacy

In their accounts, CoIs had words of praise and disparagement at the same time. They were hoping for intervention that would improve the prospects of upward mobility and behavioural change on entry point participants. In this subsection, I go through insertions made by CA, CM, HM, HG, as well as G. G is both main participant and friend to C.

8.4.1 Ideas on behavior

CA hinted that her father liked reading, so he gave her some of his books. When in Standard 1 (now Grade 3), CA could read. Early love for books reduced much exposure to township streets, as she made books her friends (CFF14.4). CM acknowledged that she too attended school, but reading was a problem. She revealed, ‘I couldn’t focus on reading, but preferred to listen; reading was never my friend’ (CFF14.8). She survived retrenchments that came with changes in the work landscape. She belonged to a generation that grew up when factory jobs were widely available around Chamdor industrial area. She had appreciation that such job opportunities were waning. CM sustained entry-level employment. Her testimony highlighted varied ‘survivals’. She survived adolescent mistakes that came with pregnancy and attraction to a pleasure-seeking lifestyle. Despite being pleasure enthusiast, CM managed to retain her working life. We note the shifting expectations. In later years, her daughter C followed similar pleasure footprints in a time when possibilities for work waned, but the mother did not seem to understand. CA too survived. However, she was in better position because she had CM’s to

watch. She said, ‘I always tell her, I looked at your mistakes (referring to CM) and told myself I am not going to repeat them’ (CFF14).

She was, ‘thankful that [she] never was *uclever*’ (CFF14). In township jargon, ‘uclever’ refers to a ‘street-smart’ person who is generally aware and savvy of the township practices. Opposite is ‘ubari’, one who is slow with navigating township life, unmoved by its fashionable upkeeps and ever-changing styles. CA opted for that kind of a dullish, laid-back outlook as strategy to survive. It seems when jobs were widely available, both modest-clever CM and street-avoiding CA managed to survive. Such survival was no longer open for C; she needed to be morally upright, carefully selecting, and censuring friends. According to persons in circles of intimacy, the culprit was bad friends.

> She had two or three friends who were not at school at the time, she became very close to them. We tried to coach her saying, why don’t you try to be friends with people outside your own league? I mean you are influenced by your surroundings, right? So, if you are friends with people who are not attending school, who are drinking liquor and don’t mind sleeping around and all those things, you will also end up doing same. C listened to them more than [to] her family. She ended up having a baby and her Matric grades were completely bad. Then she became this person who would just leave her baby to be with friends. She would be gone for weeks or even months then come back, you know she would disappear for months, and we will look for her, and also try to tune her in and she would be okay for two or three days then she starts again, she disappears. (CAF3)

Mingling with out-of-school, out-of-class youth while perceived as one belonging to the higher league of suburban school, almost meant mixing with the out-of-league commoners. Already their stereotyped grading was lower and reduced by attending township schools. Being out-of-school confirmed their position as social outcasts (no wonder we have an appellation of ‘lost youth’, a status lower than displaced groups). In the same utterance, these parents informed us that C pushed those in the lower league to attain Matric certificates but clearly was no longer

able to pull herself up by the same straps she wanted others to use. Instead, she was influenced by the rest of them who did not make it but became completely out-of-league. Typically, the elderly folks attributed this outside status to moral indecency (liquor, promiscuity, pregnancy, episodic disappearance, and not adequately caring for her own baby). C had good manners. When her aunt reprimanded her, C did not answer back or show disrespect but kept quiet. From there CA would notice in C's personal notes interesting diary entries. She wrote something like, 'I know I have made mistakes, but who isn't wrong, who didn't do mistakes' (CASQ3.9). Again, we notice that the township raised C as unwilling to *own* responsibility for actions. There are many ways of understanding the CoI's remonstrations on choice and behaviour. I highlight motivation, aspects of morality, and expectations of family members.

8.4.2 On motivation

According to CA, C enjoyed cooking. At one point, she advised her to pursue the food science studies as something to fall back on when the other career(s) of her choice did not happen. In CA's estimations this would enable C to do something worthwhile rather than doing 'nothing' (CAFQ). Instead of farfetched dreams, she could still be a Doctor of Food, knowing better ways of preserving and serving food. Nevertheless, C was assailed by *status incongruence* which may be linked to a socialisation of a 'better-than'. Her tastes were in sharp contradiction with the reality that persistently grounded her in the working-class status. Although *thrown* to township-periphery, she desired to break away into suburban-core. In some odd way, her story shows the bewilderment of living in a place which one does not belong, which rendered being-in her world as *inauthentic*. In her imagination, she needed a passport to leave a *world* of non-opportunities. Scarce skills such as a medical doctor career held a promise to earn her fancied salary, following which she could afford the lifestyle to which she was attracted. We do not have evidence that this ambition was coupled with attempts to make it real: It appears it was an unreachable or a deferred dream.

> I mean at school the most subjects she liked was Maths and Physics, you know most of her friends who passed were made by her, I don't know whether *yena* (for her) it is out of sheer laziness or what, but all these people whom she helped came with very good grades through her help. So, I don't know what happened with her not wanting to push for herself. She left school about four years ago, by now she could have finished a diploma or something. Her career goal at the time was to become a pilot [at some point to be doctor, CM added (CASQ1.4)]. I looked at the subjects that she was doing. I said if you feel like maybe – because she loves cooking, she is very good when it comes to cooking, I said why don't you do food science just to see if it becomes difficult or you don't make it in the career you chose? Then at least you have something to fall back on and which can still make you to be a successful person in the community. I don't know maybe she thought about it and decided argh…(CASQ1.2)

As if to suggest that *ukuzibheka kwangempela* (true streetwiseness) is not the bliss of the folly of youth. It is to spend time that the youth years afford carving one's own space and perfecting a realistic craft within the universe of *constrained possibilities*. CA directed her to what occurred to her as reachable rather than a distinct and lofty career path, linked to her cooking strengths but not radically deviating from her career attractions. H informed us that HM motivated him a lot. However, we did not receive extensive data on this to get a sense of HM's wishes for her son, H. The limitation was that the interview was over the phone (as she resides in a different province). Her contribution paid considerable attention to the recent experience of imprisonment for her son. In addition, her concern was how Joburg (an expression used generally by those outside to refer to the whole Gauteng province) was not a great place for her son.

8.4.3 Opportunity absenteeism

At times young people fall for media hype promoting their involvement. While this may be well-meaning, sometimes it conceals realities on the ground. Together with G and four others, C was one of the founding members of the Elite Community Organisation (ECO). The intended mission for this organisation aimed to address challenges affecting young people - to tackle the

drug and alcohol problem. On probing further some of the activities ECO has done since the time of its inception, the provided response was, G said '*Ne re soka re etsa* anything' (we did not do anything (GCFF3)). This hints at the burden of desire to do something, to be involved and to work. After all, the very purpose of their existence is doing. However, in their conquered milieu, doing sometimes occurs in a symbolical way, serving to occupy time rather than earning any fruit for their labour. I further illustrate this in the quote:

> We managed to register the organisation, we have an NPO registration. However, lot of us had many other things we were involved in, it couldn't happen. We started this thing being six but only three people work harder for the other three. Others ended up leaving along the way, to do their own things (GCFF 2). We had an activity plan, but it failed because we didn't receive support, *kgape* (again) we didn't have time. We couldn't set time aside to say, let's do this. We didn't have time to focus on the project. (GCFF3)

It is admirable to learn that young people tried to list their names on website of the Companies and Intellectual Property Registration Office (CIPRO). However, registration is one thing and trading is another. Still, they enjoyed the *symbolical access* rather than *authentic access*.

8.5 Conclusion

In the context of this chapter, attaining and maintaining this status appeared as both elusive and illusive, in that non-participation in EET held no higher regard for the young people who had enjoyed the Model C route in their schooling years than for those who did not. Their lives were as inauthentic as the rest of those that attended township schools. We noted with surprise that earlier participation in the Model C route does not always prepare the smoother pathways for accessing and retaining opportunities, especially for those residing in the township. Instead, this exposure can serve to create an illusion of being distinct from the rest of the township youth, and in that process maintain the status incongruence. This gave them double identities of being individuals belonging and not belonging to the township.

Chapter 9

Uzoba strong: A struggle of becoming someone in a world of impossibilities

In this discussion chapter I commingled the three clusters of Pre-Matric, Matric, and Post-Matric to present the struggles that relates to individual effort that was not matched by positive outcomes. To recap B was a peculiar representative of the pre-matric cluster, but D, E, F, and G constituted the Matric cluster, only 'C' and H were part of the post-Matric. However, for C attainment to the post- matric was not verified by persons she selected as those in her circles of intimacy (CoI). In fact, their account contradicted her story. Even as I acknowledge some of the inconsistencies, in telling the stories that entry point participants provided, I am obligated not to change them. Instead, I try to make sense why embellishment (or covering up) in accounts that were shared was required. In South Africa (SA) we are aware of the difficulties associated with being an informer (impimpi), wherein, individuals were forced by apartheid agents to reveal some of the strategies and gruesome secretes of the fellow comrades to avoid torture. Reflective researchers would not deny that some of the processes used in our work pry on other people's privacies. Sometimes the participants allow invasive violence involved in the intrusive snooping of researchers, because they hope their lives would be improved. This can be likened to clinical psychologist 'patients' (or clients) who reveal some of their personal horrors with the hope that afterwards they will be 'healed' (or be helped to deal with their issues). Participants in this research were not different. Some responses that they provided show that they sought to be publicly seen in good light. The less pleasant aspects of their lived experiences of non-participation in education, training, and employment (NEET) had some trimming. I know this because, I also spoke to persons in their circles of intimacy.

People have the dignity that they need to retain, I do not take it as light thing that the participants that I succeeded to recruit risked to share their life stories as informers with the hope of attaining a greater good in terms of their participation in the modern structures of opportunity.

Although the matriculation certificate is made to be indispensable in this society, at least at the time of interview, not all the participants had obtained this requisite (sometimes merely for the sake of being fussy) certificate. Non-attainment was tantamount to a social death sentence, yet there were no adequate mechanisms made available for all citizens to obtain the much-valorised certificate. Much focus was given to the first-time attempters. Most participants identified the need to improve their matric results or enrolling to obtain it, yet they had not done it. Sometimes the delay to return to school lasted for four years since the first matriculation examinations sitting. It appeared that, the lives of those young people who 'failed' to acquire good Matric results at first attempt were continually precarious. Most of the available options tended to be meandering along those post-school pathways that are inadequately resourced which tended to be leading nowhere. Both non-attainment and partial attainment instigated for the risk of non-progression. Some of the participants pointed to the deep rootedness of poverty in their families that was traceable as far back to the grandparents. The initial family context informed the social circumstance for entry into the category of non-participating (otherwise fashionable known as NEETs). However, some added what they conceived as the personally 'induced' misfortunes.

In the current chapter I discuss blame apportioning as an overarching theme, in the analysis as it occurred to me as stronger in the pre-matric relative to other two clusters of matric and post-matric. Blame assigning helped with the focusing of the systemwide impossibilities that are sometimes construed as signifying markers for township life. I found the construct of impossibility to be slightly robust than what has been identified in the literature as barriers that affect the young people who complete (except for B) school successfully. It highlights those difficulties that relate to the various attempts made to attain to the dignified status of becoming someone through the full participation in education, training, and employment, but without meaningful access or success. Among these three modern structures of opportunity (EET) that the appellation of NEET enfolds, employment dominated the data corpus rather than education

or training. This drift helps us to appreciate a simple point that the cohorts of those who enter the schooling sector as children exit as emerging adults who have undergone all (in exceptional cases only a few) the prescribed years of preparation. Whether the education provisioning that they received was adequate or inadequate is beside the point, no one is spared from the responsibilities that come in adult years, irrespective of the employment sector's readiness to absorb the young adults.

