

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

“Come on, you know this shirt will look so good with that pair of blue jeans you bought the other week?” This mannequin says to me, or at least I am imagining that she is talking to me, let alone trying to convince me to buy this white shirt. She stands in the middle of the entrance of the shop next to her male companion that I assume is also trying to trick other men into buying the chino pants and collared shirt that he is wearing. I know that I just have to walk past and go over to get my prescription refill at the pharmacy located upstairs. Flash forward to an hour later, and I have gotten my prescription from the pharmacy, I even had some time to stop and buy a salad at the café. Something in my other hand feels a little heavier. Is that? Oh shoot! It’s a shopping bag; in it, the white shirt and a pair of black heels. I seem to have completely ignored the fact that I went into the shop and bought the white shirt! As I was making my way to go and pay for it, the mannequin told me how that black pair of heels would tie the outfit in together with my blue jeans and this white shirt. I notice a few other women with shopping bags and seemingly happy as they move around the aisles of the mall; I am these women.

A young and black middle class female in a shopping mall that has just made a purchase from money she earned from work. This is what drew me into this topic; understanding the shopping experience that encompasses ideas around shopping and consumption practices as a black woman in post-apartheid South Africa. Specifically, shopping for luxury goods;

walking into a consumer space and spending a day purchasing luxury goods such as fashion clothes and accessories, household items, and food at the mall.

It is said that South Africa has a consumer-driven economy; according to Statistics South Africa, the 3 million emerging black middle class is currently the largest spending group. The emergence of this consumerist group is largely due to the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) program's aspirations of creating a patriotic South African elite through the previously, racially disadvantaged groups of the apartheid regime, while also striving for the same groups to have them actively participate in the economy (Marais, 2011). This new consumer would be an interesting group to explore as I also form a part of this group as a young black female that is middle class in a new emerging South African context and constantly frequenting this space of consumption.

The working definition for 'the middle class' is taken from work by Krige (2011) to shape the ideas of my research group and in an environment whereby the middle class is described as a group dealing with and navigating questions of public finance and the practices of a constitutional democracy, economic growth as influenced by debates of whether it is production or consumption driven, the varied implications of black wealth amidst black poverty with debates around black middle class materialism, the de-racializing of the economy through affirmative action policies such as the BEE scheme, and the importance between consumption and ownership (Krige, 2011: 294). My research will use this conception of the middle class as its working definition as it is worked through and against

the lived conceptions and personal understandings of my research participants' middle class positions.

This research wishes to situate itself in a space of consumerism and consumption. I wish to explore the space of a shopping mall in Southern Johannesburg in order to trace the experience of shopping by the use of black women as my core group of analysis. The age group that these women fall under will be that of the early 20's.

The importance of this research is due to the fact that although South African literature of the black middle class and its consumption exists, it does not adequately take into account the significance of black female consumption. Also, I found that there is not enough research in the South of Johannesburg region as a space to evaluate consumption practices; instead, I found that consumption practices in Johannesburg were researched in parts assumed to be low in a scale of wealth; such as Soweto and the CBD, and high in a scale of wealth; such as the Northern Suburbs.

Another importance of this research is because it could lend itself useful for future studies on black females as the women that will be included in this research will form part of a group that is young and in stable jobs or receiving a steady and disposable income. Their experience of shopping can lead to some interesting insights as to the thoughts and ideas that inform their habits and practices of shopping as black women in post-apartheid Johannesburg.

Ultimately, through tracking the experience of shopping I want to understand the question of how does a previously disadvantaged group participate in the economy through their newly found freedom of consumption insofar as that while the policies talk about economic freedom, it is important to note that these women represent interesting cases of the black female in a post-transition state whereby there reveals an important interplay between race, age, gender and femininity, consumption, and branding. The importance is within looking at these young women who are professionals and carry varying degrees of being able to consume.

1.2 Methodology

My primary form of method, for my research, is participant-observation. I conduct my research from the perspective of the shopper. I shadow four different black females as they shop, so as to encompass different kinds of shopping. I shadow these four females that are between the ages of 24 and 26. The strategy of shadowing my participants' shopping, while acting as a shopping companion, was a strategy employed by Miller (2001) whereby he would shadow the shoppers and actively participate with them as this helped to yield some insights that were better than if he had not been on that shopping trip with the selected participant.

In order to gain a broad understanding of the experience of shopping, the four women were all engaged in the different types of shopping in the different days of the week and weekends. I sought to conduct research via 'lifestyle shopping' defined as "an emphasis on an informal, relaxed style of shopping, perhaps with an implied comparison with less pleasurable, utilitarian form of everyday 'necessary' shopping...[the] predominant feel...is one of relaxation" (Reekie,

1992: 185). The different kinds of shopping were divided up into household shopping, clothing shopping, accessories shopping, and gift shopping. The types of shopping, for the different participants, were determined by the participants themselves according to preference as this kind of initial decision-making was telling for some initial insights upon being invited to partake in the study.

The advantage of working with this specific type of group was that it helped in understanding the various aspects of consumption by those spending their own money, and it also helped in eliminating any generational issues that could have arisen from using different age sets. The other advantage was that this particular group was made up of females with disposable incomes that tend to use their incomes for basic needs and soon after engage with the purchase and consumption of luxury goods, usually with the surplus of the income.

It is important to note that some participants struggled to remember their commitment to the study, and would usually take shopping trips without inviting me. The mere fact that the actual research had to be employed in a nature of purchase, it would be difficult sometimes to do as money was not always available to go for a trip to the shopping mall to purchase luxury goods. The alternative plan for this was to do some window shopping; thus engaging in a shopping experience without purchasing. Even though participants were asked early to participate, it took 3-4 months, after initial contact, in which all participants were then ready to partake in the research. The fact that some participants had to either limit their spending or save up money for spending on the trip lent itself to some very interesting insights about how well the women were able to participate, or not participate, in this game of spending within their limits. This

restriction, placed on themselves, spoke more about themselves, and their identities, than about their pockets showing how “shopping remain for many a backstage activity of preparation and ‘programming’ and the presentation of self for an audience” (Shields, 1992: 13).

I was able to shadow the ladies’ days of shopping on different days. I conducted my research from entering the mall to leaving the mall. Through formal and written permission, I then conducted interviews with them to get at the experiences of their shopping as well as getting information of their biographies and life histories so as to give context to the different participants. Although I had seen it fit to conduct these interviews immediately after the shopping trip, sometimes this was not the case as some ladies wished to leave the mall immediately because of prior commitments, and sometimes even though we would sit at a location to conduct the interview our casual conversation from throughout the trip would take up all the time before we got to the formal interview process. This then led to the rest of the research spanning across different days and locations so as to accommodate schedules and finish the research process whereby we would set a different time for the interview phase of the study.

I found it necessary to employ a reflexive approach by the telling of my own experiences as a shopper; this proved to be advantageous as a way in which to explore the shopping experience as a shopper rather than as merely the research participant I had been before. The other advantage to this was that major discrepancies were eliminated as I fell under the same bracket as the demographic of my initial research participants. The shift from researcher to participant was able

to help in revealing the field from a different perspective and to add onto the shopping experience.

As I was conducting the research, I found it important to create another shift. Although the individual interviews gave way to some interesting topics and thoughts by the different participants, I realized that some of their answers would have been interesting if put in the context of a conversation with other participants sharing ideas, and thus I decided to conduct a focus group emanating from the individual interviews I had conducted with the participants. The focus group was held at a central location so as to accommodate travelling time for the ladies as over time some of them had moved to different locations away from the initial fieldsite. The focus group was able to put into action the different questions against the different answers into a very interesting conversation for insights that would have not otherwise been revealed from the one-on-one interviews I had conducted.

My observations were carried out at The Glen Shopping Mall in the South of Johannesburg because of the fact that it was the only mall in this region that my participants looked to as a better option for shopping opposed to its counterpart Southgate Mall that was located a few suburbs away. The fieldsite was advantageous for this research because it was a setting where purchases are made. The variety of shoppers, in the mall, was useful in helping to get at the dynamics of race and class in a space of consumption.

In giving some context to my chosen fieldsite, I refer to literature about the South of Johannesburg and malls in this part of the city. Historically, the urban development in the South

of Johannesburg was not geared towards the 'deracialization of space' like what was happening in other parts of the city, such as Hillbrow, whereby black people were moving in to an area that was once predominantly a white area that eventually pushed white people to move away from the inner city into the Northern suburbs. The growth of the South of Johannesburg moved away from this idea of expanding the townships and informal settlements into previously white areas, and instead, went into the opposite direction by rejecting this very idea by allowing itself to develop on its own terms by those that can afford it; in fact, when it was suggested that there be an introduction of low-income housing projects in the South there were 20,000 written objections that mostly came from black middle-class households already in the South of Johannesburg (Tomilson, Beauregard, Brenner, & Mangcu, 2003: 14). This need to keep space exclusive, in the South of Johannesburg, would weave into other parts of the social world such as the shopping experience.

A shopping mall located in Dobsonville, Soweto, is about the size of a neighborhood shopping mall that caters to the township. The local property managers of the retail centre argue that the consumers it was intended for perceive the centre as second-rate and of an inferior quality that pushes them to prefer to take a taxi to one of the other regional malls such as Westgate and Southgate regional malls perceived to be major competitors; "CBD and township shopping becomes the preserve of the poor and the measure of a township inhabitant's wealth is how far they travel to purchase goods and services" (Tomilson & Larsen, 2003: 49). Similar to my participants and the people that frequent the Glen Mall is because Southgate has since been frequented by shoppers from everywhere 'south', specifically the townships, as shoppers attempting to display a level of wealth. Southgate is now perceived as second-rate and inferior in

quality by most of my participants that live a mere 5-10 minutes away from Southgate and would rather prefer to frequent The Glen with its villa-style architecture for the purpose of exclusivity and a measure of wealth within their ability to travel that extra 10 minutes in much the same way Sowetans, described in the Dobsonville case study, are able to display their wealth in distant shopping trips.

1.3 Ethical Considerations

In taking part in this research, specific ethical considerations had been employed. Anonymity was given to participants who would request it whereby I would employ pseudonyms; it is fortunate that none such participants existed. The idea of the shopping mall as being a public space lent itself to the participants not coming into any physical or mental harm within the context and duration of the research. When I began the research process with the recruitment of participants, I made it a point to first explain, in as much detail, the research I had wished to conduct so as to make sure that the participants and the research would not come under a compromised and harmful light.

Upon agreement to participate in the research, I handed each of my participants the forms of consent to either be recorded vocally and/or visually (tape-recording, pictures taken, and video footage) and to have information used in the research, that were then signed by the participants. The participant information sheet was given to participants to explain the research and what was expected of them as participants; they kept this sheet. The consent form was then signed

afterwards and returned to me. Most of my participants agreed to all of the terms except for one that was not comfortable with their video footage being made public and thus the content in the video was then transcribed rather than shown as part of the research.

Field notes and other records from the research that form part of raw data were kept at a safe location and were only seen and analyzed by myself, and sometimes, by my supervisor when organizing the data upon completion of the research.

I have also given my participants the option of receiving a copy of the completed research report should they request it.

1.4 Fieldsite

Green and Lascaris (1988) spoke of the South African urban space as a place where there was a huge influx of black people into the urban space. These people were a younger demographic and were identified as the black consumers. The area in which my research took place seems to have experienced this type of influx of different races and demographics of people that were beginning to set up their homes encouraged by new developments. It felt necessary to describe the way in which the space is set up so as to get a feeling of 'being there' and a sense of the urban space in which my participants come from.

I leave the driveway of my house and drive along the road until we reach the main road; Columbine Avenue. Nonde lives at the corner house diagonal from the traffic lights across the street. Today, she is back at her student residence at school. We drive down and there are rows

and rows of houses along both sides of the road. We reach a traffic light, and at that intersection all four corners of the stop are occupied by some type of establishment in this neighborhood; Mondeor. On my left, I notice the Mosque and there is a small shopping block with a Spar chain, a Scooter's pizza franchise, right next to it a small café, a perfume shop, a clothing shop, a hair salon, and an Indian cuisine restaurant nestled in a small part of the four-way stop.

Across the road is a Dis-Chem Pharmacy and hair salon which sits diagonal to me. Upon looking to my diagonal right there stands an Engen garage that stands across the road from the pharmacy. Just about a kilometer down the road from the Engen garage is the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve, but just before that is where Lemo's parents' house (and the house that she grew up in) is. Across the road from the gas station, on my left, is a small office space that has been refurbished into a white, grey, and bright blue color scheme. It was a space that used to house various establishments such as a Pub and Grill restaurant and a Mr. Video, a Sushi restaurant, and a pool hall with a baking shop and cooking school downstairs. We continue to drive up the road that curves upwards revealing the Mondeor landscape that could be described as one filled with hills and valleys.

I notice various homes under the shade of large trees on the pavements; smaller trees are also present on the island of the roads to split the traffic of cars that are oncoming and ongoing. There is a veterinary clinic on my left that sits on the corner across the road from a nursery school that is simply titled "Little Leaders Academy". The next corner approached has a white board with purple and black writing that reads "Mondeor Integrative Medicine" that advertises a variety of different kinds of medicinal approaches from Western to Asian practices of treatment. As soon

as we pass that corner, the next town begins called “Winchester Hills”. It is marked by a memorial of a concentration camp of the apartheid era; a large field with fencing around it and a headstone marking the significance of the space. Across the road is a Shell Garage that is marked by its position of being at the bottom of the hill as you would need to go down a deep inclination to make it to the floor of the gas station; further categorizing the ‘hills’ of the Winchester suburb.

Driving further up this road is more of a hill as my dad’s van struggles to make it up the hill fast enough. We continue to drive up the hill and come up to a school on the left called Abbot’s College, the school is quiet with a couple of cars in the parking lot of the first few administrators probably preparing for the new school year ahead. Behind the school is Columbine Crossing, a large and fairly new shopping center that lies behind the school and below the Sasol Garage that we then enter as the car requires gas. At the garage, I can actually see Wisani’s house from here. Technically, her house is the first residential house on the road, but directly on the corner is a recently-built show house for a real estate company. The shadow of the show house eclipses some of Wisani’s house where it seems they would be getting most of the sunlight. When we exit, we leave the shopping complex and gas station behind us and face a McDonald’s that we drive past as we continue along Columbine Avenue, passing the suburb of Suideroord, underneath the Klipriversberg bridge and then into the suburb of Glenanda.

The road, then, curves and curves passing a public library, a petrol station and other small shopping complexes with takeaway restaurants and such stores for furniture. The billboards begin on the street light poles; a turquoise color splashes across the board, and in bold white writing is the FNB logo with an arrow indicating ‘straight ahead’ for where their next bank

branch is located, which is at The Glen Shopping Mall I am going to. After the billboards, is an interesting selection of other small buildings that look like homes transformed into places of business; Figures SA which is a training academy for fashion modeling, A party store selling decorative ornaments and accessories for parties and the like the store is also part institution for math extra lessons for children in school. As we curve the corner around the complex of town houses, we pass a nursery school and then spill over into the hub that introduces the industry of shopping to us. Among those introductions are various billboards about an auto body shop, a gas station and a row of men standing on the pavement with cut-up cardboard boxes written words like plumber, electrician, painter, etc. I realize that they are standing on the pavement across and leading up to a hardware chain store called Builders Warehouse whereby they have stood there so as to advertise their skills that go in line with what one will be purchasing at the hardware store. Continuing along the road is a car dealership for Renault, and across the road is a Tiger Wheel and Tyre shop.

We continue along the road, go underneath another bridge, this time it is the N2 highway that, if we had taken that road, one could see the mall standing grandiose on the side of the road where we would see The Glen Shopping Center so clearly with all of the ample rooftop parking and different kinds of shops; from household to banking, to food stores. After the bridge, the road inclines upwards; it is almost as if we are emerging out of the shadow of the bridge to the sunny image of the mall. There is an Audi car dealership and petrol station next to each other that are directly across the road from the mall. We drive up onto one of the ramps leading to the parking lots and I am anxious to get there and spend some time in the mall. The car has dropped me off and leaves me at the entrance, as I feel a sense of being abandoned, but soon get excited about

the fact that I am about to walk into a place full of shiny and brand new things looking back at me through the window displays. I am in retail heaven.

This very same idea of retail heaven has been priming me during the journey I took from leaving the driveway at home to entering the door of the mall; from the small hop at the four-way stops to the big hopping complex in the next suburb, to the cluster of car dealerships just a block away from the mall. With all of the overwhelming visual information of shops and shopping, I have already decided what shops I will be going to in the mall, what I will be looking for, and what I will be able to afford to buy during my time there. This retail heaven, I walk into, will highlight themes of postmodernity and choice, the structure of the mall and its distinct features, concepts of affordability and class, as well as the thoughts and idea of the different kinds of patron of a shopping mall a a space of retail heaven.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 Literature Review

I wish to use this chapter to establish literature and works by authors from different parts of the world and how their studies and opinions work next to studies and opinions set in a South African context that will help me establish certain arguments that I wish to pose through my own study of the consumption practices of black females. The literature I chose helps me to map out what I wish to explore in conducting this research, and the kinds of ideas that emerge from the voices of my participants about ideas around race, class, and gender in a new South African perspective; about what structures of the shopping mall represent; about the landscape of contemporary Johannesburg in which the participants find themselves in; and about the different ideas of consumption and empowerment.

