# Learning to Learn: A Critical Realist Exploration into the Home Established Learning Practices of a Marginalised Community in Port Elizabeth

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**Abstract**

This study was completed as part of a project exploring social inclusion and exclusion in South African higher education. In a globalised world, the achievement of a qualification from an institution of higher education is increasingly key to finding any sort of employment. This is particularly the case in South Africa where employment amongst black citizens is inordinately high. The aim of the research reported upon in this thesis was to better understand the construct of 'epistemological access' (Morrow, 1992), often used in relation to the needs of black working class students entering higher education, in relation to performance data (see for example, CHE, 2016) that repeatedly shows that black students fare less well than their white peers. Following what might be termed a 'social' approach to understanding access, this study begins long before most students have even heard of higher education and focuses on identifying the mechanisms that come into play at much earlier level of learning and literacy development.

The study outlines the development of 'ways of being', or social practices, surrounding learning in a marginalised community in Port Elizabeth, in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. This was achieved by means of critical ethnography and it is therefore qualitatively based. The study shows how social structures enable or constrain a child's school readiness and how they then go on to support or impede progress in school where the language and literacy needed for educational success are further developed. The study therefore aims to allow us to explain global data indicating that the single greatest indicator of a young person's ability to access and succeed in higher education is the level of education of caregivers in their homes of origin.

Examined from a critical perspective (i.e. with a concern for social justice), this study has made use of a framework using social, psychological and linguistic theory and more, particularly, the work of sociologist Margaret Archer (1995, 1996, 2003). The study makes particular use of Archer's 'morphogenetic framework' which allows for an analysis of the way structure and culture impact on a child's development over time.

As I was concerned that my own social status might impact on the understandings I developed as a critical ethnographer, the study acknowledges my own experiences of learning and the way my own family sought to enhance them as enabling. In doing this, the study aims to better contribute to understandings of social justice in South Africa.

Key words: Higher education, social inclusion, epistemological access, critical realism, and critical ethnography.

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**Quotations**

‘The right to a quality education is, I believe, the perfect path to bridge the gap between different cultures and to reconcile various civilisations. Without such a right, the values of liberty, justice and equality will have no meaning. Ignorance is by far the biggest danger and threat to mankind.’

– Mozah bint Nasser Al Missened

‘For the meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person’s life at a given moment.’

– Viktor E. Frankl

‘I believe the way to justice is education’

– Julian Assange

‘Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the corner stones of freedom, democracy, and sustainable human development’

– Kofi Annan

‘The small wisdom is like water in a glass: clear, transparent, pure. The great wisdom is like the water in the sea: dark, mysterious, impenetrable.’

– Rabindranath Tagore

# CONTENTS

Abstract .......... i
Acknowledgments .......... iii
Quotes .......... iv
Contents Page .......... v
List of Figures .......... ix
Acronyms .......... x

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction and Orientation .......... 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION: PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC MOTIVATION .......... 1

1.2 CONTEXT .......... 7
1.2.1 Social Inclusion .......... 7
1.2.2 Epistemological Access .......... 10

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS .......... 12

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS .......... 12

CHAPTER TWO: Meta-Theoretical Framework .......... 16

2.1 ONTOLOGY: CRITICAL REALISM .......... 16
2.1.1 Critical Naturalism and Transcendental Realism .......... 16
2.1.2 A Layered Reality .......... 17
2.1.3 Structure and Culture .......... 18
2.1.4 The Epistemic Fallacy .......... 19

2.2 EPISTEMOLOGY .......... 20
2.2.1 Abduction .......... 21
2.2.2 Retroduction .......... 22

2.3 CRITICAL REALISM AND THIS STUDY .......... 22
2.4 ARCHER'S MORPHOGENETIC APPROACH .......... 23
2.4.1 The fallacy of Conflation and Analytical Dualism .......... 23
2.4.2 The Concept of Emergence: Personal Emergent Properties (PEP's), Structural Emergent Properties (SEP's) & Cultural Emergent Properties (CEP's) .......... 24
2.4.3 The Morphogenetic Framework .......... 26

CHAPTER THREE: Explanatory Theory .......... 28

3.1 THE NEED FOR EXPLANATORY THEORY .......... 28

3.2 NEW LITERACY STUDIES (NLS) .......... 31
3.2.1 Autonomous Model of Literacy vs. Ideological Model of Literacy .......... 32
3.2.2 'Literacy Events' and 'Literacy Practices' .......... 33
3.2.3 Gee's construct of 'Discourse' .......... 34

3.3 LITERACY, LANGUAGE AND POWER ........ 37
3.3.1 Literacy and Social Practice ........ 39
3.3.2 Social and Cultural Capital ........ 41
3.3.3 'Situated Learning' and 'Discourse Communities' ........ 42
3.3.4 The interplay of New Literacy Studies (NLS) and Socially Embedded Practices 44

3.4 SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT ........ 45
3.4.1 Play ........ 45
3.4.2 The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) ........ 46

3.5. THE LANGUAGE QUESTION ........ 46
3.5.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics ........ 47
3.5.2 Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) ........ 48
3.5.3 Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) or 'Dual Iceberg Hypothesis' ........ 51
3.5.4 Bernstein's Restricted and Elaborated Codes ........ 52

3.6. CONCLUSION ........ 53

CHAPTER FOUR: Research Methodology ........ 56

4.1 INTRODUCTION ........ 56
4.2 SELF-REFLEXIVITY ........ 56
4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN ........ 59
4.3.1 Critical Ethnography ........ 60
4.3.2 Research Aims and Objectives ........ 63

4.4. RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS ........ 63

4.5 RESEARCH METHODS, TIME SCALE AND ORGANISATION OF DATA COLLECTION ........ 64
4.5.1 Sampling ........ 64
4.5.2 Observation ........ 66
4.5.3 Interviews ........ 67
4.5.4 Photographs ........ 69

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS ........ 69

4.7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ........ 71
4.7.1 Reliability ........ 71
4.7.2 Validity ........ 71

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ........ 72

CHAPTER FIVE: Shaping the Community ($T_1$) ........ 76

5.1 INTRODUCTION ........ 76

5.2 RACE AND THE INITIAL STRUCTURING OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION ........ 76
5.2.1 The South African Apartheid Government: Abetting Social Exclusion ........ 77
5.2.2 The Bantu Education Act ........ 81
5.2.3 Language and Social Exclusion ........ 84

5.3 FROM APARTHEID TO DEMOCRACY ... 86
5.3.1 Education, social segregation and continuing exclusion ... 88

5.4 THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONDITIONING OF THE COMMUNITY ... 92
5.4.1 History ... 92
5.4.2 Location ... 95
5.4.3 Demographics and language usage ... 96
5.4.4 General living conditions ... 97
5.4.5 Family structure ... 102
5.4.6 Occupations ... 104
5.4.7 Financial situation and access to financial support ... 106
5.4.8 Education ... 109
5.4.9 Religious beliefs ... 111
5.4.10 Gendered discourses ... 112
5.4.11 Racial discourses ... 115

5.5 CONCLUSION ... 118

CHAPTER SIX: Exercising Agency in Preparation for Schooling ($T_2$-$T_3$) ... 119

6.1 INTRODUCTION ... 119
6.2 FINANCIAL INDIGENCE ... 121
6.2.1 Overcrowding ... 122
6.2.2 Health ... 124
6.2.3 Alcohol use and domestic violence ... 130
6.2.4 Crime and safety ... 138
6.2.5 Gangsterism ... 142
6.2.6 Educational related costs ... 144
6.2.7 Financial indigence and marginalisation ... 146

6.3 FAMILY STRUCTURES ... 147

6.4 THE CONSTRAINTS OF GEOGRAPHY ... 148

6.5 SERVICE DELIVERY ... 153

6.6 THE EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF THE PARENTS ... 155

6.7 TECHNOLOGY ... 158

6.8 HOME-BASED EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES ... 173

6.9 LANGUAGE ... 181

6.10 READING AND WRITING MATERIALS ... 182

6.11 TOYS AND GAMES ... 186

6.12 CONCLUSION ... 187

CHAPTER SEVEN: School Readiness and Support ($T_4$) ... 189

7.1 INTRODUCTION ........ 189

7.2 PIRLS ........ 189
7.2.1 Language ........ 191
7.2.2 Schooling conditions ........ 193
7.2.3 Pre-schooling and parental/caregiver involvement in literacy development ........ 195
7.2.4 Home environment ........ 199
7.2.5 Cultural constraints ........ 200

7.3. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS THESIS ........ 201
7.4 CONCLUSION ........ 202

References ........ 204

APPENDIX A: Selected Photographs of the participant community ........ 217

A. 1 PHOTOGRAPH OF A SHACK LOCATED OUT OF PUBLIC VIEW IN THE BACK GARDEN ... 217
A. 2 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ENTRANCE TO AN OUTSIDE SHACK ........ 217
A. 3 PHOTOGRAPH OF A BEDROOM SHARED BY THREE FAMILIES ........ 218
A. 4 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE SAME BEDROOM, WITH YOUNG MOTHER ........ 218
A. 5 PHOTOGRAPH OF A BATHROOM SHARED BY SIX FAMILY MEMBERS ........ 219
A. 6 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE KITCHEN AREA OF THE SAME FAMILY ........ 219
A. 7 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE VIEW INTO THE LOUNGE AREA ........ 220
A. 8 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE VIEW OF A LOUNGE ........ 220
A. 9 PHOTOGRAPH OF A BROKEN DOLL 1 ........ 221
A. 10 PHOTOGRAPH OF A BROKEN DOLL 2 ........ 221
A. 11 PHOTOGRAPH OF SOFT TOYS OF FOUR CHILDREN ON THEIR SHARED BED ........ 221
A. 12 PHOTOGRAPH OF A CHILD PLAYING WITH MARBLES 1 ........ 222
A. 13 PHOTOGRAPH OF A CHILD PLAYING WITH MARBLES 2 ........ 222
A. 14 PHOTOGRAPH OF A COMPUTER IN THE COMMUNITY ........ 223

APPENDIX B: Consent Forms ........ 224

B. 1 GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM ........ 224
B. 2 GUARDIAN AND CHILDREN'S CONSENT FORM ........ 225

## List of Figures

**Figure 1** – Bhaskars' stratified understanding of reality 1

**Figure 2** – Archers' Morphogenetic Cycle 26

**Figure 3** – Cummins' representation of intersecting axes of BICS and CALP 49

**Figure 4** – Cummins' representation of the 'Dual Iceberg Hypothesis' 51

## Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| ANC | African National Congress |
| BICS | Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills CALP |
| | Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency |
| CHERTL | Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning CR |
| | Critical Realism |
| CUP | Common Underlying Proficiency |
| DA | Democratic Alliance |
| EHDC | Education Faculty's Higher Degrees Committee HE |
| | Higher Education |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology PIRLS |
| | Progress in Reading Study |
| NLS | New Literacy Studies |
| RDP | Reconstruction and Development Programme NGO |
| | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NSC | National Senior Certificate |
| NSFAS | National Student Financial Aid Scheme SGB |
| | School Governing Bodies |
| SR | Social Realism |
| ZPD | Zone of Proximal Development |

# CHAPTER ONE
## Introduction and Orientation

### 1.1 Introduction: Personal and academic motivation

It can be difficult to express openly one's personal commitment to a piece of research particularly at doctoral level. However, I feel that understanding the motivation to complete a particular study is important, not only for those who will read about it, but also for the researcher themselves. When the study involves critical ethnography, as this one does, the need to explore the motivation for doing the piece of research is part of the self-reflexivity which is core to validity.

Reflection on my reasons for embarking on this particular study has revealed that my own personal history is important. In the first year of South Africa's democracy in 1994, I was in my final year (Grade 3) of a co-educational, mixed race preparatory school in the Eastern Cape, in South Africa. The following year, I enrolled at a single sex girls' high school in the same town. I remained in this school for my entire high school education, and matriculated in 2003. Nonetheless, I believe my education began before my formal enrolment in school. Both my parents and extended family paid attention to my development as a learner in numerous ways. My older sister and I were taught and encouraged to play games that extended our vocabulary. We started learning the basics of mathematics through concepts, and not purely through numbers. We also learned to categorise through playing with toys at a young age. The focus on playing games was not only my education. Rather, they were also used to keep me occupied as my parents went about their day.

My parents were both employed within the higher education sector and often challenged the schooling curriculum that my sister and myself received. Neither of my parents hold a degree, with my sister being the first in our extended family to obtain one. In the evenings, our family asked us to share and explain what we had learned at school that day. In these informal conversational sessions, we were often asked 'how' and 'why' questions in relation to the subject matter. Once answered, other members of the family would provide feedback from their personal experience

and knowledge. My grandparents lived with us at this stage and also enjoyed being a part of these discussions. My sister and I were constantly encouraged to challenge our formal curriculum in that we were urged to question what we had been taught at school and to understand how what we had been taught could be seen differently depending on context, background and personal experience. No perspective was ever deemed as a hard right or hard wrong. However, all opinions needed to be substantiated and justified in order to be accepted by those involved in the conversations that took place.

This encouragement extended into my parents presenting opposing viewpoints to try and make our arguments increasingly more difficult to prove. There was always a healthy intellectual challenge to try and conquer. This regularly lead to a handful of publications containing opposing outlooks being identified and called on to support one or another family member's position on the topic. In this way, I was taught to look for text as a means of substantiating what I was arguing. The credibility of texts was also questioned, however. Information taken from popular magazines such as the 'YOU', or similar publications were not taken seriously, and was often referred to as being 'sensationalised'. Information in encyclopaedias and reference books would always trump anything in a magazine. If there was any contestation between books, the year of the publication was brought into question, accompanied by any events that may have taken place during the space of time that could have modified the information. Notwithstanding, there was a continual unspoken consensus that more than one final opinion could be true, as long as it was sufficiently supported. In this way I came to understand that there could be plurality in truth and fact-finding.

I was very fortunate in having access to a vast array of educational recourses, and other individuals who would share understandings and interpretations of text. I had access to a multitude of books on countless topics, opinions and debates in a nurturing setting. My mother and grandfather frequented second hand bookshops, church fetes and garage sales in search of new reading material at inexpensive prices. Be it fiction or non-fiction, the condition of the books was considered secondary to the content of the book. If we, as children, seemed to have an interest in a new topic or required information for a school project, they would try to find publications for us to foster our interest. In addition to the on-going search for second-hand books, a weekly trip to the library was planned every Saturday morning. We were permitted to spend as much time as

we wished browsing the different sections of the local library to find the exact book we wanted, and would be left there regularly while my mother finished her errands in town.

Regardless of this support, I struggled in a formal schooling environment. Only recently, and thanks to my reading in relation to this study, did I realise that the literacies of my home did not match those of the school in which I had been enrolled. When answering questions in History classes, my educators regularly responded to my answers by stating that if information was not located in the curriculum, it could not be used. The general justification given for this approach being that such information would not be examinable and was therefore irrelevant. Extra information, as relevant and valid as it may have been, was not accepted in tests as the 'correct' information, and was marked down. Adding information that was not in the curriculum in essays and examinations was not rewarded but was rather penalised. Even though the school did encourage its learners to complete additional reading, this was generally prescribed on a formal list.

We were discouraged from overtly sharing personal opinion and many educators pressed memorisation tactics over making personal associations and the development of in-depth understandings in subjects such as Mathematics, History, and Science. I experienced immense internal conflict in classes, and consistently gained subpar grades. I read what interested me at home, and continued to incorporate this information into my schoolwork. As a consequence of disputing certain areas of the curriculum, I was identified as 'experiencing trouble dealing with authority figures' and labelled with a 'general learning disability'. As a result, my immediate as well as extended family put more intensive assistance strategies in place at home. Nonetheless, my family continued to value critical thinking and encouraged me not to accept any part of my school curriculum at face value, to consistently ask questions, and challenge opinions regardless of the responses received from my teachers. I found this a painful challenge and fervently wanted to drop out of school altogether. My parents continually reassured me that if I could just carry on at school I would eventually be accepted into a university, although my mother later admitted years later that she worried for a long time that I would not be able to attain the grades necessary for this to happen. Nonetheless, achieving a higher education was valued and identified as something that was possible for me.

In my high school years, this mind-set of 'challenging the system' through critical thinking, argument development and rigour became firmly instilled. This, unfortunately, led to countless trips to the Head Teachers' offices as apparently, I asked too many questions and argued inappropriately.

My mother would regularly be called into meetings at the school to intervene over my apparently 'hard headed' and 'anti-authoritarian' nature. Providing alternative opinions during class was considered disruptive, and offering additional information to support such arguments was deemed as 'back-chatting'. Much to the dismay of my teachers, my mother would seldom support their position. She would listen to their complaints and note that if I had not acted rudely or with blatant disrespect why should questions not be asked? Was this not the baseline for gaining a meaningful education? If the additional information I was supplying for justification in class was in fact relevant, then why should it be rejected and excluded from the argument? She justified this by stating that if she gave into their demands and disciplined me for this behaviour, she would have begun to destroy my home-based education. She would be going against her fundamental beliefs of what it meant to be a parent and what nurturing a child's development involved. She insisted that these qualities and methods of knowledge contemplation and production took years to inculcate and she would by no means allow them to be taken away from her children. The school began to dread having to contact her when I had 'behaved in a manner not expected of a young woman' or if I had challenged an argument that I did not think to be 'watertight'. She would continue to make use of her agency and level of social capital throughout my high school career. She maintained that one would learn in spite of their education and not as a result.

Eventually, in my final year of high school my teachers became more accepting of my behaviour, and we were able to enter into more lively debates without alternative opinions being shut down almost immediately. With this continual and unwavering support from my mother, I persevered in my attempts to complete high school and managed to obtain the matriculation exemption necessary for me to continue education at Rhodes University.

In my first year of university I was diagnosed with dyslexia through the University Clinic, as a result of an enquiry from one of my English tutors. I did not attend any assistance classes

following this diagnosis. I did however make a subject choice adjustment and dropped English after completing first year, taking on Psychology as a new major in my second year. Once settling into the university environment in my second year, I engaged with all my lectures, assignments and exams in the manner in which as my family had prepared me. I did my best to negate the methods taught to me in my schooling years and my education began to gain momentum during the last year of undergraduate studies. I started to see and feel the validity of what my family had been trying to help me understand during the trying years of my primary school and, especially, high school education. Hard work, perseverance, a healthy curiosity, questioning and critical thinking really did contribute to my understandings if the world around me and of ways in which I could exercise my agency. The exercise of my agency, in turn, allowed me to see that deepened understandings could be found once initial obstacles had been surmounted. As a result, I learnt that one's education requires pushing these boundaries in order to gain more insight and understanding. I still strongly believe that, without the advantage I gained by acquiring certain ways of being, along with the social practices associated with them, gifted to me by my family, I would not have been able to continue my studies at a post graduate level. At the very least, I feel that my progress through University would have become increasingly more difficult and not increasing more interesting, and enjoyable as it did.

I do not think that the current educational dilemma in South Africa and my past educational experiences are at a comparable level. However, the fact that I am a product of the South African public educational system over the last two decades will undoubtedly affect the way in which I access, and interpret other people's experiences of the same system, even if at a different time period, and even though those narrating those experiences occupy different spaces in society. I have been provided with vast array of opportunities, resources and educational resources that the majority of others in South Africa have been afforded and I am very aware of the benefits I enjoy because of this.

In sum, then, what I am trying to convey in this introduction to my doctoral study is how critical the way I was prepared for schooling and supported through it was to my own success. The value of the ways of being and learning practices gained within my home context only became more apparent once I entered tertiary education. These seemed to be essential practices in a university setting, even though they were noted as hindrances in my primary and high schools.

Without the educational background provided by my family, I doubt that I would have been able to complete my undergraduate studies with as much enjoyment as I did. Even more significantly, I doubt that I would have been accepted to study at a postgraduate level. My parents and caregivers were able to draw on their own experiences in order to provide me with access to the kind of knowledge making that is dominant at universities. They were able to identify the learning practices that would be required for an easier transition into a tertiary setting. Hence, they ensured that both my sister and I began to acquire these practices from a young age and nurtured our mastery them in spite of direct disapproval from many of my educators. My family encouraged debate and opposing viewpoints in order to teach us that there are many ways to deal with one situation or argument. This may have created a tingling sense of social exclusion while in my formative schooling years. Nonetheless, these practices underpinned my level of social inclusion once I entered the learning space of the university. Ultimately, although it may have not felt like it when I was a child, but I now feel I was afforded enormous educational privilege thanks to the instruction and guidance I received at home.

In short, then, it is my belief that some home-based practices support children's learning and success. Social practices take many forms, and are aligned with different degrees of success and failure depending on the context.

South African higher education currently manifests appalling student performance data (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007; CHE, Vital stats, 2018). In this context, questions arise regarding the way children in marginalised homes are prepared for school and how they are educationally supported. As I ask these questions, I am cognisant of the fact that my own home-based experiences acted to impede my success at school but enhanced it at university. This understanding adds to the complexity inherent in exploring home-based preparation and support for learning, a task I set myself in this study.

The study on which this thesis reports formed part of a large NRF funded project led by my supervisor. This project explored social inclusion in higher education. Following the thinking outlined in the next section of this chapter, my interest came to focus on the earlier phases of education as I saw these as fundamental to social inclusion at the tertiary level. My own experiences as a learner at school and as a student in a university led me to adopting a particular

theoretical lens for the study which will be outlined in Chapter Three. This personal narrative in this introductory Chapter provides a rationale for my interest and paves the way for what comes later in this thesis.

## 1.2 Context

### *1.2.1 Social Inclusion*

South African data show that the number of learners who enrol in the foundation phase[1] of schooling, and the number of learners who continue on to primary, elementary, and high school quickly diminishes with each year that a cohort of learners progresses through the system (Liddell & Rae, 2010; Spaull, 2015). As they progress through the tertiary system the attrition exacerbates (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007: CHE, Vital stats, 2018) A further drop is demonstrated between undergraduate and postgraduate study (CHE, Vital stats, 2018). Closer scrutiny of performance data at all levels of the education system reveals a skew along the lines of social group (Moses, van der Berg & Rich, 2017). In tertiary education, for example, regardless of the university at which they are registered, the programme of study or the subject area they have chosen to pursue, black South Africans[2] consistently fare less well than their white peers.

This skew along the lines of social group is evident in spite of the enormous efforts that have gone into transforming the schooling and higher education systems since the first democratic election in South Africa in 1994. The achievement of democracy, manifest in the country's first open elections April 1994, brought the African National Congress (ANC) into power, and provided a means of ensuring that the concerns of historically marginalised and oppressed social groups could finally be heard. Many of these concerns revolved around the fact that quality education had been denied to black people during the years of apartheid and with the result that education became a focus of the new government.