Therefore, it should not be surprising that, at this crucial life stage their preoccupation appeared to be one-sided and slanted towards employment. Being engrossed with the next level, already hints that normal life is one that satisfies individual's sense of progress. Individual learner who has been exposed to the well-known low-quality schooling is not freed from living in the adult years, s/he must undertake adult responsibilities. The truncated quality and/or absence of training possibilities does not mean non-attainment of adulthood. Thus, it should come as no wonder why the trend of employment permeated through all the three clusters of this study. Given that, all the seven entry point research participants were already Out-of-it (EET), their discoursing tilted towards blaming the impossibilities in the system rather than providing the solutions that are needed to improve the system. Barrier impresses an idea of what plumbers would construe as blockage on certain portion of the pipeline. Such that, prior and post to the identified point of barrier things are well and good. Unfortunately, the experience that the participants shared in this research stretched far longer than the assumed barriers in certain parts of the system. There were three noticeable tendencies that the participants used in ascribing the blame, which were, government, labour-markets, but also some individual issues.

9.1 Blaming the government

If the apartheid state earned criticism for developing harsh draconian policies, the democratic state is made suspect for lacking competence of building a stable economy and sustainable institutions. For instance, in the past, researchers revealed that the young people who exited

school had little or no prospects of employment (Bundy, 1987; Chisholm, 1992). At the time it was fashionable to level the blame squarely on the systemic and apartheid state's policies. However, within democratic years the logical link between policy and practice is no longer straightforwardly noticed. There are mixed voices among the analysts. Some have lauded South Africa's (SA) policies to be among the best in the world. These tend to proceed further to hint that, the problem lies on the side of practice which has to do with implementing the otherwise good policies. Proponents of this view sometimes fall short of disparaging the emergent state as incapable of governance (Kraak, 2013; Burger et al., 2015). Surprisingly some in this group are keener to praise the labour markets. In couching their argument against age-grade norm policies that encouraged higher rates of promotion Burgers and colleagues almost bestowed the SA economy as perennially able to create jobs. If there were societal problems that relate to employment, the concern should be with government policies and not the economy. Some did not give up on blaming the purported as respectable policies to be interspersed in neoliberal profanity yet pretentiously made to appear as all-embracing (Vally and Motala, 2014). I agree with the criticism on incarnations of the neoliberalism. Surely keeping the township youth longer in the system of education (to preserve sacrosanct status of the economy) is not a good solution, instead it poses the threat of 'warehousing the unemployed' (Weram, 2001).

In keeping with the general criticism of the state, one of the participants lambasted the government for allowing the perpetuation of qualifications-based employment as if there were no well-known problems in the system. In her view, extending the culture of demanding qualification uniformly to include what she considered as the 'light jobs' (subdued status jobs) such as cleaning services was not only fussy, but occurred to her as averse to the individuals' sense of progress. In particular, she condemned the habituated misrecognition that all the human life matter: Both those who have obtained the school qualification and those she expressed as *khandalukhuni* (which can be directly translated to 'numbskulled') to refer to the

slow academic achievers. For me this insight provides a useful criticism on the current methods of education provisioning which tend to reward only those learners who exhibit prowess in reciting, restating, and reflecting other persons' thoughts to reinvent already past originations. In these terms, if the slow academic achievement was treated seriously, it would permit for aggressive investment in development of the productive persons to [re]discover their endowments (no one is without them) or what their gifted hands can do.

Unfortunately, the current orient of the government programmes encourages the outcomes-based viewpoint, which is centred on production rather than the producer. If it is to be worthy of its name, the new turn can take as its preoccupation the people-based orientation which will encourage the originality that comes with the attention that is intentionally centred-on the creative abilities of the producing persons. We are caught-up in the mode of blame which highlights that individual sense of hope could be dissipating. Recipients of the curriculum blame the system, administrators and practitioners blame or label their clients as the so-called slow learners. This kind of blaming game can extend to the *teacheability* (slightly different from the lamented teacher ability or competence) of the foreign borrowed curriculum that may not be committed or attuned to the experiences of the local people in terms of practical usefulness. Local teachers and leaners alike continue to be blamed for not achieving what may not be immediately relevant in their contemporary township contexts.

Until we realise that all humans matter including those residing in townships, we will continue to view leaners who arrive in the doors of township classrooms as majority under-achievers and their teachers as incompetent. My personal take on this, is that it will be difficult to improve anything by paying too much attention on dysfunctionalities. The focus can also be paid on what works in the township context to veer away from deficit lens that judges other people existence as only wasteful – bringing wasteful expenditure (they require extra programmes; stay in education system longer etc.). In SA it has become a bit difficult to ascertain the

serviceability of education and training and the needed improvements. In part, this has to do with the fact that, we tend to place too much attention on what does not work, thus know less about what could work.

This twisted logic has prepared a fertile ground for self-doubt. For instance, B doubted her abilities, she identified certain expertise that were needed to complete matric studies as lacking in her life. While taking responsibility for own actions is important, the public issues should not be owned as personal troubles. It should still be possible to separate things of the system from things of the self. In fact, C mistrusted the very moralised idea that effort was equal to rewards when their experience as young people who grew up in the township was that, sometimes effort made was compensated for by the endless frustrations. As such, for the youth in townships, hope in what the system could offer co-existed with despair. When practitioners within the system doubt young people's abilities, or carefree about what these could contribute, this breads the ground for disbelieving the things of the system. The visible representatives of the system do not always display the disposition of service to the people, but an attitude of being in it for themselves. In fact, one prominent person in governing party once said, 'I never joined the struggle to be poor'. This assertion can be pulled to different directions. Its insensitivity lies with chanting slogans in the name of 'the people' but express rewards of the struggle as personal gain. Serving the people does not end with persuading their hope in the system governance, but by acting to create environment for citizens to thrive.

In words of compassion, BM said that 'nabo abathandi bayazama' (BMSQ16.2) to highlight that persons who do succeed at school do not like their current condition(s), but they too want to live. Although some of their attempts were not successful at that point, still they are dignified humans with capabilities to contribute to the world we all share and to their personal lives. Her insights help us to think deeply about the prospects of de-stigmatisation of the educational non-attainment. For her, school qualifications are not everything. Even without the degree, diploma,

and certificate, it should still be possible to access work (having something to do) to complete the existentiality of being human. Finding a thing(s) to do was linked with becoming someone, but impossibilities of finding work eroded not only the dignity but threatened existence. Other examples of blaming government included what D suspected as malpractice when it comes to improving matriculation results. He harboured a belief that in the second attempt of trying to obtain or improve previous year's results the attempting persons are risking being marked down. Schools cannot wish away the caliber of the leaners who arrive (show up) in their classroom doors. Refusing the young people access is tantamount to denying them success. Permitting access may require that the practitioners find ways of keeping them in the system long enough for them to obtain the qualification that is recognised in post-school sectors (including employment market).

The context of doubt pervaded beyond classroom learning. For instance, G doubted if the township school could offer the extra-curricular that keep the children and the young aged from the streets. He thought that, too many young people in so-called black township have little meaningful activity that occupied their leisure time. In that aspect, those who grew up in vulnerable contexts where there was 'nothing' they can do for themselves or that can be done by the external agencies that will make them winners at par with others. This sets them up for future failure or delayed progress in their life trajectories. He thought that it would be proper to at least give them something that will help them not to get stuck permanently. Deciding on what could be construed as fair assessment in this blaming game is not the objective I pursued, but I wanted to register the young people's concerns shared with the persons in circles of intimacy. Since something had to blame, the government and employment market were not spared. In following subsections, I pay attention to the latter to discuss the insights on opportunities, that were sometime not opportune enough to be accessed by the township youth.

9.2 Blame on employment opportunities

There is a growing body of literature from a group of researchers that are giving up on the prospects of work. These have pushed a strong message that, there may be no employment anytime soon (Webb, 2019; Ferguson and Li, 2018; Barchiesi, 2012; Weeks, 2011 Gorz, 1982). And that, since chances of employment were unlikely in the immediate and perhaps even in the distant future, time had come for young people (in my purposes) to go play and/or enjoy their leisure time in things that they 'were' or would not be able to do under the contractual obligation in the modern class-based labour (Gorz, 1982). Leaning on Kathi Weeks who has posed the question why is it that humans must work for long hours (also refer to the timespan in their productive years) and so hard. We know about the division of labour in our split world that espouses the reservation practices, in which, lucrative business and attractive employment opportunities tend to be 'race' insular (Idriss et al., 2021; Cooper et al., 2019). This serves to complicate this question even further. Caution aside, the line of reason that question human work-centredness is somewhat useful in so far as it seeks to bandage the wounds of working-class persons who are 'no longer' much needed in the technological-based economy. At the same time, it is not helping because work can be argued for as directly linked to human existence (not just dignity), as I endeavour to show in this research. S/he that ceases to work must by the same stipulation also cease to live. Borrowing ideas of a black slave Washington George Carver, I push this idea even stronger in the conclusion chapter.

The ethnography study that was conducted in Algeria, by the French sociologist found that the meaningfulness of work for the peasants mattered more than their productivity when engaged in labour (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 176). This hints on the aspect of dignity. However, emerging research is challenging the very idea that has been defended in the sociology of work for years, that it is workers in the factory floor who will bring needed changes in the work landscape and spill over to the society at large. In a rejoinder paper that targeted the criticism from Ben Scully

and Edward Webster, Franco Barchiesi (2012) came across as disobedient to the venerable viewpoint that expansion of work opportunities *always* brings what is necessary to make the world a better place (added my emphasis). As things stand, we have skyrocketing numbers of the unemployed persons that co-exist with prevalence of informal, precarious, and non-standard jobs (Ferguson and Li, 2018) in this country (some of which are counted in the segment of NEETs) and the world over. For Barchiesi, work at least in the context of capitalism is otherwise proving to be failing especially on its extended responsibility – the emancipatory promise (p. 104). Instead, the promised liberation through work has become precarious as the context wherein work devising must take place.

In this research, I am putting forward a slightly different argument, which says that work is needed for human existence, and that it should be possible addressing this aspect on its own rather than always tying it to the extended responsibilities of correcting other problems that come with the so-called global capitalism. It can be bestowed with a life of its own outside the bargaining strategies of the organised labour. It should still be possible 'enacting the social' (Law and Urry, 2004) of work, without creating imageries of 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2007). Other dissenting voices include the emerging 'anti-work' doctrines (Webb, 2021; Ferguson and Li, 2018). Christopher Webb joined James Ferguson and Tania Li to put an argument forward for the demoralisation and depoliticisation of work in South Africa. The fact that work in the recent years has come to be understood as precarious, demeaning, humiliating and sometimes totally dangerous has legitimised the new ideology that encourage sympathisers against idealising and moralising work. This new anti-work enthusiasm follows the charge that lately work does no longer provide the promised independence, dignity, and social recognition (Webb, 2021: 373). The problem with this claim is that there are still many people who are in the paid labour-force, and most probably the adherents of anti-work doctrinaire are themselves working and are looking for alternative work opportunities.