2.1.1 Contemporary Johannesburg

This research is conducted in shopping malls and surrounding residential areas that make up small parts of the urban city that is Johannesburg. For this very reason, it is important to explore the contemporary city landscape in which the research is focused in. The descriptions of the city and the ways in which it is discussed in literature gives the research, and its various aspects and facets, the context within which it operated.

Johannesburg has been discussed in such a way whereby “post-apartheid fiction offers a fruitful site for understanding city-culture in a more extended idiom - the intricacy of the city as a spatial formation, its density as a concentration of people, things, institutions and architectural forms; the heterogeneity of lives juxtaposed in close proximity, the citiness of cities, the ways in which they gather, mix, remix, separate, conceal and display and the ways in which urban life becomes the irreducible product of mixture, each urban moment sparking performative improvisations which are unforeseen and unforeseeable” (Nuttall, 2004: 740). This statement helps this research to situate itself in an urban space that is constantly changing and evolving through its ability to be dynamic through the people and things it hosts. Shopping in an urban environment such as this one, could lead to some interesting insights that may be so because of its nature as an urban space.

Apart from looking at contemporary Johannesburg as a continually changing urban place, it is useful to look at a perspective that sees that change as a means to an end of what its ultimate goal is meant to be. Bremner (2000) discusses South Africa from when it adopted the idea of being a gateway to Africa, and basically its representative. In 1997, a vision was launched to further encourage this new image the country had, by rehabilitating the image of the inner-city and turning it into a more positive one; the vision was described as one whereby “it relied on an aesthetic, property-led development program to regenerate a declining economy, re-image a city tarnished by its oppressive, racist past and position Johannesburg as a “world city” as it entered the global economy” (Bremner, 2000: 191).

This perspective still persists in contemporary Johannesburg, especially around the time when the entire world was to come to our city for the FIFA Soccer World Cup of 2010. This kind of perspective gave the city its confident outlook as competing in the new world as a world-class city. My research participants represent this idea of inhabitants in world-class city. They navigate the urban as confidently as the city has allowed them to be as thinking of themselves as world-class citizens of a world-class city.

Postmodernity, agency, and freedom are all expressed through the shopping experience and manifest in the women in South African malls as an idea of empowerment via purchasing power. In discussing the city of Johannesburg, Nuttall (2008) wishes to convey the topic via a description of the Y Culture that is constitutive of a post-apartheid youth that is made up of the Y Generation. This group is made up of young locals that reconstruct Johannesburg under their take of the modern, the up-to-date, and urban. One way in which this is understood is via a reading of Foucault's practices of self-stylization or self-fashioning whereby "individuals create a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and ways of being so as to transform themselves". This self-fashioning is important as it draws heavily on looking to the self as a body of political liberation and practices of freedom (Nuttall, 2008: 92-93) Participants of this research are expressions of self-fashioning via their freedom in a space of shopping, under the representation of them being a group given rise to by political liberation. They carefully think about the different ways in which to present themselves to the world on any given day, and this selection process helps to speak a lot about the individual.

2.1.2 Race, Class, and Gender in a New South Africa

I wish to engage with the concepts of race and class as a collective representation of a new South African discourse that uses gender to work through such discussions. The new South Africa is discussed by its interplay between the affected ideas of race, class, and gender. Certain literature works through my arguments in using the lens of a contemporary South African discourse, in which I undertake in the pursuit of relaying the consumption practices of black females in the contemporary moment.

Dean (2009) conducts research on malls in South Africa and discusses the fact that within her space, a focus on women helps to think about the integration of different races and cultural changes as women make up the gender that carries both the aspects of class and ethnic identities compared to their male counterparts, and thus concludes that women's lives can be seen as scales of cultural change (Dean, 2009: 3). The focus on women is important for my research as women are always evolving within the different relations in the spaces in which they find themselves in.

In looking moreover at the different conceptions of gender and how that participants seemed to have taken the time in establishing how they looked points to ideas of beautifying oneself that Dean (2009) discusses. It is seen that the consumer culture present in malls has been associated with femininity because of the fact that consumption takes its form in the body of the female consumer that wants to follow a form of beautification and adornment, which reproduces the female consumer as an active consumer (Dean, 2009:

22). The participants for this research fall under this definition as the female in a space that reproduces their femininity; this literature will help this research that seeks to explore just how much the female body enhances the experience of the shopping space whereby it transforms them into active consumers.

I find that this idea of ‘the new South Africa’ gives us a variety of people, with a variety of experiences, to learn from. It was important to come to terms with this when selecting my research participants; that even though they were similar in demographic detail, the contemporary environment in which they found themselves in allowed for them to face their lives differently from each other, and this gives way to varied opinions in insights. The lesson learned was taken from qualitative research conducted based on the participation of women. Cannon, Higginbotham & Leung (1988) found it useful to explore aspects of volunteering for research that went into the process of sample collection as they realized that it was based more on the kinds of backgrounds that the women came from, that would heed the best results of how research can take form as “while in-depth analysis of small homogenous sample is key to discovering the unique quality of subjects’ lives, if this approach is used repeatedly on the same population, it can block discovery of the diversity of the human experience” (Cannon et. al, 1988: 450). This helped them gain more and more insight into the fact that only a specific type of woman would volunteer; as only white woman from middle-class families working in male-dominated sectors would be the quickest to respond positively to participation, whereas with black women, it took more labor-intensive strategies whereby interviews and face-to-face meetings would be set up at the risk of them cancelling and counting on the fact that the black women saw

something worthwhile about the research in order to participate. This paper was a way in which, via exploring the different race and class backgrounds of different women, to show that without adequate research into the racial and class backgrounds of participants, especially women, qualitative research would produce biased results (Cannon et. al, 1988: 449-450). When it came to the selection process, this study had helped to make me realize that I needed to explore the participants' backgrounds in more detail so as to give them enough of a motivation to participate in the research, over and above the fact that they were ideal candidates for the research.

In the epilogue of Anderson and Collins' (2007) book is a collection of anthologies that helps introduce students to the ways in which race, class, and gender shape experiences of the different groups in the United States. The point of the book is to show a discourse on how groups develop within their race, classes, and genders and how that these three concepts are actually interconnected and help in understanding a person's individual and group experience. There is a use of essays in narrative form by disadvantaged or marginalized groups in the contexts of race, class, and gender to showcase how these categories work themselves out in the social. This has brought about the need to analyze "race, class, and gender together in thinking about inequality" (Anderson & Collins, 2007: 79). My research works through the concepts of race, class, and gender whereby it is beyond the scopes of the classroom, and just in between young women that have left (or are still pursuing tertiary education) while also moving into adulthood. There is a gap in research of this particular age group, whereby their experiences of race, class, gender, and inequality is experienced differently based on their class position and age.

In getting at the questions of language and class, Phadi and Owen (2010) look to Soweto, as their fieldsite, in which to explore isiZulu and Sesotho language definitions/translations of 'class' as an English conception. It was seen that the predominant number of participants regarded themselves as falling under the category of 'middle class', by vernacular definitions of 'middle class' that were related to status, and a person's standing in society, usually based on materiality, money and affordability (Phadi & Owen, 2010: 92). This literature helps me with a way to approach the participants of this research, who are black and identify with different ethnicities and speaking different African languages that do not have a direct translation of the term 'middle class'. It is important to look at the participants via their race and ethnicity, so as to understand how they work through the English conception of being 'middle class' and their willingness or reluctance to self-identify with the term.

Once established that my participants are different and unique in their own ways, it is then easier to observe them as they make their decisions in order to navigate through this contemporary world they are in. By looking at them as different to one another, it is important to note how their middle class status translates, at different moments, so as to show that not all literature about the black middle class is accurate in its analysis based on generalization and assumed homogeneity of black people of a certain class.

In a magazine article from in *The Economist*, it is stated that coming from South African initiatives to reverse apartheid's influence on disabling the economic participation of

South Africa's black population, affirmative action initiatives such as the BEE initiative, by the government, have helped in producing a black middle class that is able to influence and affect the country's economy and political landscape. They are unfavorably known as 'buppies' (black up-and-coming professionals) that have, in the past few years, been very influential in shopping sprees and property boom's of the country that have helped in speeding up the economic growth whereby this group buys assets such as cars and household goods via their access to credit. The highest priority that this group has is the purchasing of a new home, usually out of the townships into more affluent neighborhoods with a huge presence of the black diamond's (Author Unknown, 2007: 1). The article is useful to look to, for purposes of my research, in getting to understand what factors are there to influence the decision-making of the group; more especially, the importance of the participant that has made the decision to purchase her first home and is shopping for that very purpose in participating in this research. It is revealing of some insights as the participants that follows this kind of pattern. Moreover, it will be uncovered, that although this research presumes the middle-classness of the participants that they do not engage in a supposed 'shopping spree'; on the contrary, they seem to be a group that participates in very careful spending while shopping.

2.1.3 Shopping Malls

Tomilson and Larsen, (2003) begin by setting the scene of foreign tourists flying into O.R. Tambo International airport and being driven to the Northern suburbs where they would decide to begin their exploration of the city as they go to the mall. As they settle into the

coffee bar, they would be surprised by all the high-end shops of the mall, as well as the intermingling of the different races in one space. They would also be more aware of the dominant race of people in the mall as black shoppers that have been drawn from Soweto into malls in the North. An unlikely move to the CBD will have them notice an absence of white shoppers and a predominant presence of foreign African nationals as traders of the space. This anecdote is used to introduce the interplay between race, class, and space whereby the nature of race and space shows decentralized shopping outside of the CBD whereby there is integration along class lines (Tomilson & Larsen, 2003: 43-44).

The chapter sets up malls' developments, in different parts of the city, against the CBD as a way to look at the patterns of shopping whereby the black population has tended to move to malls in the North (Sandton) and the South (Southgate), and bypassing Township mall developments. Low-income, black families tend to frequent the CBD, whilst higher-earning black classes tend to frequent malls outside of the township which are characterized by their predominant presence of 'white shopping' (Tomilson & Larsen, 2003: 48-49). The participants of my research fall heavily under this interplay of race, class, and space as black middle class frequenting spaces of white power, mostly due to the fact that all of them have been living in the surrounding middle class suburbs from when they were toddlers. Although they exhibit a sense of being most comfortable in so-called 'white spaces', it is seen that some tend to move away from the CBD and township malls, pursuing a different shopping experience in malls of the North, markets, and factory shops.

While on my different shopping trips, I notice the heavy presence of security in the mall. As it turns out, by the time I had decided to undertake this research, I found out that it was just after months of different malls being targeted by different heists and robberies. Three months before my research, The Glen Shopping Center already had one of its Istore's robbed. It is almost an impossible task to have a discussion about malls without engaging literature about its security and what having security means for the mall as a space of freedom. In an attempt to describe, more specifically, the shopping mall, its nature and the impact of consumer culture on the lived experience, malls in the States and malls in Britain are studied by Miles (1998) whom goes on to describe the fact that these malls seem like monuments of the freedom of consumer choice. He says that malls have religious-like qualities that set the tone for every consumer experience turning the act of shopping into less of a choice in a space that he describes as "highly controlled environments" from security patrolling as a police force to closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras capturing every move at all angles (Miles, 1998: 59-60). As the mall is set up, it is a space that gives the shopper a sense of being in a space where anything is possible, especially the possibility of a kind of freedom. This article shows, for my research, how that freedom is controlled, by the different structure of mall security, showing a contradiction of what the space of the mall should be like.

I realized a lot of instances from the observations of and the conversations with my participants, and through self-reflection, that the mall is not always a space of merely buying; the exchange of money and object. I realized that there were moments when I felt

like I was being watched, and moments I caught myself gazing at the activities of the mall, only to find that my participants do the same. They describe this act of gazing upon each other, as participants of the mall, and gazing upon the mall's activities is something within which they find enjoyment. Literature from Mumbai illustrates this point. Anjaria (2008) conducted an ethnography whereby he compares and contrasts spaces of public consumption between markets and shops in the streets and shops in a shopping mall. He acknowledges that malls and street markets are able to coexist in the urban space rather than one taking the place of another. It is said that even though the mall was reserved only for those with credit cards and cell phones due to the large influx of people visiting, it soon became clear that other people were only visiting the mall "in order to witness the novelty of the space – the large atrium, central air-conditioning, cosmopolitan atmosphere, unique sense of order, and shops full of previously hard-to-obtain foreign brands – rather than to purchase goods" (Anjaria, 2008: 213).

The failure of the mall came in 2006, since opening in 1999, where it was then sold to a company that had different plans for the site. Partly due to the failure were the different assumptions of what the mall could do. An assumption of what the mall can do as a space is important to note here as "the diversity of ways people make meaning and derive pleasure from malls complicate the assumption that these new spaces of consumption will necessarily revolutionize consumption practices" (Anjaria, 2008: 213). This is largely due to the fact that people wish to consume the mall as a space of spectacle rather than the products within the space of the mall. My research illustrates this point whereby it is revealed that the mall is a space of spectacle whereby one would find a consuming of the

space and its elements rather than actual products in the several shops and restaurants offered.

In looking at literature about malls in South Africa, Nuttall (2008) describes Rosebank Mall as a place tailored for the rising youth. My participants are considered a rising youth that frequents spaces that draw them in, and this is done through specific ways by some of the malls I frequented with my participants. Whether the mall was in the North or South of Johannesburg, the mall had a certain pull-factor for my participants to be there in the first place. In Johannesburg, Nuttall (2008) speaks of the urban Y Culture that makes its presence felt within where it is located in Rosebank; in a mall called The Zone. The Zone is described as a mall targeting the nature of Y Culture individuals, whereby the studios of a community, youth radio station, YFM, are located. The Zone and Rosebank Mall attract what she terms as the ‘young, hip workforce’ that is drawn in by the influx of “information technology, travel and tourism enterprises, retail and fashion outlets, cinemas, and restaurants”. The mall is able to further draw this group of people in by including the YFM studios and local fashion brands, books and music that they are familiar with. Restaurants are strategically located in such a way whereby people passing by could be gazed upon by those in the restaurants (Nuttall, 2008: 95).

This space of the mall is structured in different ways, with certain shops, in order to attract a certain kind of group. The Glen Mall, in the South, has aspects that are similar to certain malls and is also structured in a way that attracts the consumption of my participants.

Much in the same way as the discussion of the positionality of the restaurants, the mall for this research is similar as further enhancing this idea of being under surveillance in the

mall by where one would position oneself in the space to gaze upon others or be gazed upon. This particular mall, used for this research, also continues to add shops that are assumed trendy enough to attract my group of participants proving to be a space that draws in a particular group of people.

It was important to investigate how time plays a role in a consumer space, such as a mall, as this aspect varied according to factors relating to how much money one has, what was needed, and how inviting the mall was. Participants in the next study, specifically, show how certain factors come into play when one is deciding how long to stay in a mall. In looking to the concept of time and how people construct time, Feldman & Hornick (1981) found it crucial to discuss the idea of consumer space. “A person’s activities are the result of a complex mix of incentives, personal characteristics, and constraints. These serve to mediate choice, often functioning in differentially lagged combinations. An investigation of the consumer’s personal domain in relation to temporal behavior will contribute to a better matching of consumers and time” (Feldman & Hornick, 1981: 411). They use this understanding of consumer space in order to maneuver the different ways in which people spend their time. They state that individual differences based on socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, home and family, occupation and income, and the person’s personality all contribute to how consumer space is approached and experienced. These differences also influence the consumers’ choices of leisure (or lack of) in the different consumer activities, that are based on perceived needs, that shopping curbs, that will then decipher how that time will be used efficiently in the consumer space rather than wasting it (Feldman & Hornick, 1981: 411). This study helps explain the aspect of my research

whereby I realized that the time I spent in the mall was dependent on them; how that in walking into the consumer space of the mall, decisions about time spent are often due to a person's demographics that either limit or increase their time in the space and also contribute to how that time is spent. My participants' choices of consumption, based on time, spoke a lot about the different aspects that motivated (or failed to motivate) them to consume.

2.1.4 Consumption and Empowerment

When going on the different shopping trips, all of my participants engage in different kinds of shopping and consumption practices, these consumption practices are easily identifiable through deciding what category of shopping orientation each participant fell under. In a dissertation by Inseng (2004), she writes against the backdrop of commerce whereby she looks at consumers and their different shopping orientations within the different South African retail stores; such as, Edgars, Woolworths, Mr. Price, Markhams, etc. She employs a model for classifying the different shoppers according to the ways in which they make decisions of purchasing. She divides them into eight different profiles such as the recreational hedonistic consumer, the novelty-fashion consumer, the perfectionist and brand conscious consumer to name a few. She does this so as to inform brand strategists what kinds of brands would attract the different kinds of consumer as not all consumers are the same, and having this knowledge could give accurate results for future branding of consumer goods (Inseng, 2004: 78-80). It is important to note that even though my participants fall under the same categories of race, class, and age set; they tend to be different kinds of shoppers that could be revealed through how they make decisions

in shopping, thus giving way to seeing the different categories of shoppers that the participants fall under.