[1] The first phase of formal schooling within the South African educational system.
[2] In describing this phenomenon, I have chosen to use the term 'social group' as in South Africa social class and skin colour tend to overlay each other thanks to the legacy of apartheid even 25 years after the advent of democracy.

At all levels of education, the South African system has seen many changes over the last twenty or so years. Despite all these changes, which have included wide-scale curriculum innovation, the entire education system continues to perform poorly and the exclusion of some social groups, more specifically the those had been previously marginalised, from success at one level and progression to the next continues.

Reasons for this continuing poor performance abound. At the level of schooling, cited is lack of training and support for teachers, the lack of leadership in schools, the stranglehold of teachers; unions and the resulting impact on performance management and the failure of provincial governments to provide text books and other resources (Moses, van der Berg & Rich, 2017). In higher education, the legacy of apartheid on historically black institutions (*ibid*), poor management (*ibid*), the lack of pedagogical knowledge on the part of academic staff (Behari-Leak, 2017; Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007) have all been identified as impacting on the ability of universities to produce graduates. Other authors (Boughey & McKenna, 2016) identify more deep-seated reasons related to the way students and their experiences in higher education and, indeed, schooling is understood. It is from this particular angle that this study aims to explore the issue of inclusion and exclusion in education and more specifically the way education works to serve some social groups above others from the very beginning of a child's life.

As indicated above, success, graduation and throughput rates in higher education continue to privilege some social groups over others (Scott, Yeld & Hendry; 2007). However, performance data relating to higher education need to be seen in the context of learner's progression from Grade R[3] onwards. Scrutiny of results of the school leaving certificate, the National Senior Certificate (NSC), for 2016 and 2017, show that only a small percentage of learners who began school 12 years earlier actually took the examination (South African Department of Education, 2008; South African Department of Education, 2009). This gives a very different perspective on higher education as it shows that failure and drop out begins much earlier that what was being communicated. At the time the results of the NSC are released in January each year, however, the dominant narrative

[3] The South African schooling system consists of 12 grades. Children begin school in their sixth year and complete the National Senior Certificate twelve years later. These grades are number from 1 – 12. 'Grade R' relates to a pre- school year that intends to prepare learners for the formal schooling curriculum.

‘spun’ by the ruling party, the ANC, focuses on the percentage of learners passing the NSC which, because of the way grades are allocated in the examination, can be shown to be high. In 2016 and 2017, for example, overall pass rates of 72.5% and 75.1% were presented to the public. This obscures the tragedy of those learners who never took the examination as they had dropped out of school at an earlier stage (South African Department of Basic Education, 2017; South African Department of Basic Education, 2018).

To elaborate, 674, 652 student’s full-time students sat the NSC in 2016, and after evaluation a pass rate of 72.5% was presented to the public (South African Department of Basic Education, 2017). However, if one looks back to this group of students in their grade 2 cohort, the original number of registered students for this group was actually 1, 081652 (South African Department of Education, 2008). This shows that almost half of these students dropped out of the schooling system before they had the chance to write the NSC examinations. Consequently, if the original numbers supplied by grade 2 cohort was used to represent the true pass rate, only 41.98% of students were able to obtain their matric in 2016. Using the same logic to inspect the 2017 results would present South Africa with a 39.25% of the original grade 2 cohort and not the 75.1 % that was reported (South African Department of Education, 2009). In this 1, 022853 students were registered in grade 2, but only 629, 155 of this cohort actually sat the NSC examinations in 2017 (South African Department of Basic Education, 2018). Accordingly, instead of an increase in students passing their matric exams from the previous year as was reported to the public, there was in actual fact a decrease.

Furthermore, what would this mean for the number of students actually registering towards their first of tertiary education? Hence, only a small percentage of students who pass their NSC examinations will obtain a bachelors pass which would permit entry into a South African university. For example, only 153, 610 of the 629, 155 who wrote the NSC examinations in 2017 achieved a bachelors pass (South African Department of Basic Education, 2018). Furthermore, it has been well noted that approximately only one-third, approximately 33%, of students who do obtain this pass will enrol in a university (van Broekhuizen, van der Berg & Hofmeyer, 2016). When considering factors such as; those who wish to apply, those that are accepted towards study, those that can secure funding, and/or financial support, further hurdles are enforced.

Moreover, it has been noted that more than half of those that do begin their first year of university will drop out before they have competed their first degree (*ibid*).

The need to address the poor performance of the schooling and higher education systems is enormous. Since 1994, legal barriers to education have been removed. However, the notion of a 'quality' education for all continues to be elusive. In South Africa, the 1994 election did not only see changes with in the country but also the way the nation was viewed at an international level. Long treated as a pariah, the advent of democracy saw South Africa free to participate in the world order diplomatically and economically. Economic participation in the global economy was particularly important given the impact that the exclusion from international trade had on the national economy during the years of apartheid, exclusion which had inevitably influenced the living standards of the poorest sectors of society. By 1994, however, participation in the global economy was no longer dependent on the ability to engage with mass production and, thus on the availability of cheap, poorly skilled labour but rather on a nation's ability to 'reinvent' existing goods using technological and other advances (Castells, 2010). This, in turn, was dependent on the availability of 'knowledge workers' or highly skilled individuals. The need to skill South Africa's workforce was paramount as the country moved into its new political dispensation and much of the policy work of the 1990s, including policy impacting on curricula, focused on this (Kraak, 2001). The failure of all this policy work to impact on performance of both the schooling and education systems nearly twenty-five years after the election has had an economic impact which is felt by poor South Africans who continue to be excluded from the benefits of a global economic system.

### *1.2.2 Epistemological Access*

The notion of '*epistemological access'* was first coined by Morrow (1992) to describe the need to gain access to dominant ways of knowledge making and learning. In order to understand what this means, it is necessary to imagine being placed in a situation where the majority of the social and behavioural cues were foreign to what had been taught and to what could be considered second nature. In such a situation, how could an individual exercise their agency to achieve their learning goals? How would these goals have been constructed in the first place?

How would an individual be able to navigate the learning terrain without access to some form of social compass? The inability to draw on dominant understandings of knowledge and learning and to engage with the ways of learning associated with them, is seen as a lack of epistemological access. Having epistemological access to learning environments assumes an understanding of their value systems, social practices and goals. Epistemological access can accordingly be seen to be integral to success and to impact on social inclusion and exclusion.

Given the way educational success continues to evade the majority of the South African population, it is clear that the subject of epistemological access deserves more consideration. Until now, the focus on the provision of epistemological access has been at higher education level and has occurred in the domain known, in South Africa, as 'Academic Development', a field of practice focused on student support, staff and curriculum development (Volbrecht & Boughey, 2004). This study aims to correct this emphasis by asking questions about epistemological access at the other end of the educational continuum. More specifically it looks at the way children in a marginalised community are prepared for and supported (or not supported, as the case may be) for schooling by parents and other caregivers.

In order to do this, this study draws on Critical Social Theory (Archer 1995, 1996, 1998 & 2000) and, more specifically on theories of literacy and literacy development associated with the field of 'New Literacy Studies', a field that, following Street (1984, 1988, 1993 & 2003) understands literacy as a set of social practices and not only as a technical ability involving the encoding and decoding of printed text. Following theorists in the field (Street, 1984 & 1993; Gee, 2008; Heath, 1983) these practices are understood to be acquired over time in social settings. The time before school, when children are at home in the care of parents and others, is seen to be critical to the acquisition of these practices as, without them, school will be alien and, to a large extent, meaningless. Drawing on the concept of '*epistemological access'* introduced earlier, the development of these practices in the early childhood phase is consequently seen to be key to gaining access to learning at school. These same theories allowed me to understand the role of parents and other caregivers in supporting and extending school- based learning.

## 1.3 Research Questions

As indicated above, the study focused on a marginalised community located in Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape. Following the methodological framework used for the study, the community will be described in depth in Chapter Five ($T_{1.}$) of this thesis. The main research question informing the study was:

*How do the home practices of a marginalised community in Port Elizabeth initiate and build learning for the children within it?*

A number of sub-questions were then identified to explore this question in more depth with a higher level of detail. These were:

1. How are learning practices implemented within the home?
2. How do key tools enable or constrain learning practices?
3. How do value systems construct home learning practices?
4. How do the conditions of power structures enable or constrain learning practices in this community with concern to social justice, epistemological access and social inclusion?

In order to answer these questions, my study took an ethnographic stance involving long term engagement with the community for a period of approximately one year. The design for the study is outlined in Chapter Four for the thesis.

## 1.4 Structure of the thesis

The structure of the thesis is as follows:

**Chapter One:** *Introduction*. This section begins to outline the current situation of the South African educational system with regards to social inclusion, and epistemological access that has been gaining increasing attention over the last few years. This brings shape to the dilemma of the high number of dropout rates in schooling and tertiary education set alongside the low number of throughput rates that are currently experienced by South African Universities.

The use ofstatistics and figures provides a clearer and more genuine perspective of social inclusion in South African education. This feeds into forming the foundation of the dilemma by moving into the concept of epistemological access and how this may act a barrier from a much earlier level of learning and literacy that what is being concentrated on in current research studies. Through the presentation of my leading research question, accompanied by secondary questions, I bring the focus of social inclusion and epistemological access into the context of a marginalised community in Port Elizabeth. Here I am concerned with the way in which knowledge has been constructed in this community, how this knowledge is disseminated, and how this has the potential to create tendencies that may affect the child's success in the current educational system. In short, I am primarily concerned with how the parents of this marginalised community prepare their children for school.

**Chapter Two:** *Meta-theoretical Framework*. As indicated, my study draws on critical social theory and, more specifically, on the work of British sociologist Margaret Archer (1995, 1996, 1998 & 2000). Archer, as I will explain in this Chapter, allows us to understand the way individuals are socially and culturally conditioned in the exercise of their agency. Regardless of how much a child's parents and caregivers might want to prepare the child for school and provide support while learning the way they are conditioned to act and the resources, both cultural and structural, on which they can draw will impact on the way they are able to do this. As I will explain in Chapter Two, I found Archer's work to be extremely useful in providing a means of accounting for the way the position of the community in wider society impacted on children's chances of gaining epistemological access.

**Chapter Three**: *Explanatory theory*. This chapter seeks to explore the theory and past research which has been used to construct the claims and supporting arguments that create the theoretical basis of this thesis. This section introduces the reader to certain key terms which assist in gaining the required perspective for the analysis chapters. Theory based on social, psychological and linguistic grounds are looked at to further adjust this lens through the ways in which meaning can be created in terms of literacy. Here I have located my study in a field of theory know as 'New Literacy Studies', which is mainly concerned with the ways in which language, and language related activities function in preparation for, and for schooling itself. This discussion proceeds to

frame the purported ways in which epistemological access has the potential to constrain literacy development.

**Chapter Four**: *Research Methodology*. This Chapter is used to exhibit the design of the study and the manner in which I have gone about constructing this research. Working from a critical realist perspective, with a social realist backing I discuss the reasons I attribute to making use of a qualitative research paradigm, as well as critical ethnography as a means of data collection. This discussion outlines the methods and techniques I have implemented (such as observations, interviews and photography), as well as the sampling method I made use of in order to locate and address the sample community in Port Elizabeth. This chapter also formulates and elucidates the research question, as well as sub-questions which secure the base of this research. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to frame the ethical factors that were considered, as well as how elements such as reliability and validity have been applied to the research in order to satisfy the nature of this study.

**Chapter Five**: *Shaping the community* ($T_{1}$.) Being the first part of the analysis and the morphogenetic cycle, this chapter aims to describe the shaping of the historical and contextual basis of the community. This concentrates on the formation of the community and in what ways structure, culture and agency can be separated out to be further inspected in even more depth in Chapters Six ($T_2 – T_3$) and Seven ($T_4$). By looking at historical structures, for instance the political and educational systems in South Africa, I will consider how these expositions have led to the creation of the current realities in which the community were located at the time of the data collection process. This chapter analytically separates out the structural and cultural conditions which can either act to enable or constrain the community. This discussion on the social and cultural conditioning of the community has been explored in terms of social inclusion and exclusion, especially in relation to education, geographical location and language usage.

**Chapter Six**: *Exercising agency in preparation for school ($T_2 – T_3$).* This chapter is the second section of the analysis that deals with the way in which members of the community make use of their agency in terms of preparing their children for a formal school setting. Through looking at the enabling and constraining conditions exposed in Chapter Five, this section serves to note how parents and/or caregivers exercised their agency during the time of data collection when set up

against these restrictions. In order to elaborate on these conditions and to assist in answering the secondary research questions, this chapter further describes associated resources and tools located in the community, or to which the community have access. Tools and resources including technology, and traditionally recognised educational tools (for example, reading and writing materials), toys and games used on a daily basis are identified and their nature of usage is explored. This description then illustrates a few notable home-based literacy practices that have been ascribed to these tools and resources.

**Chapter Seven**: *School readiness and support* ($T_4$). The concluding chapter of the thesis examines the early years of the schooling period for the children in the community in relation to their readiness for school, and what support they have in terms of their literacy development. In this section I look to the results of the South African section of The Progress in Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS) published in 2017 which provides notable conditions for being most suitable to literacy and learning. Looking at these results alongside this thesis, allows for comment on the level of preparation that the children of the sample community have gained. This inspection examines aspects including language, schooling conditions, the role that the pre-school and/or parent/caregiver play in literacy development, the home environment, as well as possible cultural constraints on their epistemological access to the current schooling system in terms of literacy. Ultimately, this section summarises the findings of the study, and the knowledge contribution made to the field of education and literacy development.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Meta-Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Ontology: Critical Realism

Clarification regarding philosophical perspective on what a researcher considers to constitute 'truth', 'reality' or 'knowledge' and how that 'truth', 'reality' or 'knowledge' can be known is a very important aspect of any academic study. This clarification forms the basis of the methodology for a study and, hence, the research design.

I chose to locate the study on which this thesis is grounded in a philosophy known as 'Critical Realism' based on the work of Roy Bhaskar (1998 & 2008).

#### 2.1.1 *Critical Naturalism and Transcendental Realism*

Bhaskar's critical realism combines the philosophical perspectives of both critical naturalism and transcendental realism (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson & Norrie, 1998) in order to take into account the role social construction can play in the development and interpretation of phenomena. The linking of critical naturalism and transcendental realism offers researchers a means of describing the mechanisms that contribute to 'effects or events' within a reality that is self-regulating and 'acts independently of men' (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 148). Critical realism, as its name suggests, acknowledges an ultimate reality while, at the same time, recognising the role of human thought and action in the 'knowing' of that reality.

Critical naturalism, a philosophy based in social science, specifies three key points on which it bases an understanding of the society and social practices. Firstly, it states that introducing a person into society has the power to socialise them into certain ways of life as a result of this exposure. For example, people who are exposed to the social practices characterising some contexts will tend to draw on those practices in their own lives (Bhaskar, Archer, Collier, Lawson & Norrie, 1998). Secondly, it affirms that people have the power to either reproduce or transform this society in way that can be beneficial or averse to the society as a whole (*ibid*).

Reproduction or transformation is not determined, however, since the mechanisms resulting in that transformation or reproduction are not deterministic but rather tendential. Thirdly, any attempt to identify mechanisms leading transformation or reproduction must be understood as explanatory since it is not possible to establish strict cause and effect relationships. The aim, rather, is to identify the interplay of mechanisms through a rich description of networks (*ibid*). This would present a form of developing 'reasoning' and not the establishment of hard claims about what aspects have the potential to lead to other aspects (*ibid*).

### 2.1.2 *A Layered Reality*

Bhaskar's (2008) transcendental realism enhances these concepts by presenting a view of reality which is layered. These layers of reality are the *Empirical*, the *Actual* and the *Real.*

The *Empirical* can be defined as the sensory domain of what humans experience and what can be directly observed (*ibid*). This would relate to observations of events or experiences, and examining how they play out in everyday life. The *Actual* is defined as the manifestation of what we as humans' experience as social practices and successions of events (*ibid*). The *Actual* encompasses different combinations of events and social practices and how they connect to their context through sensory domains. Finally, the *Real* is defined as an enduring and independent stratum, not directly accessible by empirical means, from which the latter emerge (*ibid*) consisting of mechanisms from which events and experiences emerge.

**Figure 1: This understanding of a stratified reality is illustrated below (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 47):**

| | Empirical | Actual | Real |
|---|---|---|---|
| Experience | √ | | |
| Event | √ | √ | |
| Mechanism | √ | √ | √ |

Critical realism accepts that in order for a phenomenon to be present, certain mechanisms on the level of the *Real* are required to work simultaneously and need to be considered for the phenomenon to be fully examined, documented and understood (Elder-Vass, 2004). For these levels to be adequately accessed, documented and addressed, the use of *explanatory* theory grounded in the disciplines such as Sociology, Anthropology, Linguistics and Psychology is needed.

Bhaskar (2008) argues that mechanisms have the potential to lack meaning when separated in an attempt to examine them independently of one another since it is the interplay of mechanisms that leads to the emergence of events at the level of the *Actual* and experiences and observations at the level of the *Empirical*. Since generative mechanisms work within open and closed systems, one would be required to inspect both of these systems in order to credibly document a series of events in an attempt to locate these trends. This can assist researchers in gaining invaluable information about how particular trends come into being, how they have manifested through social practices and, additionally, how they have been modified or replicated. In a sense, this would entail the pulling apart of the different levels of reality within these systems to find generative mechanisms in order to note what tendencies or conditioning these may have on the overall picture. Furthermore, one can see how these tendencies may have been constructed by the interaction of different systems or elements.

### 2.1.3 *Structure and Culture*

Critical realist theory argues that if we are to understand how knowledge and power function to create human experience, we need to understand the mechanisms from which knowledge and power emerge. Simultaneously, we must also consider aspects of social and cultural influence, in conjunction with affective historical structures (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen & Karlsson, 2001). All of these aspects possess varying elements which could have a bearing on the interpretation of whether or not they constrain or enable situations as experienced by a society or community.

Bhaskar (2008) notes that 'culture' and 'structure' hold enduring properties. Consistent with the foundations of critical realism, culture can be defined as 'the meanings, values, ways of life shared by particular nations, groups, classes and periods' which can develop into 'practices which produce meaning' (Garuba & Raditlhalo, 2008; p. 38). These practices manifest on the level of the *Actual* but emerge from structures and mechanisms (values, groups, context, social class etc.) as positioned at the level of the *Real*.

Since culture is derived from diverse historical and developmental aspects; cultural goals and values can, and commonly do, vary in different degrees between societies and communities (Eckensberger, 1994). Furthermore, these goals and values are subject to fluctuation and re-definition over periods of time, as a result of political and social influence (*ibid).*

Culture is passed down from present generations to the succeeding, growing and developing generations through educational instruction, amongst other things (Smelser, 1981). Culture shifts and transforms, depending on what is required, what is accessible in terms of expansion, and progress for survival. These shifts are frequently partnered with the influence of other cultures and communities (Eckensberger, 1994). This is particularly notable in a country that has been exposed to a politically divisive history such as South Africa.

Structural mechanisms denote the ways in which access to resources are allocated. For example, geographical location, gender, social class and political affiliations all impact on access to resources. Structural mechanisms embody powers that have the potential to assist or constrain agency, while agency can also draw on these powers to affect the emergence of events and experiences of events.

#### 2.1.4 *The Epistemic Fallacy*

Critical realism allows for the use of a realist ontology with the acceptance of an interpretivist epistemology (Elder-Vass, 2004). This permits the understanding that even though an ultimate reality exists, our comprehension of it is still socially constructed (Bygstad & Munkfold, 2011). Critical realism is useful as an 'underlabourer' in research as it allows for the separation of

ontology and epistemology, where previously they were often conflated. Bhaskar is insistent on the avoidance of what he terms the 'epistemic fallacy' explained as a method of reasoning which forces the assumption that since something displays characteristics indicative of a certain entity, it must therefore be that entity (Archer et al., 1998). In simpler terms this involves conflating what is, with what appears to be.

In the context of the study on which this thesis is based, the important notion to grasp here is that people may explain phenomena in certain ways but these explanations are based on their experiences of the phenomena. The experiences themselves are socially conditioned and accordingly cannot be conflated with the phenomena themselves.

## 2.2 Epistemology

As I have indicated above, a key objective of research is to locate, define, and explain some form of truth, or truths. In order to do this, a researcher must be aware of their own ontological position, that is, in order to establish a truth or knowledge, one would have to take an unequivocal stand on how the term 'truth' or 'knowledge' should be defined. Taking such a position will shed light not only on the phenomenon under inspection, but also on how that truth can be known. Here epistemology deals with the assumptions about how to establish true assertions about the world. In this way, epistemology comes to be aligned with ontology, but must still be defined and seen as separate entities.

A critical realist epistemology stipulates that researched as well as hypothetical establishments about our world need to be explored in an interpretive manner. Critical realism requires a researcher not only to identify the causal mechanisms associated with a certain phenomenon, but also the sub-parts located therein (Elder-Vass, 2007). The adoption of the layered ontology necessitates acknowledging that we can only begin to explore the world at the level of the *Empirical*, that is through the senses. Hence, this empirical exploration can be gained through what we as humans can hear, see, and touch.

The way we experience the world using our different senses can be discerned as a consequence of personal experience. One's personal experiences take into account their interactions with structures, cultures and other agents who similarly have their own personal experiences that have also been shaped by the structural and cultural conditions in which an individual has been immersed. This not only applies to individuals, but also the collective eyes of a community. As a result, critical realism acknowledges the existence of multiple realities at the level of the *Empirical* with each possibly connected to the next. In this respect, the use of ethnographical approaches underpinned by critical realism allows a researcher to track the development of understandings by identifying idiosyncratic truths within the frame of a shared truth of the community as a whole.

As a researcher, one cannot lay broad statements that are able to truly explain the world in its entirety in a constant sense. All knowledge and understanding of the world, and its underlying mechanisms are subject to processes of constant influence and change – and consequently, also subject to change in definition. Here critical realism asserts that there is one absolute reality which consists of relatively enduring mechanisms located at the level of the *Real*. Researchers are therefore able to know the world empirically, and the manner in which we can describe and experience the world is reliant on the interplay of these mechanisms.

Following on from this it is important to work from the level of the *Empirical* to that of the *Real* in order to identify these mechanisms, while exploring this interplay. The exploration of this interplay involves using the cognitive tools of *abduction* and *retroduction*.

### 2.2.1 *Abduction*

The cognitive tool of abduction involves using theory that is closely related to the subject matter in order to 'see things and situations differently'. Looking through this theoretical lens allows a researcher to approach a very different understanding of the mechanisms at play than would otherwise be possible. For instance, in the case of the study reported in this thesis, I made use of theory from the field known as 'New Literacy Studies' (see, for example, Street, 1984, 1993 & 2003). This allowed me to understand the home-based learning practices of the families in the study in a very different way than if I had used more 'technical' methods of understanding literacy that are focused on the encoding and decoding of text.