No one can dispute that there is life after the institutionalised work that came with modernity. However, the post-work settlement needs to be carefully examined in each context of attraction. It certainly cannot be used in a progressive sense as a blanket approach for all citizens. As such, the right for young people to search for opportunities that are most viable and sustainable for their 'secured' futures should not be entered into hurriedly or in a reckless manner. Especially in contexts where alternatives do not yet appear as obvious to those requiring them and the buy-in is not reached regarding the recommendations of increased social protection support, stricter enforcement of labour regulation and effective income distribution (Webb, 2021). Participants in this research yearned for work, they wanted to see themselves doing something, because self-respecting persons work. The fact that, the emerging modernity that came with so-called fourth industrial revolution further threatens human work, does not mean humans will no longer work, but that industries are changing in ways that displace work done by humans. The current changes in the nature work will indeed affect humans adversely, but my contention, is that humans will always find something to do whether profitable or not. In other words, they will and must always work.

However, we have seen in the literature I cited, that, some are still trapped in the modern promise which encourages the search in no longer available opportunities. The kind of work that would advance young people in ways that satisfy their personal sense of progress is thought to be only found within the modern establishments. Even as the gates of this type of work are evidently seen to be closing-down rather than widening-up, the young people's hopes and persons in their circles were premised on these gradually discontinuing opportunities. As result we have such concepts as sitting at home threatening to defuse the desired status of self-respect that is accorded to the working persons. When self-respect erodes, in its place unbecoming behaviour is made to be a threat for sitting persons. Furthermore, the absence of opportunities

to access the institutional-based work rendered the township youth as examples of persons who had nothing to lose, as those awarded legitimacy to care less about the things of virtue.

When young people are made to believe that they had no capacity to succeed in any meaningful activities, then the dispositions of meaninglessness are engendered as a viable alternative. Having nothing to do seemingly tempered with the imagination to project oneself to the meaningful future life and corrodes individual assurance regarding the prospects of gaining access to those things one aspires for. B did not know what to do next to sustain her family: The absence of paid work-imposed difficulties when it came to accessing food. While work offered the meaning to our existence, participants in this study experienced a life that was dominated by being nowhere. This became frustrating because these thought of themselves not only as physically able, but also as intellectually endowed (as attested by participants D and E). As such, they searched for ways of escaping what occurred to them as a place *nowhere* to be *somewhere*, but available opportunities that they were able to access were temporal in scope, as such most of the time these occupied *meantime* things, some of which was harder than well-paying jobs as depicted in figure 9.1 below.

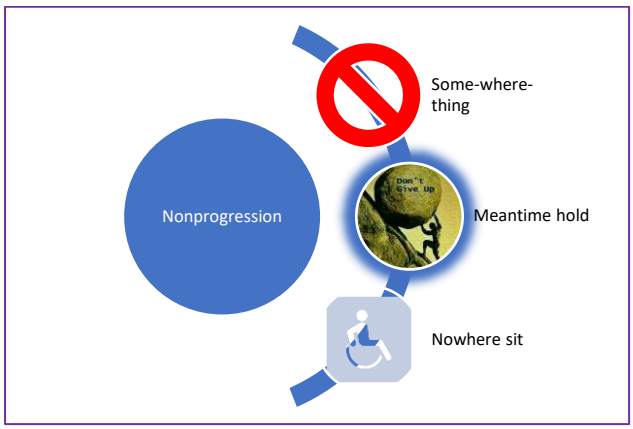


Figure 9.1: Positional options for non-participating youth

Figure 9.1 highlights some of the crucial issues that emerged in the analysis. It provides us with a pictorial representation of the optional positions to which those young people that were non-participating in employment were exposed. It begins to tinker with the question asking, 'Where are they', and begin to show that the lives of the young people oscillated between *nowhere* and *at-least-where*, but seemingly never getting to the desired *somewhere* level that appeared to be high on the lists of positional options for the young people. Employers reserved all rights to set the criteria, draft the nature of contract, employ whoever, and to dismiss employees at will. Often the sporadic contract workers are not union members. This gave employers the latitude to be unhindered in their acts of placing and displacing employees. When their contract ended it did not mean the work itself had ended, for employers had a wider reserve army of labourers. They kept changing all the time. To their knowledge, among the contract workers, most of the time contract employees often did not complete a year in the continuous employment. At face value, this may appear as fair practice that gives credence to the inclusion standard, in that, opportunity to gain entry-level exposure to much needed employment is enjoyed by a wider population of contract workers. After all, 'employment experience' was one of the major barriers that was used against young people when searching for the jobs. However, this possible representation of nobility shifts slightly with the further nuances.

The factories wherein B, C, F and G worked traded with chemicals. Such that, their elongated stay would unavoidably affect the health of factory floor employees. To evade health-related lawsuit costs, the workforce was changed frequently, to reduce labour force so that there could be fewer permanent employees. Factory managers exploited the situation of the mass youth unemployment, in the name of inclusion. They saw no need to keep the lowly paid employees longer due to the wide reserve army of labour (RAL). Contrary to the valorised skills thesis in which the lack of skills is often seen as the major contributor to youth unemployment, the shared stories provide alternate explanation - that workers are many, but jobs made too few. In

other words, non-participation in employment is not just a skills issue, but relates to the contracting possibilities under what has come to be known as global capitalism. This begins to hint that, there can be no sustainable globalisation in the absence of strong localisation. Youth unemployment thrives where there is limited scope of employment possibilities under de-industrialised setting of the emergent global capitalism. Young participants had an inkling that structure of opportunities had shifted yet continued to hope for being the lucky ones. Even if their luck would only last for a season. While the ideal of somewhere remained a distant reality that was unlikely to be attained, they hoped to remain in the 'at least' middle position that was apparently attained through self-marketing. In figure 9.1 this is depicted by a picture I found on social media wherein a person with strong muscle is either expected to roll-up a huge rock on steep surface to attain the desirable somewhere plain or hold on it until s/he finds help. Young people in townships express this dismissively as uzoba strong (you will be strong), often used contemptuously either to mean 'you are on your own' or 'deal with it yourself'.

In terms of meaning, their experiences help us understand the different conceptions of work. There is work for subsistence which dealt with the everyday livelihood (bread and butter) issues, but non-participation in work eroded the existential dignity in that it enables the experience of 'nix'. Work offered the dignity of being something in life ('ubeyinto aph' ebomini'), opposed to being nothing (a phrase that is analogous with the big 'N' (not) of the NEET expression in much use in SA these days) but worklessness meant *awukabiyonto* (not yet a thing in this life). Sometimes this aspired for thing[ness] was not sustainable, in that, further deterioration into *awuseyonto* (no longer that or the thing you were once upon a time). This dethronement from the thingy-past into [no]thing-in-the-present lingered as present threat that may dislodge the current perceived statuses. Whether prospective hoped-for promotion which would not be attained, or retrospective demotion remained as haunting threat, being some-*thing* mattered for all participants. It serves to affirm one's dignity, first to self and to

other humans. To invoke the Durkheimian expression of 'appearing in public without shame', work has to do with the right to be sure that one can attain a secured state of some-*thing*. In these terms, work is no longer limited to the desired productivity, but extends to reducing (or eradicating) human shame. The greatest threat that non-participation imposes is to undermine the existential dignity for those young people who grew-up and continued to live in the townships. Work came across as safeguard to the individuals' dignities.

Furthermore, work had a liberating dimension and moralising aspects to it. One engaged with work regains power to occupy time with the meaningful things; it frees *us* from idling. Work showed something significant about human existence, even if it was temporal and short-lived. For instance, non-matriculated B regarded *ukubamba* (meantime work) to be better than being in the *nowhere* of *ukuhlala* (sitting), without any due consideration for size of wages and working conditions that trouble researchers. Interestingly, I noted that the already Matriculated males D and E thought of certain jobs to be demeaning and insulting. Here we can observe a gendered pattern. It was D, E, G (and to lesser extent H) that raised some concerns about the work status, but the three young females B, C and to some extent F were willing to do the low status work. G had previously quit the job voluntarily on account that it would compromise his health. H on the other hand endured the low paid work to *escape* the shame of sitting in the township, and to that end esteemed this decision highly. All that the three young women raised as a complaint related to the precarious working conditions was casualisation. Their work employment was sporadic, and this implied that money they received for monthly upkeep was not always guaranteed. They would be called-in and sent-away at any time so that planning around work was difficult. Yet although this was contrary to their preference, they endured *ukubamba* which occurred to them as a common way of accessing jobs for the township youth.

Denotatively, *ukubamba* refers to interim holding. Except that their temporal hold did not position them as the holding persons into going towards somewhere. Yet when statistics are

collated, those that episodically *bamba* can be counted together with those that are somewhere. Factually speaking they were not completely *nowhere*, but ironically not quite *somewhere* either. This two-folded identity can be confusing, not so much to onlookers but also to the one experiencing the state of limbo. Even with all the virtue attached to the returning to the school education, all the females (B, C & F) and H (at the time) preferred employment. However, the first choice for D and E was university education. The oldest participant G stood as outlier to either being drawn towards post-school or employment. He wanted to join the new cadre of entrepreneurs (even getting their earnings from the government tenders otherwise labelled in this country as the tenderpreneurs). The state of limbo disturbed their ability to plan, hoping that perhaps they might be called for employment for a longer time. Being neither nowhere nor somewhere, offered middle position of 'at-least'. In its general usage 'at least' implies two things. One sense implies 'not less than' to express a demand for the bare minimum. The other sense adds positive commendation to a generally negative situation. Industry captains are quite fond of the latter expression as it helps them to be seen in a positive light as those practicing *inclusions* when they could be executing acts of displacement to the already wretched township youth. This analysis begins to hint something about the orthodoxy of *inclusion*, which was touted as seeking to eradicate older narratives of marginalisation (Dolan & Rajak, 2016, p. 527). Inclusion is the friendlier language of dominance: It grants full power to the dominant to give permission to include, and less scope of choice to the young people's planning for their future. Employers enjoyed the sole right to give permission for accessing companies they lead to whoever, under terms dictated rather than negotiated.

Attaining somewhere appeared farfetched for individual participants, I illustrated this through the description of *ukuhlala*. The lives of the township youth was dominated by being nowhere yet they were physically fit and able. As provoked in the depiction I used in figure 9.1, wherein being nowhere was analogous to a socially [dis]abled person. Intermittent access to the

meantime jobs that seemed hard to retain could be permitted but accessing those admired as some-where appeared as socially barricaded, thus best depicted by the no-entry sign. Together these positional options indicate non-progression, especially for those young people that are still in the pre-Matric cluster whose non-attainment of the emblematic certificate may be used against them as legitimate barrier (positive discrimination) for their access into modern opportunities. If past disappointments have any role to play in shaping our present lives, as psychologists believe (see Langa, 2012, p. 13), being nowhere presents an extra burden to continually rework the difficulty that the past has shaped for or in us. For those represented by B's cluster, such difficulties may extend throughout the course of life.

Modernity's established industries promote mass paid work and urbanisation. However, in the contexts of the colonially conquered, and with the additional burden that de-industrialisation imposes, the prospects of paid work are far removed following the declining manufacturing sector and growing service sector, as well as the dramatic bulge of the financial, insurance, real estate, and business services (Crankshaw & Borel-Saladin, 2014). However, we have noted that work offered greater meaning to the existence of humans. However, the prevailing labour-market arrangement did not always offer adequate support to the aspirations of young people from the townships where most African subpopulation groups reside. In the final analysis, relying on the employment 'markets' that is run by the capitalist merchants has not proved to be beneficial to all, especially those belonging to the racial group affiliation of the Africans and with academic profiles akin to those of B. The above said, it was quite striking to lean that for the youth in townships attaining matric did not add any extra advantage over the one(s) who had not yet obtained it.