Moreover, on the aspect of research, South African commerce gave way to the discussion of factors influencing the different shopping patterns of the participants, and inversely, how the participants' shopping orientations affected certain factors. In providing a perspective of South African retailers, it is seen that it is no longer enough to adapt to changes that may arise in the environment, instead; it is now up to the retailer to be innovative in creating needs in which they can meet. Unfortunately, retailers' problems are beyond a changing environment and a needs assessment to being about the competition with illegal clothing brands, consumer spending changing from clothing to assets such as education, housing, health. Moreover, consumers are increasingly cancelling their credit cards and switching between different retail brands (Radder, 2000: 76). This perspective gives insight about the shopping patterns of my research participants, and what kinds of factors influence the changing of those patterns, especially with regards to the question of credit expected of the new group of black diamonds. This perspective helps to give some insight into the different reasons my participants adapt to the changing environment of the retail space by switching their priorities in pending, over above the retailers' attempts to adapt to the changing retail environment with the shopper that no longer shops impulsively.

I had realize that my research participants were shopping to fulfill certain ideas that related back to their personal lives and motivations as described by Miller (1998) whom begins

his book by describing two case studies whereby shopping occurs. A young man shopping for a pair of jeans because his current girlfriend disapproves of the pair he currently owns and frequently wears. He is faced with decisions about where to buy from and how much to spend. His decisions are also influenced by the approval of his girlfriend; she could notice if they are a cheap brand and she could also notice that he bought jeans of the very same kind he is shopping to replace. The second case study is of a woman that is meant to buy baby products for her baby, but instead comes across a pair of shoes that her single and unattached lawyer sister wore on her last visit that she suddenly wants to buy in place of her baby's products.

Miller (1998) pushes the reader to picture himself/herself in these people's shoes so as to explore with them the experience of shopping as one that comes with decision-making based on desire, sacrifices, and love and relationships; that when one is shopping, as a ritual, external variables are the ones that come into play more significantly rather than the assumption that shopping is an isolated event that seems as "hedonistic materialism that we enjoy abusing" (Miller, 1998: 1-4). This research brings forth the importance of seeing the shopping experience as much more than an isolated event, but as one whereby shoppers' experience of shopping is constantly faced with external factors that make the shopping experience filled with many more social elements other than merely the act of buying.

While shopping, I notice that objects carry meaning for my participants. Although they are not necessarily purchasing the object, they are, in a way, consuming right there on the spot

by the mere interaction with the object. I did not need to see consumption playing out in the private domain; it was happening right there in the shop as participants would decide, according to the meanings attached to certain objects on the shelf, whether or not they were going to purchase it. Object mediation was discussed in more detail by Miller (2002) on the idea of consumption. He states that engagement with consumption meant taking seriously the relationship that exists between people and things, and that holistic ethnography was a project to undertake in order to get at the ripples of consumption via people's social and cultural lives (Miller, 2002: 237-238). He points to the fact that typical anthropological research (Participant-observation, focus groups, and questionnaires), in public domains, of consumption is led by the fact that consumption is usually always in the private domain, thus "the ambition represented by these projects is then to find some way for the researcher to participate within the sites where consumption as an activity is concentrated" (Miller, 2002: 239). Thereby asserting the fact that ethnography might have to be inclusive of more than just the shopping experience as consumption, but should consider moving with the product that is to be consumed to the private domains of social life where it is most likely to be consumed, in which case. Although it is suggested that we follow the consumption of the object into the private domain, via the act of shopping, this research observed the consumption of the object within the shop and through purchase, which gave way to some interesting insights as participants used these objects to speak more of their private domains through this engagement.

In order to understand the political and economic context of my female participants, this study needs to engage in a discussion of literature to understand more the political and economic context of BEE (Black Economic Empowerment). To this, I do a reading of

Hein Marais (2011) whereby the historical context of BEE and its function is outlined. Initially, the early BEE form was more of a political compromise on behalf of the existing corporations. This compromise was meant to aid in “the rapid emergence of a black African bourgeoisie sympathetic to the ideals of a national liberation” (Marais, 2011: 140). This ‘African bourgeoisie sympathetic to the ideals of national liberation’ is just a term to describe a black capitalist that would eventually be able to challenge or even displace the white elite. The thinking was that, through this, a patriotic bourgeoisie would emerge that was a successful entrepreneur; a wealthy black person forming part of a black middle class that would ultimately mean that a benefit for black people would be a benefit for the country (Marais, 2011: 140).

This concept seems all too good to be true as looking to the current political and economic climate of a black people in post-transition South Africa today. It seems as though this patriotic bourgeoisie might have been a myth as even the current black middle is not all patriotic even as being presumed to be the group that has the ability to influence the political climate of this country.

After the first wave of BEE ideals were introduced it seemed difficult as after the black control of market capitalization on the JSE (Johannesburg Stock Exchange) had plunged, Black business associations set up a Black Economic Empowerment Commission that sought a much more interventionist strategy from the government, which then included more strategies to empower the black people via black management control and skill development. This expanded version of the BEE came to be known as Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment, BBBEE, “this more thoroughgoing variant of BEE, it was hoped would cultivate a productive black capitalist elite capable of operating in tandem

with government. BEE would thereby serve the grander project of building a developmental state” (Marais, 2011: 141-142).

BBBEE was ultimately meant to create the black capitalist elite to navigate the global economy all the while staying loyal to the ruling party, i.e. the ANC whereby all the economic and political profits would feed into the ANC by the patriotic capitalist that would determine a political climate inside and around the ANC against radical change. Therefore, “BEE has served two primary functions. It has provided a vehicle for elite enrichment and the brisk engineering of a black bourgeoisie that rides side-saddle behind incumbent corporate capital” (Marais, 2011: 144).

This research sought out this explanation of the BEE strategy so as to give the research and its participants some context as to how far or near this strategy stands in relation to the participants. Although some participants relate to this strategy and some of its intentions, they stand at a greater distance than their parent whom caught the direct ripples of the intentions of BEE as being an economically black elite group, and being loyal to the ruling party and government because they feel that they owe their livelihood to the government. My participants caught the ripples of the BEE through their parents that encouraged putting them through tertiary education and having their homes in the suburbs. This shows that my participants’ link to BEE is only secondary, and could further explain their willingness and reluctance to self-identifying as black middle class since this term almost always goes back to how it emerged because of BEE, and that BEE is a government strategy employed for loyalty to the ruling party; perhaps this line of logic does not resonate loudly for the younger generation.

In speaking about race in South Africa, I wish to use the following literature to extend upon the idea of postmodernity through consumption. The idea of postmodernity allows for ideas around agency and freedom that are further perpetuated by the potential of policies such as BEE. Browning (1989) discusses the concept of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). He starts off his book with a discussion of how the BEE term has been almost a kind of buzz word with a collection of adjectives and a noun to create a fine-sounding phrase. This then led to the people in that period saying this phrase without much thought about what it is, what it does, and how it works. He acknowledges that there is still continued discourse about what it means to operate under a BEE system. His focus is mostly on BEE in the public and private sector, within this he is able to have a brief discussion about individual prosperity. He defines, more specifically, black individual prosperity from BEE that allows business owners to prosper, and the individual to earn enough money to have the choice of shopping at a Pick 'n Pay in Town or at a local spaza shop in the Township in which they live. He also highlights the fact that although freedom of economic choice could be on the rise for black people, it will still be the white business owners that still own a majority of the country's wealth and means of production because of the limited knowledge that black people have about BEE; "it is clear that great expectations have been aroused in the black community about the concept of black economic empowerment, even though it may not be fully understood. If some results are not achieved quickly, that enthusiasm will turn to disillusionment" (Browning, 1989: 16-26). The need to explore the concept of BEE is important for this research as it directly deals with the conceptions of black South African females actively participating in actions

that are economic, and based on class. This female is the research participant for this research, whereby historical factors have helped her to fall under a certain category when it comes to the South African economy.

In linking back to the idea of consumption to empowerment, I present here an argument about how this empowerment can be worked through. Sherman (2007) looks at luxury hotels and the different aspects and processes that are experienced by the workers of the hotels as well as the guests of the hotels. She attributes the rise of consumption of luxury service to the rise of consumption of luxury goods that included clothing, accessories, cars, houses, food, etc as being more in line with the lifestyles of the rich and famous or the “new” US economy (Sherman, 2007: 5). Sherman (2007) also discusses how that the rise of the consumption of luxury goods and services is attributed to people’s increasing incomes that allow them to be able to afford some of their purchases, this however tends to then create an inequality between the consumers of luxury service and the producers of luxury service whereby the workers providing the luxury service do not earn enough money to consume such luxury service.

Understanding these dynamics in a space of luxury consumption can speak about the ways in which class is reproduced and how the different classes negotiate their decisions in the space. This is seen in the worker who must insubordinate himself in order to give the luxury service to the hotel guest who tries to ignore class differences by being reciprocal in his tipping and politeness to the worker so as not to come across as the entitled luxury consumer, “guests justify their conflicts about consuming luxury service just as workers resolve their discomfort with producing it...they obscure their own privilege by trying not

to think about it...they mitigate their privilege by practicing reciprocity toward workers and casting them as equals” (Sherman, 2007: 255). This point is important in thinking about the female consumer purchasing luxury goods in a setting whereby they are most likely to encounter workers that insubordinate themselves for them. In fact, the biggest factor of a good shopping experience was within receiving good service from the retail workers of the shopping mall; without this, various factors arose about class, race, gender, and customer satisfaction.

2.1.5 Postmodernity

I notice that, through the act of shopping, my participants have learned lessons of being more in control of their lives and that choices made were from their newfound ability to decide for themselves. The idea of postmodernity was highlighted in these conversations; calling on Miles (1998) who closely associates the act of consumption with the concept of postmodernism, states that consumption is and is a condition of the rise of a postmodern era and culture (Miles, 1998: 23).

He then calls on authors that describe and debate this link of consumerism and postmodernity. Mike Featherstone (1991 as cited in Miles, 1998) states that consumption is not restricted to the young and rich; it reaches further beyond those boundaries including everyone in the postmodern assumption that anything is possible. Moreover, it is “not that middle-class artistic value are becoming more important to a large percentage of the population...but that the production of such culture is increasingly subject to a process of commodification” (Miles, 1998: 24-25).

Featherstone (1991 as cited in Miles, 1998) also makes a crucial point about the role consumerism plays in postmodernity and that is no matter whom you are “as consumers we are all gaining some semblance of authority over the everyday construction of our lives through consumption” (Miles, 1998: 25). This idea of consumption and a postmodernist approach to how being in the mall and consuming gives one the possibility that anything is possible, and that this feeling reaches all kinds of people in the space is important because my research is conducted in a space whereby different kinds of people could be observed as they work through the space and the idea of limitless possibilities that are offered by the mall.

In continuing in my line of thought about postmodernity, I take on the concept as it relates to the view that my female participants are empowered in their positionality as postmodern actors with the freedom of an abundance of choice; as their positionality allows them to purchase both their basic needs, as well as luxury goods. This postmodern ability to purchase luxury goods also puts them in a position whereby they can walk into a shop and expect the kind of service that comes with purchasing luxury goods. The fact that my participants are manifestations of post-apartheid ideas that are assertive and allow the exercise of their agency and freedom, it is seen that they extend these ideas over to when they are within the act of shopping whereby they assert themselves as superior in a space where they are the customer that must be assisted by the salesperson of the shop. This idea of superiority and insubordination is illustrated in hotels service literature. The shopping experience this research will follow will be that of consumption of luxury goods

from the everyday shopping of other goods such as groceries. I explore this point by looking to the consumption of luxury service in hotels.

CHAPTER 3

The following chapter is a collection of the profiles of the research participants; Lemo, Wisani, Nonde, and Nonki. It is an introduction to the people and the personalities that inform the bulk of this research report. With this chapter, I wished to enter ethnographical data that allows the reader to get to know the research participants before going shopping with them; to get at their thoughts and ideas to better inform the different shopping trips that I had gone on with them, and how and why their shopping trips went the way that they did.

3.1 Shoppers' Profiles

3.1.1 Lemo

Lemo drives a red Renault that she has had for as long as I have known her. She admires her car and even personifies it by giving it an affectionate name. I remember when she first got it, she was still at the University of Cape Town (UCT) where she was permanently living and had no real use for her car that side, so she would only use it when she was back home in Johannesburg. She permanently moved back home in 2011/12, after her 4-year degree in social work at UCT, where she then had to accustom herself back into the city as someone that was no longer a high scholar in the city; someone that was enjoying freedom and independence in another city to now moving back into her room under her parents' roof; and as a qualified student with a Bachelor's

and Honors degree in social work. She has had to get used to the Joburg roads and has now built up her confidence to travel in her car as just another Joburger on the roads. She almost has this permanent smile on her face, and is always laughing and giggling about something. It is made very clear that one should not see this as a weakness in her because she demands respect in such a subtle way, you won't realize until all of your attention is drawn to her and what she has to say. At the time of this research, she was undergoing the process of purchasing her first home. She has been at her job since 2013 at the Adelaide Tambo School for the Physically Disabled where she works as a Social Worker; she has said how she had intended on being there for about two years, but loves the children of the school too much to want to leave just yet. I can hear her passion each time she speaks of how she needs to make some improvements to the school and, more specifically, for the children. She is 25 and laughs as she tells me this, "I'm so old, I know! And I'm so single, please tell me about it!" Although she also does say that she is happily single. During the course of the research she was at home living with her parents, her older brother, sister-in-law, and niece. At the conclusion of this research she had just moved into her new townhouse that she says she bought at a new development in the South of Johannesburg, and that her mother helped her in purchasing the property. She made it important to note how much cheaper, and smart, it was buying property in a new property development.

She is currently in her second year of her Masters degree in Occupational Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand and about to begin the research component of her course as a part time student; she says she is doing this degree as a way to shift her focus

in qualifications so that she could be able to open up herself to better and more opportunities in her field for when she does make that career shift. The other reason she wants to make this career shift is in order to begin earning more than the gross amount of R15, 000.00 at the school, which she says is the basic amount earned by social workers hired by the government.

She tells me about all of the essentials that she has managed to purchase, thus far, making sure that her initial strategy was to first go window shopping in order to look around for prices, deals, and a round sum of how much money she would need to save each time as part of her budgeting strategy. When asked about her budgeting, she shrieks and tells me that she has not been budgeting in the purest definition of the word, but that she has employed the strategy of saving for just the items that she needs at the time. She tells me about a specific fabric bed, that she saw while on her window shopping trip, that she then began to start saving for before she bought it about three months later. She tells me that “everything else has just been dependent on how much I can spend within that month to spend on the other essentials that I need”, thus items bought are dependent on how much has been saved in that particular month and what is needed and could be afforded at the time.

Throughout our talks about her purchases, she would mention how she was waiting for money from her dad to help her purchase some appliances she needed for her home; she would laugh about this and be thankful of the fact that even though she’s moving out to live alone, that all of the expenses were not all faced alone. She tells me that the fact that her parents have been helping her out with some finances has been working out well and

that when she did put in her offer to purchase the townhouse, her mother had helped her in purchasing it as well as purchasing some of the other items when they would go on the different shopping trips together. She tells me that her father had been able to help her purchase her fridge, which she was excited about as she tells me that her parents were more than willing to help in this regard and that “they’ve actually helped to make it less of a burden in terms of money, and budgeting, and having to worry so much about ‘oh my word, I still have to do this, and this, and this. How much money? I don’t have that kind of money’; they have kind of alleviated that stress”.

Once her dad was able to give her the money for her to purchase her fridge, she took me with her to go look for one and I noticed that with all of the choices present within the store, she leaned a lot towards a specific brand of appliances. Whether we were looking at the microwaves, washing machines, or refrigerators; she would look at each item and then be more assertive and analytical about one type of brand. This observation pushed me to ask her what motivated her to look for and select that specific type of brand to which she responded by telling me that it was because of the experiences, she had recalled, from using the brand at home and that she felt that she was getting her value for the money in which she put in to purchase the brand. The important thing was that no matter how much money she was putting in, she was guaranteed to be happy with the product.

We are sitting in an Italian restaurant and lounge in Rosebank Mall, where we have ordered pasta and cocktails. We eat and drink on the couches in an area of the restaurant where it is just couches and pillows made for us to feel more comfortable; “a perfect way to end a shopping trip”, I think to myself, and I wonder if everyone enjoys all of these

luxuries. “What does the term ‘middle class’ mean to you?” I ask her, to which there is a long pause from Lemo and she begins to gesture her answer where she lifts her arm up to indicate a level to which she laughs realizing how she may be looking right now; “those who aren’t at the top, maybe in between, I don’t know how to describe it, oh my god! But like, when I think middle class, what do I think? Somebody who has a job, who is able to afford certain things, to a limit, obviously, um, [when you think] middle class you don’t think impoverished. I think somebody who is educated, you know, somebody who has done their studies, or somebody that is working in a very good job with a very good income. Ya, something like that, and I don’t know, I also think somebody who is striving for better; like to move up, not just to be satisfied with what they currently have”. After her demonstration, she seems uncertain and does not know if whether to identify herself as someone of the middle class as she tells me that she thinks that she is of the middle class solely because of the way in which she grew up and as a result, where she is now. She then tells me that she is middle class because she did not grow up in poverty as her parents tried to give her the best education and she did not grow up in a place that was impoverished, she also says that the kinds of jobs her parents had and the assets her parents own have influenced what she has been able to acquire now.