Here, working from a long series of observations of events and interactions, one is able to begin to see a clearer picture of what would be the most probable, but also potentially previously obscured understanding of these observations through this lens of theory (Danermark, et al., 2005).

### 2.2.2 *Retroduction*

The following cognitive tool used to look at the interplay of mechanisms at the level of the *Real* is that of retroduction. This involves asking the question 'What must the world be like for *this* to be possible?', where '*this'* refers to a phenomenon accessible by the physiological senses. 'The *world'* then refers to the level of the *Real*, and the interplay of mechanisms from which the *Empirical* phenomenon emerges. Here, the underlying importance of retroduction would be to look at the possible tendencies, and conditions under which the phenomenon being inspected has been generated. This requires the use of retroductive inference on the part of the researcher which could, of course, be fallible. Checks on fallibility are achieved through checking the logic of the reasoning with others. This assists in strengthening their validity, and allows for sturdier and more reliable results.

## 2.3 **Critical Realism and this study**

As I have indicated in Chapter One, the research question driving this study is:

> *'How do the home practices of a marginalised community in Port Elizabeth initiate and build learning for the children within it?'*

Using critical realism as a 'philosophical underlabourer' for the study underpinning this thesis allows me to begin by exploring events and experiences arising from connected events in the community. However, it also permitted me to begin to see how the interplay of mechanisms at the level of the *Real* contributes to the marginalisation of the community itself. Furthermore, and of significance in finding possible answers to the driving research question, this brought me to note

the impact this marginalisation has on the learning of the community's children. As I will show below, the use of Archer's (1995) morphogenetic framework in addition to critical realism allows me to frame this exploration within a specific time period.

## 2.4 Archer's Morphogenetic Approach

### 2.4.1 *The fallacy of Conflation and Analytical Dualism*

The morphogenetic approach, as devised by Archer (1995) presents social scientists with a framework, which assists in studies exploring social change. It permits the separation, inspection, and examination of different parts of our world within a collective reality. This enables the researcher to identify and explore mechanisms that have the potential to generate change as well as those that will sustain the status quo over a specific time period.

In identifying the concept of the 'fallacy of conflation', Archer points out that, with other forms of social realist theory, there is a tendency towards various forms of conflation. Archer identifies 'upwards', 'downwards' and 'central' conflation as being problematic in social realist research (Archer, 1996). 'Downwards' conflation can be described as seeing autonomous actions of the agent being entirely reliant on structure, without any other causality being taken into account (*ibid*). 'Upwards' conflation is defined as the privileging of the agent in her ability to take action but a failure to take into account the conditions in which these actions are situated (*ibid*). Central conflation draws on the work of Giddens (1979) and affords equal emphasis to the concepts of structure and agency which are seen to be mutually constitutive. Archer sees 'central conflation' as the locking together of structure and agency in a 'conceptual vice' (1996: 80).

Key to Archer's work is the argument that structure and agency need to be *separated for analytical purposes* in a process she terms (1995) 'Analytical Dualism' as the initial step in exploring the interplay of mechanisms at the level of the *Real*. This involves the analytical and ontological separation of culture, structure and agency in order to explore interactions and relationships between these three domains (Archer, 2003; Porpora, 2013). This method assists

in avoiding inferences made as a result of historical conflation, such as that of combining culture and agency, or structure and agency (Archer, 1995).

In the same way that Bhaskar presents culture, Archer's work encompasses ideological constructs such as value and belief systems that are at play in the social realm. Structure can be seen as the independent and dominant systems that perform within society representing the ways in which people can be organised. Therefore, they cannot be reduced merely to observations of human interaction (*ibid*). These include political structures, educational structures, social class, gender, age, and so on. Finally, agency refers to independent human action on both structure and culture in order to lead to the emergence of events and the experiences and observations associated with them. It is essential for the researcher to recognise an agent as partially being a product of their society, but in addition to this, they also hold the power to modify society simultaneously (Archer, 2003). Archer (2003) emphasises the importance of agency in the social world, as well as the importance of recognising that each individual is a fusion of different influences, ideals and aspirations that develop as a result of interactions with various forms of cultures and structures.

### 2.4.2 *The Concept of Emergence: Personal Emergent Properties (PEP's), Structural Emergent Properties (SEP's) & Cultural Emergent Properties (CEP's)*

The interplay of agency, structure and culture thus brings about emergence (Archer, 1995). Emergence is used to define a result, which has been created from contact between two elements (*ibid*). For example, this could be the interaction between an agent (an individual within the social realm), and a certain social structure. This interaction could create a complex novel social practice (*ibid*), more specifically, a learning practice in the case of this particular study.

Significantly, Archer (1995) accords independent power to the domains of agency, culture and structure. In line with this thinking, Archer (1995) introduces the concepts of Personal Emergent Properties (PEP's), Structural Emergent Properties (SEP's) and finally Cultural Emergent Properties (CEP's).

Firstly, agency is noted as processing PEP's, as the properties arising from people, or individuals. In this a distinction can be made between 'actors', or people those who act by themselves, and 'agents', or those that act in a group capacity. This is further divided into two categories for agents seen in a group capacity who can be a part of the same group, or who are involved in the same set of circumstances – both 'primary agents' and 'corporate agents' (*ibid*). What sets these two categories apart is the fact that even though primary agents may share similar circumstances, or have similar goals, they will act in their own capacity to try and complete their projects or to achieve certain goals. Whereas corporate agents will try to act in cooperative manner, as a collective, in order to obtain a shared goal or goals (*ibid*). Working as cooperate agents can be carried out through the pooling of resources, time, or knowledge so that they have a better chance of accomplishing a shared aim or objective (*ibid*).

Following this, the domain of structure is understood to have SEP's and CEP's. SEP's can be accredited with properties that arise from particular structures. This would include institutions (such as schools and charities), political structures (capitalism and globalisation) as a means to gain entry to more obscured information past that of an empirical means of enquiry. CEP's would include aspects, for instance; cultural positions or identity, religious affiliations, discourses, ideologies and beliefs of the chosen community, or those that surround them, and would therefore have an enabling or constraining effect on attaining their goals. Although agency is understood as being socially and culturally conditioned, PEP's are understood to activate both SEP's and CEP's which otherwise remain dormant.

In exploring the concept of agency, Archer (2008), notes that individuals and groups of individuals always have concerns and identify projects to address these concerns. Any attempt to pursue a project involves interacting with the powers accorded to structure and culture which are dormant until activated through the exercise of PEP's.

Archer's (2008) concept of analytical dualism was used in the study to underpin this thesis in order to explore the way individuals, as well as the marginalised community as a whole exercise their PEP's. In addition to this, analytical dualism was used to note how the community exercised their PEP's in relation to SEP's and PEP's that lead to the emergence of events related to the learning of their children.

### 2.4.3 *The Morphogenetic Framework*

The Morphogenetic Framework outlines Archer's interest in exploring change, or non- change, over a period of time. She accomplishes this by conceptualising change as occurring in overlapping and recurrent cycles (Archer, 1995). Each cycle begins at a certain point in time termed $T_1$. $T_1$ represents the social and cultural conditioning in place at a specific time in history, relating to a particular sample group (*ibid*). In the study underpinning this thesis, I was interested in exploring the way children were prepared for school in a marginalised community. $T_1$, was therefore conceptualised as the social and cultural conditioning in place approximately around the time a majority of the children that I observed would have been born.

The second period in the cycle is referred to as $T_2 – T_3$. It is in this period that agency interacts with structure and culture through the interplay of PEP's, SEP's and CEP's. Here the use of the morphogenetic framework involves analysing this interplay over a period of time (*ibid*). Employing the use of analytical dualism allows us to separate out each of the domains (agency, structure and culture) for the purpose of this analysis, and to gain a more vivid picture of the elements needed to answer the research questions.

The final point in a morphogenetic cycle is termed $T_4$. It is at this point that it is possible to make statements about the extent to which change (morphogenesis) has taken place or whether there has been morphostasis (non-change). $T_4$ then becomes $T_1$ for the succeeding cycle.

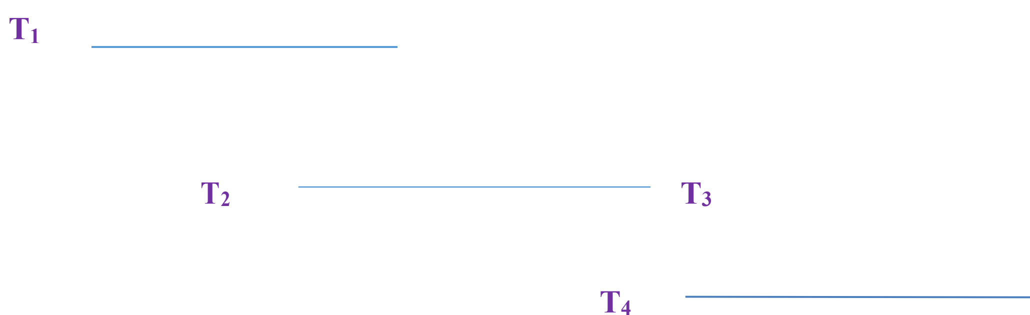


**Figure 2: Conceptualising a morphogenetic cycle (following Archer, 1995).**

Morphogenetic cycles can describe the morphogenesis/morphostasis of agency, structure of culture because of Archer's insistence on analytical dualism (Archer, 1995).

For the purposes of the study underpinning this thesis, the morphogenetic framework was useful as it allowed me to conceptualise the early childhood years, and the early years of schooling as a cycle. At birth, the caregivers of a child were conditioned into exercising their agency in particular ways in relation to their child's learning. As the child grew, they again exercised their agency in relation to the domains of structure and culture, but were always conditioned as they did so through past experience, as well as the experience of their parents and/or caregivers who guided them.

The framework allowed me to conceptualise what I saw as I engaged with the community in Port Elizabeth and to understand how their marginalisation impacted on the extent to which children were prepared, or not prepared for school.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Explanatory Theory

### 3.1 The need for Explanatory Theory

In Chapter Two I introduced the meta-theoretical framework underpinning the study reported upon in this thesis. This provided an ontological and epistemological grounding for the study as well as a means of offering explanations for what was observed and claimed. In this Chapter, I move to a discussion of the explanatory theory I used in conjunction with the meta-theory as a means of understanding what I observed, with abducting and retroducting to the level of the *Real*.

As I indicated in Chapter One of this thesis, I was a member of a group of doctoral candidates looking at social inclusion and exclusion in higher education in South Africa. One of the main elements of coming together as a group was through the insight we could gain from not only our supervisors but also from other students. In our first year of study, we had been exposed to lots of thinking around the focus of our studies, social inclusion and exclusion.

We began with a collection of concepts which can be the basis of theoretical understanding and development. From here we began to expand our thinking to the shape of an actual study. By this stage I began to feel that my own understanding of research and what it meant to be a researcher had really begun to take hold.

From this point onwards, I felt we begin to create our own 'researcher persona', a more agential notion of what it means to undertake fieldwork and produce academically sound results in studies. However, I found myself entering an epistemological quandary. I knew how I saw the world and my subject area, but then I needed to make sense of it through a more formal, structured approach. Nonetheless, I was always influenced by my own experiences.

One particular occasion that had come to mind when thinking about the relationship between epistemological access and social inclusion was when I was in grade four of primary school.

Our class had been sequestered as a blanket punishment for being quite rowdy. Stillness and quiet behaviour were rewarded in this system. Talking out of turn and asking questions without the formality of raising one's hand was not acceptable. Additionally, by this stage of our education we had been taught that leaners were to address the teacher and not the other leaners during class. At the time in our school, only English was allowed to be spoken during class times, and talking in other Languages such as Xhosa was met with verbal correction. We were told by teachers that as we attended an English medium school, only English was to be spoken unless we were attending a language class that was not English. One of my new friends, who had recently been placed into the school from one the rural schools on the outskirts of town, waited until the teacher had left the room then addressed the class. She stated that is was not in her culture to be quiet, and was frustrated that this form of punishment was hindering the progress of her education. She could not understand why we had been provided with this unjust punishment. She stated that learning meant conversing with other members of the class as we were being taught. Not just the teacher, but with other class mates as well. We all egged her on, hoping that our comrade would address the teacher on her return and we would be relieved of the punishment. Her argument made sense to us. How could we learn if we were unable to share our options openly with others? Was just one opinion fed to us from our teacher truly the best way to understand what was being disseminated to us? Why did we have to deal with this punishment?

Upon the teacher's return, an attempt to explain the situation was made, with a volley of heckling support from the rest of the class. This was met with, 'I am the teacher', and 'you are the leaner'. Therefore, the instructions of the teacher were the only way forward and the class must accept this without question. We were informed that teachers were entrusted with our education by our parents and consequently we should act in way in which would make our parents proud. Apparently standing up for ourselves would not make our parents proud. I took offence at this as I had been taught the complete opposite from my parents and added my opinion. There were threats of this disruptive behaviour leading to a visit to the principal's office or a call to various parents. One fellow classmate was singled out as being 'the instigator' and was sent to the principal's office on charge of being a 'trouble maker', and 'talking-back' to authority. She was not allowed back into the classroom until the start of the next lesson. At which point we all felt that we, as well our classmate had been unfairly punished, and there had been no form of social justice.

We tried to explain this to our teacher once again, but were met with the same explanation that there would be no possibility of educational progress unless we stuck firmly to the set of rules this system had decided was the best for our instruction. How could a system that had been in place for so long not cater to the educational needs of all the class members equally? Years later this episode stayed in my mind an example of unfair oppression and punishment. It had begun with a blanket punishment that ended with one classmate being made an example to others.

As a result of the readings I engaged with on the advice of my supervisor and others in the Social Inclusion Project, I began to understand this situation slightly differently. What did it mean to say 'being quiet is not in my culture'? Our classmate had been trying to explain to our teacher that she had been taught to learn differently to the way we were being taught. But this was misinterpreted as being a disruptive force in class. This particular teacher did not have access to previous knowledge of the way caregivers in other socio-cultural groups had conditioned their children for learning. There was an understanding of what it would mean to provide what Morrow (1992) terms '*epistemological access'* for my classmate. What implications would this have for her education? The teacher had learned from her own years of teaching within a particular system, stemming from her own cultural background how to teach through this particular frame of reference. She had been socially and culturally conditioned to teach in a particular way. It did not seem to occur to her that there were alternative forms of learning that may be just as valuable.

As I read further, I also began to understand how power is implicated in education. How, by privileging certain ways of being, some are excluded from the learning that characterises most schooling. In this I began to see how education can function to maintain the status quo in spite of the fact that it is widely acclaimed as a means of facilitating individual progress in society.

I have used the example from my own schooling in order to try to explain the development of my own comprehension of the importance of what critical realists term 'explanatory theory'. The reading I did as part of my doctoral study allowed me to begin to understand the mechanisms at play in excluding or including people in education. This theory allowed me to 'operationalise' the meta-theory I had chosen for my study by allowing me to move from empirical observation

experience to the level of the *Real.* Without this theory and the research on which it is based, we cannot gain begin to identify the interplay of mechanisms at the level of the *Real*. The conditions under which a scenario plays out is not devoid of cultural reference, societal constraints and other forms of knowledge production. Following Archer, agents do not function randomly. They are subject to constraining or enabling factors stemming from structural emergent and cultural emergent properties. If not examined from using explanatory theory, what the researcher sees and observes is only interpreted from their own world view.

As I read, I began to see my own experiences (recounted in Chapter One and above) differently. I also began to ask questions. What forms of social practices targeted at learning are utilised in marginalised homes? How have these social practices come to be? In what ways could these practices have the potential to hinder or assist in gaining epistemological access and valued knowledge? I began to see how an examination of home-based learning practices in a marginalised community could contribute to social inclusion and epistemological access by challenging the status quo of the current schooling system.

For now, however, I need to provide an explanation of the theory that allowed me to explain much of what I experienced in the community that participated in my research.

## 3.2 **New Literacy Studies (NLS)**

The theory that I found most useful emanated from a field that has become known as 'New Literacy Studies' (NLS). The field is particularly concerned with the way language and language related activities such as reading and writing function in schooling and other areas of society. In this, it is particularly concerned with the workings of power. In the South African context, it allows us to begin to understand how traditional literacy practices been enabled or constrained as a result of colonialism and the way this has then impacted on whose learning is valued and who gets 'to learn'.

### 3.2.1 *Autonomous Model of Literacy vs. Ideological Model of Literacy*

The use of the ideological model of literacy, proposed by Street (1984, 1993 & 2003) offers an alternative to the more traditional view in the form of what he terms the 'autonomous model' (*ibid*). The autonomous model views literacy as a set of neutral skills involving the decoding and encoding of printed text. On this basis, it assumes that the introduction of literacy informs social practices and bestows cognitive advantage. Street problematizes this model as it negates cultural and contextual elements, by '…simply imposing Western concepts of literacy on to other cultures or within a country those of the one class or cultural group onto others.' (Street, 2003, p. 77). Street (2003) elucidates that more comprehensive explanations for literacy development should be located in the ways of being that people and communities exist and carry out their day-to-day activities.

In place of the autonomous model, Street (2003) argues that the ideological model of literacy addresses this problem by ensuring that cultural and contextual variations related to literacy are considered. He explains this by arguing for an understanding of literacy as a set of social practices which should be seen consistently as 'embedded in socially constructed epistemological principals.' (Street, 2003, p. 77). Individuals and groups of individuals are inducted into these socially embedded practices from birth with the practices differing according to context. Meanings attributed to different forms of learning and literacy are, moreover, continually informed by the ideological notions which have developed within a particular culture or context (Gee, 2008; Besnier & Street, 1994).

In addition to understanding literacy as a set of neutral skills, the autonomous model attributes cognitive benefits to the acquisition of these skills in a particular context, with a particular background. This idea found substance in the 'Great Divide' theories (see, for example, Ong, 1967; Goody, 1968; Levi-Strauss, 1962) which argued that there are basic differences in thinking between orate and literate societies. The introduction of literacy to what he referred to as 'savage' oral societies, was then understood to further advancement and development in a different way to what was the current accepted convention within those societies as their accepted norms.

The Great Divide Theories were debunked by work conducted by Scribner & Cole (1981) amongst the Vai people in Liberia. The Vai employ three different kinds of writing: a unique writing system for their own language, an alphabetic script in English for schooling and Arabic script for religious purposes. Scribner & Cole (1981) subjected their research participants to a battery of psychometric tests and found that literacy per se had very little effect on performance. Through continued research they found that what did have an effect on their performance was formal schooling. Therefore, what emerged from the study, was that literacy in itself does not bestow any cognitive benefit on the participant. What mattered is the uses to which people put their literacy.

Street's identification of the ideological model, and in particular its emphasis on understanding literacy as a set of social practices is particularly important in South Africa given the social and cultural diversity of the country and the huge divides left by apartheid. Using Street's model allows us to see that the literacy practices that dominate formal education are those of a dominant social group. The acquisition of literacy can therefore be seen as being influenced by previous social and cultural experiences, and the literacy practices of marginalised groups have been not interpreted or valued in the way that should have been (Prinsloo & Brier, 1996).

### 3.2.2 *'Literacy Events' and 'Literacy Practices'*

Street (2003) notes that any exploration of literacy development, requires the identification of 'literacy events' and 'literacy practices'. In this Street (1988) makes a clear distinction between the two terms. He states that literacy events can be noted as empirically observable and definite events that connect to literacy (Street, 1988). He relies on Heath (1982a) who has been credited with coining the term, who states that a 'literacy event' is 'any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and interpretive process.' (Heath, 1982a, p. 93).

'Literacy practices' are the ways an individual relates to text in a particular context. Literacy events come to constitute a literacy practice if they become habitual (Street, 1988). In turn, according to the ideological model, literacy practices come to constitute 'a literacy'.

Thus, literacy is understood not as a singular phenomenon, but as multiple, where individual literacies are understood to develop in specific socio-cultural contexts. Hence the term 'academic literacy' refers to the sets of literacy practices that predominate in the academy, although, even here, the use of the term in the singular fails to take account of disciplinary differences in literacy practices (see, for example, Lea & Street, 2006). It would therefore be more appropriate to refer to 'academic literacies', rather than the singular 'academic literacy'.

### 3.2.3 *Gee's construct of 'Discourse'*

In social science, the term 'discourse' (spelt with a lowercase 'd') can be seen to have many different meanings. In linguistics, for example, the term is often used simply to refer to a stretch of language. Elsewhere, it can be used to refer to sets of ideas that 'hold together' in language and other sign systems that then constrain or enable what it is possible to do. Kress (1989:7), for example defines discourses as:

> '... systematically organised sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Beyond that, they define, describe and delimit what it is possible to say and not possible to say (and by extension – what it is possible to do or not to do) with respect to the area of concern of that institution, whether marginally or centrally.'

Gee (2008) offers yet another understanding, 'Discourse' which he distinguishes from others by always using the capital 'D'. For Gee (2008, p. 154), a Discourse is:

> '…composed of distinctive ways of speaking/listening and often, too, writing/reading *coupled* with distinctive ways of acting, interacting valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, believing, with other people and with various objects, tools, and technologies, so as to enact specific socially recognizable identities engaged in specific socially recognized activities (original emphasis).'

Accordingly, a Discourse can be likened to a 'role' that signals membership of a particular social group.

From a perspective in critical realism, discourses, in the sense described by Kress (1989) can be understood as mechanisms at the level of the *Real*. The interplay of discourses with other mechanisms then leads to the emergence of literacy events and practices which can be observed at the level of the *Actual*. An understanding of discourse as a 'stretch' of language to be analysed in a linguistic sense would be seen as the result of an event involving the production of spoken or written text. Gee's (2008) definition can be seen to encompass beliefs and value systems (constituted discursively) at the level of the *Real* as well as events and actions at the level of the *Actual*. An individual's experiences and observations of the Discourse would then be located at the level of the *Actual*.

In relation to the study reported in this thesis, the construct of Discourse proved to be useful in understanding the manner in which some social groups are excluded from the benefits of post-apartheid education (Msila, 2007 & Hoadley, 2006).

Gee (1989, 2000) defines literacy as the mastery of a particular Discourse. He also distinguishes between primary and secondary Discourses. According to Gee (2008), a primary Discourse results from the interactions a child enjoys with caregivers from birth. This primary Discourse lays the ground for the way they are prepared for school. If, for example, the primary Discourse draws on values related to the benefits of reading and encompasses interactions with written texts then the child will acquire these practices and develop these values as the primary Discourse is mastered. Primary Discourses, can, and habitually do, affect a child's interpretation of learning practices and how they will transmit this information into daily activities as they progress to adulthood (Heath, 2010; Sandstrom, 1983). Secondary Discourse are those Discourses acquired in addition to the primary Discourse. An individual can acquire as many secondary Discourses to which they are exposed through interactions outside the main location of their upbringing. Hence, school-based Discourses would count as secondary Discourses, though, the closer the primary Discourse is to these, the easier the acquisition.