The science of access to upper[tunities] required some doing from the searching persons from below to ensure that their social ensemble was in tune with often absent possibilities. At times this obligates the individuals to have their 'own persons' among the already employed persons

with whom they could form some patronage alliances, so that s/he may facilitate access to reachable jobs (the so-called useful networks). The circumstances that this youth encounter encourages them to merely clasp harder as the strong ones on the 'at least plane' into which they are thrown as their last hope. In the following discussion I provide a summary of the discussion of on blame apportioning, and on employment as distant opportunity.

9.3 Youth not yet free

Those young people who are glibly dubbed as the 'bornfrees' (Mattes, 2012) are born to twin legacies of colonialism and apartheid, which set the limit to equal opportunities as the normality of all times. I have noted in chapter 2 that ILO (2019) is envisioning a human turn that is based on three policy dimensions of equality, sustainability, and inclusiveness. Often what results in practice is contrary to the touted freedoms. For instance, in early years of democracy, there was hostility in most suburban schools against township youth: Access was protected through the feeder-zone policies. Yet the suburban schools were perceived as offering better education. Lowenberg (1997) mentions that education for blacks was made to be inferior to that of whites, a segregation that Hendrik Verwoerd (often deemed as the architect of apartheid) vociferous stated that it was aimed at securing job preference for the Europeans. However, such feeder-zone policies did not prevent children of the recent immigrants - who resided closer to the urban towns and/or cities and slightly less from the townships where many Africans lived – from accessing these schools. This created an impression that South Africa (SA) afforded the recent immigrants better futures and decent life, than the 'bornfrees' (so-called) whose parents had stayed on SA's shores for longer. The espoused inclusivity was on policy papers, but not yet widespread as a practice.

On the business front, much disdained (by the privileged) affirmative action policies including the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act 2000 that obligated the government to award preferential points to enterprises that were owned by historically disadvantaged persons

(including females), and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 2004 which promotes economic empowerment of black people in terms of code of practice for procurement processes, afforded the same status of privileges to 'all blacks'. In practice, Indians and white females who had enjoyed slight privileges that came with the racial stratification in the past and were economically higher enjoyed some of these equities striving policy provisions. The slightly free elites (Indians families, white females, and politically connected Africans) became a class of freer, but the children of the severely oppressed were assured social grants as their secured freedom. When government supplied contracts, the private companies had to allow a significant number of the black-owned companies to gain a share in the industry, but in reality, economic freedoms were enjoyed by elites who had a wider set of choices when it came to the education of their children. Many left the black townships and could no longer be blocked from accessing surburban public schools by the feeder-zone policies, and some could afford fees paid in private schools.

In the field of training, skills lack was widely broadcasted in ways that constructed images that led to self-doubt as 'unskilled youth' (Kruss & Wildschut, 2019) in ways that further disadvantaged the township youth from enjoying the same privileges as their elite peers, or to legitimise their exclusion. It is alleged that even those in possession of higher education qualifications struggle to access the available jobs. Of course, jobs dubbed as such may be far less than their demand. Still, it is puzzling that there are jobs and there are people wanting them, but who will not get them. The assertion often goes like, 'Unemployment and inequality are high and rising, and growth is very slow, stalled not least by a destructive politics of patronage and corruption' (p. 3). What may be less fascinating to non-South Africans is the selective inclusion and exclusion of factors that may contribute to youth unemployment. For instance, the government's mistakes are broadcasted, but those in the private sector are given euphemistic labels which conceal the colonial and apartheid secured privilege (Ndlovu, 2013).

The less privileged youth that were hankering to access available opportunities would not have them.

The lived experience pushes us towards there-for-me reality framework which compels the social engineers to run down identified objective gains to the me-level of individuals. Young people and CoIs have the township as their there-world. I set out to understand if there is anything that they deemed as useful, valuable and/or accessible to them in that world or that all possibilities are for others. Heidegger (1996) associate being-in-the-world with a purpose to fulfill. For their existence to be meaningful, being-in-the-world must be disclosed for-the-sake-of-which: This has to do with the significance for which they exist. Contrary to the pervasive skills dogma, which is invested on deficit (the never-ending need for upper tuning) accounts of lack, humans could have a desire to understand what they exist for. This said, the human quest for 'ability to handle things' and 'being able to do something' never ends (p. 143).

9.4 Conclusion

Under capitalism, accessing opportunity has itself become an opposing current against the tune set in the modern structure. As such, it has not been opportune for all. Some remain defenceless subjects of 'moral worth', thus needing minimum care, but others have reserved for themselves the status of being the ever-skilled human agents with moral autonomy. What is worrisome about this autonomy is that it does not end with their selves, but to retain it, one with moral autonomy must necessarily insulate his/her group autonomy even if the measures in place were to barricade the pathways for accessing autonomy of others. The privilege reserving gymnastics are not seen as acts of immorality but as manoeuvres that are needed to maintain a balanced life. Young people who grow up in the township are not part of the autonomous groups but are expected to reproduce other subjects with moral virtue that are policed, misrecognised and sometimes rewarded by the autonomous agents. Essentially, nothing good came out from sitting at home, but there was virtue in keeping to this posture watching others passing-by with

hope that one day they-too will be among those who are counted as standing and acting in positions of trust. Change from being subjects with moral worth was possible through the *self-help* of networking, yet network formation occurred when one was engaged with something (opportunity). In the final analysis, sitting stunted the possibilities to navigate spaces occupied by relevant persons, in that, having nowhere to go arrested possibilities to meet up with the relevant networks. Contrary to the expanding leisure time thesis, sitting was seen by the participants in this research as altogether disadvantageous. It helped to place self-interest in abeyance. Young people in the so-called black townships have not accessed the needed possibilities that would permit them to be strong.

Chapter 10

A [re]theorisation of the notion of NEET in SA context: a medley between Bourdieu and Heidegger

No individual has any right to come into the world and go out of it without leaving behind him distinct and legitimate reasons for having passed through it. (A quote attributed to George Washington Carver, 1915).

Lack of attention to the human condition in our local version of the non-participation in education, training, and employment (NEET) studies is a serious indictment to [re]imagination of meaningful structures of possibilities. I propose a new conceptual model that contributes towards shifting our current understanding of imperatives for gaining access into the broad fields of post-school education and training (PSET) and employment in South Africa (SA). This was made possible by commingling the two theorists that worked from relatively distinct paradigms to build a case for human work as an existential right that comes with being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1996), rather than being an institutional opportunity accessed through individuals fortuitous gambling in hustle with the objective chances (Bourdieu, 1997). Using empirical evidence that was constructed from young people themselves together with persons in their circles of intimacy I tried to reclaim the subjective dimension. I challenge the dominant narrative on youth work as opportunity, the access of which is limited by 'growth of economy' coupled with the 'lack of skills' (Bhorat, 2004; Kraak, 2013). This pair has for long served to legitimise young people as 'gazers' of seemingly farfetched opportunities (Ramphele, 2002), as prisoners of 'hope' (Jeffrey, 2008b) and those who must 'wait' for forthcoming possibilities that are either delayed or never arrive. In this chapter I push forward my concluding arguments.

There is a view asserting that, 'Not all young people will have the aptitude, interest, or ability to follow a higher education pathway, nor can the system accommodate school levers' (Wildschut & Kruss, 2018, p. 197). It is one thing admitting that the social universes of opportunity that were historically designed for the racial minorities cannot adequately cater for all, but another thing to blame those the system has disappointed as lacking interest and being

without ability. In SA, there are relatively widened possibilities to acquire education and training qualifications without ever accessing any skilled occupation. In real terms, this means that although some of the historically espoused 'doors of learning have been opened', the doors of the economy remain too thinly ajar. The end goal of work tends to be subdued to the preparation processes. It almost seems that those ideologies promoting education for-its-sake were entrenched over there-for-me views. The record here shows that when institutions matter more, most people experience hardships with accessing the opportunities; but when people take precedence over institutions, then institutional reputation can be judged against the very people they exist to serve. Thanks to Heidegger, we now understand things in terms of their function.

This considered view begins to disabuse us from the popular notions that drive the perception that certain humans have inherent disabilities as engendered by the 'skills lack and/or mismatch' thesis, which render them as unfit for work. Heidegger (1996, p. 126) argues this point most lucidly that, 'in what is taken care of in the surrounding world, others are encountered as what they are. They are what they do'. I presume that 'the others' that Heidegger refers to include individuals belonging to the racial groups that were colonially subdued and displaced through apartheid policies. Added to this, that, although the reality of universal jobs has been seen as not only receding but strange (Ferguson and Li, 2018), what is stranger is acceptance that a dominant segment of the population comprising of able youth residing in township and rural areas can enter and exit life in the world without work. I am persuaded that, we can only know others in terms of what they do rather than in terms of their invisible thoughts, record of qualifications, and potential capabilities ascribed by the skills regime. This thinking become clearer in the model I have developed that propose to shift the current gaze from preoccupation with institutions towards the people themselves, as shown in figure 10.1 below.

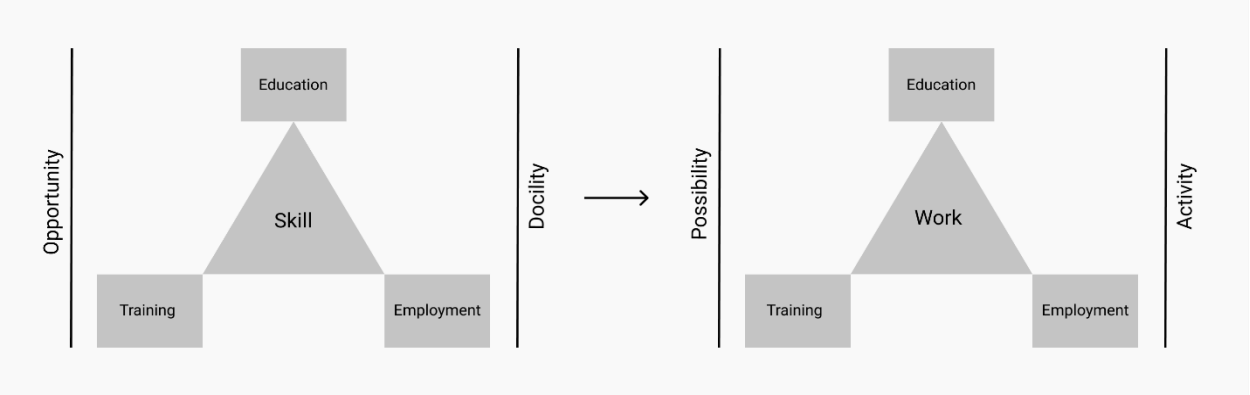


Figure 10.1: From lack to possibilities: A model that shifts current discourses on youth

In terms of this model, people-based systems place work at the centre; however, institution-based approaches privilege people[less] productivity. People become the equivalent of machines. They matter only in so far as they possess a certain category of skills. People must first accumulate skills prior to accessing work, yet skills develop in the process of doing work. Humans make institutions. An impression should never be created that made things wield greater power than their creators, except if there are interests to retain the status quo of human displacement. However, if there is genuine concern in the world to do away with social incidences such as non-participation in EET, there should be a concerted effort to place human work at the centre. The skills lack thesis does not end at imposing deficits on youth: It is complicit in continuously accepting misrecognition of other humans' abilities. All humans are on earth primarily to work, even the so-termed 'NEETs'. Of necessity human existence must link to purpose - the *raison d'etre* of work. The young people I interviewed did not strike me as wanting to live from government handouts but wanted to work. They had intuition that human life was about approximating work possibilities rather than endless gambling with life as a chance that is best lived through uncertainty of opportunity. So, I journeyed.