Lemo is the shopping black woman and her opinions on this resonate with the idea of ‘independence while participating in the economy’ as her idea is mostly from herself, as a single woman, where “there is nothing more, alleviating, no, there’s nothing more amazing; the feeling is amazing knowing that you can afford to buy this. Or maybe if you can’t afford, you can make a plan and try get what it is that you want; you are

independent enough to make your own choice. I think that's the nice thing that comes from this whole shopping thing. And it's all about making you satisfied, and not necessarily somebody else. And the fact that you have an opinion and can say it (she begins to smile widely as she say's this). I think also sometimes for other black women who are married, they try to make it OUR home, but also if you are single you try to make it MY home. You make the choices that suit you and not necessarily what everyone else thinks".

3.1.2 Wisani

Wisani's name is a Tsonga name to mean 'to rest', which is much like the isiZulu equivalent of the name 'Phumlani". When I met Wisani, she was permanently living in a suburb called Suideroord in the South of Johannesburg, until about a couple of years ago when she moved to Pretoria for her new place of employment after she had graduated. Pretoria is not unfamiliar territory for her as she was living there during school semesters at the University of Pretoria where she graduated with her Bachelor's in Communication. She visits back at home in Suideroord as often as she can, usually for family commitments. When she is in Pretoria, she is working full-time at Jaguar, Land Rover in Marketing as part of a two-year fixed contract, while also studying for her Honors in Communication part-time.

Although her interests lie in listening to music, and watching movies, these interests seem to have taken a back seat in her life as she describes to me her past year as being filled with her commitments to school and work. Even with all of this, she still manages to fit

into her schedule some time for shopping as she tells me that she does a lot of window shopping, monthly, so as to see what she would want to buy at the end of the month, mostly because that is when she would have just gotten paid. She tells me that her motivations for purchasing items, at the end of the month, are because “I look at the timelessness of it [the item]; it must be something I could wear for a long time to come”. Other motivations to purchase would be as the result of certain established relationships; she tells me the story of a pregnant colleague, from her work, who once wore a dress to work that she took a liking to and went on to let her colleague know that she was going to purchase the same dress for herself as she explains that “if something looks really good on someone and I think [that] it would look good on me, I think I’d buy it if they had a good shopping experience”. She tells me that she is motivated by items on other people that she feels would be the perfect fit for her, and that the mere sight of a purchase and it being a perfect fit, as such, would be an indication of a good shopping experience that she would want to replicate.

I ask her about what the term “middle class” means to her and she tells me that “I think it means being able to just afford. All that comes to my mind is just credit; I feel like middle class people have the most credit, but I think it means being able to afford, budgeting, you have to be really smart with your money or else it literally just dissipates”. I sense that budgeting is a very important element by how confidently she talks about it and also links it to the ways of how one can be smart with their money by budgeting before one is paid, and being able to budget for things, beforehand, for the next month. She lets me know that she only regards herself as middle class because of the household in which she comes from, but tells me that, for herself as middle class, she has

not thought of the subject, but then tells me that, as per her definition of the middle class, “I think so [that I am middle class] because I can afford the things I budget for, I think I am on my way to middle class, rather than I am [middle class]”.

As a single 25-year old woman, that lives alone, I wonder how she handles her budgeting for other commitments as the kind of person that does not seem like she has any other responsibilities other than that of her own. She tells me that she plans her budget on a spreadsheet, that she renews every month, whereby the items she first lists are of a high priority “then I’ll see what’s left because I also budget for entertainment, and then what’s left, I can give or I send home and then the rest is for me or for saving”. I remember that she did not budget during the month of December, she actually ended up spending above her usual budget whereby she splurged on herself and did not buy gifts for anyone for the festive season, but instead spent on herself and her niece. Wisani seems to have strong opinions about branding in a consumer society taking over the idea of quality as she speaks of the shopping black woman; “I’m usually just looking for the best price, as I said, quality as well. I feel like black women are more driven by labels, and I don’t think that’s what should necessarily motivate the shopping. Well, I mean, if it is a good quality item, I think all that should motivate us is quality, but staying in PTA (Pretoria), I don’t know if it’s just Pretoria or what; women there are EXTREMELY label-driven, and that’s all I see, and it’s just this superficial shopping experience, and I don’t think it should be about that...I think it should be about the quality”. Quality, in this sense, is to mean actively purchasing items that are characterized by item’s aspects of longevity, good material, color, and sustainability.

3.1.3 Nonde

Nonde's full name is Nontombi. She tells me the reason she uses the name 'Nonde' is that when her and her brother were still children, her brother struggled to correctly pronounce her name and whenever he would call out her name, it always came out as Nonde, and since then it just kind of stuck. She is a tall woman, and her defining features are her big brown eyes. Out of all of the girls, she is the one that is louder with her opinions, but can equally be silent to hear someone else's opinion. She tells me that she is one to go on a search for bargain places and sales, and never really sticking to one place and one shopping regiment, she is one that is keen on the exploration of different places and things. She tells me that she rarely makes that call, to retailers, to enquire before walking into a store, but she almost always calls the store when she is unhappy "about a decision they made me make; when they trick me into buying something I don't like". She can sometimes be mistaken as being a dramatic person when she makes statements like these, but she will soon show you that that is her personality, and will not hesitate to put it into simpler terms exactly what she means. She then tells me that she will call retailers when the merchandise is bad, or when there is something wrong with what she bought and she has no time to go straight to the store.

She is a single and 24 year old woman that will stay in a shop for as long as she need to as she describes that "I stay in the shop as long as I need to try on the item, compare it to another item in the store, and out of the store, then I come back and make the most educated and financial decision; the cheapest product that is as beautiful and as great in quality". She is currently pursuing a National Diploma in Building as second year student at the University of Johannesburg; she says that she is working towards a Quantity

Surveying BTech qualification. She lives at the University's residence with a roommate, and her income stream is via an allowance that will vary between R2000 and R3000 a month, depending on necessity. When she is not at res, she will be living back at home in Mondeor with her mother and older brother.

Although she does not own her own car, she says that she is more than willing to travel to make a purchase. When she is desperate enough for the item, she will go as far as needed; this travelling also depends on the bargain she will be getting. She says that even when she cannot make the trip herself, she will ask someone to. She says she usually looks for timelessness when she is purchasing, and that it must sometimes be a small fit for clothing. She laughs at this statement as she begins to explain that she tends to be realistic in that the item will only be worn when the time is right; when she has been encouraged to lose the weight in order to fit into the items. She shows me the denim shorts that she is currently wearing and tells me that she is only realizing now that they are the perfect fit, compared to when she first bought them and had thought that they fit, only to find out that she was "practically exploding out of them, now they're the perfect fit, you see? They are timeless!"

She tells me that she realized that she does not know what the middle class is, "we all assume that people who have home and cars and work are the middle class, But I just recently discovered that people who have cars, and have homes don't own them and people our age have parents who, in their 40's and 50's, don't own their homes and I thought that that was something so bizarre and unheard of, and so my definition of

middle class...I actually don't know where the middle class stands". Her predominant discourse around the middle class was about ownership. Those who own can be called middle class and above, in fact, those who own are just a step above. She says that because she lives in a home that her parent actually owns, she can consider herself as upper class; lower upper class. She says that because of the people that she has met, which claim to be middle class, they helped her realize that they are actually closer to the bottom than to the top, where it is as though they are not even middle class anymore.

She describes herself as the kind of shopping black woman whereby when she has the least money, she finds that she will want to buy and consume everything. She does not know why this is the case, but points it to how her sister, mother, and a friend of hers do the exact same thing. When there is less money, they tend to spend more. "I don't know what it is, but for some reason making a purchase makes us feel better. Purchasing a product we may or may not need in our time of poverty, to use the term very loosely, and in our time of having very little makes us feel better"

3.1.4 Nonki

Nonki is a self-employed, 25-year old woman working in a start-up company where she works as the PR and Communications Manager, and in her other company; she works as the Content Producer and Content Writer. The companies that she is involved in are centered around innovations and solutions which gives context to her opinion about how she finds sad that "South African's don't really know or are aware of a lot of people who

are changing things around them in terms of business and implementing solutions to problems that are unique to South Africans”.

Nonki lives at home with her parents and younger brother; she mentions that her helper lives in the cottage outside of the main house. She lives about five minutes away from The Glen Shopping Center in Oakdene, South of Johannesburg. In getting to know her, she tells me that her interests and hobbies include writing and reading, “I absolutely love reading!” she tells me that she has a love for looking at different kinds of places because she is interested in travelling. She tells me that she feels that daily news tend to be boring because it seems to be repetitive and monotonous; always about what is currently trending as usually violent and about terrorist attacks around the world; these kinds of aspects of the news has driven her to try to work and be innovative around South African issues.

She is not one that will, generally, travel far to make a purchase. She will only travel according to her radius, especially because most malls around her are similar in shops and what they have available for purchase, and even though some will give better discounts than others; “I have to do a lot of things on my money; I tend to now cut down my travelling, even though petrol price has gone down, if I’m going to travel far it’s going to be to my grandma to eat and visit her. That’s it, I’m not trying to shop for a lot of things, if I do happen to go to the store, I’m very specific, I know exactly where I’m going and I know what I want”. She tells me that she shops a lot during peak times of the year when she finds herself purchasing gifts for people, especially in the month of May. She says that when she purchases gifts, it will depend upon the location and where she needs to purchase, but then says that for herself, she will spend the most money during sales as she casually refers to herself as one that is crazy about sales.

At the moment, she wants to just drive around and take advantage of the sales happening everywhere especially because she has gas in her car so she can travel for the purchase.

Nonki says that she will purchase during the sales at the end of the month, and also do a little looking in the beginning of the month. She laughs at this affirmation as she confesses that “honestly, I shop every single month for myself, I always tell myself I need something; in my mind I do need it, and in my wardrobe it’s another story”.

She enjoys sitting at the mall and having a meal, as a way to take a break. Her favorite part about this experience is being able to watch the people walking around while she enjoys the moment. She is one who considers herself as middle class as she describes it as a class that is in between the terms of ‘being broke’ and ‘being rich or wealthy’, “you are comfortable...and I have income streams that allow me to have the life that I have”.

Although she defines middle class as a state of being financially comfortable, she says that the middle class is almost living in a precarious state as when you are middle class “you are always prone to the fluctuations; like you don’t have enough securities to protect yourself against what’s happening out there”.

Her thoughts as the shopping black woman centered on ideas of validation and self-worth; she felt that she found black people have a tendency to seek being labeled as though they are trying to fill an insecurity about how it is that people see them according to what they wear so as to gauge their worth from the outside as well as from within. She says that although she used to fall for this kind of thinking about her image, she soon moved away from it upon realizing that clothes will always be there and it was not crucial to own

everything in order to be seen in a certain light. Although this kind of thinking worked, it only gave rise to another insecurity, connected to shopping, whereby she would constantly go shopping with her mother; whether it was after gym or after church, she was gaining all kinds items of clothing and even food, but what counted the most in gain was the time spent with her mother, and ultimately approval from her mother. This connection to shopping was soon challenged when she realized that sometimes it is okay to ease up on the shopping trips and that shopping should only be when necessary for herself and in satisfying her enjoyment of it rather than validation and approval from others.

3.1.5 Gugu

I found it to be important to use a reflexive approach, to this research, by looking to myself as a research participant as the particulars of my demographic fell in line with the rest of those of my research participants. I have lived in the South of Johannesburg for about eighteen years and I have become an active consumer of the space. My regular shopping is done at The Glen Shopping Center and Southgate Shopping Mall. Within these malls, I frequent similar stores ranging from Mr.Price to Woolworths, Queenspark, and small boutiques. I personally prefer to shop at boutiques specifically for the exclusivity of the items they will have on sale. My style, as a consumer, is that I feel that I am usually ‘pretty slow on the uptake’, which is to mean that I feel that I am not the most ‘current’ consumer; everything trendy at a certain point I usually find appealing once its season is over; I found that boutiques will trade these kinds of items, usually with a

different and more unique take on the original piece. I like to stay original; even if my original can easily translate to ‘outdated’ or ‘so last season’.

I don’t usually spend much time when I shop. I will usually be in a store for about 10-15mins and then about an hour to three hours is the kind of time I would spend, in total, in the mall. I usually prefer to window shop before I make an actual purchase as I tend to be an impulsive shopper; window shopping helps me to plan my budget and helps me plan on what I would want to purchase when I am financially able to. I am a single and 25 year old student. My monthly income is between R1800 to R4000 whereby it ranges from my allowance to the income I would receive from freelance work during my studies. I am a full-time student whose highest qualification is an Honors degree and currently pursuing my Masters degree. My interests lie in reading across different genres, I enjoy being active, well, more like when I am having my boats of activism.

In my research I had asked my participants to give me an idea of what they had felt strongly opinionated about, at that moment, in order to get to know them better in a spontaneous approach. Relating this question to myself, I realized that I would need more time to think about this. I immediately think about the technological age in which my generation is said to be in and embodying. I have Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp. I am only fully functional in about half of these applications. The biggest reason I use them is because that is where the information is now readily available. I have found that my problem is that we are rapidly moving into the risk of being overexposed. When I was on Facebook, I noticed that people could share their locations and let their Facebook friends know that they have “checked in” at a certain location. I could see what outfit you are in hours before I see you because you posted a picture of what you are

wearing today, on Instagram. I think that there is beginning to be a very thinning line between sharing and exposing of oneself and their world. But not all is bad in the information age, one of my motivations for purchasing come from this very information I receive without having to first go into a consumer space; I am the type of person to consult online and by calling retailers before I go into the shop. I always look for items that are affordable, timeless, and original.

When it comes to defining the concept of “middle class”, I think the concept describes the class group that poses to have the most influence on the economy, because of their need to show that they can afford to spend, and their influence on politics; and because they are a group that influences the economy they ultimately learn that they can influence the political realm. I think that the middle class, that is my age, is usually born into this position rather than having worked towards it, the majority of this group seems to work towards staying in this class position even as they enter the workforce; a kind of complacency that keeps them from striving to be producers and a part of the upper class in their own right; only a few other individuals would choose to oppose this settling for the familiar. I consider myself a part of the middle class insofar as I was born into this position; I am a middle class consumer with the ability to influence the economy via my consumption practices and the color of my skin, my gender, and my geographic positionality can allow me to have an influence on the political.

As a shopping black woman, I believe that we are so busy being influenced by the European and American identity of womanhood and beauty. I feel that this influence has

been given too much power over the African woman, regardless of race, whose influence should be African inspired. Historically, it makes sense as to why this has become the case. I have found that the claim for 'Africanness' has become a discourse around "who can be more African?" and "we are all African, some more African than others" whereby the streets of the city are displaying competition between women that seem as though they are in a race to appear more authentic than the next person. This sense of competition shapes the shopping black woman; we are all ultimately searching for an authentically African experience that draws its strength away from the Western image and experience.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 Shopping Experiences

4.1.1 Lemo's Shopping Trip

I meet Lemo at the underground parking lot of the mall, where she is holding shopping bags from Pick n Pay. She has bought food for her aunt, who is currently in hospital, and lets me know that after leaving the mall she is going to go pick up her mom so that they could go pay her aunt a visit in hospital. She requests that today we do a bit of window shopping as she has not saved enough money to purchase anything today. She is wearing a black summer dress with pink and white roses and a pair of brown pumps. She leaves the food bags in the boot of her car and explains to me how she was interested in making today about the decorative element of her new home. She is in the process of purchasing a town house, with the help of her mother, and is nervous as she is awaiting word and confirmation from the real estate agent about whether or not her application was accepted.

We go over to Mr. Price Home and there is a huge store that is brightly lit with all the colors coming from the different items displayed on the shelves, and displayed as a sort of showroom of what items would look like in the home as I notice a brown coffee table surrounded by turquoise couches with scatter cushions. There is also a side lamp on a smaller table next to the couches with a small carpet on the floor, of the display, that it almost has me feeling welcome and at home. We look at various bedding sets and she explains to me the different kinds of pillows, and duvets one can get according to comfort

and price. We see decorative items for the bathroom and she tells me about how she needs laundry baskets, but she is very specific by what she wants; a strong set and with lids. We move past the bedroom sets and see beds and a bedroom scene made up for children's rooms with a Spiderman and Barbie inspiration. She tells me that as far as beds and couches go, she cannot shop for them at this shop because as affordable as they may seem, they are not of the best quality and comfort for longevity. We move to the kitchenware and she expresses her need to purchase cooking utensils like pots, pans, and cutlery. After looking at the selection of woks, her direction is turned to a bright shelf; it's mostly different shades of pink, red, and orange. This shelf contains various kinds of baking utensils, and decorative fridge magnets that read as funny lines about the cooking in the kitchen, such as "you cannot trust a skinny cook". As we continue around the store, away from the kitchenware, we come across the selection of couches, chairs, and benches. She does not even take a second look in this direction. I try and sit at one of the couches and get comfortable, to which she responds by telling me that she has no trust in this store's selection of couches as although they look good, they aren't good for the long-term as she moves on again; she wants to be able to not have to purchase a second couch due to the first one deteriorating. This has prompted us to leave the store and go over to the store next to Mr. Price Home; Coricraft. There is a big red sign on the window display where there is a showroom display of couches showing that the couch is on a price special. Lemo takes me right to this display and sits on the couch as though she has just gotten home from a long day at work, I join her, and she is smiling about how this is the couch she plans to purchase. The couch makes for a smart purchase because it is comfortable, and of good quality, plus it is on special whereby she could afford it and end up saving some money for other important purchases. She tells

me that it might be small, but she will also purchase an ottoman or two so as to compensate for the lack of size for when she has guests over. She laughs at this as she tells me that even though there will be a good couch, it won't be for the guests to sit and watch TV as she is not about to purchase one any time soon because of all the other household items she still has to purchase with most of the finances falling on her. We look around the shop, and she tells me that the shop is actually quite expensive, but their specials are reasonable if one is looking for quality products that could last a long time as she goes on to show me another item on special that she hopes will be her first official purchase; a Sealy branded fabric bed. She is very excited about this item, and tells me that this is the only place she trusts to purchase this type of bed, especially while it is on special.