Child rearing practices vary from culture to culture, and from community to community. As previously indicated, traditional child rearing practices were disturbed throughout the colonial period (Brock-Utne, Majhanovich, & Pitman, 2010a) and further disrupted during apartheid as parents moved away from their homes to work in the cities. In line with this thinking, once a child begins school, practices will also vary from school to school. Fataar (2012) notes that 'dissonant spatialities' of numerous 'lived domains co-constitute' a child's 'learning practices and position them as particular types of learners' (p. 17).

From Gee's (2008) perspective, one's mastery of the primary Discourse and the nature of that Discourse along with exposure to secondary Discourses can impinge on an individual's educational success. The closer the primary Discourse and any secondary Discourses to which an individual has had exposure are to the Discourses of schooling, the more chances of success are afforded an individual.

Previous research demonstrates that children from middle class homes are privileged in relation to other social groups as they enter school (Heath, 1982a; Scollon & Scollon, 1979). Once a child reaches a formal classroom, their educational framing within the home can bring about a possible clash with the framework on which the official schooling system has been based (Huggett, 2009; Colgan, Linington & Excell, 2005). This problem can be seen to contribute to problems in South Africa, where the educational system draws on colonial times and where the history of apartheid means that the majority of the population was denied access to quality education (Cottrell, 2005).

Decades of research in human development from multiple disciplinary perspectives affirm that the time from conception to approximately 8 years of age, marks a crucial period of cognitive, linguistic, social and psychological development. Gee's (2008) construct of Discourse provides us with a theoretical lens to examine the way the environment in the home serves to prepare children for schooling and support them when they are in it. Gee's work provides powerful explanatory theory that can be used in addition to the meta theory outlined in Chapter Two in order to explore the way child rearing practices in a marginalised community in South Africa contribute to that marginalisation. Previous studies on child-rearing practices such as those of Heath (1983) in the Southern United States, Scollon and Scollon (1981) in Alaska and Canada, as well as

Brock-Utne (2006) and Ishengoma (2005) in Tanzania are indicative of the potential of this sort of research.

## 3.3 Literacy, language and power

As a result of longitudinal studies using ethnographic research, researchers such as Heath (1983 & 2010) have identified the relationship between power and practices and power and language. Heath's (1983) study in the Piedmont area of the Carolinas explored the way three very different communities, termed 'Roadville', 'Tracton' and the 'Townspeople' prepared and supported their children for school. The Roadville and Tracton communities were working class, one white and one black. The 'Townspeople' were both black and white educated parents. Heath's (1983) work shows very clearly how the advantages enjoyed by the middle classes are secured through childrearing practices that contributed to the success of their children. Consequently, education comes to be related to the maintenance of social advantage and power. Although Heath does not draw on the term 'Discourse' (which was coined by Gee), re-conceptualising her work using the concept results in an understanding of the way children whose primary Discourses are more closely aligned with those of the school are empowered once they enter the schooling system (Heath, 1983).

With values and final goals in mind, these practices are developed through generations of families and communities and are then maintained, or modified depending on the needs and available resources in an environment. In South Africa, 'social class' has largely been conflated with 'race' as a result of apartheid although a growing black middle class has emerged since the democratic election in 1994. Therefore, the alignment of schooling practices with those of middle class homes not only contributes to the maintenance of a class privilege, but also to those of racial privilege.

The way one speaks and interacts with a child can influence their progress through education (Heath, 2010; Huggett, 2009). It impacts on the way in which the child's mind-frame develops and how learning is understood (Heath, 2010). Middle class educated parents, for example, are not only likely to induct their children into schooling and support them while they are in it more effectively

than parents with less educational capital, but are also more likely to set goals and contribute to aspirations of their children to enter more prestigious areas of work.

The manner in which parents and other caregivers socialise children into expectations of work is well documented in the literature. For example, Willis' (1977) study *Learning to labour: How working class kids get working class jobs* shows how a group of boys, termed 'the lads', from Birmingham in the United Kingdom, are happy to pursue factory work and experience the decision to do so as a result of their own free choice, a 'choice' which, nonetheless, serves to sustain them in working class positions in society. 'The lads' had been conditioned into constructing manual work as 'manly' and continually resisted the mental work of schooling on these grounds. Here 'manly' work had been shaped into a discourse that was valued over that of other discourses as it had been favourably rewarded in this particular context. This in turn, permitted this discourse to be supported, reinforced and continued by the succeeding generation.

The issue of language has long preoccupied those working with and in education in South Africa as a foundational point of concern. Particularly given that although there are eleven official languages, English and Afrikaans are 'privileged' in that they have been recognised as the languages of learning and teaching in the country. This means that the majority of children entering school need to begin to learn in a language which is not their home language. This situation is made worse by the increasing status of English as a 'global' language with the result that many parents seek access to English for their children as they enter school in South Africa. This is despite the fact that the use of the home language in the early years of schooling has been shown to be critical to literacy and other social and linguistic development see, for example, Cummins & Swain (1986), Field (2004) as well as researchers working with an interactive view of the reading process, such as Carrell (1988). Allowing a child to use their home language in the early stages of teaching reading that focuses on the decoding of printed text means that knowledge of the home language can assist in predicting what comes next, in what Goodman (1967) has termed the 'psycholinguistic guessing game' of reading. This term denotes that reading is not just a precise process of learning to produce letters into words, but it also includes language cues such as syntax, semantics and possible graphics that maybe included in the reading material (*ibid*).

This includes predications that can and generally are made by the reader during the act of reading in order to comprehend what is being read (*ibid*). However, this can be impacted by the use of 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' processing when it comes to bilingual, or second language learners.

In 'bottom-up' processing each letter has to be correlated with the sound it represents in order to slowly build words and phrases. With knowledge such as these linguistic cues being denied, reading becomes a process involving 'bottom-up processing'. In research conducted in this area, second language speakers generally use a great deal of their process memory trying to find understanding in each individual word, separately (Field, 2004). This can hinder their comprehension of the actual overall meaning of the bigger picture of the letters that create words, words that create sentences, sentence that create paragraphs and so on. (*ibid*). Generally, first language speakers are able to make use of 'top-down' processing which can facilitate meaning comprehension. 'Top-down' processing employs background or contextual information in order to predict or understand the deeper meaning of what the combination of words actually convey as a sentence, idea of collection of ideas (Carrell, 1988; Field, 2004). In many cases the use of 'top down' processing is missed out with second language speakers, which can hinder their overall understating. Ideally one should use an interactive process involving 'bottom up' and 'top down' processing which linguistic knowledge is used to aid processing (Carrell,1988; Field, 2004).

However, the need to acquire an additional language is not the only problem for the majority of South African school children as it is not only the language *per se* that must be mastered but also specific forms of it. I will return to this point later. For now, the relationship not only to the powerful language of English but also to powerful forms of that language cannot be sufficiently emphasised.

### 3.3.1 *Literacy and Social Practice*

Scollon and Scollon (1981) argue that literacy is a set of social practices through which power relations are determined. Their study focused on traditional Innuit literacy development and identified children spectating as the teacher told riddles and stories. The role of the children was

essentially passive. However, within the Western schooling system, children are required to display their knowledge to a teacher, counter to Athabaskan social practices. The resulting confusion in teacher-learner power relations can be predicted to affect children's learning outcomes, resulting in a lower level of social capital and empowerment being acquired through education as indigenous social practices were not favoured or congruent with the dominant 'imported' schooling structure.

Scollon and Scollon (1981) also identify a connection between action and language growth development in social practice. One example noted in their study involved the handing of objects from adult to child while naming the object. This seemingly simple action had not only the potential to build language, but also to construct association, as well as contextualise action and language. In their studies of Athabaskan families, oral story telling was a key practice for parents to teach contextualised, conversational and indexical literacy to their children. Their study also showed that stories were used with purpose to prepare a child for the role they would hold within their community. However, this form of literacy lost functionality when placed in another context, that of western oriented schooling. Here, practices utilised with the goal of developing a child's understanding of their roles in a community and, thus, developing their ability to be a functional member of that community, did not correspond with the goals located within another community.

Scollon & Scollon's study was not the only piece of research to identify ways in which the introduction of western schooling placed children at a disadvantage. Many researchers including Brock-Utne, Aliou, Boly, Diallo, Heugh & Wolff (2006), Brock-Utne, Majhanovich & Pitman, (2010) and Zulu (2001) have all shown how home-based social practices have a formal role to play in indigenous education. Brock-Utne & Lwaitama (2010) have established that many African societies traditionally made use of riddles in order to educate their children. Here, parents, grandparents and other members of the community employed riddles to pass on cultural practices, perceptions of the world, language skills, farming methods, and practices related to the analysis of objects (Brock-Utne & Lwaitama, 2010). Ishengoma (2005) found that the children of families who still utilised long-established riddles for the purpose of education had a stronger grasp of their native language, displaying a broader vocabulary in comparison to those whose families had discontinued these practices as a result of colonial influence.

The historical lack of equal distribution of resources and denial of specialised forms of knowledge has painfully affected growth for an extended period.

As the bulk of the African schooling system has been fashioned primarily on a European educational structure, with an increasing Western influence, there is obvious conflict between approaches in which learning is facilitated in the home and in which children are prepared (or not prepared as the case may be) for school-based learning. Over time, indigenous learning practices have been weakened and, in some cases, have been completely lost. Thus, it would seem there is an epistemological crisis in instances where indigenous learning practices have weakened, and have not been reinforced with those associated with the dominant schooling structure.

The result of this is that children from homes in which caregivers are able to induct them into school-based learning practices are at a considerable advantage. Consequently, power gained from occupying some positions in society can be maintained through child rearing.

### 3.3.2 *Social and Cultural Capital*

Through the act of examining issues related to language, literacy and power, Bourdieu's (1986) constructs of social and cultural capital are useful. Bourdieu sees individuals inhabiting different social spaces and position themselves in those spaces through different social and cultural networks. The extent to which they can draw on these networks increases their 'capital' (Bourdieu, 1986). Here, he puts forward that our social world can be seen as a collection of past events in which can either enable or contain one's level of social capital (*ibid*).

In an educational setting, the term 'capital' adds to the idea that one's social and cultural conditioning functions as a kind of 'educational currency'. Here, the more capital a child brings to the setting, the more benefit they will be able to obtain from the educational environment. Social capital is acquired in early childhood and access to capital impacts on equity. Understanding the way social and cultural capital is built in different social settings is therefore imperative to understanding how education can work to contribute to equity especially in a country such as

South Africa. Children who arrive in a formal school setting with the 'right' social and cultural capital are better able to understand what is required and how they need to function. Social capital therefore impacts on success in school and, thus, on opportunities in life after school.

Social and cultural capital can work in many ways and on different levels. For example, a mother may know that their child is about to reach the standard going school age, but be unaware of the process which they need to undergo in order to have their child enrolled at a preferred school. When confronted with application forms and other formal procedures, the extent to which a mother masters the literacy needed to complete the form will impact on the child's chances of admission. At another level, the extent to which a child has been exposed to languages and varieties of language associated with schooling would also impact on success in school.

### 3.3.3 *'Situated Learning' and 'Discourse Communities'*

Yet other concepts that are useful in understanding the experiences of children are those of 'situated learning' and 'Discourse communities'. Gee (2008) argues that human beings make use of 'social languages' (p. 4) or languages that develop as a result of social and cultural conditions (Gee, 2008). A single community can make use of numerous social languages under the banner of one actual language. These social languages are shaped as a result of an individual being exposed to ways of learning, speaking and understanding in specific social contexts. This, in turn, can be seen as a form of 'situated learning' (*ibid*). Once again, it is possible to see how the context in which a child is raised impacts on their learning.

Additionally, Gee (2004) goes on to argue that exposure to 'Discourse communities' further shapes children. As a result of the Discourses a child is exposed to, they would enjoy greater or lesser levels of epistemological access to the formal schooling system. To illustrate, if a child has been born into a family unit in which parents and caregivers were read to as children, the greater the likelihood that those parents and caregivers would be able to reproduce this behaviour with children in their care. Hypothetically, home socialisation will more than likely also guide the child

to imitate the behaviour of parents and other caregivers. Thus, if parents and caregivers read in the home, the more likely it would be that reading would be perceived as a valuable and, possibly, an enjoyable practice. Hence, children are more likely to take up reading for themselves. In the pre-school years, enjoying being read to would prepare a child for reading. These reading behaviours in the home would be supported and then extend to the teaching of formal reading in school. Furthermore, depending on the Discourse community, a child would also be exposed to different uses for reading. In Heath's (1983) study, for example, members of one community regularly read flyers distributed by food stores advertising special offers. Here, the act of looking out for produce that was cheaper than usual was a worthy and rewarding way to exercise their reading skills. This was a specific use for reading and, having watched adults practice this use, it could be expected that children would themselves begin to appreciate reading in this way.

The manner in which a child begins to acquire building blocks for learning may not be valuable in a context different to the home. Each environment or context generally holds to its own set of social language or constructions of social languages, with their own imperatives. These are normally learned through being a community member from birth.

To further this idea, it could be said that through learning, one begins to create a type of 'being', suited for success in a certain environment. If there is an alignment of tools, knowledge and a level of agency with which to make use of these tools within a context, there would ultimately be a higher level of success in that context.

In relation to the study reported upon in this thesis, it might be beneficial to look at the processes of urbanisation that have taken place both during and post-apartheid. Over time, an increasing number of individuals left the rural areas in search of a livelihood in the towns and cities. The migrant labour system of apartheid was a particular example of this practice. Once the Pass Laws[4] came to an end, other members of families frequently moved to join their relatives in the urban areas. Apartheid had meant, however, that the work available to the original

[4] Under apartheid, the 'Pass Laws' required an individual to carry a pass which entitled them to live only in certain areas, which severely affected freedom of movement.

migrants as well as to those who followed them, was of a menial nature involving long hours. As a result, parents and caregivers were constrained in their ability to spend time with their children who were enrolled in a schooling system sustained by the belief that success was dependent on abilities inherent to the individual such as intelligence, motivation and aptitude (Boughey & McKenna, 2016). Traditional family practices were disrupted by the move and become increasingly disrupted over time. Essentially, the shift to an urban area meant that families needed to acquire new Discourses, new ways of being, in order to promote the success of their children in school. However, exposure to these Discourses was limited because of the separation occasioned by apartheid and the nature of the work available to parents and caregivers. Thus children were at a disadvantage long before they ever reached a formal learning environment.

### 3.3.4 *The interplay of New Literacy Studies (NLS) and Socially Embedded Practices*

Street's (1984, 1993 & 2003) notion of 'socially embedded practices', inherent to his 'ideological model of literacy' can be seen as complimentary to Gee's (1989, 2004 & 2008) constructs of situated learning and discourse communities. Street (2003) explores the epistemological elements of literacy and shows how access to dominant forms of learning rooted in social practices because of the way practices prevalent in the environment in which a child is raised will impact on the way the child is able to construct knowledge. Street (2003) examines the ways in which these social practices are replicated within contexts, the epistemological principals associated with them, and how they can become part of one's everyday life. Accordingly, Street (2003) begins to explore the connections between literacy practices and access to power and privilege. In Section 3.2.1 (page 32) above, I noted the claim made by the 'autonomous model' that it was literacy *per se* that granted cognitive advantage and the way this was disproved by the work of Scribner & Cole (1981). Scribner and Cole (1981) identified the way the one literacy used by the Vai people associated with schooling did present an advantage. Therefore, in this case, depending on home-based literacies and their closeness to those of formal schooling, a child will be more or less advantaged as formal education begins.

In the face of advancing technology, there has been a move towards considering the way in which digital technologies are conditioning literacy development. New Literacy Studies (NLS) incorporates areas of learning such as Digital Literacies, Media Literacies, Information Literacy, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Literacies and Computer literacy (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear & Leu, 2008). A relatively new area of theory and practice, NLS provides an exploration of the way social practices develop as technology can be used. This can, for example, encompass the way an individual or groups of individuals utilise a digital device as a tool in order to complete a task or achieve specific goals. NLS can thus be employed to consider what tendencies owning and utilising a computer, cell phone, laptop or tablet may develop and therefore contribute towards literacy practices.

In today's world, the ability to manage an email address and making use of mobile phones are commonplace and, depending on the context, even essential. Online tasks can now encompass a wide array of actions such as making applications for jobs, accessing the wealth of information on the internet and using a spreadsheet to manage financial data. Thus digital devices are central to developing literacies and one can begin to see how a lack of access to such tools disadvantages individuals.

## 3.4 Socio-psychological understandings of child development

### 3.4.1 *Play*

Vygotsky (1933) identifies 'play' as a tool in a child's social and cognitive development. Children acquire social practices through watching and mimicking actions modelled around them. Consequently, different social practices can become established as commonplace in the child's development. Play has been identified as extremely important in reinforcing cultural customs as well as playing a role in the development of literacies as a cognitive process (Daniels, 2008 & Vygotsky, 1933).

A small child could, for example, pretend to read to a teddy bear or a doll before tucking them into bed. In this, the child is practising the behaviours they have been exposed to as a result of time

spent with parents and other caregivers. The child is interacting with certain tools, such as a book, a toy and a bed to reinforce what they have learnt at home. From this example, it is possible to see how innocuous acts of play become implicated in the development of literacy practices and, thus, in promoting access to power and privilege.

### 3.4.2 *The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*

In addition to theorising the role of play, Vygotsky (1930-1934/1978) also offers the construct of the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). This focuses on the idea that if a child is exposed to modelling and receives help from a knowledgeable adult, the child will progressively move towards being able to complete the task autonomously (Daniels, 2008; Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978). This is achieved by first duplicating an adult's demonstrated behaviour, then internalising each step. Finally, the child is able to carry out the complete task without assistance. For this to be successful, the adult would need to have mastered the task in the first place. If parents or caregivers have the experience of the task and can offer support to a child, the child will be at an advantage.

Once again, it is possible to see how theory, in this case socio-psychological theory, provides insights into the way advantage and disadvantage work in the early childhood years as a child is prepared for school.

## 3.5. **The language question**

As I have indicated earlier in this Chapter, language is an enormous issue in South Africa. This is mainly attributed to the widespread use of English as a language of learning and teaching in spite of the existence of the eleven official languages: Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Northern Sotho, Sotho, Swazi, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu. Some schools do make use of the indigenous languages. For example, a large number of schools within the Eastern Cape make use of isiXhosa as a language of instruction (*ibid*). However, these schools are more often than not in dire need of resources, financial and otherwise (*ibid*).

Consequently, the vast majority of learners are taught in a language other than that of their home language. This has obvious implications with regards to their level of preparation once entering the education system. For example, if a learner comes from an English-speaking home and is sent to a school where English is the language of instruction, they are in a privileged situation. This is because they have already been making use of the language on a daily basis. In comparison, a learner whose home language is one of the indigenous African languages and who is enrolled at a school where English or Afrikaans is the medium of instruction, will find themselves at a considerable disadvantage. It also should be noted that even though this example makes a clear distinction between the different languages, it should not be interpreted in such bald terms. In practice, individuals may speak multiple languages although each language may be used for specific purposes and in different contexts.

Because of the complexity of language use in South Africa, the need to learn using the medium of an additional language is often cited as a cause of failure in both the secondary and tertiary education systems (Boughey, 2002 & 2005). Although the impact of the need to use an additional language as a language of learning and teaching cannot be underestimated, the 'problem' is not as simple as many would assume. This 'problem' cannot simply a be put down to the matter of mastering the formal features of the additional language, but goes much deeper (Boughey, 2002 & 2005).

### 3.5.1 *Systemic Functional Linguistics*

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is a linguistic theory that views language as a 'social semiotic system' (Halliday, 1973 & 1978; & Eggins, 2005). SLF is mainly used to examine how language is developed and utilised within different contexts to obtain specific goals or objectives (Halliday, 1973 & 1978).

Systemicists (i.e. those drawing on SFL) see language use as a system of choices where each choice is made on the basis of an understanding of the context in which the language is used (Halliday, 1973; Eggins, 2005). Two layers of context are identified: a broader 'context of culture' and a more specific 'context of situation'.

Different socio-economic groups and communities experience different social and cultural conditions (or 'contexts') and draw on their understandings of these contexts for example, to attribute meaning to signs (an example of a sign would be a word). A sign could thus embrace positive, neutral or negative connotations for each individual and can affect how language is used and interpreted.

For example, in the South African context, a person from a rural Xhosa background could associate concepts such as lobola[5], animal sacrifice[6] or wealth with the sign 'c-o-w'. An individual from a commercial farming background, could link the notion of wealth in terms of farming and industry and an activist might draw on understandings of environmental damage or animal cruelty. This example allows us to see how a simple sign ('c-o-w') can hold many different meanings depending on the context on which a language user draws. All of these connections are correct in their own right while still being founded in different socio-cultural understandings. If the term 'cow' is used in class, there is potential for myriad understandings to be at play.

If a child is unable to relate to the context on which understandings dominant in the classroom are based, then they may well have difficulty in learning and in being evaluated on the basis of a different 'social language'.

### 3.5.2 *Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)*

Like Halliday (1973 & 1978), Cummins (1982) identifies the centrality of context in the development of language and literacy. In doing this, Cummins (1982) identifies two key concepts: Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

[5] 'Lobola' can be defined as a payment made from a groom to his betrothed family to demonstrate he will be able to provide his future bride (Heeren, Jemmott, Tyler, Tshabe & Ngwane; 2011). Traditionally within South Africa, this payment is made with cattle (Heeren & Jemmott, et. al, 2011.

[6] Animal sacrifice is traditionally incorporated within South Africa culture during times of celebration for communication with ancestors (Cocks, Dold & Wiersum; 2003).

Cummins (1982) uses a representation of intersecting axes to describe these two concepts (Please see Figure 3 on the bottom of this page for a diagram of Cummins intersecting axes). The horizontal axis describes the amount of contextual support available for language use. In this, contexts can be rich in support or provide reduced support. An example of a context rich in support would be face to face conversation. Here gestures and other forms of paralinguistic cues (non-verbal communication) are available to support meaning making and various can also props are also present. Here there are more detailed elements of communication available, which can allow for deeper meaning and understanding to be shared. A context with reduced support would be a written text consisting only of black marks on white paper or a white screen. This provides no additional information, such as verbal or paralinguistic cues to support a deeper meaning or understanding of what is trying to be conveyed. The second axis describes the cognitive demand involved in language use. Language can be used to describe, discuss and analyse complex abstract topics, in which case the cognitive demand is high. It can also be used to describe every day, concrete activities and topics, in which case the demand is low.