10.1 On research journey

Typically, I began this research journey by reading through the related local youth literature, then extended this to the international studies (mainly from two countries, the United Kingdom

(UK) and Australia). Very early in this process, I noticed that I had many problems to deal with, as the field of youth studies was vast and dispersed. For instance, there were researchers who paid attention to the political involvement of young people (Dawson, 2014; Bundy, 1987), while others sought to maintain the Birmingham school tradition of youth culture (Soudien, 2011; Bennett, 2011). However, I set out to join those that researched youth transitions (Isdale et al., 2016), a tradition that is associated with the development that occurred after the Second World War in Britain (Roberts & Atherton, 2011; Biggart et al., 2008). I thought that the research on the NEET phenomenon belonged to the transition domain. As I was searching for an intelligent way of joining the conversation, I learnt that the youth culture and transitions were negotiating a merger (Furlong et al., 2011). However, I did not imagine that such tasks could be left in the hands of newcomers, but that the experts within the two sub-research fields would carry it out. The proposed merger confirms that youth studies are not static. There are regular shifts i.e., from moral panics (Seekings, 1996) to moral ecology (Swartz, 2009), and *out-of-education, out-of-employment* to the NEET (Cloete, 2009). Sometimes initial conceptions may be better in terms of clarity, at other times new developments possess more explanatory power.

The new child (NEET) on the block, that came through adoption from the policy makers, had not found a home to settle in the old traditions. I noted with fascination that the prominent researchers in this field treated the encroaching NEET as some illegitimate stepchild. It appeared they gave it lesser regard, yet the sub-area raised related issues, and thus belonged to the broad family of youth studies. The field experts preferred to retain the old 'youth unemployment' and bemoan that there is no clearly stipulated means for identifying who is or is not 'NEET' (Furlong, 2006). And that, this made it difficult to ascertain trends, or to make international comparisons to hold politicians accountable for their youth policies. In particular, the complexity was brought by the hybridisation of youth unemployment into a composite

structure of opportunity that rested on the two sides that are sometimes treated as opposite (so-called supply and demand) that may be driven by a separate logic. The NEET concept combined those young people with very little control over their situation along with those exercising choice and this promoted confusion. It accorded same status to the so-called 'NEETs' as a 'fault' of structural commission, with individual omission. The orientation I have taken veers away from hunting for youth problems to explain 'why they were NOT', to the discourse of possibilities. The human turn forces us to have a greater intention about possible ways out of this social malaise.

In what follows, I provide a summary of the crucial considerations I embarked on along this research journey. I first consider the framing of the problem, then proceed with the formulation of research questions and analysis. Thereafter, I proceed to register my findings that came through my employ of the tools I obtained from the literature. Lastly, I point to the study contribution, implications, and conclusion.

10.2 Reflections on framing the problem

Originally, I wanted to study the imperatives of 'massification in higher education'. Then I shifted my focus to the conditions of those young people that were labelled as 'the NEETs'. I struggled to come to terms with the phenomenon that is best expressed through negation, such as the existential presence of what is NOT. I thought it would be easier to study the various modes of participation in EET (Education, Training, and Employment); however, I had to give recognition to the big N that is prefixing it. Making sense of the absence of NOT with recognition of its historical presence and potency on tainting the young people was elusive. Secondly, even if I had succeeded to get rid of the obstacles that came with NOT, I still had to grapple with the separate concepts of EET that presented different logics. Initially, I operationalise the programmes fuzzily through separation of terms: 'Education' referred to school education (but also to university, often referred to as higher education); 'training' meant

anything post-school. It was often coupled as ‘education and training’ within high institutions of learning and work-based training. ‘Employment’ referred to the semi or contractual paid work done for the-other. In the end, I decided to treat them together as modern structures of opportunity, after all my gaze was on people and their lived experience.

Finding the NOT-literature was difficult, as result, I relied on the various appellations. The closest construct that resembled the negated expression was the non-participation idea (Fergusson, 2013) that became prevalent in the widening participation studies (Fuller et al., 2011; Watts & Bridges, 2006). Soon I learnt that widening participation in SA might not mean the same thing as in England where the deserving youth needed a motivation to register for the university education (Fuller et al., 2011; Roberts & Atherton, 2011). Here at home, even those who may be deemed in terms of this construct as ‘undeserving’ had unbridled aspiration to access HE, because participation in the university education was associated with substantially improved employment prospects (Bhorat et al., 2017). For instance, South Africans were shocked when it was reported at the beginning of the 2012 academic year, that a certain parent was killed in a stampede at the gates of the University of Johannesburg, where the crowds of prospective students queued from early hours of the day in a mission to gain access into the university (Sehoole, 2012). While the incident itself does not prove the (un)deserving claim, it hints on the desperation for access.

Non-participation raises the concerns of widening participation in ways that resemble the emergent search for ways of ‘responding to the educational needs of the post-school youth’ (Cloete, 2009). As stated, the needs of post-school youth stretch beyond the so-called deserving students to cover even those that may be understood as undeserving. In that broad spectrum I elected to research the young people in middle categories: Those who were searching for opportunities. The majority of these belong to the ‘fine’ category and are counted with those following the smoother transition in Table 2a. In as much as the categories that were listed by

Isdale and colleague (2016) are not statistical representative of the population, we know from a later publication of their work (Isdale et al., 2018) that some fall out of the smooth pathway in wave 5 (30.8%) and do not proceed to the post-school education and training or employment. At this point some of those previously counted as following the smooth pathways join the middle groups as those 'at risk' or 'staggered', or even 'stuck' and 'marginalised'. Those in the last group who are listed as 'stopped' in Isdale et al. (2016) might not reach the bottom-most status of 'lost' but linger in the category of the 'marginalised' (Everatt & Orkins, 1993). The NEET phenomenon may occur in any of these segments, my focus is on those at risk.

In approaching this, I withhold my bias for the OUT conception. Throughout the paper I used the popular NOT expression. My dislike for NOT is that it conjures an image of an absence even non-existence, but OUT recognises the social presence of a young person rather than their erasure. It points to the possible positional shifts from one who at one point might be *in* (school) and later *out* (employment). In the context of SA, compulsory schooling years have made it possible for all children at one point in their lives to be at school; educationists have termed this as physical access (Motala et al., 2009). However, the phenomenon of universal access occurs in primary education; when adolescents step-into secondary level of schooling, troubles of non-participation begin. Some of these are traceable to grade repetition, dropout, and being overage. At this point, some of those once 'in' put on a new status as those 'outside' formal education and training, and later-on in their life outside employment as well. The policy makers in UK have termed the out-group as NOT. Furthermore, I have noted striking similarities with naming of the researching centres studying this group. In UK, they have the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASEuk). In SA, we had Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASEsa).

I have argued that the privileged notion of social exclusion (impressing the idea of omission and/or marginalisation or political tactic of segregation) in CASEuk does not seem to fit well

in a context wherein those envisioned as excluded are not in the category of ethnic/racial minorities (Mertens, 1999, p. 4 in Romm, 2020). In SA, the would-be excluded ethnic/racial groups are the majorities. Since the task of extracting majorities from minorities and the corrective of inclusion of majorities into the social universes envisaged to provide 'opportunities' for the minorities was unlikely, I was attracted to the idea of social occlusion (adapted from Cooper et al., 2019) whose outcome is social displacement. Occlusion has to do with ongoing obstruction that shut-off a group of people from participating in available opportunities. The corrective would be to open the deliberately shutting of the doors of possibilities and placement of the groups that have been displaced. The OUT idea pursued by CASEsa occurred as amenable with the notion of social displacement. While I grant that aspects of social exclusion have some resonance with social displacement, the latter goes further to highlight the inauthenticity of being-not-at-home or 'outside' even when purported to be socially included. The concept accommodates other sub-population groups that are misrecognised in symbolical forms of displacement. However, the displacement construct was less prevalent in non-participation studies and the emergent local PSET studies. As such, the consideration of the idea of social displacement is an original conceptual contribution in youth transition studies.

Social displacement better nuances some of the concerns raised by the participants in this research. For instance, when they register their concerns regarding what they deem as acts of displacement, the groaning on afore-reigning tactics of the for[e]reigners (such as skipping the queue of accessing opportunities), their concerns tend to be rubbished hastily as hatred. The silencing act results in xenophobia being made more popular than [loca]phobia (hostility, derision or even disdain for the local people). This suspicion has rendered those persons that recently arrived on SA shores as 'opportunity thirsty', but those who had arrived before them as 'blood thirsty', lazy or utterly stupid. The construct of social displacement adds the missing

ingredients to the social exclusion debates (see Chapter 2). I have argued that social displacement helps us to imagine the authentic corrective such as [re]installation into possibilities rather than the patch work of inclusion. Having pointed out the more humane ways of progress that may restore the dignity that is being eroded by poverty of opportunity, I now proceed to formulating research questions.

10.3 Formulating research questions

After engaging the background literature in chapter 1, an invitation became clear that I needed to pursue youth lived experiences, rather than joining the widespread tradition of studying the extent of this problem. This became much clearer when I engaged the research field in chapter 2 where I discovered that youth employment opportunities were contracting. I noticed that local researchers were exploring ways of joining the transition research. Accordingly, I tried to incorporate debates on the study of NEET into older traditions, beginning with broad questions which were explored in our local youth studies over the years. Thereafter, I force-fitted non-participation in EET into the subfield of youth transitions. This literature provided me with the useful ways of framing my research questions. The answer for the first sub-research question I posed on potential causes of non-participation came from this literature; it pointed to opportunity structures as crucial when explaining the outcome of being outside modern possibilities (Roberts & Atherton, 2011). Other explanations pointed to the poverty of aspiration and rational choice, both seemingly blaming young people as lacking ambition and making wrong choices. What impressed me as agreeable with the young people's experiences in our local context, is one on poverty of opportunity (Roberts & Atherton, 2011). I found this as the balancing idea and correcting the poverty of aspiration thesis, but more pointedly the pervasive supposition that at any given historical moment the township youth always lack skills.

In my first research question I asked, ‘What are the young people’s and CoIs’ conceptions of non-participation in EET in terms of perceived causes (personal evaluations of contributing factors) and to whom do they apportion blame for becoming or being “NEETs”?’ The young people and the CoIs blamed scarce opportunities that may be owed to the social neglect of youth possibilities over an extended period. To explain their perceived scarcity, I engaged the philosophical literature with the aim to explain their lived experience in the context of a human-centred approach or turn (ILO, 2019). Humanist perspectives extend explanation to the people themselves – reality is no longer explained in terms of what institutions proffer but understanding is sought for a reality that is there-for-me, so that institutional logics and processes are not themselves an end, but a way to find possibilities for the betterment of human life. The enduring feature of youth research has been to find various ways of explaining the social conditions that bring about the phenomenon of interest, including the one I am grappling with in this study. Such an important task can be hazed by the fixation of numbering the affected people with aims to justify the problem’s existence. The human-centred approach we find in Heidegger’s (1996) preoccupation with ontology encourages human involvement.