On the second day of the shopping trip, it is about three weeks later, and we meet to go over to Game to look at and try purchase some appliances for the kitchen. She tells me that she has done a lot of the shopping outside of the mall as she thought to be a cheaper option when buying from various factories and warehouses, but today, she wants to look at a selection of her trusted brands of home appliances so as to make her decision. We go over into the big Game store, and she directs us to the very end of the store where, after passing the electronics, all I see is the silver and white of the different kinds of home appliances available for sale. We begin at the section of microwaves, and she tells me that she trusts the Defy brand as that is what is used at home for almost all appliances, and that there have never been problems experienced. Today, that is the brand she is leaning mostly towards. She says that the kind of microwave she wants must be picked according to her budget, and according to how closely it can resemble the one she uses at her parents' home. She tells me that at some point, just after she got her job, she ended up using some of her money, from

her first paycheck, to purchase a convectional microwave for the house and farm in Hamaanskraal, in the North West; she felt that it was part of her responsibilities to the family house whereby her parents, her dad retired and now a pensioner, and her mother two years from retirement, had begun to prepare for farming at the farm so as to start a business, which had just started being operational in mid-2014. She says that there is still a lot of work to be done in that house as they were not permanently staying there, but felt the need to contribute to the development of that house that the father seems to be travelling to often to operate the farming business. We move over to the washing machines, and she says that she is just browsing and not looking to purchase yet as the price range is too high for her because she still has other financial commitments. She says that in the mean time she'll figure out her own laundry, even if it means taking it back home every now and then.

We soon move on to the selection of refrigerators available. Almost all the fridges are silver in color, and only about four were white and much smaller. She tells me that she is still looking at the Defy brand. Some of the other aspects that she is looking for are about the upfront price, and not the price by installments. She looks at the interest rate and goes on to express her frustration about paying off items in installments; she says that one will end up paying ten times more than the required price if paid up front. Lemo is also looking for a big-sized fridge with lots of space as she wants to store a lot of food in the fridge so as to not struggle when there is no money, she is also looking for a fridge with a quality of longevity whereby she could take the fridge with her on her next move after the town house. The salesman arrives, and she asks him questions about warranty on a fridge that she is interested in, and if she had to pay for the fridge now if it would be possible for the store to hold the fridge for her until she moves into her new place. She also calculates the cost of the

fridge, and the cost of the delivery, and is happy that they will be able to hold the fridge for her and can deliver it anywhere, for her, without having to worry about distance and extra costs.

She suggests that we go over to Mr. Price Home again so that she can show me these kitchen stools she once saw and thought it reasonably priced and wise to buy about three or four for her kitchen counter. They are tall, wooden, and black chairs to reach a high table top. She tells me that although she has purchased a variety of curtains for her place, she is still missing a set for an extra room. As we approach the curtain section, I notice a white woman with a blonde bob haircut, she is squatted to reach the lowest rack of packaged curtains and she rummages through rows and rows of the different selections they have on offer. I don't know what exactly she is looking for, but it reminds me of a person that might be searching for a piece of treasure in a pile of rocks. At some point, through her search, a pile of curtain packets fall at my feet and before I could even acknowledge the moment, she quickly removes the packets that fell and immediately gives a rushed "sorry, sorry", which I respond to with a "no problem". I notice a small smile on Lemo's face that signals to me something of a paradox in this situation as we calmly stroll past the variety of selections of the curtains and how she's already bought all of her curtains, although looking for one more, this scene contained quite the opposite as I watched the frantic woman desperately trying to find the perfect curtain.

4.1.1.1 Asset Accumulation

Lemo took part in the research because she was in the process of purchasing her new home. Much of the trips, I took with her, were of shopping for different items for her new home. It is assumed that the natural course for young, black, and employed people to take would be first to purchase assets such as a motor vehicle (considered to be an asset) and a home; it seems that after some time at her first job, Lemo sought to purchase her first home. Krige (2011) points to how “the majority of the black middle class, however, is engaging in a process of asset accumulation, which means delaying spending on typical middle-class goods and services” (Krige, 2011:298). Lemo is engaged in this process of asset accumulation merely because of the fact that she is young, black, and falling under the middle class sector.

A similar argument was made in The Economist about black up-and-coming professionals that would label Lemo as a ‘buppie’ which would mean somebody that exerts their influence through his/her shopping sprees and influence on property booms. This level of influence is said to have helped in speeding up the economic growth whereby this group buys assets such as cars and household goods via their access to credit. The highest priority that this group has is the purchasing of a new home, usually out of townships into more affluent neighborhoods with a huge presence of black diamond’s (Author Unknown, 2007: 1). In doing this research, I could see and be in agreement as to how black up-and-coming professionals would have a strong influence on the economy of the country, especially with the idea of the use of credit. My contribution gives a more updated perspective, looking to my participants, as conversations about credit were spoken of in a tone of distance and avoidance. This new generation of an emerging middle class tries to stay away from credit,

speaking of it as a problem experienced by the generation before them; in fact, they are the group that tries hard not to fall into credit by budgeting and saving, and by accumulating their assets in cash. Another point I wish to illustrate is that Lemo, and the majority of the other participants, tried to distance themselves from being called “middle class”, they much rather preferred to say that they were working towards such a status of middle classness, which again proves the generational gap in literature about the black middle class. The Economist describes buppies as those that move out of the townships into the suburban neighborhoods. I think that my participants, as black up-and-coming professionals, are distinct in that they grew up in the suburban areas that their parents had moved to from the townships, hence the shift away from calling themselves middle class as that is not the definition that describes their own personal class positions. This resulted in many instances whereby some of the participants would point to how they believed that their parents were middle class, rather than themselves.

4.1.1.2 The Brand-Loyal Consumer

My next shopping trip with Lemo was different to the first; we were no longer shopping for quality decorative items to fill up her home with, we were on a search for appliances of a specific brand. It was made clear to me, from the minute we got to the appliances, that we were in search of a specific brand in the microwaves, washing machines, and refrigerators. While I would linger at the sight of a bright and brand new appliance, Lemo would have already moved on to look at the selection of appliances her chosen brand had put in stock. Inseng (2004) employs a model that helps to differentiate between the different kinds of

shoppers and their shopping orientations when it comes to how they make decisions of purchasing. The Consumer Styles Inventory (CSI), used to classify the shopping orientations into decision-making styles, was defined by Sproles and Kendall's (1986) Eight-Factor model. Lemo is said to fall under the habitual, brand-loyal consumer category that is most likely to form a habit in frequenting certain stores and purchasing certain brands that would be described as a favorite (Inseng, 2004: 66-68).

4.1.1.3 Shopping for Shopping's Sake?

The lady that we encountered at the end of our shopping trip marked just that; the end of our shopping trip. This lady, being so frantic and panicked, scratching through the variety of items looking for a specific curtain looked as though she had lost something and desperately tried to recover it. Lemo's reaction to this signaled, to me, relief and happiness for having gone through this process and found what she needed, her smile signaled a "phew, boy am I glad that's not me". Miller (1998) states that the experience of shopping is one that comes with decision-making based on desire, sacrifices, and love and relationships that when one is shopping, as a ritual, external variables are the ones that come into play more significantly than the assumption that shopping is an isolated event (Miller, 1998:1-4). It is seen, through observing this scene between the lady and Lemo, that our shopping trip ended at that moment because Lemo realized that she had nothing else to shop for because she was no longer in a position where she was frantically searching for items the bulk of her shopping was done and she did not need to shop for the sake of shopping. This decision-making process showed how Lemo's experience of shopping was influenced by the external factors

presented to her that seemed to be characterized by elements of the social rather than the mere act of shopping as an isolated event.

4.1.2 Wisani's Shopping Trip

She calls me in the morning asking for us to meet at the entrance of Mr. Price. When I get to the entrance, there are two stores belonging to the chain of Mr. Price; Mr. Price Sport and Mr. Price Clothing, both separated by the fact that one is of sporting gear and the other is more central to fashion trends. We meet at this entrance specifically because this is where she wants to begin her shopping trip. She tells me, before, that she asked her brother to borrow her R300 for this shopping trip. She is recently without money because she had to send in her car for repairs that had broken down and was in need for new parts and servicing in Pretoria as that is where her mechanic is; her father will be accompanying her.

She tells me that she isn't looking for anything, in particular, but I notice her leaning towards her selection of dresses. She begins by looking at a grayish white dress that is lace. She expresses her interest in it, but then I alert her of the fact that the dress she is currently wearing today is exactly the same as the one she is looking at on the rack. She laughs at the realization of this. As our laughter is all we can hear, we begin to realize how quiet the store is, which makes the store seem somewhat empty as we notice the stillness of the clothing racks that are usually caught up in the shuffling of various women sifting through for specific sizes, colors, styles and trends. The store has no music playing through its speakers today. It is quiet chats from different parts of the store as though

everyone is in their own spaces, even as we shuffle through the aisles past the other ladies our “sorry” and “excuse me” are in a polite whisper as though we are trying hard not to disturb the stillness of the store much more than avoiding disturbing each other. We see some crop t-shirts that seem to be the summer trend in bright colors and bold writing of the latest buzz words from popular media that we both see as a generational gap and not for today’s trip.

We move to a different part of the store that houses a different brand to the one we have just seen. This brand is more of a formal looking style, with brightly-colored accents for the summer season. Wisani spots a bright orange dress that she seems almost immediately drawn to. It is a sheer and thick material and is short sleeved. It has more of a modest style to it and she immediately grabs a medium size and suggests we go to the fitting rooms so that she could try it on. On our way to the fitting rooms she tells me about how she feels she gained weight after the month of December as I sense a tone of guilt and embarrassment. We get to the fitting rooms and the lady at the entrance hands us a silver disc with a number 1 on it to indicate how many items of clothing we have with us to try on as we enter. I tell her that I will leave her to try on the dress and will be waiting outside of the door for her so as to give her that personal space. She eventually calls out for me and tells me that her fear of her festive season weight gain has come to fruition as she has to now make the decision of trying on a bigger size that she then asks me to go and get for her. I eventually leave the fitting room to go on my mission to go and find a size of the same dress for her.

Upon approaching the rack with the dress, I identify with a black and white dress with the same sort of modest design and grab a size for myself whereby I then search for a size for

Wisani in her dress as well. I get back to the fitting room and the lady hands me another disc with the number two on it. I knock on Wisani's door and hand her the dress, and alert her that I have decided to partake in the shopping by trying on a dress of my own. We both come out of our cubicles and neither of us looking to happy with the way that we look in the dresses, having pictured ourselves very differently in our minds. My dress, as modest as it seemed, is now too tight to even breathe in, and Wisani feels as though her dress is now too short for work. I see nothing wrong with the length and the fit; she looks and looks at herself in the mirror, busy twisting and turning to see the dress from all possible angles and she frowns and sighs until I convince her that the dress was a good and appropriate choice. She has made up her mind, and after a few more seconds of analyzing her choice she decides that we go and pay for it. The shop is still very calm as we make it to the tills and find we are there only ones there to pay as we get called by the lady at the till. We make the purchase of R115, and she pays with her debit card.

4.1.2.1 Credit in Consumption

Even though Wisani comes from the South of Johannesburg, a bulk of her adult life and period of her coming-in-to-age has been spent in Pretoria. She was living in Pretoria during her years in University and returned briefly to her home in Suideroord, only to move back to Pretoria shortly thereafter. Literature that discusses the South African market's relationship to credit states that the ability to buy would be dependent upon the availability of credit (Rousseau, 1990: 192) and that black consumers are the middle class group most likely to spend beyond their means and move on to informal borrowing via

informal credit relations (Krige, 2011: 162). Radder (2000) speaks of credit from the perspective of South African retailers. According to this, shopping patterns are increasingly changing due to consumers moving away from buying typical consumer goods and clothing and moving into purchasing assets such as education, housing, and health. This move from clothing to assets purchasing has seen this group cancelling their credit cards (Radder, 2000: 76).

Wisani has money given to her by her brother as most of her money has gone into repairing her car, which is the asset in this instance. She tells me that she feels as though the middle class group is the one most likely to purchase on credit as she gets her debit card out to pay for her dress. While this is so, when we were leaving the mall, she decided that she did not like her purchase and resorted to returning it for a full refund.

4.1.2.2 The Experience of Space

As a person that works and lives in the same space in which she works; Pretoria, Wisani would be an example of an individual whose consumption has a tendency of affecting her lived environment. According to Featherstone (1991) “the new middle class help to develop sites of cultural consumption...this group is seen to be particularly sensitive to the question of style and aesthetics and subsequently stamp this preoccupation upon the character of city life” (Featherstone, 1991: 52-54). Wisani tells me about the women in Pretoria as being “label-orientated” in a tone that is irritated, surprised, and in disbelief. This pointed to how Wisani’s consumption practices, as a modest and conservative

consumer, affected her lived environment; whereby her consumption was constantly creating her experience of the urban environment in which she worked and lived.

4.1.2.3 Time in Consumption

My day with Wisani was very short-lived. We had initially struggled to set a date to meet each other for the shopping, and when we eventually did, Wisani told me that she could not spend too much time shopping today, nor would she be able to visit a lot of shops. Her reasons for taking on a short shopping trip today were that firstly, she did not have enough money to scout around for and buy a lot of items. Secondly, she had to rush to doctor's appointment in the next few hours. In a study about time and how people construct time, Feldman and Hornick (1981) found that within a consumer space, people tend to spend a certain amount of time in the space based on their individual differences based on socioeconomic and demographic characteristics.

These characteristics that inform the decision of time spent would be the characteristics of the home and family, occupation and income, and the person's personality (Feldman and Hornick, 1981: 411). Wisani had already stated that she is not one that necessarily enjoys shopping in describing her personality. In using the analytical conclusions presented by Feldman and Hornick (1981), Wisani had to take her car in for repairs, in Pretoria, around this time and she tells me that she had to spend almost the rest of her remaining money for the servicing. This is the reason her brother gave her some money for this shopping trip. The amount of money she had limited the kinds of shops and the amount of items to visit and purchase, respectively. This speaks to her level of income whereby an expense, such

as fixing your car, comes up; your income for that month is automatically limited thus pushing one to make certain decisions about time spent in that consumer space.

Moreover, Wisani had a doctor's appointment that ended up limiting our time spent in the mall. She had emphasized how it was crucial that she made it for this appointment as the doctor had been on leave and made it difficult for her to have a consultation in previous times. The other reason was that she was limited to this doctor near home, and one other one in Pretoria as per condition of her chosen medical aid scheme. If more money had been spent on the medical aid, she would most likely have a wider range of options based on when and where to see a doctor rather than being limited to the two in the two cities as she was now. This points back to Feldman and Hornick's (1981) argument that time spent in a consumer space is dependent on socioeconomic characteristics of the individual.

4.1.3 Nonde's Shopping Trip

I take a taxi with Nonde to the Glen Mall and she expresses her desire to purchase a few accessories today. She tells me that she only has interest in purchasing from one shop today; Mr. Price. She usually does other shopping elsewhere outside of this mall, but only did her shopping for accessories at this mall. "After bridge!" she shouts from the back row of the taxi to signal to the driver that we want to get off at the stop that comes after the bridge, which is right by the first entrance to the mall. We begin to cross the road and make our way into the mall. The entrance that we use is used by a lot of people that, firstly, have parked their cars in the parking lot near that entrance, and, secondly, I notice

that a lot of the people coming in and out of this entrance use public transport as this is the entrance closest to the roads where public transport operates.