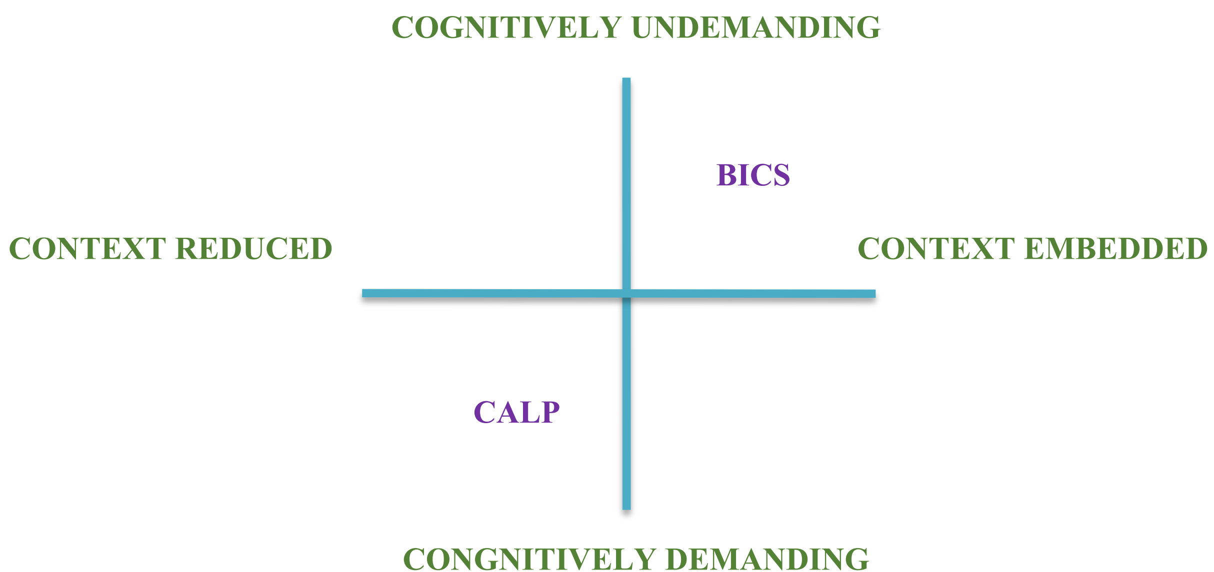


**Figure 3: Cummins' representation of intersecting axes used to describe BICS and CALP**

Hence the ability to use BICS involves using language to communicate with others about simple topics in situations rich in support for meaning making. BICS is learned from birth and is considered the foundational level of human communication (Cummins, 1982).

CALP on the other hand is a more complex form of language development (*ibid*). This is more associated with communicating theoretical concepts that have been decontextualized. This form of language proficiency allows for thinking critically and more sound reasoning in problem solving situations (*ibid*). CALP begins to make use of abstract concepts, which is more advanced and would require more elements of support, such as context to understand in comparison to BICS (*ibid*). It is therefore directly associated with academic language, and the ability to communicate and explain more complex subject matter (*ibid*). This form of language is used in educational settings and becomes increasingly more abstract and complex as the years of education progress (*ibid*).

Significantly, some learners are exposed to CALP in their homes of origin. If parents and caregivers are educated individuals, then it is more likely that CALP will be used in the home around the child.

Cummins (1982) notes that in the case of learners operating with two or more languages the problem becomes more complicated. If a leaner's home language is not the same as the language of educational instruction, CALP would be more difficult to understand and take more time to develop. Also, learners who have already gained higher levels of achievement in BICS in the language in which they are taught will more than likely be able to acquire an elevated comprehension of CALP in a shorter time period (*ibid*).

Furthermore, all this means that a child could enter school having some knowledge of the language of learning and teaching even though this is not their home language. However, they may have only been exposed to BICS and not to CALP. Once again, the importance of the home of origin comes into play and the role of social and cultural capital is emphasised.

3.5.3 *Common Underlying Proficiency Hypothesis (CUP) or 'Dual Iceberg Hypothesis'*

Furthering the concepts of BICS and CALP, Cummins (1982) proposed the Common Underlying Proficiency Hypothesis (CUP) in order to explain language development and language proficiency in multilingual learners. This hypothesis deals with the manner in which meaning or meaning creation can be conveyed in more than one language (*ibid*). This hypothesis is also referred to as 'The Dual Iceberg Hypothesis', as the CUP is concealed underneath the first and second language features, much like that of an iceberg (Adapted from Cummins, 1982, p. 83):

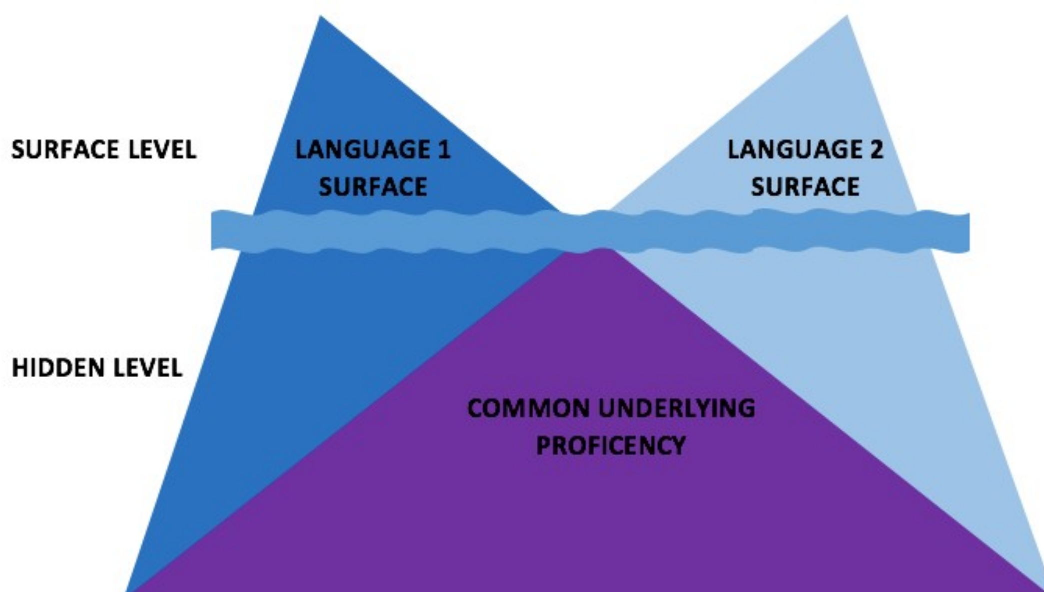


**Figure 4: Cummins' representation of the 'Dual Iceberg Hypothesis'**

BICS and CALP can be seen as embedded within the larger theory of CUP. Here, BICS (more informal skills associated with listening and speaking) would be located at the surface level, and CALP (more formal skills and knowledge needed to succeed in a classroom setting) at the hidden level of the iceberg (Bligh, 2014). Skills that have been obtained through one language, should be accessible through both languages as these skills inhabit the same section of the brain (Cummins, 1982). In this, these skills should be reinforced at the level of CUP, while still differing from

the surface, meaning that they should be able to be accessed by both languages (*ibid*). Furthermore, the level of the CUP can be improved by access to the dominant Discourses such as non-verbal cues, as well as shared contextual or cultural understanding (Bligh, 2014).

### 3.5.4 *Bernstein's Restricted and Elaborated Codes*

Bernstein (1971) is yet another theorist who identifies the role of context in language use. His interest was in success at school level, and paid particular attention as to why working class children in the East End of London did not do well academically. As a result of his work, he identified the constructs of 'restricted' and 'elaborated' language 'codes' to try and explain this phenomenon.

Bernstein (1971) describes a 'restricted code' as a form of language that considers that the listener will already have access to certain parts of information that could be culturally or contextually based. The speaker is able to make assumptions that the listener has an understanding of the topic at hand and views it from a similar perspective. Little additional explicit information is required for the language users to make sense of what is being communicated because of the social and cultural background that is shared and which is brought to the language event.

In a comparable vein of understanding, Olsen (1977) explains the 'oral tradition' in a similar fashion. According to Olsen (1977), historical and cultural information was passed on generationally in the form of stories and poems which were linguistically inexplicit because they made heavy use of mnemonics and rhyme. The lack of explicit information did not impede communication, however, as listeners to the poems and stories brought a shared social and cultural background to the story telling or poetic event. Hence, for both Olsen (1977) and Bernstein (1971), some forms of language are 'immediate' and accessible because of what language users involved in a language event share.

Elaborated code, on the other hand, does not assume a shared social or cultural background, and therefore participants in a language related event would not have similar points of access to the

topic (Bernstein, 1971). Consequently, additional information is required for a message to be adequately communicated. As a result, much more explicit detail is added in order to leave little space for misinterpretation (Bernstein, 1971).

Once again, it is possible to compare Bernstein's notion of 'elaborated code' with Olsen's (1977) work on the shift from orality to literacy. Olsen points out that once writing was invented, the message could 'travel' across contexts and, as a result, shared understandings of the context in which it was developed could not be assumed. Over time a tradition developed (in part thanks to British essayists such as Locke) where the aim was to make the text as independent of context as possible. In effect, meaning came to be 'contained' in the text rather than constructed from the interaction between text and context.

## 3.6. **Conclusion**

Engaging with the theory discussed in this Chapter has allowed me to make sense of much of what happened in my own home with regard to reading. In my first year of study towards a doctoral degree I read a myriad of papers and books related to my area of interest. As a result of my reading, I came to realise I that I was able to begin to understand my own experiences as a child through the lens of theory and, thus, differently.

This also brought me to begin to understand how social inclusion and exclusion in higher education, the focus of the project in which I was involved, commences in childhood. I began to see how some social groups continued to be excluded from higher education, in spite of all the work that had been done to provide 'formal access' (Morrow, 2009) to the universities and how this exclusion had the potential to begin in early childhood.

The reading I completed on literacy complemented the social theory had provided the meta theoretical basis for the study underpinning this thesis. Over time, I began to see how the work on literacy held power to explain the way the interplay of mechanisms at the level of the *Real* provided access to dominant Discourses associated with schooling and, later, higher education (Archer, 2000). Returning to the work of Archer (1995, 1996, 1998, 2000), I began to see in more concrete terms how parents and caregivers in the community in which I was potentially interested

were enabled or constrained in exercising their agency. Specifically, in relation to how they exercised their agency in relation to the raising of the children in their care in ways which would prepare children for schooling and support them while they were in school.

I came to see how children who have been exposed to, and brought up in communities that expose them to 'schooled' Discourses (Gee, 2008) would be better prepared for school and would carry more social and cultural capital into the school space than those who have not. Those who have access to particular forms of knowledge and have the tools to utilise their knowledge, are essentially placed into a privileged situation. In South Africa, these 'schooled' Discourses have their roots in the North and West and were thus available only to some social groups, particularly during apartheid.

In this sense, access to specific Discourses continue to favour the historically privileged social groups in which they were initially developed. These Discourses are replicated, and further entrenched over generations and those who do not grow up being exposed to them are isolated as they enter school. The claim that schooling is an equaliser therefore has to be questioned.

At this point in our enquiry, a few sizable questions begin to appear that beg to be investigated. Is it the case that children need to be provided with access to dominant Discourses in their pre- school years, as current calls for more access to early childhood education would seem to suggest? Or is it the case that the schooling system itself needs to change in order to gain a higher level of epistemological access and social inclusion in South Africa?

In recent years, student protests under the *#RhodesMustFall* banner have called for the formal 'decolonisation' of the curriculum as means to address this very problem. Curriculum needs to be understood as encompassing not only as *what* is taught, but also *how* teaching takes place within the context of who teaches and who is taught. If we heed these calls, is it possible to 'decolonise' pedagogies in order to provide greater access to knowledge (however that is constituted) and knowing?

As I have previously indicated, as far as I am aware, little research has taken place into the learning experiences of children in marginalised communities before they go to school. If more such

research were available, it might be possible to see how the forms of learning that children do bring with them into the school setting could be valued in order to further their progress.

Thus, social practices that a child experiences while at home can be seen as central to a successful transition into our current schooling system. This could result in inadequate home preparation to meet goals in line with a European or Western lifestyle, on which our system of education and for the majority, other contemporary structures, have been established. Now it can be inferred that the formal schooling system can be recognised as a biased structure, which has the potential to benefit or hinder a learner before they have even reached the physical threshold of any educational institution.

In summary, this Chapter has provided an overview of theory and research on literacy and in doing so, has introduced some of the concepts that will be used in the analysis constituting Chapter Five. The Chapter needs to be understood alongside Chapter Two, since both provide the theoretical framework for my study. The social theory in Chapter Two provides the meta- theory as well as the literacy theory in this Chapter, the explanatory theory without which the meta theory would be powerless. For example, the work of Archer (1995, 1996, 1998, 2000) described in Chapter Two attributes PEP's to agents. Agents use these PEP's in relation to CEP's and SEP's. The explanatory theory in this Chapter allows me to begin to explore the interplay between the PEP's as exercised by parents and caregivers in the marginalised community in which I worked, and the SEP's and CEP's conditioning their lives. Thus, it provides me with explanatory power and a conceptual language with which to do this.

For now, however, I turn to the design of the research for my study to provide a detailed account of the methods implemented to carry out my research.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## Research Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

From the very beginning of the time I worked on my doctoral study, I was mindful that any attempt to look at the experiences of children in the marginalised community to which I had been privileged to gain access ran the risk of bias. I was aware that my observations of the community would inevitably involve applying the understandings of a white privileged person in South Africa to the lives of others. While I was cognisant of this, I also knew that I wanted to gain a more personal connection with participants, and that I did not want to be a remote 'researcher' as this would not provide as much insight.

At the same time, I was also aware of the need for 'close up' work if I was to be able to describe practices related to child rearing, particularly in relation to preparing children for school and supporting their school-based learning. This chapter therefore not only outlines the design of my study but also describes some of the measures I have used to try to counter the possibility of bias.

### 4.2 Self-Reflexivity

Self-reflexivity is a vital consideration when undertaking the kind of research that has the potential to be liable to bias. Not least as it serves to strengthen the research of the overall validity of the work. Mainly as the meeting points between myself and the participant community were few and far between. What does it mean to identify with one's research, and in what sense can self-reflexivity assist in the overall construction of the study? How can one's own preconceived ideas and notions, one's own experiences and one's own world view be managed in a study which may require considerations of very different ideas, experiences and world views? More specifically, how would background and a researcher's own personal development affect the interpretation of the data? What effect would this have on analysis, interpretation and final conclusions? Equally importantly, what effect would it have on the choice of a theoretical lens

through which collection, analysis and interpretation all takes place? I will attempt to clarify these questions with a personal example.

In the first year of my doctoral journey, I came across a book entitled *New South African Keywords* (Shepherd & Robins, 2008). I experienced this text as providing a significant step in my own understandings of South Africa because of the way it explored the way in which common terms in use in the country were socially constructed. This book looked at different socially constructed terms by exploring the way they have taken on new forms and meanings as South Africa has attempted to transform following the shift to democracy in 1994.

From the outset, the authors are firm in the belief that language plays a pivotal role in the formation and moulding of social realities (Shepherd & Robins, 2008). The way in which we, as individuals, also develop our own understandings of social domains in our encounters with every-day life and contribute to the understandings of others as well as to the construction of the domain itself is stressed in relation to self-reflexivity. Shepherd & Robins (2008, p. 1) note, for example:

> 'Far from being a passive process whereby we specify what is already known, the act of naming something becomes part of the process of its constitution, and an active site of social contestation. This is especially true of societies in transition (and what society is not in transition?). To say and to name is to know – but always to know in particular ways'.

The book contains a selection of essays, each addressing a term that has in some way either enabled or constrained the social construction of South Africa through public and political discourse. It deals with concepts such as culture, development, ethnicity, gender, heritage, and race. Through reading this book I was reminded of a famous quotation I had read a few years previously in a psychology class reader, by Markus Aurelius, a 2nd century Roman emperor and philosopher, that was particularly significant for me given the point I was at in my doctoral journey:

'Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth.'

The impact of this quotation was due, not only to my own awareness of the need for reflexivity given the nature of the study on which I was about to embark, but also to my growing understanding of critical realism (Bhaskar, 2008). This understanding being noted in terms of critical realisms' acknowledgement of the relativity of transitive layers of reality alongside an acceptance of a more enduring intransitive layer. Aurelius' acknowledgement of perspective rather than truth accords with the Bhaskar's (2008) *Empirical* layer, which I would need to recognise as a researcher, for it was here that my own observations of the community I aimed to study would lie. It was also at this layer that members of the community's own perceptions and statements would be found. My job as a researcher would be to record and interpret these, but I would do so through the lens of my own perceptions and world view in a process identified, by Giddens (1984) who notes that the 'findings' of the social sciences very often enter constitutively into the world they describe' in a process he terms the 'double hermeneutic' (1984, p. 20).

Thanks to Shepherd & Robins (2008) I also became aware that my own observations and perceptions would not only be coloured by my own upbringing and experiences as a privileged white South African woman but also by my training in the disciplines which would also 'discipline' my thinking (Foucault, 1977).

My reading of Shepherd and Robins (2008) left me with a profound sense of unease. However, my uneasiness was not negative but rather a signal alerting me to the need for my own self reflexivity as I embarked upon and conducted my study. The biographical details I have included in this thesis are an attempt to further the process of reflexivity I identified as critical to the rigour of my study and, also, to manage my own perceptions and world view by attempting to lay both out for self-scrutiny. These biographical details also serve to allow others to see how the observations and conclusions I offer in this thesis may have been coloured by my perceptions and world view.

One last point about the need for reflexivity concerns my choice of substantive theory outlined in Chapter Two of this thesis. As I have indicated, both Bhaskar (1998 & 2008) and Archer (1995, 1996, 1998 & 2000) are critical realists and identify a layer of reality which is not directly accessible to exploration using the senses. While my exploration of that layer may be coloured by the substantive and explanatory theory I have used, my choice of critical and social realism means that I must attempt to move beyond the world of experience and observation to delve into something I do not yet know. As a result, the theoretical framework used for the study itself supports the need for caution regarding the worlds we draw on as we experience the worlds of others.

## 4.3 Research Design

When working within a critical realist framework, it is imperative to keep the layered ontology (the *Empirical*, the *Actual* and the *Real* as described in Chapter Two) in mind through the process. As I have explained previously, only the layers of the *Empirical* and the *Actual* are directly accessible to exploration by empirical means. In critical realist research, exploration of these two layers can take many forms. Research methods that are qualitative draw attention to the subjective inherent qualities of human experience and activity (Smith, 2008) and can therefore be used to begin an exploration of the object of study working from the layer of the *Empirical*. However, quantitative data can also be used descriptively in an analysis of the impact of social exclusion and a lack of epistemological access. A quantitative analysis therefore has enormous potential by, for example, tracking the progress or a cohort of school- going children and so on. Quantitative data exposes which cohorts require more attention, and where attention needs to be paid in order to increase social inclusion. The use of qualitative data allows problems identified to be explored in more depth.

In South Africa, a wealth of quantitative analyses in, for example, the Trends in International Mathematical and Science Studies (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS), show how badly some learners fare in schooling. According to Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena & Palane. (2016), the 2015 assessment of 12, 810 Grade 4 learners from 293 schools across the country showed that 78% of the cohort could not read for

meaning, that is that they could not reach the Low International PIRLS Benchmark in reading. The study shows that half of households surveyed had fewer than ten books in the home and that very few children had experienced activities related to literacy in the home. In turn, their parents were shown to have little involvement in schools.

While large scale studies such as that of Howie *et al*. (2016) can provide quantitative analyses they cannot, for example, explore what does happen in homes or how parents may be involved in their children's education or have aspirations for their success in school in ways which are not formally recognized. Only qualitative analysis can begin to explore the picture presented by quantitative studies in more depth.

The design of my study drew on such understandings as I will attempt to show below.

### 4.3.1 *Critical Ethnography*

At the start of my first year as a PhD candidate, I experienced numerous informal conversations with some of my peers at 'Doc Weeks' offered by the Faculty of Education in which I was registered. In talking about our prospective studies, I noted a commonality that presented itself quite openly in the form of the value we each attached to our research. Initially, this value was commonly rooted in the students' own interest in their topic and how they felt connected to the topic through personal motivation. Many students had developed an interest in a topic as a result of idiosyncratic experiences or some form of personal connection to their work. As our studies progressed, it became apparent that each candidate had drawn on these initial values and interests to understand what they were exploring and, subsequently, to produce new knowledge and forms of meaning. Although they had begun by working from a very personal perspective, their doctoral journeys allowed them to see what they had experienced in different ways.

In undertaking research where the primary aim is to better understand an object of study, exploring networks of values and meaning can begin to explain the social practises of the systems involved.

As a result, I began to see that I needed to draw on research approaches and methods that would allow me to get 'close up' to what I wanted to study.

Many previous studies have shown that critical ethnography is highly effective in the exploration of social and cultural paradoxes and previously unexplained phenomena (Carspecken & Walford, 2001). Critical ethnography arguably allows for an examination of the way social practices have developed and, in the case of my study, their potential either to enable or constrain epistemological access in a schooling milieu. Although critical ethnography requires a researcher to look 'close up' at one context, the promise of contributing to the visualisation and mapping of a broader perspective exists.

Over time, I therefore came to see the benefit of undertaking an ethnographic study because of the way it would allow me to explore literacy and child rearing practices in a particular community and, more importantly given my stance in critical realism, the values and beliefs that underpinned those practices. This was because I came to understand that an ethnographic study would allow me to explore experiences at the level of the *Empirical* and identify and map events (in the form of particular practices) at the level of the *Actual* from which I could begin to abduct and retroduct to the values and beliefs at the level of the *Real.* I also began to see that, from a basis in Archer's social realism (Archer, 1995), I could use an ethnographic approach to explore the way parents and other caregivers were enabled and constrained in using their agency to contribute to children's development. Even more significantly, I began to see how ethnography would allow me to explore the networks of practices and meanings in the small community I sought to study as well as the way those networks were reinforced and reproduced thanks to its relative isolation. In all this thinking, I was aware that I would be exploring an 'open' system (Bhaskar, 2008) and that I could not therefore attribute cause/effect links to what I identified.

Critical ethnography aligns well within critical and social realist studies as it aims to uncover and interpret mechanisms from observable action within social and historical structures (Carspecken & Walford, 2001). It recognises the researcher's background, influence, fallibility and the effect these may have on the collection and interpretation of data (*ibid*). This is particularly important given my own privileged position in South African society and my own history in the schooling system.

From a perspective in critical and social realism, I also began to see that an identification of the conditions from which literacy and child rearing practices emerged would further allow for modifications to those conditions to be realised. As such, the approach was one in which hope of social action could be embedded.

In embarking on my study, I was mindful of a number of characteristics of ethnography and their impact on my own practices. Chief amongst these was my understanding of the field- based nature of ethnography and the need to immerse myself in the setting in which participants lived. Ethnography is highly personalised and ethnographic researchers are both participants in the daily lives of the people they are studying whilst also being observers and analysts. As a novice researcher, I was attentive to the need not to impinge upon the community especially since I hoped to be able to enter their homes. I have already described attempts to control my own bias as a researcher but, more than this, I was aware that I was an outsider entering intimate spaces in order to observe and participate in interactions between caregivers and children. All this resulted in a huge sense of responsibility for what I was about to do.