Subsequently I ask, ‘What are the young people’s and CoIs’ conceptions of the possibilities within their milieu?’ In chapter 7, I set out to evaluate what counted as possibilities for them. There was no clear sense on from where the possibility would come; instead, non-participation was associated with the non-attainment of university education. Young people and CoIs were acutely aware that private sector opportunities were not there for them, yet subsistence in the informal economy was not always easier. As such, they selected government employment, especially teaching careers as it appeared to them to be more reasonable in terms of salary and accessing these seemed attainable. While gaining access into the TVET colleges was an easier option, the structural relationship of participation in these opportunities was not always linked to accessing employment. This in-built mismatch in the relationship between education and

training sectors, and the employment markets has often been read as the searching person's *skills mismatch* problem, when the problem may lie on the skilling mechanisms. Such incongruity points to where the problem might arise, rather than somewhere else where it manifests (in the people). Indeed, the young people do not structure the schooling and post-schooling curriculum, which leaves trainers and employers as the responsible parties. A context is created for making skill as legitimate excuse of all time for the occlusion of others. Bourdieu (1997) terms the shifting of responsibility to effect changes as symbolic violence.

In my third research question I set out to interrogate the aspect of choice. I asked, 'What choices do the young people make to enhance the quality of their well-being?' While this question applied to everyone, in chapter 8 I zoomed-in to those young people with relative privilege as I thought these had wider options that were available to them. My analysis points to structural constraints, personal blunders, as well as moral staging as the quest to be understood and acceptance. Relative privilege facilitated a deep sense of gratitude, even indebtedness to the opportunity structures; for instance, the 'better life start' that hints distinction and self-importance. This case converged into the idea of *status incongruence* (de Kock & Schutte, 1994). The outcome of non-participation was not just misfortune, but a shame that necessitated some covering up. Lastly, I asked, 'What kind of alternative strategies do the young people suggests as way out of being "NEETs"?' Here I sought to solicit the information regarding their personal efforts. I combined this research question with the idea of meaning to get a sense of the implications of this phenomenon in young people's lives. I got a distinct sense that young adults thought that the absence of job opportunities was itself an opportunity, except that it was not always opportune for them in terms of regular income.

My overall purpose in this study was to answer the main research question, 'How do young people living in a Gauteng township and without the bachelor's Matric endorsement make sense and experience of non-participation in education, training, and employment?' The

understanding of the phenomenon of non-participation in EET stems from two realms of reality, which are cause and effects. At any given point, researchers in this field want to know about the contributing factors (a modest way for expressing issues behind NEETing realities) and its related consequences (referring to attendant penalties at human level). While it may be difficult to provide a conclusive picture in a single paper regarding this phenomenon, empiricism is satisfied with even following a tiny tributary that leads to the mainstream. Contrary to the emergent drive for anti-normalisation of work, I point to the centrality of work in human existence. With that background in mind on entry logic of empiricism, it is now possible to proceed with the theoretical framing.

10.4 Selection of relevant theories, methodology and literature

When I commenced with this journey, I was a member of the reading group in my university where academics and doctoral students converged bi-weekly to read a chapter on the selected book. It so happened that one of the considered works for that semester was a book on Pierre Bourdieu's key concepts edited by Michael Grenfell. On many fronts, I agreed with Bourdieu's intellectual project and attempted to adopt his concepts for my research. However, when I tried to make sense of data later, I noticed that it might not be possible to use triadic concepts of habitus, field, and capital exclusively to explain youth stories, but I found symbolic violence relevant for explaining system wide aspects. Wilhelm Dilthey helped me to elucidate the notion of lived experience. I noticed that there were few studies that used lived experience as a frame but did not make extended effort to describe it. In chapter two I defined what lived experience meant and incorporated on individual based analysis the construct of symbolic violence. Then I came across Gibbs (2008). Gibbs used the circumspection idea to argue for the Heideggerian position that the 'essence of work is essence of being'. I dedicated time to read the text on Being and Time. His concepts provided me with the useful language for describing utterances made by the participants. In this process I was not driven by the ambition to grade the

supremacy of one paradigm over the other, I merely wanted to widen the scope of analysis for experiences of non-participation in EET from more than one perspective. I decided to work 'with' (to learn) rather than 'within' (to prove, confirm or disconfirm) paradigms (see Romm, 2018, p. 32-33).

10.4.1 Related literature

NEET studies locally (Cloete, 2009; Smith, 2011) sought to create the findings in a numeric form. Interest tended to be on the extent of the problem. Within the scoping framework, PSET and skills research consistently showed that those young people without a Grade 12 certificate and the higher education qualifications or coming from schools well-known for producing the alleged low-quality education (Spaull, 2013), were most likely not to gain access or follow the desirable transitional path into employment (Perold et al., 2012; Rogan, 2018). Up to this point, poverty of opportunity that comes with quality education is represented as responsible for poverty of opportunity in the labour markets. On the other hand, skills research persisted on fondling the twin notions of skills 'lack and mismatch' (Kraak, 2013; Breier & Erasmus, 2009). From here it is easy to succumb to the widespread seduction of the demand-led education and training, in which employers play a bigger role in the production of skills (Kruss et al., 2019). Allais (2012) has long challenged this view as 'economics imperialism'. Constantly, Allais and Marock (2020) argue that knowledge and skills needed for work do not develop in some secluded corner somewhere outside of the economy, then supplied to the economy to meet the labour market demand. Instead, skills formation is rooted in the economic and social arrangements within a system.

In part, poverty of opportunity was shaped by de-industrialisation in the global 'employment', in a context wherein the financial services increased, and manufacturing industries demised (Imbs, 2013). The timing of these developments took place along with the transition to democracy in SA, before those citizens that were 'previously' displaced from accumulation of

skills could be firmly anchored in opportunities. The globalisation opened the flood gates of displacement wider in that those who had received the perceived-as superior training (or better that the Bantu Education to which the South Africans were subjected) and wider exposure as the diaspora gained employment advantage over the locals. This pushed the locals to the back of the queue as those that were not only lacking skills but aspiration. The poverty of aspiration is not rooted in the contextual factors, and to the extent that it is bent on blaming individuals who were structurally displaced by draconian apartheid policies, it has become the discourse of displacement. The disdain for the transformation policies including the Black Economic Empowerment, New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) does not help to improve the situation of inequality.

I have argued that the misrecognition of the economics imperialism which seeks to subordinate the entire society into the economy has created a crisis of economy that is indifferent to the societal ills. I have termed this as collection economy to highlight the posture that is in sharp contrast with the principles of distribution economy. It is no wonder why the lack of skills mantra has been so pervasive, and the varied displacement manoeuvres by interest groups have added to the poverty of training and employment opportunity.

10.4.2 Beings in their world

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1996) characterised humans as Dasein or a 'there being' (Larkin et al., 2006). This implies that being a complete human being involves being somewhere-out-there interacting with worthwhile possibilities, rather than being in perpetual lack of 'worthless docility'. This theory helps us to appreciate the threats that this non-participation in EET imposes on the foundations of our being as working things whose existence is satisfied by active participation. Meaningful existence is fundamentally part of us, as it discloses itself in our functions through our involvement in the world we occupy (Larkin et al., 2006). As such, non-involvement that comes with non-participation is tantamount to social erasure, or existence

with dominant features of being not-at-home. Lack of skills offers a twisted logic, in that an unknown, hidden process (apparently the known processes do not skill adequately and are responsible for lack of skills) must prepare suitable humans that will fit in employment. Since such process is already hidden from our view and therefore cannot be known, caring beings should rather adopt as 'social mission' (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 240) an approach that seeks to serve the 'people' in moving towards progress.

The idea of *care* compels us to recognise that humans care for what they do, need, expect, and for things in the surrounding world (Heidegger, 1996, p. 119). Given that we live in a world that is shared, it is crucial to esteem all humans as those not devoid of worth. Lack of care for others is a deficient mode of being. Heidegger saw the deficient mode as highlighting dispositions of being against, passing-one-another-by, and not-mattering-to-one-another. Negative care amounts to non-care, but he paid considerable attention to the positive care such as leaping-in and leaping-ahead. With the former, responsibility is removed from one cared-for: S/he steps-in only when the matter has been attended to. The burden of duty is off-loaded. I have argued in Chapter 2 that this kind of disburdenment is both freeing (here and now) and oppressing (in the long run), in that the freed is left as dominated by the freer. The best example that illustrates this in our immediate context is the social grant modality used by the SA government to disburse money to indigent youth without working for it. In terms of leaping-ahead, control over what needs care is given back to the abled humans requiring care (Heidegger, 1996, p. 123). It recognises the authenticity of existence for others.

The other becomes transparent to herself in her care and freeing. This approach liberates cared-for persons from domination of getting things done for them. In my view, nothing can be as scandalous as blaming as lacking skills the individuals who are reduced to 'social gazers' by the prevailing systems of opportunity. In leaping-ahead strategies the helped no longer watch others doing work. There-for-me possibilities are made transparent to individual requiring help,

rather than depending on the sheer luck that comes through subordinating oneself to dominating others. Humans develop skills (knowledge-how) in the work context when they are physically and intellectually engaged (Billet, 2013). Work fulfills more than economic ends (Allais & Marock, 2020). Heidegger insisted that when seeing someone 'standing around', we never get to understand his or her humanity. Similarly, enumerating 'NEETs' into existence of a number through statistical representations does not help us to understand their humanity – their lived experiences. George Washington Carver had strong ideas about work. His ideas help to disabuse us from the notion that certain humans with the same blood as others have inherent disabilities and unfit for work.

According to Carver, humans have no right to live if their living is not to fulfill individual *raison d'etre*. Humans exist for work; what is no longer means to end, but an end (Gibbs, 2008, p. 426). Every human individual has work to do on earth. Given this great charge on humans, it should follow that since no human has the right to show up or exit the earth without eking out his/her own work for living, no one should be permitted legitimate monopoly over another person's work. Work affords humans dignity. Defending a system that satisfies the existential right of work only for the few is no longer tenable. However, expanded social kindliness could inspire hope even among the rough and most unpromising, to awaken new dispositional impulses of searching for ways of approximating to the possibilities. Living human beings from anywhere in the world have capabilities to learn to do, and in this process to develop the abilities to participate, when social conditions permit or when given a chance. Without recognition of human capabilities, the world robs itself of the great talent. For instance, Carver emerged from horrid slavery to become the distinguished Black Scientist against the odds, targeted for his race. His contemporary politicians and merchants had to recognise his astute intellectual prowess and discoveries. Those who read his extensive contributions testify that

even the merchant Henry Ford thought of him as the greatest scientist (Kremer, 2011). Carver strived to demonstrate better ways by which subjugated groups could self-uplift.

In the 21st century, the human misery that has styled itself as youth unemployment, which advances social conditions of unhappiness on the so-termed 'NEETs'. Those I interviewed in this category were not happy about the conditions around them. Yet they did not strike me as wanting to live from the government handouts, but they understood that their lives were inauthentic outside work possibilities. Without exception, they all wanted to work. As if their intuition was that human life was more about approximating to the possibilities of work. Heidegger offers us *care* as a way out. I now proceed to the empirical aspects.