The Mr. Price is just as we get in to the mall and the entrance stands right in front of a bench where I notice two older people sitting as though waiting for something. We continue past and enter the shop. To our left is the men's side and to our right is the ladies side to which we turn and go directly to the accessories side that forms part of the window display. She immediately goes towards where the sunglasses are. They hang onto racks with an mrp (Mr. Price) branded plastic band that hold the sunglasses. She picks a brown pair that is round, and is pointy at the top corners reminding me of a retro style. She says she is in love with them and wants them, to which I encourage her to keep looking before she settles on the first thing she sees. She then finds another pair, which looks the same as the first pair, but different in color as I suggest that I go and fetch shopping basket from the front of the shop as she seems like she is about to buy all of the accessories. I return and she has found another pair of sunglasses as she starts to model, for me, the different pairs that she has seen; a brown one, a black one, and a one in color as she waits for my opinion. I tell her the while others are too daring for me, they do look good on her, except for the black one that does not work too well with her brown skin complexion. She then decides she wants to move on to other things. The necklaces available are not her style, and the rings she describes as sizes too big for her thin fingers. I suggest a hand bag and she looks at me disapprovingly, and a little disgusted too, as she shakes her head because she thinks that the bag is not of a good quality; and I believe that she was thinking that this is not a place to purchase an item like a hand bag as I notice her Gucci branded bag that was given to her as a gift from her partner. We go to the rack that has hair accessories on

them. There is a white selection of brightly-colored hair bands and clips, from striped-patterns to hair bands with big and small ribbons on them as a decorative feature. She reaches for the hair bands that are about three in a pack, one is striped, the other has polka dots, and the other is one plain color; all following a color scheme of black, red and pink. She tells me that she needs the hair bands for her hair, right now, which is a weave that is sometimes difficult to maintain without certain hair accessories.

She then tells me that she needs to go and purchase a cell phone for her mother. She tells me that her mother is going to Cape Town from tomorrow, on holiday, for a week where she will be visiting a friend of hers. Nonde's older sister had purchased the flight ticket for her mother, and now Nonde felt it upon herself to buy the cell phone. We get to Game and she explains to the saleslady that she is looking for a low-cost cell phone that is easy to operate. The easier it is to operate, the more accessible it will be for her mother to use while she is away. She wants a low-cost cell phone because it turns out her mother's handsets usually get lost or broken, but she explains that what usually gets lost are the cell phone chargers and the low cost solution makes more sense and moreover, she is looking for a cell phone that would use a charger that is able to be used by other cell phones so that, when, Nonde points out, her mother loses the charger, the phone will still be able to be charged by other cell phone chargers in the house instead of having to go out and buy a replacement charger. Nonde's mother seems to always be one that loses her phone charger.

The process at Game is that you order your handset at the cell phone counter and whatever else you wish to purchase; the salesperson will then print out a receipt of the handset ordered, code, and other specifications of the product. This receipt must then be taken to

one of the multiple pay tills and the item paid for there, once payment has been concluded, one must make their way back to the cell phone counter, produce the proof of payment and then receive their handset. Once the purchase has been made, the item is placed in a Game branded shopping bag and once one gets to the door to leave, there is podium that the security sits at waiting for patrons to leave whereby their receipts are checked against items in the shopping bag and then if everything is as it seems, the receipt is signed and one can leave the store. We go over to the till, and she remembers that she wanted to purchase some portable lights. This happened around the time of load shedding almost every day and the fact that her room's light and circuit was damaged and she had needed these lights for more than load shedding reasons. She bought three packs with two lights in each pack so that when load shedding occurred, her mother and older brother, at home, did not struggle too much with candles and could just use these lights instead. We go back to the tills, get some batteries, and go through the process of paying, collecting the handset, getting the receipt checked, and leaving to go and sit for a quick lunch.

4.1.3.1 Security in the Shopping Mall

The mall, as a space has been described as a place of spectacle (Anjaria, 2008) and a place to observe different people's shopping patterns (Radder, 2000) whereby a postmodern approach has made its presence felt to assume the mall to be full of possibilities of choice, leisure, and freedom. During Nonde's shopping trip, all of these elements were evident from experiencing the spectacle of the mall as a space to express one's shopping preferences and patterns in a nature that made us feel like we could do and be anything,

this feeling soon disappeared once we experienced the careful process of exchange and security at the Game store whereby every move felt monitored and certain approval's had to be administered before we could make an active move on to the next thing on our agenda. As soon as our receipt was signed and stamped by the security guard at the door, I began to notice the security guards around the mall casually walking around, but actively monitoring the security details. I noticed the sensors at the doors of many stores with security guards that would check a person's shopping bag as they leave and when they enter, as well, whereby shopping bags would be sealed. Once I had noticed the security, it became odd to feel like I was not being watched in a store. Even when security measures were nowhere to be seen, security had been embodied in the sales people of the store and the security cameras that would follow one around; keeping a safe distance, but monitoring extremely closely.

In the Mall of America, Miles (1998) made the same acknowledgement whereby he stated that even though malls are described as monuments of freedom of consumer choice, they are more experienced as highly controlled environments from security guards patrolling as a police force to closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras capturing every move at all angles; the act of shopping turns into less of a choice and freedom of space as it claims to be (Miles, 1998: 59-60).

4.1.3.2 To Consume in Northern Suburbs or the CBD?

In conducting this research, I had initially thought that Nonde was the kind of woman that indulged in a more expensive taste until I learned that this observation only made up a

small part of her consumer personality. As it turns out, Nonde is one that is conscious about the price tag and always seeking out for bargain places that do not burn through her purse and budget, thus the debate of where are my research participants shopping? Are they disregarding the Johannesburg CBD for a more affluent shopping experience in the northern suburbs? Tomilson and Larsen (2003) found that, increasingly, tourists tend to be shown a consumer space in northern suburbs and its malls represented by a strong white power and presence whereby more people of color end up frequenting, as well, leaving behind consumer spaces; malls and markets in the township and the CBD (Tomilson and Larsen, 2003:43-44).

Nonde acknowledges this sentiment of 'white shopping' in northern and high-end consumer spaces (Tomilson and Larsen, 2003: 48-49), but unlike the assumption that higher-earning black classes move away from the CBD into 'white' spaces is untrue for her as her shopping patterns rely on searching for affordable items, and this will sometimes mean purchasing in the CBD area in Johannesburg and in Pretoria whereby there will be stores of big chain retailers that will sell their stock at half the price, and below, compared to their branches nestled within malls. Nonde does not actively seek a shopping experience characterized by this 'whiteness' believed to be found only in Northern high-end consumer space, but rather seeks one characterized by affordability and quality. Location does not seem to be an element that would stop her from purchasing a bargain.

4.1.4 Nonki's Shopping Trip

Nonki decided that today we will be shopping for a gift for Lemo to congratulate her on purchasing her new home. She tells me that when shopping for a housewarming gift, one is supposed to purchase something that is practical that the new home owner would usually forget to purchase, things like a chopping board, oven mittens, utensils for special requirements, etc. opposed to decorative objects like the typical lava lamp I had suggested as though we are still living in the 90's as the classic house warming gift. We soon realize that this shop is too expensive and full of items that we, or Lemo, would not use and so we leave.

After the price shock and limited stock at Boardman's for gifts we decide to go look at Mr. Price Home as an equivalent in stock, but with less costly items to purchase. We look around and are fascinated by the scatter cushions with a trendy take on them with bright colors and large printed words and modern-age pictures. Our attention is caught by a rug that could be useful for lying on the floor under a coffee table as we remember that Lemo had a keen interest in purchasing a coffee table. It is on sale, but not a right fit for a gift. We walk over to the kitchenware and continue our search for the essentials-as-a-gift items. We see more cutting boards that are about R20 cheaper and perfectly –sized. Nonki notices a white tray with blue accents of a sort of whimsical print on them and decides that she would want to purchase this. We look to a shelf with single plates on them as we go through a discussion about why some kitchen items would be sold separately opposed to as being a set. One example of this is the dishes she bumps into; they are predominantly white and the edge is a collection of very colorful butterflies bunched up together. Nonki falls in love with this and gets more excited when she learns that one plate costs R18. She

begins to remove each one from the shelf, counting as she goes, careful not to break them as she stacks them on her arm. This quickly signals to me to go to the front of the store in search of shopping baskets to help us carry all that we intend to purchase. I return and she has returned the stack of plates where she had found them. I lift the basket so that she can load the dishes in there. We count six, in total, as the typical round number for crockery sets. We continue to look through the kitchenware as that is the kind of gift that Nonki has settled on. She grabs an oven mitten and suggests the tray we had initially seen as going with the theme of butterflies and the whimsical feel of the items to form a theme of the gift that even though the items are different, they can be seen as under one umbrella. She also has settled on getting the tray we had initially seen; it does not necessarily match in color and theme to the rest of the items, but she feels it falls under the theme of essential items for the kitchen and a new home owner.

The shopping baskets are getting heavy for both of us, with me carrying the dishes and the oven mitten, and her carrying the tray and glass cutting board. We remember that Lemo is a wine lover and it would be a good idea to purchase a set of wine glasses for her. To our disappointment, the glasses being sold are not in sets and the glasses themselves are not to our liking and thus we make a mission to go and pay for the items. At the till, there is a variety of items to buy that would otherwise seem not useful where we notice a variety of notes books and fridge magnets. We look through them while we wait and just before we lose interest we notice gift bags and tissue paper for gifting, which makes us remember that we were buying gifts and these small till items would help in finalizing our shopping trip. We buy a big gift bag for the tray and cutting board and oven mitten, and soon realize that with all the gift boxes in the shop, none are round and big enough for 6 dishes to go

into for gifting. We pay for our items that are placed into large branded plastic bags and make our way out of the store with a big sign at the door thanking us for our patronage and asking to come back soon.

Nonki remembers the Birthday Shop that houses all sorts of items perfect for gifting. We walk along the escalator going a level down only to bump into young men cat calling us to come and test the massage chairs in which they are promoting. We notice a group of 3 people standing on the next platform promoting specials at the Nu Metro cinema house that reminds me of the new renovations to the house that just make you want to go and watch a movie right then and there. Five steps later, next to the Game, is a green and orange stand for Smoothies and Juices called Boost, with the staff looking happy and energetic about this new healthy snack. Across from them, in the middle of the path is another stand that is black and purple stand where they bejewel any handset, laptop, and tablet. Once we emerge from the area of much promotion we walk past PNA that is especially full today with young children and parents in the store, searching and purchasing stationery for the new school year. We continue along and as we turn the corner, on our left is a white and orange stand, next to a clicks, that sells a brand called Twisp, which is for the new electronic cigarettes with its accessories and flavors. To our right, around the corner, is the Birthday Shop.

The shop is huge and is quiet. There is one other couple in there looking through a section that is full of items that are shiny. Nonki makes her way straight in to where the gift boxes seem to be. The shop has aisles and aisles of greeting cards for all occasions and there is half a wall dedicated to all sorts of gifting bags and wrapping paper. We go to the corner and there are round boxes in a stack, “this is perfect”, we think. Nonki reaches for a box

that will stay within the color scheme of the gift as she grabs a blue box with pink flowers on it, she gets a plate out of the Mr. Price Home bag and places it in the box that she has just selected and it fits perfectly. This is the box we will use to go with the black gift bag and bright pink tissue paper.

4.1.4.1 The Reproduction of Femininity

When I went to meet Nonki for our shopping trip, she had told me that she was at Aldo looking at some sales items when I found her she was looking at rings on sale for more than I would spend on rings, but I should not have been too surprised since this store was high-end and provide quality items. As we began our shopping, we were surprised by Lemo who told us that she had noticed us in the store as she was walking past. Lemo had just come from getting a wax at the Sorbet spa that offers all sorts of grooming options for ladies. She tells us that she figured that she could come in for a quick visit to the spa and rush off to finish cooking and preparing for guests that were coming to her house for her father's *stokvel*, which is a social and savings club which had found its roots in Black Johannesburg formally known as the rotating savings and credit association (ROSCA) Krige (2011: 228).

This encounter with Lemo resonated Dean's (2009) ideas around discussions of gender whereby the consumer culture in malls is associated with the idea of femininity wherein consumption is seen in the female body through its manifestation of beautification and adornment. This kind of consumption is said to reproduce the female consumer as an active consumer (Dean, 2009: 22). By Nonki's very decision to begin at an Aldo

characterized by its beautification and adornment of the feminine body through high-end shoes and accessories, as well as Lemo's impromptu trip to the spa that puts the idea of beautification and adornment in a literal sense via grooming, speaks to how places in the mall help to enhance this idea of the reproduction of femininity in the consumer space that transforms women in to active consumers.

4.1.4.2 Consuming the Spectacle

Nonki had discussed with me just how much she enjoyed watching the happening's of the mall; gazing upon the mall and all of its participants partaking in the mundane. According to Anjaria (2008) a mall opened in Mumbai in 1991 failed and closed its doors in 2006 because there was a contradiction between what it was intended for and the reality of what actually happened. The assumption and expectation was that people would be able to experience the mall in different ways in order to find varied pleasure from it that would, in turn, revolutionize consumption practices. In reality, what ended up happening is that instead of people revolutionizing consumption practices through purchasing and consuming material goods offered at the mall, people were almost entirely going to the mall to experience the atmosphere of the mall. Consumption moved away from the consumption of tangible products to the consumption of the spectacle of the space (Anjaria, 2008: 213).

Other contributions for the mall as a space of spectacle have been made by Nuttall (2008) in speaking about The Zone in Rosebank, Johannesburg. Nuttall (2008) uses this mall to speak about a youth culture that frequents this space mostly because it has been designed

to attract them with various elements ranging from the youth radio station operating in the mall, to various shops and restaurants that appeal to the younger, up-and-coming group of the workforce. Restaurants are said to be strategically located so that people in the restaurants can gaze upon people passing by and vice versa (Nuttall, 2008: 95). Nonki's experience of the mall is based on sales and searching for timeless material items, while she also enjoys the premise of the mall as a space of the spectacle whereby she situates herself within the idea of gazing and being gazed upon in the mall (Urry, 2000).

4.1.4.3 A Sense of Authority from Consuming

Nonki made a point about how she found herself constantly attempting to gain validation from others through her past ideas of shopping and consumption. She felt that having certain clothes and items would be enough for her to be accepted by those that she was seeking validation from. Her other need for validation came from when she would go to the mall with her mother that would then bring about a sense of being closer to her mother. Although she describes that that was her connection to shopping, she has since learned that she had to limit her consumption practices to suit herself rather than to gain acceptance from others. She says that through this affirmation, she realized that she did not need to be in debt to achieve validation and as soon as she let go of these reasons to purchase and consume she was more content with the fact that she genuinely enjoyed the act of shopping on her own terms.

This point made me think about how much control and discipline she had now possessed with her new thinking; it was as though, through her consumption practices, she was able

to gain some semblance of authority over her life as Featherstone (1991) stated that consumption in a postmodern era has a tendency to give consumer an authority over the everyday construction of their lives through the act of consumption (Miles, 1998:25).

Within this space, the participants of this study were able to negotiate their identities from experiences outside and inside this contemporary space. This construction of their everyday lives is much like Walter Benjamin's 1989 study of the shopping arcades whereby it is described that within these contemporary sites "we find the implicated shadow of elf, desire and consumption in amongst the goods on display and the crowds of people" (Shields, 1992: 1)

4.1.5 Gugu's Shopping Trip

We drive around the edge of the traffic circle and enter via the second ramp entrance that leads to one of the entrances with the pick n' pay where it seems as the most central entrance to begin my exploration. I walk over to the Cotton On because I had been told that there is a sale of up to 70% off of all items in the store. I am told the sale will last until all of the stock is finished, thus I figure my 3-day delay is not much of a delay at all. As I walk over to the store which sits ahead on my left, I try with all of my strength to not get distracted, until a big and colorful sale sign catches my attention on my right in the YDE store. I have not shopped at YDE in a very long time because the clothing and prices had no longer appealed to me, but the idea of a sale at a store I once loved had me reminiscing once more and seek to satisfy an old memory. I look through the different racks of clothing, I look at the dresses, the shirts and pants, the bags, and the shoes, and I

am disappointed once more at the store I was once loyal to. Everything I do seem to like is too expensive for myself and everything that is on sale is too small or too big a size for me and thus I decide to leave and continue on my mission to the big Cotton On sale as I can see the store from inside YDE, “perfectly positioned” I think to myself. I begin to make my way to Cotton On and the sign outside says that there is still a sale of the last remaining stock. I look through the new stock they have available, mostly all the kinds of items for the autumn season, I am also on the phone with a friend of mine that is talking to me about her boyfriend and I am listening and trying to give her advice. I feel as though I have closed myself off to what is happening around me, but I am not distracted from my shopping mission, besides “the phone call makes me feel less alone”, I think to myself. The phone call continues as I pass along the different shirts and light jackets and jeans. I make my way to the back of the store and the manager is busy organizing some of the clothing racks, there are long cardigans and just as I am drawn in I notice a rack to my right that just looks disorganized compared to the organizing the manager appears to be doing on my right, which is when I realize that I have come to the sales racks of the last remaining stock! I see a huge selection of black shirts, although my size is available I realize why there is such a wide selection of this particular top; the style is just not an impressive one. I see a bunch of different printed t-shirts that I could have sworn I had seen a couple of months ago in the same spot. I notice some dresses, but without a size. To this disappointment of my entire reason of visiting the mall today I am reminded about my lack of interest in shopping at all, and to this I decide to leave. I am still on the phone as I explain to my friend how the idea of a sale feels like nothing but a ploy.

I am wearing a grey maxi dress with black sneakers with a white sole when I remember that I had bought this particular ensemble at Pick n Pay Clothing, which then prompts me to go and try my sales luck there. A few shops, an escalator, and a level down later, is the Pick n Pay Clothing after a small section of ATM's and a coffee shop. I walk in and the store is quiet. I expected an affordable shop as this one to be full during their sale season, to which I then realize that there is no sale here. This does not discourage me as I remember that the prices are affordable, and the quality is good as I begin to look at some summer dresses that now appear too bright for me and the shoes a style I do not really like. I think at this point, I am just tired of shopping as I leave.