A considerable amount of work has been written (Carspecken & Walford, 2001; Madison, 2005) about the myriad methods used by ethnographic researchers, including various types of interviews (Carspecken & Walford, 2001), observation (of various forms including the collection of photographic evidence) (Madison, 2005) and the perusal of archival material including tools (Carspecken & Walford, 2001; Madison, 2005). As ethnography requires long time engagement, I was aware of the commitment my study would require alongside the need to be constantly aware of the rights of participants and of my need to respect their privacy where appropriate and to honour any promises I made to them.

I was also aware of the inductive nature of ethnography, that findings would be emergent and that they would result from the describing what I observed in detail and, then, slowly looking for patterns and trends in what I saw. I was also cognisant of the fact that ethnography is dialogic and that I would need to share my tentative insights with participants in my study and invite them

to comment and elaborate upon them. Finally, I was aware of the need to produce the fullest possible picture of the group I was studying through 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) which would allow me to identify the intricacies of patterns.

### 4.3.2 *Research Aims and Objectives*

In my study, I aimed to identify and explore emergent home-based learning practices of families in a marginalised community in Port Elizabeth community. The initial objective of the research was to describe practices combined with families' experiences of these practices in order to identify the social and cultural conditions from which they emerged. This involved spending time with both the children and the parents or caregivers, and members of the community over a period of eight months. I sought mainly to locate semiotic tools situated within the home and community environment, and explore how these were connected to and conditioned the development of social practices related to learning and school preparation.

## 4.4. Research Question and Sub-Questions

As I indicated in Chapter One of this thesis, my main research question was:

*How do the learning practices*[7] *of a marginalised community in Port Elizabeth initiate and build learning for children of the community?*

I then identified a number of sub-questions which would allow me to better explore my main question:

1. *How are learning practices implemented within the home?*
2. *How do key tools enable or constrain learning practices?*
3. *How do value systems construct home learning practices?*

[7] Learning practices in this sense can be seen as a sub-category of social practices as defined by Gee (2008).

4. *How do the conditions of power structures enable or constrain learning practices in the community with concern to social justice, epistemological access and social inclusion?*

## 4. 5 Research Methods, time scale and organisation of data collection

### 4.5.1 *Sampling*

The concept of Gee's (2008) 'Discourse community' was an important thought to maintain in the final selection of the sample community. According to Gee (2008), it is imperative to recognise a child as being part of, influenced by, and therefore, in part, a product of the community in which they are reared. This is especially significant in critical and social realist study, where the influence, conditioning and relationship between structure, culture and agency need to be explored to locate mechanisms of significance through emergence. Therefore, in order for the aims of this study to be achieved, the use of "non-probability sampling", or more specifically "purposive sampling" was utilised in the selection of a participant community (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006).

The sample group was required to be of a working-class centre of population, reside within a marginalised community, in addition, to have been historically disadvantaged in terms of political action. The community needed to contain a few children that were at least six months to one year prior to their first experience of a formal schooling system. Consequently, the age of the children needed to be younger than, or within an age bracket that is considered standard for school preparation. This was considered as an age from birth to up about six years of age and not enrolled in a school. I did however interact and observe children of all ages within the community. This allowed for more extensive and thorough exploration of the conditions under which the children of the community acquired social practices relating to learning, and how these modified over time, and in different contexts.

Initially, I was able to locate three possible options for a sample group during 2013. After much consideration, and discussions with my supervisor, I chose and addressed only one of the communities. This decision was made as a result of the community not only matching all the selection criteria, but because it also demonstrated rich diversity with respect to race, language,

religion and culture. I had previously built a rapport with one family in the community, the 'gatekeeper family', through community assistance and development with my partner in 2012.

In order to negotiate access to the community, I asked my partner to accompany me on my first and second formal meetings with its members. This was because he had come to know a number of the men from the community as they worked as car guards[8] for the business where he was employed. During this first lunchtime meeting, a few of the men of the community were resting under a tree next to the river. My partner introduced me to the group and explained that I wished to spend some time with their families over a period of 6 months to a year to see how their children learned things at home. I was able to explain the research in more detailed and asked if they could communicate my request to their family members. They seemed to be quite interested in the prospect of being part of the study. One father informed me that they thought the mothers and children would enjoy this as it would be something different from their daily tasks as no one really took interest in their community.

Other community members were informed about my prospective study by those who were at the meeting under the tree. On my next visit, my partner and I visited all the homes in the community and I was able to select the ones that would most match the sample criteria (Field notes, July 21, 2014). The aims of my study and what it would involve was explained in great detail and community members were able to ask questions and comment on what I was telling them (Field notes, July 21, 2014).

Full agreement to participate in the study was received and consent forms were completed (Field notes, July 22, 2014). The forms had to completed by guardians and the children. The children were presented with a colouring-in form so that would be able to decide it they wanted to be part of the study. For further details in this regard, please see the ethical consideration section of this document located on page 72. Then I began my study within the home of the gatekeeper family (Field notes, July 22, 2014). I was able to build a rapport with, and branch out to the rest of the community through this household.

[8] In South Africa, car guards, who generally have no other form of employment, earn small amounts of money watching or 'guarding' cars parked in a particular location in areas where no parking tariffs are imposed. Where formal tariffs are imposed, those charging them are responsible for security.

In terms of demographics, 6 houses positioned themselves as 'Coloured', and the remaining 3, 'White'. Four of the Coloured homes had children of a school going age, whereas only one of the white families had children who would fit the sample criteria. All members of the community were Afrikaans first language speakers, but the majority of the adults were fluent in English, and some in isiXhosa (Field notes, July 22, 2014).

### 4.5.2 *Observation*

The incorporation of observation into the design of the study was consonant with the overall ethnographic approach adopted. This method of data collection enables the researcher to note a participant's interaction with others along with their behaviour. It allows for the identification of key tools, and notable events that may be crucial to the outcome of the study (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Moreover, making use of observation has also been noted as being a practical and advantageous tool in gathering information in research focused on children and their interactions (Keenan, 2002). Observation was to be key to the collection of data given its focus on literacy and learning practices.

Generally, there are five main forms of participation observation when undertaking ethnographic research which range from no participation whatsoever to complete participation (De Walt, De Walt & Wayland, 1998; O'Reilly, 2012). The first method, 'non-participation' restricts the researcher to absolutely no communication or interaction with the sample group (*ibid*). This form would not have been appropriate, as I would have been unable to make use of interviews, and would have not been able to gain any subjective information from the sample group. The second form is referred to as 'passive participation' where the researcher is able to observe the sample group more closely, however, they do not truly participate in any of the sample group's activities (*ibid*). This would allow for observation, but would be restrictive in that the researcher is unable to take part in activities and, thus, would run the risk of developing less rapport with the sample group. The third option is 'moderate participation', which is where the researcher is able create a balance between being part of the community whilst remaining separate (*ibid*). This would mean that they are better able to build rapport with the community whilst still maintaining at a distance in order to contribute to objectivity. The fourth option is 'active participation' where the researcher learns extensively

about the group, eventually becoming accepted by the community through learning their different customs for the purpose of the research (*ibid*). The last form of participant observation is that of 'complete participation (*ibid*). Normally in complete observation, the researcher is already a member of the community and has been fully versed in their skills and customs (*ibid*).

Initially, I entered the community in a position of moderate participation and was be able to gain a stance of active participation over time. This was what I had hoped would be possible. I paid attention to crucial events, experiences, and conditioning structures through spending time with the sample group within their home and community, accompanied by a few follow up visits during the analysis and final write up stage of the research. I took notes as often as I could during the visits, or followed up on my visit by writing notes on the same day the observations took place. This allowed for me to maintain the observation notes as rigorously as possible while still being able to participate in activities without disrupting the natural process of events. My observations were documented in a diary format and ordered in a sequential manner (i.e. following date order and noting the home or location in which the observations were made). The observations acted as a means of ascertaining and accessing points of enquiry for the informal interviews.

#### 4.5.3 *Interviews*

Through qualitative interviews, a researcher is able to obtain rich data from a participant about their community and their role and practices in it (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). This form of data collection permits more in-depth exploration of specific aspects related to the study particularly as any information shared can be explicated upon in detail (Edwards & Louw, 1995). Where possible, the interviews be recorded by means of a digital dictaphone and others were carefully recorded in written documentation. The starting point for these informal interviews was information gathered and observations made during my visits. Then I used the interviews to clarify understandings and explore further. Following on from these informal interviews, I was able to develop semi-structured, open-ended interviews for specific caregivers or parents. All interactions followed a relaxed, conversational format.

During the first formal day of data collection, I performed preliminary informal interviews with all members of the 'gate-keeping' family (without the use of the dictaphone). This assisted in negotiating time spent with the family and to ascertain everyday routines, roles played by each member and the drafting a flexible structure of how, when and with what frequency my presence could be incorporated with as little interference as possible into their daily lives (Field notes, July 22, 2014). Fortunately, a majority of the rest of the community had already been informed of my presence during this first visit. This allowed for an easier introduction to other families, many of whose members I was able to meet. As a result, I was invited to talk in their homes at a later date (Field notes, July 25, 2014).

I was able to record three formal interviews, from different households in the community during the course of the data collection period. I encouraged those members of the community who agreed to an audio recording of my interactions with me to 'play' with the device I used for recording. My aim in doing this was to make them feel more comfortable with the interview process. Unfortunately, a majority of the community members were not that willing to make use of the voice recorder for more formal interviews as I had hoped. Those that declined the invitation for a recorded interview attributed this decision mostly to not being comfortable with the idea of their voices being recorded. Another noted that they did not want to take the time out of their day to sit and answer questions, but would happily allow me to ask questions while they moved around the house completing their chores. Since I did not wish to overstay my welcome, or compromise the comfort level of the participants, I tried not to push the request for recorded interviews past a few attempts. The participants were informed that, if they wished, a translator could be made available to assist with the interview process. However, none of the participants who agreed to be recorded felt a translator would be required, as they had a good understanding and command of the English language. The files were saved chronologically and were personally transcribed after each interview on my laptop.

All the members of the community that I interacted with on my visits indicated that they were happy to share information verbally. I took care to confirm what I had recorded in my notes with each participant after I had taken down the information after each session. Here if I had not interpreted a point correctly, the participants had the opportunity to correct my thinking, or further

explain a point. At all times, individuals and families were aware that they could withdraw from the study and that I would destroy all data if they chose to do so.

### 4.5.4 *Photographs*

On occasions, I also took photographs using a small digital camera of events and interactions that I identified as being pertinent to my study. Before bringing the camera to the community, I requested permission from each home if I could take photographs in following weeks. All of the homes granted this permission. Here I waited a few months for the participants to be comfortable with my presence before bringing the camera to the community.

Furthermore, in each instance that I took a photograph, I invariably asked for permission to take a photograph beforehand, and showed the results to the people I had captured visually asking if they were happy for it to be included in my written report. If the photograph was of one for the children, I would show it to one the caregivers for approval. At the end of the data collection period, a few of the homes requested copies of photographs that they were fond of, as they only had photographs of the children that had been provided to them from their schools.

## 4.6 **Data analysis**

My data analysis followed the steps identified by critical realists such as Elder-Vass (2007), Sayer (2010), Bygstad & Munkfold (2011) and Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen & Karlsson (2005). This involved working from the concrete, that is from the descriptions I had generated of events related to learning and child rearing and participants' observations and reported experiences of those events and of anything else related to learning and child rearing, to the abstract. In moving from the concrete to the abstract, I was attempting to move beyond the transitive layers of reality described by Bhaskar (2008), that is from the *Empirical* and the *Actual*, to the intransitive layer of the *Real*. In order to do this, I used the tools of abduction and retroduction.

As I have indicated in Chapter Two of this thesis, abduction involves using theory to 'see the world differently'. In the case of my study, this using explanatory theory, which as I have described in

Chapter Three, drawn from the field of New Literacy Studies, to see the events I had observed and the experiences and observations reported to me in the abstract terms of that theory.

Retroduction, as I have also explained in Chapter Two, involves asking the question 'What must the world really be like for this to occur?'. In order to do this, I used substantive theory in the form of Archer's work (1995), and more specifically her construct of 'analytical dualism', to identify and explore the interplay of structure, culture and agency.

In order to explore the domain of culture, I used the tool of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (see for example, Fairclough, 1993). For the purposes of my study I drew on Kress's (1989:7) construct of discourse, not to be confused with Gee's understanding of Discourse (deliberately capitalised and discussed in Chapter Three) as 'clusters' of ideas that 'hang together' (albeit temporarily) and which function to constrain or enable what it is possible to do, say, believe and so on. In my analysis, I did not do a strict linguistic analysis. Rather terms and phrases indicative of ideas or sets of ideas were identified as indicating discourse(s). I then worked with my initial identification of a possible discourse by rereading my notes in order to refine and sharpen the discourse itself. Having identified certain discourses, I sought to deconstruct them in order to identify their emergent properties (i.e. in order to posit to what they had led).

All this was framed by an understanding of Archer's (1995) morphogenetic framework which allowed me to understand what I was positing within a time frame of preparing a child for and supporting them in their schooling.

The final step in my analysis involved working back towards the concrete in order to identify the way the structures and mechanisms exhibited their emergent properties in more concrete conditions (Danermark, et al., 2005, p. 110).

## 4.7 **Reliability and Validity**

### 4.7.1 *Reliability*

In qualitative research, it is generally not possible to conduct 'reliable' research in the traditional sense, as both the researcher's and the participants' roles are integral to the entire research process and these are not replicable (Silverman, 2003). In many cases researchers make use of a certain philosophical standpoint (for example positivism) that has previously proven to compliment a specific area of study, and attempt to apply the same philosophy to a differing discipline expecting coherent and valid results (Maxwell, 2008). This can lead to a lack of honesty within findings as the mind-set used to explore a certain area may be unsuitable in terms of what the researcher is truly attempting to document. This especially the case in studies that focus on the more social aspects of our world. However, as I have indicated in Chapter Two, the use of critical realist theory allows one to acknowledge the complexities of social relationships through acknowledging the relativism of access to the social world (Elder- Vass, 2004). Even if this access is brief, it can allow the researcher to identify relatively enduring mechanism or causalities at work which do extend beyond particular contexts.

Furthermore, in critical realist research, the notion of transferability in terms of cause and effect is not seen as a goal (Wikgren, 2005). Rather, the research is seen to be contextually specific. Consequently, the findings of my study are presented as potentially, but not definitively, relevant to other contexts and not in terms of direct transferability (*ibid*).

### 4.7.2 *Validity*

For the purposes of this thesis, I understood 'validity' to refer to the extent to which my findings truly represent the aims of my study. I have attempted to control for validity by adhering strictly to the philosophical underpinnings of the study, namely critical and social realism.

During the process of this study, I worked closely with my supervisor to adhere to the substantive theory of my theoretical framework by constantly drawing on the notions of

transitivity and intransitivity. This involved acknowledging the transitivity of my data collection and analysis.

In an effort to pursue credibility in my use and analysis of data, I drew on the concept of crystallisation. This involved using different methods to collect data (observation, informal interviews) and placing pieces of evidence developed using different methods alongside each other for scrutiny. I have also written on my cognisance of the need for self-reflexivity the ongoing interrogation of my own perceptions and the impact of my own world view formed part of this process. Following each visit to the community, I took time to reflect on my experiences there and what I had observed by means of a research journal. I did this to record areas of interest and to reflect on any personal subjectivity that could potentially influence my emergent findings.

Finally, I also sought feedback from informants before the completion of the first draft of the data analysis (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). This entailed going through the data with the participants in order to confirm or reject certain inferences that I had made in order to strengthen the validity of the research, as well as to allow for a more accurate analysis.

## 4.8 Ethical considerations

Given that my study involved potentially vulnerable participants, that is children and members of a marginalised community, ethical considerations were a very important part of my research design. I entered the research site with the intention of building and maintaining a trustworthy and mutually beneficial relationship with the community on a whole. The prospective participant community showed a deep interest in the area of study. They granted permission for the research to take place and to be cited in the thesis pseudonyms. I believe that the participants in the study were invested in the research and that this served to strengthen its validity (Shenton, 2004), as well as to reinforce the need for ethical behaviour on my part to be maintained at all times.

As I have indicated, I gained formal consent from all participants in the study. From the outset, it was made clear that if any participant or group of participants wanted to withdraw, they were free to do so. Out of entire community, all consented to take part in the study. Nearing the end of the data collection period, one family did request to withdraw. This was attributed to time constraints, work load, and personal difficulties. They did note that they were content for me to use the data I collected up to that point, and were apologetic for having to withdraw.

As I have also indicated, the research aims, data collection methods and particulars of the study were shared with all nine of the homes on my initial visits. I then arranged dates for follow up visits with each home in order to request formal participation. These was done so that the families could unobtrusively, and privately, decide if they were satisfied with the terms and conditions of the research and if they still wished to take part. On these follow up meetings I answered any questions and concerns regarding any aspect of the research. Core members of each family, such as the parents, caregivers and children, had to consent in order for their unit to take part. Consent was granted by submitting a signed consent form that outlined the goals and ethical considerations of the study. The children were unable to submit a legally recognised document, but I felt they should carry as strong a voice as the adults of the community. They were offered a picture selection form, where they were able to present their own personal choice. This form represented two identical pictures at the bottom of the page. They were asked to colour one or the other picture to specify if they would like to take part. This 'picture consent form', was also signed by one of their parents or legal guardians. Examples of both of these forms can be found in Appendix B, on page 224 and 225).

I was open and honest about what was being studied and did my utmost to ensure the main focus, and what was to be expected, was understood by all the participants. Each home was asked if they would like to make use of a translator during the data collection period. All homes decided that this would not be necessary presumably because of the fact that the majority of the adults were confident in speaking English, as they required a good command of the language in order to find work. The community is multi-lingual, containing members who speak predominately Afrikaans and Xhosa as their first language. I myself am an English first language speaker. Nevertheless, I can understand and converse in Afrikaans at an intermediate level. This assisted greatly during visits to the homes, as Afrikaans was the language spoken most often.

Generally, members of the community would speak to me in English, while the younger children would speak in Afrikaans. If I was unable to understand an Afrikaans word or phrase, I would request clarification from the speaker. This was usually met with a quick discussion of few similar versions of translations between family members until a common notion was decided upon.

Throughout the data collection period, I endeavoured to respect cultural customs and traditions, both within the community more generally and in each household more specifically, to the best of my ability. At the start of the study, I asked the 'gate-keeper' family to outline and negotiate what possible expectations and rules they may place on me within their homes. This included what particular cultural or religious customs they embraced, and how I could uphold as respectfully as possible to these customs. As the community comprises numerous different cultures and religions, I asked to be taught about cultural and religious customs, rituals and festivals. My requests lead to invitations to different religious, cultural and social meetings during the period of study.

Additionally, I enquired regularly whether there were any specific areas the community would like to re-negotiate with regard to the data collection process. Generally, I experienced the community as very relaxed and eager to share their opinions and experiences. I tried my best not to get in the way of day-to-day proceedings, and offered assistance with chores wherever possible. My assistance was gladly accepted more often than not.

All information pertaining to this research was stored and edited on my personal computer. For back-up purposes, I made use of a 1TB external hard drive and a 'drop-box' account, to which I had the only access. Both the 'drop-box' account and external hard drive were password protected.

The participants were informed that they would be provided with pseudonyms in all written accounts (in the data collection, data analysis and final documentation). Quite a number of the families stated that they did not think that this would be necessary. I informed them that this was a decision made in their interest for protection and it was be a baseline requirement for the project to proceed.

Information that could lead to any form of identification has been modified to ensure that privacy has been maintained as far as possible. All electronic copies have been proofread and edited before any physical printing of documents to guarantee they do not contain any identifying information. Furthermore, all electronic and printed forms of the data collection and analysis have been accessed by myself and my supervisor only where, and if, required. The final draft of the thesis has been read carefully to ensure that criteria relating to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity criteria have been upheld.

In accordance with policy, ethical approval for my research was obtained from the Education Faculty's Higher Degrees Committee (EHDC) at Rhodes University at the time my proposal to conduct doctoral research was approved. In my proposal, I was required to outline my understanding of the need for ethical practice and what I would do to ensure that it was followed.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Shaping the Community ($T_1$)

### 5.1 Introduction

As I have indicated in Chapter Two of this thesis, I chose to use the of work Bhaskar (2008) and Archer (1995, 1996, 1998 & 2000) as substantive theory to structure my research. In Chapter Two, I outlined some of Archer's main areas of thinking and, more specifically, her stance on analytical dualism and her positing of a 'morphogenetic framework' to understand the workings of structure, culture and agency over a specific time period.

Archer holds that, although agents are able to exercise their PEP's in pursuit of concerns and projects identified as furthering these concerns. They are always conditioned by structure and culture. When beginning to explore the workings of structure, culture and agency which, in the case of my study, involved looking at the way parents, caregivers and children exercised their agency in the pre-schooling years in order to learn and support children in learning, it is therefore necessary to explore the way individuals and groups of individuals were conditioned at a time termed, by Archer (1995, 1996, 1998 & 2000), $T_1$. It is to such an exploration of $T_1$ that I now turn by looking at the conditioning of the community I chose to study both more broadly and more specifically.

### 5.2 Race and the initial structuring of Social Exclusion

Historically, race has been perceived predominantly through a biological standpoint of difference (Keita, Kittles, Royal, Bonney, Furbert-Harris, Dunston & Rotimi, 2004; Mayr, 2002), but in more contemporary terms, the term has become a problematized notion.

Initially, humans were considered equal through the judgment of a 'higher power', with all aspects of the natural world and effects on one's life explained as being influenced by the exercise of this power (Erasmus, 2008). However, it was putatively accepted that equality was not a simple option in a social or legal arena (*ibid*). In line with this belief, lineage, status, class, and race

were used as a justification for political and social rights, and ultimately stature on a global scale (Erasmus, 2008). This primary formation of the term 'race' was evidently rooted in social and legal structures, while not holding to any scientifically accredited basis (Keita et el, 2004).

The term 'race' in itself is problematic, especially in a South African context. Over the course of the country's history, the term evolved in such a way that it was placed at the forefront of a system denoting the epitome of human difference. This starting point of a formalised structure of inequality cultivated itself historically through colonial settlement. In this, indigenous populations were forced into positions of subservience. Quintessentially, the larger indigenous populations were involuntarily driven into appointments of service for the smaller colonist populace. Indigenous people were frequently stripped of their autonomy, accompanied by an immediate loss of power over infrastructure, resources and education. This commonly structured colonists into a position of middle to upper class, whereas indigenous populations were pressed into a position of the lower and working classes.