10.4.3 Paradigm considerations

In this research, I brought ideas advanced by German phenomenologist Martin Heidegger together with those of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Heidegger's interest is on ontology: He dedicated his intellectual work to the study of being and set out to correct the prevailing notion that 'being' did not deserve attention but was 'universal, self-evident and emptiest term' (Heidegger, 1996, p. 3). He sought to disclose through circumspection the world of truth that is normally concealed in its obviousness. He anticipated that such a world could show itself. Furthermore, he saw humans as thrown into the world and abandoned, such that human reality tended to be lost in inauthentic everyday life. It involved escape to itself, forgetting, and hiding from its true self. In my empirical chapters, I illustrated this through *escapism* that plays out among the township youth; that young people desired to migrate *somewhere*, to escape their emerging self that was shaped by the *nowhere* position. They projected themselves towards possibilities.

On the other hand, Bourdieu's 'entire scientific enterprise originates from belief that deep logics of the social world could be grasped only if one plunges into patterned empirical reality'

(Bourdieu, 1998, p. 2). Rather than evading the reality, he deemed it as important constructing a model from concrete experience, as this was 'respectful of people's historical realities' (p. 2), with the aim of explaining the social configurations. Unlike the collector of curiosities and the exotic surprises, he argued the researcher seeks to apprehend those structures and mechanisms that the foreigner might overlook in his/her exotic expedition. His gaze was focused on the broader structures. More than unbridled curiosity, in his view the researcher mostly needed to take on the burden of principles of reproduction used to construct and maintain a particular social space, then codify these using a model that approximates universal validity (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 23). Grenfell (2008, p. 11) further informs us that Bourdieu sought to level the ground between the 'knowing' and 'research' subject by ascribing to each the same epistemological concepts.

Throughout human history, observers searched for suitable explanations. I explored explanations that could help in not keeping the local people in same positions. In my view the leading faulty explanation is one of skills lack, especially the slant that positions the identified lack as personal choice or solely the government's fault. I thought alternative explanations could be intentional about enabling human possibilities and their active engagement with work. Non-participation in EET that has risen in the world strikes me as one that invites a slight paradigm shift (Kuhn, 2012). Figure 10.2 presents an exploration of this possible shift by proposing an insertion of Critical Interpretative Perspective among the leading paradigms.



Figure 10.2: Possible paradigm insertion

This list by Maxwell (2012) is not comprehensive as transformative and indigenous paradigms are missing (Romm, 2018). In terms of the list above, I see a potential opening for the sixth

paradigm to commingle the critical school with interpretivism. Radical interpretivism within sociological studies is associated with Weber and it arose from dissatisfaction with positivism, and then the critical theory developed in Frankfurt school from dissatisfaction with former traditions. Similarly, emergent paradigms such as critical realism and post-modernism sought to insert other aspects that were not addressed by the previous paradigms. In like manner, there is room for another medley of existing paradigms as necessitated by some limitations with the idea of free-floating powerful institutions (Bourdieu, 1997) that proffer needed change based on their own strength in an uneven world context. Such a medley will help to bring together the powerful theories from dispersed fields, to be recruited for explaining a multifaceted phenomenon such as non-participation in EET, the ambition of which is to advance a human-centred approach.

When stretched beyond current research, this begins to scratch the surface towards the commingled paradigm which can possibly be labelled as Critical Interpretative Paradigm or Perspective (CIP). If pursued, the CIP would be concerned with the being-of-the-beings-in-the-world. In other words, it does not end with being-in-the-world as state-of-being, but intentionally searches for possibilities by first dealing with what is afforded the youth (social pattern) within the supposedly indigenous or native world in which they live (yet not at home). Being-in-the-world becomes authentic when those social possibilities afforded humankind are accessible and aligned to their human living. I locate certain aspects of Bourdieu's reflexive practice to the critical theory. I selected *symbolic violence* and the humanist notion of *care*, which deals with human-based principles of intervention. This promises to instill the dispositions that support humans to thrive together rather passing-one-another-by (Olivier, 2011). In my attempt to reclaim a subjective dimension that is less privileged in the contemporary literature, I do not negate the wider social context. Below I discuss literature.

10.5 Analysis of empirical data

Using the conceptual gaze of interpretative phenomenology, I conducted the field interviews with young people that I reached through the snowballing. Through reading and re-reading transcripts I was able to construct reflective notes, which enabled me to reduce the data through coding basic themes. This enabled me to appreciate the young people's and CoIs' evaluations of non-participation in EET. The picture that 'emerges' from my own interpretation (since data does not really speak of itself) of these themes is the lived experience of 'yearning'. To reach this point, I used the CECM (cause, expectations, choice, and meaning) schema that relates to the four research questions I posed to unpack young people's experiences of non-participation in EET. In the following subsection, I provide succinct answers to research questions beginning with what were perceived as causes of non-participation.

10.5.1 Perceptual causes, effects and meaning of non-participation

Causation does not refer to mathematical concept but to the explanation of humans perceiving how the condition they encountered came about. One issue that the younger participants (D, E, and F) highlighted as a barrier to their meaningful participation was their non-attainment of a bachelor's university endorsement in their Matriculation certificate. Their delayed transitioning into employment was seen in terms of their unfulfilled obligations related to their education. These blamed non-progression on themselves. This does not end with the nobility of accepting responsibility, but further hints at the prevalent doctrines that shaped their imaginations. Non-transitioning into 'tertiary education' or higher education was objectionable because it limited their espoused progress. However, the older youth and CoIs connected non-participation with difficulties that relate to accessing the labour markets. These pointed to what I term as systemic letdown, failures within the wider system, or things that were external to the self. Ultimately, things of the system and obligations of the self, impinged on self-furtherment or individual progression. One would expect that a society that adopts becoming the develop[mental] state,

would give a higher regard for the work of citizenry in ways that were aligned to its mandate. However, policy ideals and practices appeared to be in tandem with the emerging reality of the increasing numbers of young people. Many see this as an outcome of poor education.

In its current form, the ordering of this society does not conceive of the 'work-world as site for learning' (Gibbs, 2008), but for accumulation of profit which in turn results in class conflicts. Ndlovu (2013) blames this on Descartes' dictum *Cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am) that has had an influence on the mental advancement of humans. However, to heighten the sense of life (Dilthey, 1985), human development could be focused on intellect, care, and readiness-to-handle things. If delayed transitions into employment affected even those that followed the smooth track (perhaps not to the same degree as the rest), this stands to reason that education does not account for everything wrong in youth transitions. Still, researchers do not loosen the tightened link between the school education and employment (Burger et al., 2015; Mlatsheni, 2012; Spaull, 2013). This singular view serves to underprepare young people for the *nowhere* as outcome after gaining education qualifications. Preparedness for the possibility of a *nowhere* outcome might help with a better response on reality.

Many young people encounter a less-than-smooth experience when they need to proceed to the employment. At this point, the trail to *somewhere* is narrowed. In that process several young people joined the *nowhere* domain. rapid grade-attainment (or smooth transitions) does not always translate to the ideal of frictionless transitions into employment. While participants D, E, F, and H followed smoother pathway in education attainment, they encountered barriers in accessing employment. Inter-subjective phenomenological case analysis helped to unconceal that those skills obtained in education may be necessary but are not always enough. In fact, in this society it is possible for the individuals who followed a delayed education track (staggered, stuck, and stopped) to make faster transition into employment. This is made possible by labour-market opportunities that are less built on meritocratic attainment but on privilege. In SA, race

followed by class often play a big role in reproducing the asymmetrical nature of employment. Within the private sector, Whites are more likely to access employment with lesser difficulty (Bhorat et al., 2017; Seekings, 2006), but the Africans were more likely to access more decent employment in the public sector. Nonetheless many Africans could not be absorbed anywhere.

In the field, I encountered educated (in terms of secondary education) participants that had little exposure to the so-called labour markets. Participants who had left formal schooling over four years previously did not have much advantage over B who still struggled to reach to the Matric class. Possession of a Matriculation certificate by individuals that lived in a township and who were not connected to the so-called useful networks including politician's brokers (Dawson, 2014), did not gain significant advantage over those without it. I also noted a mixed picture. CM had no Matric but was able to access and retain employment, in the same way as EM with Matric. BM and GM who had no Matric, worked only in cleaning services, like DM who had obtained it. Matric was not the sole determinant for job access. Certain aspects were attributable to the self, yet there were those that squarely belonged to the system. Mishaps of pregnancy in teenage years had additional effects for the female participant and being overage in school. The protracted poverty status of the parents increased the likelihood of suffering for children and the cycle extended to the subsequent generations. Entering marriage without a career or work served to institutionalise poverty.

This insight does not make obtaining Matric any less important as the basic requirement for accessing opportunities, but further reveals that people's abilities to do work does not entirely depend on their education qualifications. For instance, the participants C, E, F, and H accessed first-time employment through their 'networks' (parents, church acquaintances or friends), rather than qualifications. My hunch is that there could have accessed the kind of opportunities they were exposed even without any matric (except for H employment status). Finding work was difficult for individuals without an 'own person' to recommend the searching individuals

to persons in high echelons or well-connected. This highlight the experience of being distant from useful networks (so-called) that would connect them to possibilities. Preoccupation with possibilities heightened their self-awareness of being distant from it. When following the logic of *care*, a corrective would be de-distancing the alienated possibilities to make them ready-to-hand. However, Bourdieu's symbolic violence might expose the connection approach as rendering some individuals as opportunity-conductors and others as non-conductors (Thornton, 1999). And that, the misrecognition of more pronounced conductivity for certain groups over others can be viewed as a tactical game to retain the symbolic power and/or privilege.

Overall, the lives of this youth were tainted by non-progression. Their concern was that when stuck for long, one's resistance to succumb to depraved morality reduces. Furthermore, their utterances point not just to causation, but also the perceived effects of family status - including absent fathers, poverty, and others to the individual level and external factors. The absent father was deemed as weakening the family support structure. Young people thought that childhood life flourished best when both of parents were actively engaged with parenting. Neglect or dysfunctionality of any kind - including the misfortune of death and working far from home - impinged on their childhood experiences negatively. Poor parents may lack resources they need to protect their children from vulnerabilities that have emerged for young people in the 21st century. In keeping with external factors, the participants also cited victimhood to the 'fore-reign' elements. This relates to the recent immigrants who were perceived as jumping the queue of their *waithood* for accessing available opportunities. Their concern had to do with being-passed-by rather than the outright hatred-of-other that the media peddles as xenophobia. It was fascinating to observe that this was more of a concern for the older participants. The added concern regarding interface between the recent immigrants and indigenised locals was on crime that stifles possibilities.

The democratic transition promised equality, but the reality was that those ahead leaped further ahead, a development that helped to push the rest to a place in the back. The yawning chasm of class divisions is opening wider rather than closing towards the direction of equality. From the perspective of township gazers, recent immigrants (including the children of the returned exiles) appear as winners and themselves losers. In terms of the above, participants disburdened themselves from certain responsibilities of becoming and remaining the so-called 'NEETs'. As humans we are nothing more that our experience. Humans are where they have been. In other words, they are history relived. Humans thrive to overcome humble beginnings or being thrown into poverty. However, the history of protracted poverty owed to the structural inhibitions already installed the potent weapons that undermine attempts to transcend the legacies that erode human dignity. Non-participation place self-interest in abeyance. Having nothing thwarts imagination and any ability to project oneself into the meaningful future life. This permitted me to challenge the prominent views so that work precedes skills accumulation.