I walk along the mall just looking through the window displays and the different kinds of people walking around, young and old couples, and a few children with their parents, and teenagers too old to walk too close to their parents, and the rare interesting woman with long legs, a petite frame and high heels that demands attention. The Woolworths seems most appealing at this point as I make my way into the entrance passing the security guard at the door that seems to mostly be admiring the different kinds of women walking in and out of the shop rather than being alert for any security threats. I realize that I begin to realize I am in the wrong area. I continue to look for the sales racks, and fail I keep walking into territory of more and more expensive clothing. I look to my right and crossing my path, going to the back of the store where the Woolworths food market is, is a relatively attractive man that looks my way and continues on his journey. As I try to walk closer to the aisle to get a closer look, the woman in me looks passed him and notices shoes and bright handbags. I walk over to the other side of the shop just to satisfy my weakness of accessories. I look at the different shoes and it is sandals and strappy heels.

I'm tempted to get a pair of heels but remember that I tend to purchase heels and only wear them once; I fear that I might be one that collects heels more than I wear them. I see the brightly-colored handbags and realize that I need to be looking for a big handbag that was suggested by my mom for when I get my first real job; I think the bag is meant to serve as motivation for the prospects of a job one day.

I soon remember that I need to get a birthday gift for my sister; she is turning 18 on the weekend, and has been hinting at everyone at home the gift she wants. She wants a jewelry making kit; she is a very artistic person and will be starting 1st day at fashion school in a week. Once I had decided that I was done looking at sales for clothes and accessories I decided that it was best to begin looking for this gift. I begin at CNA as I walk over and look around the store, I pass the electronics as I look at the signage above the aisles ranging from entertainment magazines, school stationary, toys, greeting cards, and then I see the section with boxes of toys for children. I assume that what I could be looking for should be here if I look hard enough, and to my dismay I find nothing of the kind. I leave the store passing a small boutique, a music store and then come across a Reggie's that is across a Wimpy and a Milky Lane. I enter Reggie's assuming that even though the gift I am looking for is not exactly a toy, it does falls under the "arts and crafts" category that I believe is encouraged in children and thus likely to be sold in children's toy stores. I go straight to the counter this time and speak to the saleslady to help me and she knows exactly what I am talking about. I am thrilled to get this gift as I assume the other patrons in the store are as I notice that there are no children in the store, only older people and just men. We walk over to the shelf with toys that are in boxes such as puzzle pieces and jewelry making sets to which she directs me to. She has found exactly what I was

looking for, but it is quickly made clear to me that there is an age limit to the items in the store. An 18 year old would not relate to plastic beads that are all purple and pink with rubber bands that are of all colors. I thank the lady for the help, and think to make my way to the Crafter's Market. I am in the store and head over to the counter where I ask the young lady to help me find this gift. She thinks for a bit, and asks me to follow her. We walk over to a section where one can collect the different pieces that one would find in a jewelry making kit as she tells me that they hadn't had the kit delivered to the store for a while now and that there was a possibility that they no longer sell them. The store is place whereby different crafters would create things and bring them to the store to be sold; other things sold are tools and materials for crafting certain things as well. Their stock is dependent upon those two aspects, and my gift is dependent on what the store has in stock. I soon come to the realization that the gift will not be found in the mall as I anticipated and start considering looking it up on the internet as I feel out of options. I am tired, and disappointed, and tired of being disappointed, thus I decide to leave and go home.

4.1.5.1 Buying

In partaking in a reflexive approach, I took on a shopping trip of my own. This trip triggered ideas of what the research meant and I began to think about the act of buying. This research is, in its basic sense, about the act of exchanging money for goods; buying. Discussing buying entails discussing the items purchased. "Consumer goods are products that do not last over time, but are subject to rapid changes due mainly to the changing models offered by the external world. We currently live in a culture in which satisfying

our needs has to be immediate and at the same time short-lived. The desire to purchase that pervades the consumer is determined by a continuous search for gratification. The individual is aware that the objective of his total appeasement may never be reached, since it would entail the end of desire itself” (Lutzoni, 2009: 195). I find this statement interesting as it speaks to how this group of black middle class is seen as conspicuous spenders in the new black middle class group of South Africa. If buying means dealing with consumer goods that are short-lived and thus instill this idea of satisfying a desire to purchase, then buying is a repetitive act that never truly ends because if it does, then satisfying the desire will cease to exist.

Moreover, this idea of desire speaks to how shopping and buying makes one feel by seeing consumption as an enactment of desire. Via the Enlightenment period when psychology was trying to differentiate between what a ‘want’ was and what a ‘need’ was, it was discovered that the discovery of selfhood and personal identity would help in this differentiation by looking to how the self became conscious through medium of a particular event or through a specific set of event or desires. In looking to the context of buying and what buying does, in terms of desire, it was seen that “the ‘self’ which exists potentially within yourself, it was held, becomes actual through the process of consumption. All consumption becomes conceivable as the desire, *for*, as well as the desire *of*, the self. There lay in every want the aching need for self-expression” (Shields, 1992: 27). Although buying seems, at a surface level, as nothing buying the exchange of money for an object that satisfies a specific desire, it actually goes beyond that as the object representing a ‘want’ that, once acquired, curbs the feeling of loss and absence

within myself that speak to my existing desire to ‘complete’ myself. Even though I am buying this object to present to someone else, the fact that I buy and I am able to buy speaks more to my desire to actualize my selfhood via the act of consumption.

4.1.5.2 Gift Buying, Gift Giving

I remember having feelings of panic, anxiety, stress, and fatigue from how hard I was trying to look for a gift for my sister. I reminisced about how easy it was to go shopping for a gift with Nonki because she seemed to make most of the decisions while I fetched shopping baskets and commented on the colors and aesthetics of the items she was picking out; ultimately, it came down to Nonki’s ability to not only shop for certain items, but to know how to shop for gifts. Today, I am alone and shopping for a gift for my sister, someone that I should know so well to this moment where I must decide what to buy and yet, when I can’t find the first gift option, I had no idea what alternative to get for her. In literature by Fischer and Arnold (1990), gift buying is attributed to women as ‘women’s work’ and as a way in which to reinforce social bonds. This act attributed to women is seen as ‘labor of love’ whereby gift buying is a way in which to show and express love by women as the actors of care and caring (Fischer & Arnold, 1990: 334). It is said that women’s identities of themselves are based on showing love and care to others thus making them the most likely gender to buy gifts. It is said that investigating this kind of shopping “can increase our understanding of the complex relationship between culture and consumer behavior. In particular, developing insights into patterns of participation by gender in consumer rituals will help us understand more fully the social construction of

consumption” (Fischer & Arnold, 1990: 343). My very act of being in the mall and dedicating some of my shopping time to searching for a gift for my sister further enforces ideas around women in consumption and the sociality of consumption practices that presents itself each time a person engages in consumption.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Focus Group

I walk along Smit Street in Braamfontein on a Friday afternoon. It is a warm and sunny day as young people begin to fill up the bars and streets surrounding this hub spot now turned into a student village with many bars, restaurants, and clothing stores. The streets of Braamfontein are filled with old buildings that have now been revamped into all these establishments that now give the town a space designed to attract a particular sub-culture; “hippies” as they are called and known to be in the last three years as neo-hippie movement that have found their place in Joburg city and Braamfontein being one of them.

My attention is captured by a tall wall painted in a bright green color. It is a restaurant lodged in between a clothing store and a parking lot. The restaurant has two small benches outside with small wooden tables that look like garden furniture and in between them is a small door leading into the establishment. The restaurant is Daleah’s and its atmosphere is characterized by the fact that it feels like you are in someone’s home, rather than merely at a place of business. I walk in, and as I try to adjust my eyes from the sunlight to the inside of Daleah’s, and I notice, right by the table nearest to the door sits, Nonde in sunglasses with a glass of sparkling water. Nonki and Lemo walk in after me as Lemo tells us about how sick she is feeling and had to get herself out of bed after she took some strong medication. Nonki has a new hairstyle today and the ladies compliment her on it. Wisani is running late as she tells us that she is waiting for her boyfriend to drive her from Pretoria to where we are as her car had to go back in for repairs. It is almost sun set and the ladies are finally all together. We catch up briefly, laugh and order our drinks and

food in the backdrop of a bright and orange sky making way for a warm evening in Braamfontein.

The ladies tell me about where they do their regular shopping and that whole part of the conversation is dominated by ideas of quality and willingness to purchase products of a good quality even if it means spending more and going further for groceries just to get quality products than the ones that would be available at the local Shoprite for Nonde in town near her residence for varsity. But that sometimes, online shopping and bargain places have seem to have dominated their shopping nature as avenues to get quality, high-end products at discounted rates. Wisani tells me that she prefers to shop closer to where she lives, in Pretoria, and limit travelling to places not too far away and has found that the shops closest to her are ‘high-end’ and costly but she tends to purchase from these places just to save travelling time and costs from places she wants to shop at, “I want to shop at Pick n Pay, I want to shop at Shoprite, but those places are too far from me” and thus finds herself shopping a lot for her groceries at Woolworths to which Lemo nods her head in firm agreement as she takes a spoonful of her chicken salad. Lemo then says she does not feel it makes sense for her to drive too far and spending money on gas to drive extra km’s when there’s a shop conveniently placed nearer to you, no matter how much it costs as that R30 you might be saving at cheaper shops, is going to be used on the gas to get there and back anyway. Nonki then says, for her, it depends on where you stand in your life as if one is a student; they are most likely to be the ones to travel far just to make that bargain price and save. Moreover, she points to Wisani and Lemo as the ones in the group that are working and have a steady disposable income as the ones most likely to not mind spending more for the sake of convenience as their time is set up differently as people that have other things to be done on their limited time.

Wisani then says that it is different because students are almost always surrounded by bargain places and thus always able to save their money on purchases to which Nonde extends on saying that she discovered a low-cost place in Pretoria and before she even finishes her sentence all the ladies shriek “PRETORIA?!” as they think about how far she is from Pretoria and a student who does not own her own transport to be making such far away travels for a bargain. Wisani then asks her how she got there, and Nonde responds by saying “with students. We’re students. We literally go there for bargain shopping and make the trip. We shop for everything”. Nonki, as one other girl that drives her own car says that she does not mind ever making that distance, as long as it is for a sale and she can leave knowing that she spent her money well then she could make that trip, especially now that the petrol price has gone down. As for before, when the petrol price was still high, she would not be able to make that decision for such a trip as easily.

5.1.1 Budgeting and Saving

I had gotten the sense that strategies for budgeting and saving were of importance to each of the ladies and it resonated with each of them when they were all in agree about how difficult it, sometimes, was to budget and to save. Wisani had discussed with the rest of the group her strategy to budget even before she gets paid, and mentioned that because of how difficult it can, she had wished that she could budget and plan for ‘risk’ so as to have money saved up after the initial plans have failed. Nonde is motivated to budget and stick to a budget to avoid moments of debt. She uses an example of consumers that fall into debt by way of their credit agreements with retail stores whereby she feels that retailers make it easily accessible for people to get accounts and get into the pattern of purchasing on credit. Nonde feels as though people have been

accustomed to living in debt and see no problem in it and that her fear of being in this debt and going so far as owing people money, has led her to live her life within the boundaries of a budget. This trend can be attributed to how the new black middle class was a group that was more indebted than its white counterparts, it is said that this is because this new group spend conspicuously in order to fulfill a sense of 'having arrived' and setting their presence in stone; the dangers are in the fact that they achieve this by living beyond their means and falling into debt (Krige, 2011: 304-305).

This group of ladies distanced themselves from this tendency of an emerging middle class, emphasizing how important saving and budgeting was for them, even if it was difficult. They found that budgeting and saving meant also having to cut down and sacrifice certain aspects of their lifestyles that they could no longer afford and can be without. One of the reasons for this sacrifice is due to the ability to no longer seek validation from others as will be discussed in a later section. They are young people, that "have arrived" and part of this is to spend their money on entertainment. They do this by going against the assumption that the sense of feeling like "you have arrived" means spending conspicuously as they tend to budget for entertainment costs and will go so far as limiting themselves and their entertainment whenever they need to be so as not to spend beyond their means. Other strategies are helped by financial institutions that will encourage saving through investment accounts whereby they will be able to save money and if they go into spending some of it, they limit themselves so as not to spend all of their savings. They have emphasized that the one such time in which they would 'spend beyond their means' will only be when they know that they can always repay that money; the fact that even though they use a credit card, they will be able to reimburse it without having to feel indebted, a sort of "safety net" that is only useful if one has self-control.

Nonde tells us of something she was told from a young age about how in previous times, black people were almost forced to save and the way that worked is that those forming the working class; working in domestic spheres, would save their money for the small other percentage of the working class living in credit; via credit cards, that were reliant on the circulation of the money earned by the other working class. This saved money was used to pay for the credit in which debtors had found themselves in. the fact that they had knowledge of the fact that their credit bills were always covered, it allowed them to get more credit and spend more on that credit knowing that their debt would be reimbursed. Wisani then notes that “Black people don’t save” to which Nonde corrects her and says that black people don’t save anymore, “now they live paycheck to paycheck, and they live lives they can’t afford, they are in debt. The middle class is in debt-it’s the lowest income class”. This is similar to Krige’s (2011) Standville, whereby there was an informal lending and borrowing system of credit. The middle class that moved into more affluent neighborhoods found that they were struggling to make payments on bonds or the cars they bought and often sought to go back to borrowing money from informal lenders in the townships to keep up with the lifestyle in which they had bought (Krige, 2011: 162).

5.1.2 The Shopping Experience

The story begins from when Nonde was involved in a car accident and she was the occupant, of the vehicle, that had suffered the worst injuries. For months after recovery and being discharged from hospital, she was advised to wear a back brace as often as possible. The back brace was structured like a corset, and made out of hard plastic; this restricted the movement in that area to ensure that the back and spine could heal properly without disturbance caused by too much

movement. Nonde would go out with her brace to go about her normal life before the accident. This one day she went shopping alone and went in to Woolworths to get make-up and found that the item she needed was at the lowest shelf closest to the ground. This was a problem for her as she was unable to bend from the standing position to have to practically be on the floor with this neck brace, and thus she felt it necessary to ask for assistance. This was no easy task, it seemed, as there was nobody manning the cosmetics section in which she was in, and thus she set about to go look for someone who would be able to help her. She was then met with a lot of resistance from the people working at the shop that sounded much like, “I don’t work in that department”, “*muthu wateng uyile lunching*” (“the person of that department is on lunch”); Nonde mimics these quotes with a kind of apathetic attitude that she was met with. She then says she waited for about an hour for someone to come and assist her and when the lady did, the whole exercise seemed yet again to bare no fruits to which she then decided to ask for the manager. She tells us that she feels as though the person they brought was meant to defuse the situation and satisfy her complaint as she describes that this manager was a white male as though his presence as ‘white’ and ‘male’ would be enough for her to detract her complaint upon seeing this “authoritative figure”.

She says this upset her very much because the category of ‘the white man’ was given too much credit because of his gender and race. She was especially upset because he did not live up to the category within which he was presented; white, male, manager, in charge, instead Nonde describes him as looking like a lower class white male that could be described as “coming from Turffontein as white trash”; this reference is at a Southern suburb that has deteriorated over the years and seems to house the not so wealthy kinds of people of all races, especially, poor whites.

Nonde's shopping experience was not ideal for her as one that describes her ideal shopping experience including good service and assistance, even if she is capable. She describes that people always complain about technology having taken over the jobs that were done by humans, and yet when there are jobs for humans, such as within the retail sector, the sales people cannot seem to then rise up to challenge of actually doing the jobs in which they were hired to do claiming "I am the reason they are in business".

This idea of service, service workers, and expectations of the customers relates with Sherman's (2007) study about the consumption of luxury service in hotels. There are dynamics that exist between consumers of luxury service that can afford, and the producers of luxury service that do not earn enough to consume such a service and thus these dynamics are seen in the worker who must insubordinate himself in order to give the luxury service to the hotel guest who tries to ignore class differences by being reciprocal in his tipping and politeness to the worker so as not to come across as the entitled luxury consumer, "guests justify their conflicts about consuming luxury service just as workers resolve their discomfort with producing it...they obscure their own privilege by trying not to think about it...they mitigate their privilege by practicing reciprocity toward workers and casting them as equals" (Sherman, 2007: 255).

The ideal shopping experience had elements that suggested the same kind of premise whereby the ladies seemed to suggest that upon walking into the shop, there were certain things that had to be in place as though tailored for them to have a good shopping experience. Their expectations ranged from a quiet shop so as to avoid being overwhelmed, being able to walk into the shop and walk out with exactly what they wanted even if it meant waiting during peak sales. Ultimately, they found, at the crux of their experiences, that the personality of the people working in the

shop would be the deciding factor between wanting to stay and purchase, and wanting to leave the shop and completely abandoning any desire to shop.