### 5.2.1 *The South African Apartheid Government: Abetting Social Exclusion*

Characteristically, colonisation forced a new and split society upon indigenous South Africans. This was firmly cemented into the political system in 1948, with the National Party officially instituting the Apartheid regime (Cottrel, 2005). This structure was employed as a political justification to build upon previous racially based colonial legislature that had already become embedded in practice since the start of colonisation in the Southern Africa region. This framework upheld laws and regulations that favoured the white populace at the expense of all other racial groups.

The National Party maintained that the apartheid system was motivated economically by the markets. It was presented as a system that was intended to operate as a safeguard against governmentally focused and controlled schemes that had been employed by the majority of African countries at the time (Koelble, 2008). These countries were predominantly influenced by communist ideologies, which were counter to the colonist mind-set, and the goals of the apartheid

system (*ibid*). Consequently, apartheid was falsely advertised to South Africans and the rest of the world, as being associated with a more 'liberal' agenda by the Nationalist Party. However, the actual situation experienced by marginalised South African races was the opposite. The government manipulated this standpoint through the construction of substantial civic initiatives, which created occupations chiefly for members of the 'white' Afrikaner populace (*ibid*). Consequently, this structure was more inclined to be associated with corporatism and communism, despite opposing claims (*ibid*). But the definition could not be held in any comparison with that of true liberalism. This series of limiting legislature placed all those who had been classified as Black, Coloured, or Indian at an immense disadvantage in comparison to those who had been classified as White by the National Party.

This system implanted and embraced the notion that South Africa was not one unified nation. Instead, it was constructed of four dissimilar racial groups that were legally defined as Black[9], Coloured[10], Indian[11] (this included the Asian populations), and White[12] (Cottrel, 2005; Posel, 2001; Welsh, 2009). This was determined by the legislation in the form of the Population Registration Act[13] (Posel, 2001). This categorisation was determined by certain criteria as strictly laid out by the government's office for classification, which could not be easily contested. In cases where an individual's physical appearance was uncertain or considered ambiguous, social points of reference would be used to come to a final decision for the classification awarded (*ibid*). In this, social practices, social capital and the financial capital of the individual would also be questioned and examined (*ibid*). The individual's social status, social circle, ability to speak Afrikaans, as well as their consumption practices[14] would be under scrutiny (*ibid*). If they were considered to have a high enough social status, had the 'appropriate' social connections, had a strong command of Afrikaans and/or English, in addition to having

[9] 'Black' was used by the Apartheid Government to classify those who were members of an indigenous South African 'tribe', other than that of the Khoisan (Cottrel, 2005).
[10] 'Coloured' was used by the Apartheid Government to define those who were classified as Khoisan, Malay or those of mixed race (Cottrel, 2005).
[11] 'Indian' was used by the Apartheid Government to define those who were classified as being of Indians from the former British India, their descendants as well as those of Asian lineage (Cottrel, 2005).
[12] 'White' was used by the Apartheid Government to define those who were classified as European in origin (Cottrel, 2005).
[13] Law enacted in 1950 that formally classified the full population of South Africa into four racial groups (Welsh, 2009).
[14] This included what type of foods and drink they consumed, as well as their alcohol consumption (Posel, 2001).

mastered valued Discourses (Gee, 2008), they would more likely be classified as 'White' (Posel, 2001). This set the foundation for a near complete separation of South Africa's citizens on the grounds of their racial classification (Lapping, 1987; Welsh, 2009).

Thus, certain regulations were enacted ensuring that each racial group was separated in as many areas of life as possible. The regulations that supported this crushing system were strongly controlled, and enforced by the promulgation of legally binding Acts such as the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act[15], the Group Areas Act[16], the Immorality Act[17], the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act[18], the Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act (also referred to as the Pass Laws Act)[19], the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act[20], and the Bantu Education Act[21] (Clark & Worger, 2016; Durrheim, Mtose & Brown, 2011).

Those classified as Black, Coloured or Indian had to endure forced separations with respect to their living environments, amenities, schools and universities (Huggett, 2009; Neame, 2003). These extended into all social arenas as they were considered to be of a lower social status, and were therefore subject to demeaning, and often humiliating treatment. On a daily basis, they would have to cope with the stresses of having their intellectual capacity questioned, as well having their cultural and social practices subject to constant scrutiny. In more severe cases; they would have to deal with verbal, as well as physical abuse from their employers.

The laws limiting ownership and living areas made it difficult for non-white people to obtain a South African passport as the country was being split into different divisions.

[15] Law enacted in 1949 that banned any form of interracial marriage (Clark & Worger, 2016).

[16] Law enacted in 1950 which lead to forced removal into certain residential areas dependent on race (Clark & Worger, 2016).

[17] Law enacted in 1950 that banned sexual intercourse between different races (Clark & Worger, 2016).

[18] Law enacted in 1951 that allowed government to forcefully remove squatter or squatting communities at any time (Cottrell, 2005).

[19] Law enacted in 1952 that specified all who had been classified as 'non-white' under the Populations Registrations Act would be legally required to carry a document, or 'pass' which highly restricted their travelling and movement on a national scale (Clark & Worger, 2016). Alternately referred to as a 'dumb pass', or 'dompas' in Afrikaans (Durrheim, Mtose & Brown, 2011).

[20] Law enacted in 1953 that segregated 'white' public areas and amenities from that of the 'non-white' public areas and amenities (Durrheim, Mtose & Brown, 2011).

[21] Law enacted in 1953 that directed education based only on race as a disguising factor (Durrheim, Mtose & Brown, 2011).

The government laid very strict criteria for the application and successful acceptance of a South African passport. This meant that very few non-white people were able to fulfil these requirements. Whites took over the ownership of the majority of fertile land, while forcing current occupants into hard labour, often with unfair payment practices. One form of payment for manual workers involved the 'dop system' (Schneider, Norman, Parry, Bradshaw & Pluddemann, 2007). In this system, a percentage of wages would be paid to employees in the form of alcohol. An enormous number of South African farmers used this system from colonial times through to the end of the Apartheid era as a form of control over their workers (*ibid*). The 'dop system' was accepted as the sale of liquor to the black population was highly restricted under apartheid, and the system allowed for higher quantities to be consumed (*ibid*).

The enforcement of these regulations commonly led to a disruption of family life, in addition to traditional social and cultural practices. The necessity of travelling passes, forced home removals, the loss of independence, specified schooling systems and schooling locations resulted in every area of life being subject to segregation and control (Cottrell, 2005). Hotels, restaurants, and places that acted as conduits for social events, which were reserved for the white population, generally only accepted other races onto the premises if they were in the employment of the establishment.

Even though law also officially segregated religious gatherings on racial foundations[22], this was not as strictly implemented (Msila, 2007). Places of worship were unofficially recognised as one of the only structures where daily interactions between various social classes and races were tolerated by the apartheid government (*ibid*). Churches would position themselves in rural areas with the intent of instilling their religious views and social practices to the locals through their missionary work. Missionary undertakings also extended into the rural healthcare and educational systems.

During the apartheid years, the healthcare system also displayed a massive imbalance in terms of access, quality and treatment as a consequence of separatist laws (Horwitz, 2009).

[22] Churches & places of worship were also legally separated by means of the 'Church Native Laws Amendment Act', which was introduced in 1957 (Msila, 2007).

The white population benefited from better resourced facilities, higher levels of funding, and they did not have to suffer from overcrowding, or long waiting periods for access to healthcare (Horwitz, 2009). The Black, Coloured, Asian and Indian populations were not afforded the same quality of healthcare, which was discernible through the recorded statistics of the time. Here, the per capital health expenditure in 1985 was recorded at 452 for the White population, 249 for the Indian population, 245 for the Coloured population, and 115 for the Black population (Horwitz, 2009). In this, the healthcare system found that the White population group benefited from 60% of the available resources, but only attended to 20% of the population (Horwitz, 2009). It has been noted that charity work and missions bridged a small gap in the shortage of services, especially in the rural areas (Horwitz, 2009).

This form of altruism extended into the educational system, with missionary schools being the main location for Black, Coloured, Indian and Asian schooling (Damons, 2016). For many at the time, these schools would be the first experiences that they would have of a European schooling environment.

### 5.2.2 *The Bantu Education Act*

By the 1950's, the apartheid government concluded that the educational system in South Africa required modification in order to be aligned with dominant ideologies. As a consequence, in 1953 The Union of South Africa devised and implemented 'The Bantu Education Act' (No. 47) (Clark & Worger, 2004). This act constructed a legal facade for the racial separation of children within South African schools. This would compound the problem of inadequacy in the quality of education received by learners who were categorised as Black, Coloured, Indian and Asian (Clark & Worger, 2004; Moshia, 2006) and signified a physical separation of schools for different races as well as the complete separation of curricula.

Previously, education for indigenous social groups had been mainly in the hands of religious groups, aided by the state and regulated within each province (Msila, 2007). The Bantu system legally replaced this structure by making it a requirement that these schools register with the government and their running be taken over by the Bantu Education department.

The outcome was that a large number of these schools were forced to permanently close their doors (Mhlauli, Salani & Mokotedi, 2015). Since all amenities had been separated, the taxes used to fund the schools run by the Bantu Education department were taken only from black taxpayers. This resulted in a significantly lower level of funding being injected into this section of the state- run schooling system, as these populations generally possessed no financial investments and were already within the poverty cycle (Rakometsi, 2008). Also, this maintained a low level of income, low levels of education and, thus, a high level of poverty for these populations.

The Bantu Education Act was intended for educational structures to be implemented in line with vocations that were prearranged purely in terms of race, and not personal potential (Moshia, 2006). The Act was developed mainly as a means of instructing indigenous African people in methods that would build and further the service and manual labour base for the middle-class. This form of education also operated to facilitate and maintain an apartheid minded political authority among all citizens in South Africa. Fear mongering, threats and follow through of violence. Discourses (Gee, 2008) associated with inferiority of all races under white supremacy as a means of control were permeated at all levels of education, and within South African society.

This method of educational streaming is not unique to the South African context. Education has often been used as a means of reproducing the class system on a global scale throughout history. Colonisation used this form of education as a vehicle to oppress and control indigenous populations. This allowed for colonists to reap the benefits of a high-quality education, which increased their personal, financial and social status. This was all at the expense of the local indigenous populations' social, cultural, economic, educational standing. Instead of endeavouring to build up, and assist these populations by allowing them full access to an education that could strengthen their standing, specialised forms of knowledge were protected and restricted. Bulwarked through nepotism, this meant that smaller colonist groups would secure and preserve leading social positions in society, all the while gaining higher levels of social and cultural capital. This accumulated social status was then passed down through generations by means of social practices that were advantageous, in that they nurtured forms of knowledge and ways of knowing which maintained or improved their financial and social status further.

Within the bounds of the Republic of South Africa[23], education was 'mandatory' for all racial groups. However, there was a massive disparity in the quality and availability of education for 'non-white' learners (Neame, 2003). Here, there was a vast difference between the education received by those in the Bantustan areas and the Republic of South Africa (Rakometsi, 2008). The government used education as a means of inducting 'non-white' youth into menial and unskilled labour by promoting particular learning practices (Byrnes, 1997, p. 150). These practices were chiefly directed in repetition and memorisation. More complex and specialised methods of learning were reserved for the white middle class (Byrnes, 1997). These were often regulated through language streaming.

Dr Verwoerd (the then-minister of Native Affairs in South Africa) embodied the prejudice of apartheid's viewpoint of the Bantu Education Act through the following (Clark & Worger, 2004, p. 48; Tabitha, 1980, p.6):

> "When I have control of Native education, I will reform it so that Natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them… People who believe in equality are not desirable teachers for Natives… There is no place for [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour... Education must train people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live."

This historical rejection of equality in race, class, culture and education led to 'non-white' learners being instructed and prepared almost exclusively for working-class positions. Counter to this, the privilege of the 'White' students allowed for them to be nurtured into the middle and upper-class job market. Subsequently, generations of South Africans, of all races, were indoctrinated by means of racist propaganda through a tyrannical leadership. This enforced Discourses (Gee, 2008) associated with racism, segregation and submission.

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[23] At this time in South Africa's history, the Apartheid government had constructed separate geographical areas which were referred to as the 'Bantustans' or 'Homelands'(Rakometsi, 2008). The Bantustans were reserved for the native black population, which aimed to impede them from moving into the suburban areas of South Africa (*ibid*). This notion intended for black South Africans to run their own government, which would be independent of the Republic of South Africa (*ibid*). This meant that black South Africans would not hold South African citizenship (*ibid*). This was dissolved in 1985 by State President P. W. Botha (*ibid*).

In this sense, colonisation functioned to impede traditional education, as it laid a path for the apartheid based educational system to be instituted. Indigenous South African children were still prepared in their homes for a traditional way of life, yet they were expected to operate increasingly within the social constructions, practices and demands of an unfamiliar society. The low-quality education available to them thanks to the Bantu educational system ensured that they were not given access to the forms of knowledge or ways of knowing necessary to function in a complex modern society. Ultimately, this aggravated an already dire situation of a suppressed people within an authoritarian environment.

As a consequence of the prescribed educational practices imposed on learners during Apartheid, South Africa has been left in a debilitated state in terms of re-forming and building a more equal educational system. The current condition of the South African educational system highlights a political and social history that has created a unique collection of systems which predominantly assist those with accumulated social advantage.

The product of this educational segregation has begun to expose itself in the legacy left to current generations just beginning their education. Parents and grandparents of current school- age cohorts who were subjected to the apartheid educational system openly express the aspiration that their children and grandchildren should be afforded opportunities they could not enjoy. In the face of the perpetuation of poverty, the fight to claim an education that will break the cycle of ill preparedness for anything other than the meanest of life chances is challenging to say the least.

### 5.2.3 *Language and Social Exclusion*

One of the most damaging ways in social exclusion was achieved during apartheid involved language. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 clearly set out educational regulations which were executed through language restriction. These language restrictions would once again advantage those with higher levels of proficiency in the English and Afrikaans languages (Brock-Utne, 2002).

In 1974, the government resolved that all schools and universities should make use of English and Afrikaans as languages of instruction (*ibid*). This decision led to the 1976 Soweto uprisings, when students protested the use of Afrikaans as a language of instruction in subjects such as mathematics and the social sciences from the final year of primary school onwards (Brock-Utne, Aliou, Boly, Diallo, Heugh & Wolff, 2006). English was to be used to teach subjects such as general science, as well as practical studies such as woodwork and needlework (Ngwane, 2017). Afrikaans was perceived as the 'language of the oppressor' and was not widely spoken amongst black African populations.

This change to language use in education meant that language was being used as a means of exclusion from particular subject areas. Typically, indigenous languages were only used for subjects that would reinforce the Apartheid mind-set and prepare children for labour intensive jobs and place these learners in a position of service (Msila, 2007; Meier & Hartell, 2009). For example, subjects such as religious studies, music and cultural studies were offered in indigenous South African languages, as they were considered to instil and uphold apartheid thought processes and social practices. White South Africans were allowed to study in their mother tongue, whereas the Black, Coloured, Indian and Asian population would be forced to attend schools using their second or third languages if they wished to improve their formal education (Byrnes, 1997).

Although many indigenous languages are used within South Africa, English and Afrikaans commonly serve as a means of communication across different social groups. In the contemporary world, English is one of the leading languages of communication and business on a global scale. This can also be attributed to the movements of colonial action. Thus, discourses valuing the status and use of English have resulted in perceptions amongst all social groups that proficiency in the language is imperative to personal progress in South Africa.

As a result of these perceptions regarding the status of English in South Africa, many parents and caregivers choose to enrol their children in English speaking schools from the start of their formal education. As I have argued in Chapter Three, the issue of language is complex and the mastering of the formal structures of a language do not automatically mean that a learner will necessarily have the proficiency to work with abstract concepts and a high cognitive load (Cummins, 1983).

However, research shows that forming literacy in the home language is imperative to reading (Cummins & Swain, 1986). The act of denying children the use of their home language as they begin to master the 'technology' of reading by learning to decode sight/sound correlations using what Carrell *et al* (1988) terms as 'top down processing' is detrimental to their progress and, ultimately, to the attainment of reading fluency. In many respects, therefore, attempts to use language as a means of controlling social inclusion during apartheid continue to impact on learners today.

## 5.3 From Apartheid to Democracy

Since the political shift from apartheid to democracy, marginalised populations have been offered educational opportunities which they had previously been denied. In 1999, the ANC was admitted as a full member of The Socialist International, an international society which combines different systems of political ideas that correlate with social democracy, the labour movement and democratic socialist parties (Docherty & Lamb, 2006). Social democracy as an ideology seeks to encourage social justice within a capitalist society through the implementation of social intercession and economic assistance (*ibid*). This ideology aligned well with the ANC's marketed agenda and attempts to begin to reconcile all social groups within South Africa[24]. With the repeal of separatist laws, a higher level of access to education has been a key component to the country's reformation. But this access has been exposed as being superficial, since it would seem that it relates predominantly to physical access. The extent to which epistemological, as well as financial, access has been afforded is still being debated. The legacy of apartheid is manifested now through current educational inequalities of outcome (see, for example, Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007).

There is an abundance of research (such as Heath, 1983 & 2010; Scollon & Scollon, 1979 & 1981) indicating that structural and cultural conditions related to social class and race, have the potential to enable or constrain a child's preparedness for schooling. South Africa's longstanding legacy of Apartheid therefore exposes itself as a constraint in epistemological access to the country's

[24] The political situation in South Africa has changed since 1999, with many critical decisions taken by the ANC in the late 1900's, and early 2000's which has now resulted in a 'harder' approach to redistribution being advocated.

formal education system. As a result, the concept 'knowledge is power' becomes important to consider. The act of gaining both knowledge and power stand together through an intricately connected process as social realists such as Wheelahan (2010), as well as Maton & Moore (2010) show. In South Africa, this has implications for the need for continual re-negotiation of power through knowledge, in an attempt to establish a delicate equilibrium between both, while trying to maintain a progressive drive towards social justice.

Indeed, as I write this thesis there are indications that attacks on the post-Apartheid society have begun. The general populace is no longer willing to accept that after more than two decades of democracy, there is still such an overwhelming difference between social class, and therefore as previously noted, in race and level of social inclusion. In higher education, the 2015, 2016 and 2017 academic years have seen a great deal of unrest on campuses across the country under banners such as *#Rhodesmustfall* and *#Feesmustfall* that are fuelled and synthesised as a call for 'free decolonised higher education'.

This demand for free higher education has come about as a consequence of a steady decrease in state funding for the higher education sector over the past decade. The result being that universities have been provided with no other alternative but to increase their tuition fees to the extent that are no longer affordable for the bulk of students in the system. This situation has been exacerbated by the fact that there are no effective loans or grant schemes in existence for sections of the population other than those deeply set in poverty or who have the means to approach commercial banks for a secured loan. This has created the phenomenon of the 'missing middle', a section of the population too 'rich' to receive state support for higher education, while they are still too 'poor' to have access to commercial loans.

The call for decolonised higher education has its roots in postcolonial theory and in understandings of the imposition of dominant ways of thinking on Africans as result of colonialism and apartheid. Regardless of protests about fees and the nature of knowledge taught in formal education, if South Africa is to recover from its past, it is essential to locate and examine the mechanisms generating the current failure in the schooling system. Only when a steadier balance between knowledge and power has been attained will the drive towards social justice will become more focused and gain momentum within collective perceptions.

### 5.3.1 *Education, social segregation and continuing exclusion*

At the time of writing this thesis, it is probably fair to say that South Africa's relationship with the term 'race' is still undergoing a transformation. Following the shift to democracy in 1994, the new government pushed through policies supporting equality and reform. Effort was invested in attempts to move away from skin colour being held as a means to discriminate and oppress, to being increasingly cited as a resource for recognising and celebrating difference. However, as a consequence of historically institutionalised racism and structured inequalities, enormous levels of economic inequality between social groups remain (Kreswell, 2005; Dawes, Donald & Louw, 2000; Van der Burg, 2008).

Challenges to the prevailing status quo of the time resulted in the term 'Rainbow Nation', as coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and elaborated on by Mandela in his first month of office which quickly became entrenched within post-apartheid culture (Manzo, 1996). Here Mandela stated (Manzo, 1996, p. 71):

> 'Each of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as we the famous Jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the Mimosa trees of the bushveld – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.'

'Rainbowism' celebrated the idea of all races uniting under one nation in order to embrace forgiveness and ameliorate conditions for all. This notion has started to crack, and the nature of South Africa's social and economic disparities are becoming more and more overt.

During the opening of a national assembly intended to promote reconciliation and nation building, the then-Deputy President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki made the following statement (Mbeki, 1998):

> "South Africa is a country of two nations…One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure…The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor,

> with the worst affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled. This nation lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure."

Despite the fact that two decades have passed since the fall of the apartheid regime, the ramifications of this system continue to extend into countless facets of everyday life. As I have discussed earlier in this Chapter, the ethos of apartheid used the construction of racial and cultural difference as a means of social and political control, prejudice and persecution (Garuba & Raditlhalo, 2008), bringing about a major split in numerous racial, cultural, linguistic, social, political, and educational milieus, which are discernibly still in a state of recovery (Mapadimeng, 2009; Seekings, 2007). Furthermore, it has been well established that there is an extensive and deeply connected relationship between the level of education one has achieved and their future financial earning potential (Seekings, 2003). In many respects, protests against the quality of education which occur on a regular basis demonstrate the desperation felt by the greater public on the matter.

As I have indicated, the apartheid government manipulated class structures and clamped 'non-white' South Africans into the lower echelons of the social order. This residual has moved the concentration from 'race' in an oppressive society under the apartheid regime to a marginalised 'social class' within the new South Africa. In a manner of speaking, the term 'race' has now virtually become synonymous with 'social class' in this context. It becomes increasingly more visible that the development of this social class was constructed not only on direct discriminatory grounds, but it is also historically prejudiced. Even though the element of direct policy-driven political oppression has been removed, the true nature of our presently claimed equality and social justice is still open to inquiry.

The promulgation of the Bantu Education Act in 1953 led to all missionary based schools being forced to give up ownership of their schools to the government (Msila, 2007). The government used this funding to gain stricter authority over what was to be taught, and who would be allowed to access the education they provided (*ibid*). After the start of the Bantu Educational system, the

laws regulating South African schools became increasingly rigid, in an attempt to maintain strict control over the country's educational systems.