Contrary to anti-work (Weeks, 2011) slants, the participants in this research associated access to work with insulating human dignity that has been to the pernicious arrested in the skills lack. Worklessness occurred on two realms of realities. It meant *awukabiyonto* (not yet the thing) or *awuseyonto* (no longer that thing). Others may use a harsher term of *ngantweni* (to impress an idea that one lacking occupation was good for nothing). Heidegger helps reorient the focus to effects, to caution against being consumed by the magnitude of the problem. For him existence is revealed in functioning. Essence of work is essence of being… humans work to live and live to work (Shershow, 2005 in Gibbs, 2008). When focus is on the end goal, we get a reverse order from effect-to-cause. The beauty about preoccupation with effects is that it empowers social agents to visualise the desirable future. In that way, social change is not pursued through error and a series of trials, but by understanding the end goal 'where' we must or will be. Although participants raised the issues of being *some-thing* as that which mattered, this is

because work heightens the human sense of somethingness. Current education systems can be faulted for status elevation of certain professions. It is not an association or status that does the work but humans who had accessed the possibility of that kind of work. In this light, being something can be viewed as occupying a meaningful space that allows young people to work. Status is earned from having the possibility and fulfilled related expectations.

10.5.2 Expectations, perceived possibilities and meaning

The young people from black townships see themselves as and are marginalised. This follows their access encounters into social universes of opportunity that are regulated to permit their presence, at the same time prohibit it. A glimpse into the emergent social policies including the popular National Development Plan (NDP) gives impression that access to modern opportunity is open for all, yet sometimes these accessible spaces are what Kiguwa identifies as being 'functionally immutable' owed to the adherence to hegemonic practices (Kiguwa, 2019, p. 11). According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), the individual bodies are already incarnated into social subjectivities. In other words, their bodily potentialities are made social. For purposes of this research, we need to separate the social status (something) from their spatial existence (somewhere). The leaping-ahead directs us to the authentic care that enables us to recognise more than the statistical existence of this youth as part of the so-called 'NEETs', but also their authentic existence as humans that occupy the world they perceive and care about.

At this point, care is not directed towards 'what' as means-to but to the teleological end of their care, which I think of as 'where'. This grants us the freedom to imagine an alternative world (the idea of supersession), and the forms of engagements (transformation) that may be arranged slightly differently from current modern structures of opportunity, so that the township young people are freer to have as their world a world that matches realities that are current in their milieu with reasonable authentic existence. The bigger question that is structurally linked to the title of this study is, if these young people are already reported as missing in education and

training, yet not found in employment – where are they? While somethingness is important for its role in ascribing value (what-for), I also point to its limitation with status identification. I argue that before 'what' of status we need a sense of 'where'. This directs us beyond the spatial arrangement and natural endowments to social ordering, dominating cultures, exploitation of resources, ways of accessing them etc. In terms of this formulation, the skills question belongs to secondary gathering of ideas.

The shadowing of the primary question on *where,* by the fluctuating interests in the realm of *what,* has been the fundamental limitation in our local version of the youth transitions study, and this has extended to its subdivisions of widening participation in the modern structures of opportunity. When we understand the situatedness of the young people foremost in the realm of *where*, then it may be possible to reformulate a better understanding of the decisions that are needed for establishing the kind of human progress that fits into ready-to-hand framework (Heidegger, 1996) or to create a reality that is there-for-me (Dilthey, 1985). First things must always go first. To understand firsthand, the information on poverty, *inequality*, and youth unemployment that ravages the mass of the South African people, we need well-targeted questions and better forms of analysis. Until care is given to forge a structural relationship between human opportunities and spatial possibilities (those things we found in this land), the reality of youth *nowhere* will persist.

To the seemingly rhetorical question 'Where are they?', the simple answer is 'nowhere' (see Jeffrey, 2008a). The existence of being nowhere, helps to heighten the desire to be *somewhere.* Somewhere is a position that has no definite identity, but its attainment possesses a potential to satisfy the individual's sense of existence. Entities exist for a function – a pen does not matter from the standpoint of its cosmetic make-up, but in terms of for what it is used. Heidegger defined life in terms of dealings with the ready-to-hand equipment, which exists only to fulfill a function. In these terms, *some-where* seeks to correct the void and formlessness threatening

to deface the lives of the young people if their spatial *no-where* remains. It reveals a desperate search to remove the nullifying character in current *where*-zone by validating another form of where that promises to approximate to possibilities. Being human is about being preoccupied with what needs to be done, life is experienced in the context of the totality of involvements, the significance and meaning of which are human construction (Gibbs, 2008, p. 425).

Contrary being with political revolution (Dawson, 2014), these participants wanted to satisfy their sense of existence. They searched for jobs and university possibilities and identified improving Matric result as their need. They had appetite for progress to break away from the confines of being nowhere. 'Job scarcity' was identified as culprit against desired progress. As a result of this guilty party of scarcity, they found themselves *thrown* into *ukuhlala*, I translated as *sitting*. This sitting is akin to the notion of *waithood* (Honwana, 2013). While waithood end at expectation and readiness to act, sitting accommodates ceasing in effort, as if to admit defeat. It points us to fallenness or a state of entrapment in a life of fewer opportunities (but dubbed as having plenty). Participants gave the 'sitting occupation' a dignified management title. If peers were employed somewhere, they too were busied emptily by sitting in the township to manage the local affairs. It explains the reality of being un-furthered and wasted. Choosing careers in their earlier grades amounted to a deception that served to underprepare them for the outcome of sitting and limited choice of options.

10.5.3 Personal choices and their meaning

Since society has already shaped the process in ways that constrain individual choices (Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 2001), options available were already laid down for the township youth. Such that, any choice one makes inevitably works against individual interests. The decisions on the life of transitioning from schooling to post-schooling and employment did not only prove to be difficult but structurally delinked from what may be considered as the 'right to be sure' that certain decisions may yield to certain rewards. The blurred structure of benefits which

had already inscribed hopes in the minds of young people, had to be balanced with reality that some of the basic social goods were illusive or elusive. As such, ambitions had to be revised-downward. This is true of B who wanted to be the traffic officer, and C and D who wanted to be medical doctors. Although E and F always wanted to become educators, they too had not fulfilled this ambition. The matured youth G and H must have learnt the lesson because they chose not to specify their career interest in terms of a single attraction. They just wanted to be employed (H) or lead thriving businesses as entrepreneurs.

10.6 The study contribution

The blame that is levelled against those young people who are trapped in adverse circumstances seeks to individuate their situation as personal encounters (see MacDonald et al., 2020). Their experiences are represented in ways that classify encounters of non-participation as an outcome of choice and lifestyle. Unemployment is viewed as indolence and worklessness as ingrained culture that best explains poverty across generations. However, progressive researchers could not find evidence the thoroughgoing analysis of working-class 'culture of poverty' or 'culture of worklessness', but that there was shared exposure to limited labour markets opportunities (p. 24). In the current research I reached to the similar findings. Furthermore, these researchers identified as 'cycles of disadvantage' which effect of adverse 'common social environments', plausible the explanation that constrained chances for betterment among the working-class families. Similarly, in this research I showed that young people, together with their circles of intimacy, confront the adverse conditions that came with the structural relationship of lack. They 'lacked' means to improve their circumstances mainly due to deep-seated barriers that came with nationwide prejudice and hatred that has separated citizens between the colonial conquerors and conquered people.

In SA, rather than wealth distribution we have collection economy: The conquerors preferred to hoard the economic proceeds derived from natural resources in ways that constrained the

opportunities for adults and youth in working-class strata that mainly comprised of the subpopulation group of the Africans. Unfortunately, the democratic government did not in its various endeavors dismantle all the structural inequalities, instead it succeeded to become more corrupt as previous regimes that overtly worked against the local people. Lack of skills has its place, but when used separately without the broader contextual issues, it lands (unfortunately) on the domain of symbolic violence. Structural configuration within a capitalist society makes itself 'God' through the long-lasting institutions which are made to appear as if they were permanent, omnipresent, and transcendent, serving to extend hope to those who participate in their socially constructed 'eternity' (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 244), and despair to those that have been occluded as non-participants. Acts of occlusion and displacement within the symbolic order are concealed by the privileged denialism or *misrecognition*.

This pushes to three ends. One being that it is still possible to graft the current township youth into existing order of possibilities but need recognise them as legitimate participants. Another is that there needs to be a township economy that runs parallel to the overall economy. The last imaginative may be supersession experiment which would require a superior order that would replace the current order of possibilities. My take is that, perhaps what is needed is the superior resolve that takes as its orientation the effects, in the popular words of the former president Thabo Mbeki expressed on various platforms, 'to create the South Africa (or Africa) we want'. The buy-in from all social actors (government, business, and the people themselves) could help to address the so-called skills lack through the existing and reinforced modalities. Meaning the imagination and the will to act for the people in the society to be active in the economy. These findings point to change as urgent need.

10.7 Study implication

This research poses a challenge for social change. A cursory scan into the individual biographies reveals that completion of basic schooling and progression into accessing post-

schooling sectors of education and training is an ongoing challenge in SA. Such that, finding the responsive ways to implement the *leaping-ahead* (DIY) strategies as the long-term solution, while the young people are still garrisoned temporarily within the leaping-in (DIF) approaches (i.e social grants). I agree that Barchiesi (2012) is right about the 'precarious liberation' idea, indeed at first DIY will appear as further precariat[isation] of youth opportunities, but it would benefit them in the long run. The individuals could group themselves in the future along the possibilities they created for themselves. We need to lose concepts that renders able beings almost as perennially disable to learn requisite skills for executing work tasks. Interestingly, this takes place at a time where the construct of work almost exclusively referred to paid work. There can be useful work that pays individual directly, not via employment, Heidegger joined Carver to state that human existence is not excursion, where most citizens go around watching minorities doing some great works. All humans (Africans living in townships too) came to this world to and for work. According to Carver, humans have no right to live if their living does not fulfill their individual purpose to work. Work possibilities are needed.

10.8 Conclusion

I count as privilege having had the chance to interact with young people that participated in this research and their circles of intimacy. They generously shared their individual and family stories with candour, even though the shared stories expressed the lived experiences of hardship. I have critiqued the suspicion that the poor township youth are not deserving and the related suspicion that they come from indolent families that are best served by depending on welfare, and who pass the culture of worklessness on to the members of their families. I found the concept of poverty of aspiration as lacking the explanatory power when the threat of sitting at home (ukuhlala) lingered over the heads of this youth as a threat throughout their post-schooling years. This was regardless of whether they succeeded smoothly or experienced rough delays with their education. The youth experience of non-participation in education, training,

and employment involved hardships. The hardships came with access in terms of the policy, that seemed to coincide with in-access when it came to practice. Instead, I favoured poverty of opportunity to which non-progression was aptly a consequence, over poverty of aspiration which leads us to the suspicion of laziness – a charge that has already been laid unfairly on native South Africans.

10. 9 Recommendations

I sought to explain the overbearing weight of the colonial structure over *conquered* people and highlighted the settler colonial context that is downplayed in the widespread explanations of the opportunity structures in SA. The insertion of this neglected conquest rendered the idea of social exclusion as less useful construct for explaining the realities of the displaced majorities. Through social displacement, I accounted for endemic youth unemployment as layered with constellation of factors which include scarcity and deliberate manoeuvers to occlude others on the grounds of class and race. South Africans need access to opportunities and control over their possibilities, so that, they can self-determine their future lives. Lastly, I pointed to the discourse itself to hint that the discourse of impossibilities and lack do not help inspire new imagination of the long-lasting possibilities. I have only one point for recommendations, that we need a system that allows humans the possibilities to work even if this is outside the current institutional imaginative.

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