Throughout the research, I realized that the shopping experience is also, in part, driven by the novelty and newness of objects that surrounded any shopper in a mall. The retail pace is usually characterized by its glossy look where all of the objects on sale look shiny and as though wishing to be bought, BY YOU. It is in this context that one takes note of the object as one that is a spectacle, in own right, of the shopping experience. Although conception of desire plays a role in purchasing, it is that initial contact with the object that serves as a decision-making tool in the process of purchase as that new object represents newness that an old object cannot compete with. The object might be a replacement of the old; such as the same hair dryer that no longer works, and now having to purchase a new one that will probably be the same brand and make, maybe a different color, but without guarantee that it will not age much like the last one; it is ultimately the same thing. The only difference is its newness, “so long as novelty can be associated with ‘glamour’ in the sensibility of the consumer, it makes sense to ‘keep up’ with changing fashions, so that, even if the inner value of the commodity cannot be predicted from its external appearance, its newness can be relished” (Shields, 1992: 36).

5.1.3 Women as carriers of culture and change

“In black families, the family heirloom is responsibility, we inherit responsibility. That’s why it’s so hard for someone to get on their feet” Nonde utters these words we all listen to her telling us a story about her sister being featured in a magazine and about how she told her classmate. “So

your sister is rich? Why isn't she paying for you and all of your expense?" This is what the classmate asks Nonde. Nonde tells us about how shocked she was this conversation and what she was hearing. She is frustrated at the very thought of the fact that her classmate is but a mere avatar that stands in for the many thoughts of many black South Africans' thoughts when it comes to the discourse of entitlement. "This entitlement thing is ridiculous. Those are the battles we are really fighting; we feel entitled to your success because we're family. We're misconstruing and misinterpreting the concept of *ubuntu*; *ubuntu* does not mean we must but get ahead because I'm going too far and u are being left behind and I must go back to help you". The women of my research experience the concept of 'family responsibility' more as a "heirloom and inheritance".

They debated around whether or not they felt forced, to euphemizing the responsibility as an obligation. They come from families with strong values whereby the one parent can carry the whole ship; Wisani as describing her mother as one who "has always been full steam ahead", Lemo speaking of how since her father has retired she has found herself taking on extra responsibility, and Nonde having had her mother being a single parent after her father's passing. Nonki is one that comes from a family whereby the idea of entitlement over somebody else's success is pushed out of the conscious as she has been taught that one is its own entity, and that she should not feel obliged to fulfill this perceived notion of black family responsibility.

All of these stories, although biased as the group was all female, there was mention of the fact that they felt that the women in the household took on more responsibility and obligation to the family than the boys of the family did. They felt obliged to do more on their money from Nonde's sister being asked by her mother to purchase a car for Nonde's brother, to Lemo having

to take on extra responsibility purely because the circumstances at home had changed, Wisani having to witness her mother taking care of herself but realizing that witnessing this made her want to be in a relationship whereby the man can take care of her opposed to the culture at home of the strong, all-doing woman, to Nonki having been taught values that are not to be ruled by material wealth, while her younger brother had a different experience of embracing the material. The women believe that they have been conditioned to feel obligated to take care of family responsibility, “because your mother did it for her mother”, but the women are beginning to change these conceptions as seeing the obligation as something they feel is necessary to do, and increasingly seeking to assert their authority over their own lives and what it means for them.

A focus on women helps to think about the integration of different races and cultural changes as women make up the gender that carries both the aspects of class and ethnic identities compared to their male counterparts, and thus concludes that women’s lives can be seen as scales of cultural change (Dean, 2009: 3)

5.1.4 Self-fashioning versus Validation

I found it necessary to have a discussion about how identity gets worked into the consumer. My participant’s spoke of two concepts that stood out when reasons of ‘spending beyond one’s means’ would occur; emotional spending and validation. Nonde is the one that brought up the idea of emotional spending as what happens to her when she wants to feel better; how that a bad month could be cured by the purchase of something new and shiny. Her justification as to why she thinks people would seek validation would be because the material and the expensive would

be for those that do not have much, and because they have less, they feel less of a person. She challenges this conception by stating that she is not one to shy away from stating that sometimes she does not have money as this will not equal as a reflection on her, but rather as a reflection of her circumstances whereby she comes from a home of a single parent that is also a pensioner. Nonki was taught, at a young age, not to seek out validation from others. This lesson was taught to her when she describes that “as kids, we have different perspectives of our lives, material goods further enhance our need to be a part of something, even if fitting in means compromising a part of yourself...you need to come from a background that teaches you that it is okay to not have everything”. She tells us that her mother refused to buy her a pair of Adidas sneakers and opted to buy her other sneakers that had one stripe more than the classic Adidas brand. Her mother, even though she could afford the pricier shoe, had made it clear to Nonki that she was not going to encourage the act of buying into an image, when both sneakers were going to serve a same function.

The idea of self-fashioning speaks to how the youth culture would use the body as a site of political liberation and for practices of freedom. A cautionary note warns those that indulge in self-fashioning to describe that this conception might be emphasizing too much importance of the body, as sometimes consumption cannot be explicitly felt and confirmed through the satisfaction of the body; there is a gap between the commodification of the Y Culture as a lifestyle and the process and aim of self-fashioning (Nuttall, 2008:93). The ladies seem to have quickly heeded this warning as they are constantly navigating the seductions of capitalism and commodities, while embodying the ideas of agency and freedom in working through their processes of self-fashioning and growing out of seeking validation from others.

Liz Frost (1999) explores a number of ways in which she describes how the issue of women's appearance can be connected to their well-being. Together with the idea of self-fashioning, it was noticed that my participants really took care to 'do' their appearance and their looks as a sort of active and very conscious effort to appear a certain way for themselves as well as their audience. This act did more than just make the women look a certain way; "the pleasure to be had from turning oneself into a living art object is some kind of power when power is in short supply" (Frost, 1999: 122). It is in this act of actively doing one's looks that women find power from within their own bodies where a source of pleasure and self-expression can come through on the women's own terms.

5.1.5 Purchasing Power

Throughout the discussion with the ladies, and the research, in general, I found a recurring theme about the kinds of freedom and authority that came from purchasing. It is pertinent to the research to mention the idea of purchasing power. "Consumers seek pleasant sensations in shopping. It represents a way of evading insecurity, in that all objects on sale, and what they stand for, are accompanied by the promise of certainties. Indeed the conviction that one can express one's freedom by the simple fact of having chosen to buy one good rather than another is enough to charge this act with meanings. The current consumer society is distinguished by a general dependence on shopping, a condition without which we have the impression we are being deprived of individual freedom. The item purchased is the instrument of differentiation between individuals, but at the same time an inescapable element that endorses belonging to a specific group. The possibility of buying goods expresses a form of freedom, in that the consumer's choice and potential right to choose count more than what is chosen" (Lutzoni, 2009:

195); the fact that choosing one object from another is attached with meanings speaks to the meanings of purchasing power. The research participants, as consumers, have a kind of purchasing power characterized by the fact that they have the luxury to choose between different items in which to purchase. Their class positions and economic standing has given them the freedom to assert a power over their purchasing practices where they are not restricted to buying certain objects because they have no choice.

This power found in the act of purchase can further be extended to describe how purchase can be a tool to enact a lifestyle and, moreover, buy identity. The women in my research were ultimately shopping in such a way that spoke to their lifestyles without actually saying those words out loud. For some, throughout the year, it was realized that purchasing also spoke to their assertion of buying their identities. This spoke to femininity as a practice whereby the category of ‘young women’ could be specifically tied to consumption by what the power of purchase could do for them. Shields (1992) hypothesizes that “consumption for adornment, expression and group solidarity become not merely the means to a lifestyle, but the enactment of lifestyle. These *personae* are more like spider at the centre of social and stylistic webs of their own making which extend the body in pace, rather than the autonomous, disconnected and monadic ego-centered identities of bourgeois individuals” (Shields, 1992: 16).

To further elaborate on this point, it is noted that shopping should not be looked as merely the act of acquiring or affording things, but rather that shopping should be seen as buying identity whereby in the situation of shopping and consumption “there is some choice [which] reflects decisions about self, taste, images of the body and social distinctions” (Clammer, 1992: 195). This reveals the overpowering power of purchase that can reach beyond purchase to saying

something about the individual shopper that enacts her lifestyle in purchase and her choice always revealing her identity.

CHAPTER 6

6.1 Concluding Remarks

6.1.1 Middle-class Discussion

The participants of this research were black and were of different ethnicities and African languages that do not have a direct translation of the term ‘middle class’. It was important to look at the participants via their race and ethnicity so as to understand how they work through the English conception of being ‘middle class’. As simple of a task that is, when it came to the discussion of being middle class, the participants had struggled in putting into words what they believed to be the meaning, and would end up telling me that they didn’t know and had never really thought about it conceptually to be able to put into words. In a study conducted in Soweto, it was seen that the predominant number of participants regarded themselves as falling under the category of ‘middle class’, by vernacular definitions of ‘middle class’ that were related to status, and a person’s standing in society, usually based on materiality, money and affordability (Phadi & Owen, 2010: 92).

It was interesting to listen to the answers that the participants gave me in trying to define what middle class meant. From having to physically demonstrate the concept of ‘the middle’ to then describing the state of middle class as being ‘able to afford’ and being ‘comfortable’. The typical aspect of class came up as relating to the financial wealth and gain of a class. My take was very different as although I believed that the financial aspect had much to do with it, it felt that if pushed further that the financial was only a small part of it whereby it could go so far as

influencing certain aspects of the very fact that authors, that have been brave enough to get into a conversation about middle class, would then go on to talk about the new black middle class as a group of conspicuous spenders speaks of how this kind of spending, whether exaggerated or not, negative or positive, has a huge influence on the country's economy. My research has shown that the new black middle class is not always victim to conspicuous spending but would rather strive for budgeting and saving strategies so as to be the group that can strive for more, that can move up in the class positions, and that can also attempt to not live precarious lives in the ever-fluctuating economy. I think that my participants were the new group of middle class that came into the workforce at the peak of the BEE policies, and emerged after seeing how generations before them worked through instant wealth. Even with opposing takes on what the black middle class is like financially, the fact that they are being spoken about gives way for them to be noticed \by various financial institutions and governmental institutions as the kind of group to look to when making certain decisions; the hype created around this group calls for the influence they have on the economy and the political realm of the country.

6.1.2 The Middle-class and Branding

Miles (1998) closely associates the act of consumption with the concept of postmodernism. He states that consumption is and is a condition of the rise of a postmodern era and culture (Miles, 1998: 23). He then calls on authors that describe and debate this link of consumerism and postmodernity. I found useful the argument by Mike Featherstone (1991 as cited in Miles, 1998) who states that consumption is not restricted to the young and rich; it reaches further beyond those boundaries including everyone in the postmodern assumption that anything is possible.

Moreover, it is “not that middle-class artistic values are becoming more important to a large percentage of the population...but that the production of such culture is increasingly subject to a process of commodification” (Miles, 1998: 24-25).

It is important to begin this section with this analysis by Miles (1998) because it is then brought, to the fore, how influential the term ‘middle class’ is and can be, how that middle class values can come to mean something over and above the most simplest definition of the middle class under economic terms. It is the values of the middle class that count the most. It is the values of the middle class that people are taught to buy into when on their way to achieving economic freedom. It may not be the last stop in aspirations for some, but it sure is the first stop in economic freedom.

It is worth reminding the reader about the reluctance of my female participants to directly self-identify with being middle class. This was said to be for a few reasons, among them being the fact that they felt the middle class was a class mistaken as being an economically successful one, when in reality they saw this class to be one that is the most classified by debt and credit. In a study conducted to work through the conceptions of class in Soweto, it was seen that in describing and ascribing value to ‘class’, many respondents spoke of ‘affordability’ which was the ability to consume and maintain a certain lifestyle, “it therefore links consumption to income, and hence to work and class, and contributes to other themes, such as self-sufficiency, which emerged in Sowetans’ description of their class identities” (Phadi & Ceruti, 2013: 143).

Much like this concept of middle class being linked to affordability via an income earned through work, the second identification of class by the Sowetans was identifying as working class to talk about one that has wage employment (Phadi & Ceruti, 2013: 147). According to this

definition, if linking it to certain individuals that refuse to identify with being middle class, perhaps the working class definition might be suitable for such a group that works and receives a wage and ultimately able to navigate their social worlds via their ability to afford.

In my research, it has been discussed in length how that the middle class is one to organize their finances via strategies employed through budgeting and saving, and this very conversation often led to ideas of how the middle class is the group that tends to ‘spend beyond their means’. The very aspects of budgeting, saving, spending beyond means all move to concepts used to describe the middle class. With this observation in mind, it is probably best to make it clear by reaffirming how consumption is an active production of self. I see this much in line with the concept of branding as a tool that transforms consumption from just about being about the individual, but also reaching into how that very branding can render itself useful (or useless) for my female participants as “there is a need...to treat consumption as an active, committed production of self and of society” (Shields, 1992: 2). Consumption, of certain brands, made possible by affordability, desire, budgeting and saving speaks to my participants’ reluctance to self-identify with being middle class.

Levitt (1983) was able to provide a framework in understanding the differences between a product and a brand. He used the idea of Coca-Cola to expand on his framework. According to this, at the core of a brand lies a tangible product; a commodity to meet the needs of the consumer. The layers of competitive advantage are added to the product so much so that it is no longer seen as just a commodity, but an offering that is so much more than that; the brand. The example of the Coca-Cola brand sees the tangible product as the Cola drink. Consumers do not

just see the beverage anymore; they are drawn in by it because of its heritage and relationship with its consumers as the aspects that form the Coca-Cola brand (Inseng, 2004: 13).

Much like this transference of importance from product to brand, women's identity of my participants can be explained by how brands have been used by some people to either become middle class or move upward in the ranks of class. My participants are a group whose parents are from the baby boomer generation that was raised to follow in the path of the working class and the middle class. My participants attempt to forge a new kind of class that is not ruled by the purchase and consumption of expensive brands. They view the middle class as their parents' generation and the group only characterized by its debt and relying on brands and branding for class mobility, navigation and actualization of class rank.

My participants have proved to be a part of a larger group of the young, urban, black that were able to navigate their affordability via their ability to limit themselves by, say, window shopping and budgeting before spending. This act must not be mistaken as not being able to afford as they are often conscious of different kinds of brands ranging from the ones that are pocket-friendly (Mr. Price) to the brands that are more expensive (Aldo) that might appear to others as brand meant to aid in the project of upward class mobility. The reality for my participants is opposite to class mobility, but rather that their reality is about choosing quality every once in a while which is aided by their attention to budgeting and saving that allows them to afford rather than the presumed middle class way of risking debt and poverty for brand believed to provide the 'look' of upward mobility (Wale, 2013: 173-175). Therefore, other than brands being used to become middle class, my participants use their purchase of brands to further distance themselves from middle-classness, as classification, as they navigate to a new kind of class (or a blend of class)

that choose the degree of quality and the loyalty they have to the brand, regardless of price, over any promise by branding to aid in upward class mobility.

6.2 Conclusion

I began this research as a black woman in post-apartheid South Africa. I am 25 and I shop. I engage in acts of consumption in places of consumption. I selected four other women so as to get at ideas around what I was trying to explore. I shadowed the shopping and consumption practices of these women and got at interesting ideas around shopping, women, brands, the middle class, and purchasing power in South Africa.

Taken from a standpoint of governmental policies of economic empowerment that gave rise to a black middle class group, I find that there is not enough literature on the new middle class group that is black and female in contemporary Johannesburg. By looking to this specific group, I was able to get into a space of women's consumption practices that involved ideas around budgeting and saving, asset accumulation, the reproduction of femininity and desire in shopping malls, and ideas of purchasing power, authority and identity that emerge for these women.

I engaged with the middle class definition provided by Krige (2011) and found that some aspects were agreed upon and some were contested upon by the definitions that the participants had provided for themselves. Thus, a discussion about the ideas of the middle

class emerged as it seemed that these women would distance themselves from the definition, but would attribute their assumed middle class status to their parents' actions.

Ultimately, I was then able to discuss branding with regards to how in contemporary South Africa people use brand and branding as a tool within which to navigate class mobility, usually in the hopes of moving upwards into middle-class and above. My female participants expressed their reluctance for self-identifying with being middle class and used the purchase and consumption of brands and branding, according to quality and affordability, to aid in their own personal production of self that feels no real pressure to identify with one class rank.

The importance of this research is due to the fact that although South African literature of the black middle class and its consumption exists, it does not adequately take into account the significance of black female consumption. Also, I found that there is not enough research in the South of Johannesburg region as a space to evaluate consumption practices; instead, I found that consumption practices in Johannesburg were researched in parts assumed to be low in a scale of wealth; such as Soweto and the CBD, and high in a scale of wealth; such as the Northern Suburbs.

Another importance of this research is because it could lend itself useful for future studies on black females. Their experience of shopping could lead to some interesting insights as to the thoughts and ideas that inform their habits and practices of shopping as black women in a post-transition Johannesburg.

When I started this research I did not see myself as a shopaholic or one that had an ease about shopping, but that soon changed. I am black, young, and very much a part of the new emergent middle class of contemporary Johannesburg. My shopping trips with the ladies and my conversations with them led to some really insightful topics. Being in the company of such young and fresh minds made the experience of this research all the more fascinating and has turned me into one that enjoys shopping; knowing now, that the women that move around the aisles of the malls, with their shopping bags, are most likely in the same frame of mind as I am in makes the act of shopping less of an isolated event.

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