During the mid to late 80's, international pressure and growing civil strife resulting from this institutionalised social exclusion in schools forced the government to begin changes to educational system (Clark & Worger, 2004). These changes were mainly superficial, and the separation of education dependant on racial groups was maintained. These changes stated that all white children had to attend school from the age of seven until the age of sixteen (Byrnes, 1997, p. 152). This was quite strongly imposed, allowing for a higher level of education to be attained by the white populace. Black children would be required to attend school from the age of seven, until they had completed primary school, or they had reached the age of sixteen (Byrnes, 1997, p. 152). Finally, other racial groups such as Asian and Chinese were asked to attend school from the age of seven to the age of fifteen (Byrnes, 1997, p. 153). However, the latter was enforced quite feebly, and many regions quite simply did not have the number of schools necessary to enforce attendance. This was especially notable in rural areas (Byrnes, 1997). The quality of education received was also highly varied. Here 96% of teachers in white schools were properly qualified teachers, while other schools had to employ teachers who did not have formal qualifications with only 15% of teachers deemed fully qualified to teach the age groups they were teaching (Byrnes, 1997, p. 153). Furthermore, classes for children who were deemed 'non-white' had a far less favourable student/teacher ratio, and were much larger in size

By the late 1980's, the level of social and racial oppression had engendered a massive revolt in terms of human rights, with an increase in protests and greater international awareness (Byrnes, 1997). In the early 1990's, signalled by the release of Mandela from gaol, it became apparent that the apartheid system would soon be dissolved, and the government began to make swift changes in preparation for a new political system (*ibid*).

Educationally, this meant that changes were needed in an attempt to make way for a different political structure to take hold. The government began formulating changes in the definitions of each schooling system, and trying to steer away from schools being openly segregated on racial lines. As a result, formerly 'white' schools were labelled as being A, B, C or D model schools (Dolby, 2001).

Model A schools were streamed as being completely privatised, without government funding or assistance (*ibid*). Thus, Model A schools were considered highly exclusive, and only people who could afford the high fees would be able to enrol their children. Model B schools would be required to allow up to 50% black learners to enrol and were run by the government (*ibid*). Model C schools were located between being governmental and private schools since their government funding would decrease, while receiving increasing funding from a governing body of donors[25]. Model C schools generally had the most qualified teachers, and better resources than the others (Byrnes, 1997; Dolby, 2001). The last of the models, D, was added at a later date and was also run by the government (Dolby, 2001). Model D schools would allow an unlimited number of black learners to enrol (*ibid*).

The election of 1994 brought about the formal end of the apartheid system. As a result, all parts of the government had to be fully restructured, with the repealing of separatist laws. In education, attempts were also made at curriculum reform with the intention not only of eradicating the construction of difference through teaching and learning but also to 'modernise' the education of children who would be required to participate in an increasingly globalising economy. One of the most notable of these reforms was the introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in the mid 1990s, which was generally hailed as a resounding failure (Jansen & Christie, 1999; Botha, 2002) and which continues to be criticised today as successive adjustments to the system are introduced.

In this section, I have attempted to outline the structural and cultural conditioning in place at a broad level the time termed '$T_1$' in the methodological framework guiding this thesis. I now move to a more micro level of analysis of $T_1$ by moving to look at the location of the community I studied and the way this group was conditioned socially and culturally.

[25] Donors were generally parents, caregivers or past learners of the school.

## 5.4 The social and cultural conditioning of the community

### 5.4.1 *History*

My first unofficial meeting with the community was approximately a year before I enrolled in the doctoral programme at Rhodes University. I remembered this initial meeting quite clearly as my experience raised numerous personal questions and left me contemplating the interaction for a long time afterwards.

This first meeting was in July, well known as the height of the cold and rainy season in Port Elizabeth (Field notes, July 14, 2014). Located in the lower section of a valley near a river, the residences suffered from lower temperatures as a result of the low altitude and seasonal wind being channelled down the valley. As I assisted my partner in repairing broken windows in the houses on a community project, I could not help reflecting on the miserable conditions of those living there.

More specifically, I was confused as to why this community, who were obviously deeply into the poverty cycle, had been located in an up-market business district. I later learned that, in the late 60's, the area had been subject to very similar circumstances to that of District Six[26] in the Western Cape of South Africa. The area in which the community was located had been zoned 'white' during apartheid with the result that inhabitants had been forced to move to other districts in the city. The town council of Port Elizabeth currently owned this small section of community housing that now remained. The small number of homes in which the community lived were some of the only houses that had not been demolished after the forced removals.

However, the Port Elizabeth area has a broader history than that informed by apartheid. Initially home to the San people, the area now called Port Elizabeth was slowly taken over by the Xhosa who had migrated from the North. In the late 1700's and early 1800's conflict between the Xhosa and colonist settlers who had moved eastwards from the Cape Colony led to a series of 'frontier wars' (Agherdien, George, & Hendrick, 1997). This lead to the formal establishment of

[26]In 1968, the Apartheid government forced the entire population of District six area in Cape Town, in the Western Cape to be evicted (Mogamat, 2017). This was in accordance with the Group Areas Act, as it was considered a 'slum' area. The majority of inhabitants were moved to the Cape Flats Township (Mogamat, 2017).

Port Elizabeth in 1820 in order to strengthen the border between the Cape Colony and the Xhosa people (Christopher, 1991). The position of the port was strengthened as a result of the Second Boer War (1899 – 1902), a conflict between British and Afrikaner settlers, when it was used to transport supplies and soldiers to the British side (*ibid*).

Falling under the estate of a Johanna Gardner, a section of the broader Port Elizabeth area, now known as South End, was designated for construction in 1859 after her death (Agherdien, George, & Hendrick, 1997). This developed mainly into low-cost housing for Malay fishermen, who had arrived in South Africa as a result of the activities of the Dutch East India Company, since the area was close to the harbour (*ibid*). After some time, residents began assisting each other with the collection of firewood and the sharing of the commonage for livestock grazing. This began the building of cultural and religious tolerance between different races and members of the community in the area (*ibid*) which characterised the original suburb of South End.

The original community of South End has been described as being cosmopolitan, and harmoniously diverse within Port Elizabeth from 1834 (Agherdien, George, & Hendrick, 1997). The community contained a rich melting pot of race, religion and culture (*ibid*) and included individuals of Xhosa, Afrikaans, English, Khoikhoi, Fingo, Malay, Chinese, Indian, St Helenians as well as Greek heritage (*ibid*). The area had numerous schools, business worked alongside each other, and residents frequently made use of the communal areas and parks. A variety of religions were practised with 12 places of worship including a Muslim mosque, Christian churches and Hindu temples (*ibid*). According to diaries and other records, South End was generally a pleasant, caring and open-minded living environment despite the political implications and viewpoints of the Apartheid government (*ibid*). The community did not hold any implied or overt segregation on racial, cultural or religious grounds on any level.

During the early 1960's, apartheid thinking and legislation began to place increasing pressure on the suburb. At this point, the government began to mark out areas on the outskirts of the city where new townships would be constructed to begin the physical segregation of different social groups following the introduction of legislation. South End had been identified as prime real estate because of its close proximity to the harbour, and its picturesque views of the sea (*ibid*).

As a result, in 1962 the government initiated forced removals in South End. According to historical records of the time, 539 properties were owned by 398 Coloured and 141 of mixed family groups (*ibid*). All of these properties were subject to apartheid legislation.

A large division of the residents were removed and many of their houses were demolished to make way for new high cost housing developments. This was completed against the desires of the City Council and in spite of ongoing protests from residents. South End as a community had fought to maintain its cultural and religious diversity, as many families in this area had been located there for more than a century. The same families that had maintained the same plots for numerous generations had occupied a predominance of these homes. Over time, they had fostered the development of intricate cultural and structural systems that nurtured a mind- set counter the views of the ruling apartheid government (*ibid*).

The government set the plan into motion by attempting to justify the removals by stating that the suburb was to be re-built since it was deemed a 'slum area'. Residents were informed that once the low-cost housing had been replaced, residents would be allowed to move back to the area after 'slum clearance' and 'urban renewal' (*ibid*). However, in truth, only white residents would be able to purchase the exorbitantly priced real estate in the area after the restructuring of the suburb.

On the 10th May 1965, the Group Areas Development Board began sending the first letters of requisition and residents in South End were given three months to leave peacefully, without protest (*ibid*). The government informed the residents that other housing would be made available to them to purchase in the areas that had been positioned on the outskirts of the city. A mere three days later, approximately 450 properties had already been forcibly cleared, with many unprepared for the mass evacuation (*ibid*).

Those still waiting for new housing were allowed to stay in their homes, however, the government stipulated that they would have to pay a rent of 5% of the price they received for their houses (*ibid*). Financially this was a massive burden, as many of the residents previously had had not to pay any form of rent. Furthermore, the amount they received for their homes was minimal, and not an accurate representation of their true value. In most cases the payment for their plots was not even enough to purchase a small piece of land on which to build a new home.

The government moved Coloured residents to areas to the north of the city such as Helenvale, Gelvandale, Gelvan Park, Salt Lake, Korsten, Chetty, Arcadia and West End. Chinese residents were moved to Kabega Park, Indian residents to Malabar, and Black residents to New Brighton and Walmer townships (*ibid*). Whites were placed all over the city in areas designated for their social group, or were given the option to purchase homes in the area after the suburb had been rebuilt. This relocation lead to longer commutes to church, work and school. Many lost their jobs as a result of the commute, especially since commuting had been affected by racially based bus laws. This limited black people's options in respect of transport and they were required to meet costs that they had not encountered previously. This was start of immense poverty for many, with repossessed items, removal of children from schools, and an increasing level of unemployment (*ibid*). The Group Areas Act which had caused such devastation for the area was revoked in 1991, but the potential for South End to recover its harmonious cosmopolitan mix had been probably forever lost (*ibid*).

### 5.4.2 *Location*

This community is located in an industrial area that is currently being gentrified as a business and recreation area, at the bottom of a steep valley. The valley is separated by a river where one side of the valley leads into a nature reserve, and the other leads to the harbour. In the last few years the nature reserve has gained popularity with the wider public and is used regularly for city events such as bike races, pollution drives, fundraisers for numerous causes, art exhibitions, as well monthly social gatherings targeted towards the middle to upper classes. A few informal shacks have been constructed within the reserve, but these are well hidden from the public view for fear of demolition (Field notes, 14 July, 2014).

At the start of the study there were two formal living settlements on one side of the valley. The larger community was the target for this research. The smaller community consisted of three houses, which at the close of the study had been abandoned to make way for 'development'.

As I have indicated, the area in which the community which was the focus of my study is located represents prime real estate because of its proximity to the city centre and the sea. 'Development' has resulted in the establishment of a small section of specialised shops. The opposite side of the valley comprises a few businesses on the one side of the road, and a small middle class suburban area on the opposite (Field notes, 14 July, 2014).

The community itself consists of 9 council houses that remained after forced removals in the 1960's. Following these removals, the houses, shops, schools and places of worship that had comprised the community were demolished luxury 'townhouses[27]', reserved for a wealthy white population, were constructed. Two families have been residing in the homes since the late 80's to the early 90's (Field notes, 21 July, 2014). Other families have moved back into the area following earlier relocations (Field notes, 21 July, 2014). Currently the area serves as a 'redevelopment' zone in an industrial valley, overlooked by a mass of middle-class town housing on both sides, in both directions of the valley. As a result, many of the families shared their concerns that, once again, they might face removals (Field notes, 14 October, 2014).

### 5.4.3 *Demographics and language usage*

In terms of demographics, six of the homes position themselves as 'Coloured', and the remaining three as 'White' (Field notes, 21 July, 2014). Four of the Coloured homes have children of school going age, whereas only one of the white families have children who would fit the sample criteria (*ibid*). All members of the community are Afrikaans first language speakers, but a vast majority of the adults are fluent in English, and some in isiXhosa (*ibid*). Generally, it was my observation that the older the children became, the stronger their command of English, and most children demonstrated a strong command of vernacular forms of the English language by the age of ten years (Field notes, 22 July, 2014).

Only one family had enrolled their child in an English first language school (Field notes, 21 July, 2014). The children of this family, including a pre-school child, were able to speak English (*ibid*).

[27] The term 'townhouse' in South Africa, is used to refer to a cluster of homes that generally have a fully encompassing fence around the circumference of the group of homes. They are normally quite uniform in structure.

The remainder all attended Afrikaans first language schools (Field notes, 22 July, 2014). The families all indicated that their children needed to learn English in order to find work once they had completed their studies (Field notes, 12 September, 2014 & 16 October, 2014). This shows that they all subscribed to dominant discourses that privilege the value of English in the workplace, as well as the general job-market. However, parents and caregivers noted firmly that, even though that on the whole they themselves could speak English fluently, they expected the schools to take responsibility for teaching their children English (Field notes, 15 September, 2014). In the homes, Afrikaans was almost spoken exclusively. It was noticeable that many of the children of pre-school age knew little to no English. However, once they had begun school, their English improved the longer they attended.

On one occasion, a 7-year-old girl asked me to tell her the English words for numerous objects around the house (Field notes, 31 October, 2014). Her 9-year-old cousin would blurt out the English names before I was able to say them (*ibid*). After each case, he would look at me to confirm that they were indeed correct, then smile proudly and say to his cousin that English was not a hard language (*ibid*).

#### 5.4.4 *General living conditions*

Most of the homes had a similar construction, however the lower segment closer to the river had homes that were slightly larger (Field notes, 14 July, 2014). The actual dwellings are very old, having been constructed more than 70 years previously. A middle-aged man informed me he had lived in the area for 19 years with his wife and his children (Field notes, 21 July 2014). Before moving to their current home, they used to live in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth. I was informed that the house actually belonged to his mother-in-law, who was deaf and almost blind, but that the entire family lived together (Field notes, 22 July, 2014). My informant confirmed that all nine houses in the community belonged to the Council and that inhabitants had been informed by ‘a business type’ that they would be moved to another location as part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)[28]( Field notes, 14 October, 2014; 22 August, 2014 & 22 October, 2014).

[28] The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is a South African governmental policy that was put into practice in 1994 to assist poorer communities with socio-economic growth by the African National Congress

However, this had never been confirmed by the local Councillor in person, or in writing at the time. I asked about houses further up the road and on the opposite side of the road which differed in appearance to other houses. I was informed that these houses were not part of the community and that my informant did not think they belonged to the Council (Field notes, 21 July, 2014). By the end of the time I spent in the community, these houses had been broken down and replaced by specialist stores. It would appear, therefore, that inhabitants were forced to live with a great deal of uncertainty about their futures on a daily basis.

Another informant, a woman who lived alone occasionally accompanied by her boyfriend or son informed me that one of the businesses in the area had offered to paint the outside of the homes at the company's own cost (Field notes, 28 July, 2014). She asked if I liked the colour of her own home, yellow, and pointing to the house next door noted that she liked the green it had been painted but that she also liked the colour of her own home (*ibid*). She went on to note that she hoped the company would return to paint the doors and, possibly, the window frames noting that the Council was only prepared to whitewash the walls very infrequently (*ibid*). I was told that the company that had painted the houses had informed inhabitants that the homes directly on the street were an 'eyesore' for their customers and clients (*ibid*). Regardless of the reasons for the offer to repaint, residents had been happy to accept it. The comment by my female informant highlighted the condition of the homes in the community in comparison to the immaculate condition of the surrounding businesses, and the gentrification taking place in the area. Here, the action of the local business, had exposed the glaring inequalities and the way in which the community had been structurally and culturally conditioned into a place of inferiority in relation to the more recently developed business area. Observing the processes of gentrification going on around them could, moreover, only have added to the community's sense of insecurity and to questions about how long members would be allowed to remain in the homes they had occupied for so long.

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(ANC) (Lodge, 2003). The RDP programme which is still in place assists communities with housing and land reform, access to consumable water, electricity, healthcare and community-based employment (Lodge,2003).

The interiors of the homes were generally rundown. One mother informed me that her had been given a bucket of 'railway paint' by their church, which they had used to paint their lounge (Field notes, 22 July, 2014). She complained that the paint was of such poor quality that it marked their clothes whenever they walked too close to the walls but noted that they had had no choice but to use it given that they had wanted to repaint (Field notes, 22 July, 2014). All families indicated that they had tried to access assistance from local government through the system of Ward Councillors (Field notes, 21 July, 2014 & 23 August, 2014). Many knew the name and contact details of the Ward Councillor for the area. He was apparently contacted quite regularly to deal with disturbances as well as issues with electricity and water. However, I was informed that the general sense in the community was that, since no action had been taken, 'the government was not willing to help' them (Field notes, 21 July, 2014). Some expressed the sense that they had 'been forgotten' and that they had to rely on charity where they could find it (Field notes, 28 July, 2014; 17 October, 2014; 19 October, 2014 & 28 October, 2014). Comments made by members in the community in relation to the conditions they experienced are indicative of more generalised discourses in South Africa. These discourses relate to the failure of 'service delivery' on the part of both the local and national government (14 July, 2014; 22 July, 2014; 4 August, 2014; 22 August, 2014 & 26 January, 2015). Such discourses have contributed to the emergence of protests directed at both local and national government in many communities across the country.

Generally, the only income for the families came from small menial jobs that they were able to locate and complete (Field notes, 23August, 2014; 19 September, 2014; 14 October, 2014; 16 October, 2014; 19 October, 2014; 28 October, 2014; 6 November, 2014 & 26 January, 2014). Many of these jobs held no written contractual basis, with some lasting a few hours to a few weeks depending on the circumstances.

For example, one mother was able to find a short-term job as a cleaner for a small company in town (Field notes, 6 November, 2014). The job had been offered to her as a permanent cleaner had been given maternity leave. She said she worried about her five-year-old boy during the day, as she would normally look after him instead of finding work (*ibid*). However, since money was becoming increasingly tight, she had to find a solution (*ibid*). She said that she could send her child to playschool while at work, but the costs would only be just covered by the wages received from the job (*ibid*).

This would then mean that there was no point in taking the job (*ibid*). She was finally able to come to an arrangement with one of the neighbours to look after her child for the majority of the time she was working, but for remainder of the time he had to be left at home with his aged grandparents (*ibid*).

Most of the families owned very little in terms of material possessions. They had basic furniture, and most of their appliances did not work properly or not at all. A few family members would have to share beds, or they would sleep in shifts, depending on their work hours. If appliances broke, they would ask someone in the community who had some informal electrical know-how to try and fix them. One person was able to fix mobile phones by using discarded parts he found or had bartered. If a family desperately needed the appliance and no one they knew could fix it, it would be taken to a shop in town. This normally meant that the item would be fixed quickly, but they would not be able to collect it until they had paid for the repairs in full. As a result, they had to forgo the use of the appliance until they had saved enough money to pay the shop for the repair (Field notes, 28 October, 2014).

I was informed that each of the homes had been registered in one member's name, and they were allowed to have other family members living with them (Field notes, 22 July, 2014). However, many of the homes housed more than just immediate family members. In a majority of the homes, the title owner had opted to permit extended family members and friends to take up residence (Field notes, 29 July, 2014). In many of these cases this was initially not spoken of, as they had been informed that if there were too many people living in one house, they could find themselves in trouble with the Council and be evicted. However, if the titleholders did not allow the extra people to live with them, the only option was for them to erect some sort of dwelling in the bush opposite the community. These informal residents were required to contribute towards the running of the household. This either meant that they had to pay a small amount of rent, or help with daily activities such as washing clothes, doing garden work, assisting with the spaza[29] shops run in some of the houses, or with general household maintenance. If they did not assist, they were sent to live 'in the bush' until they were able to contribute (Field notes, 22 October, 2014).

[29] A 'spaza shop' is a small, commonly unlicensed shop that is run from a home residence, in a suburban area.

All this resulted in overcrowded living conditions in a many of the homes. The small bedrooms often had more than 3 people in each. But more often than not family units would share a room, or younger generations would share. Two households had been able to purchase old caravans at very low prices which were used for additional accommodation (Field notes, 22 August, 2014). Others had constructed small shanty-style dwellings out of old crates and scraps of wood. These had been hidden in the gardens at the rear of the houses under trees, for fear that the Council would object and punish the entire household with eviction. Although these external dwellings were only large enough to accommodate a single bed, a table, a few electric appliances and a cupboard, they were regularly occupied by more than three adults and/or children.

The Council required residents to pay a monthly 'rental fee', which included rates and water, for the accommodation (Field notes, 22 July, 2014 & 4 August, 2014). However, numerous community members noted that, since they could not afford this fee, that they did not pay. As a result, they felt fortunate that their water had not been disconnected. One member noted that since the Council did not assist with the upkeep of the homes, they were entitled to use the money that should have been paid as rent to fix and replace what they could.

All the homes were equipped with a pre-paid electricity meter. This meant that if families did not have the money to purchase electricity, they would have to go without or ask a neighbour if they could bring their appliance for use or charging (Field notes, 5 August, 2014; 22 September, 2014 & 14 October, 2014). A small number of the homes were equipped with a hot water geyser (Field notes, 28 August, 2014). The remainder had to boil water for bathing, cooking and cleaning (Field notes, 28 July, 2014). A few said there was a geyser installed, but it had broken and they were unable to pay for repairs (Field notes, 29 July, 2014). If I arrived early in the day, I was requested to assist with getting the younger children ready. This meant boiling a kettle numerous times in order to fill a small plastic bath. The children would then take turns in the bath. Once the children had bathed, the adults would then make use of the same water to clean themselves.

Unfortunately, I was unable to be present during the time older children were getting ready for school because the location of the schools meant that they had to leave home very early to walk to

school or to the taxi rank. On occasions when parents did not have enough money for the taxi fare, a frequent occurrence, children would have to leave even earlier (Field notes, 5 August, 2014).

This description of the physical conditions in which member of the community live, shows that conditions related to apartheid and the socio-economic structure of the country continues to shape the daily lives of all its citizens.

### 5.4.5 *Family structure*

The community exhibited numerous different forms of family structure all of which can be seen to have emerged from the macro level structures shaping and conditioning South African society. These varied on a scale representative of both traditional as well as western family systems. The community accepted all of these different structures and numerously diverse arrangements as normative even though no homes were free of gossip about neighbours (Field notes, 28 October, 2014). A majority of the houses were homes to extended family, such as aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents as well as destitute friends and their families. Occupation changed quite regularly, often on a weekly basis, with some members staying for periods of anything from a few days, a few weeks, a few months to a few years. Regardless of changes, the core occupation and structure were stable. One member of the core family would more than likely be the titleholder for the residence although one of the homes had a title holder (a grandmother) who had allowed her daughters to make use of the house while she lived with her son for a while (Field notes, 14 August, 2014). Hence, the titleholder was not resident in the property to which she was assigned at this time (*ibid*). The younger children would often stay with family members in other areas of the city for short periods. This was as a result of issues relating to transport to and from school, a complicated work or home life schedule and financial complications. Other children would also come to stay with family for extended periods from other areas of Port Elizabeth, as well as other towns in the Eastern Cape region (*ibid*).

It was evident that many of the women in the community with young children had to stay at home rather than look for work until the children were old enough to go to school. Many cited staying as being their only real option, as they could not afford the costs of a crèche or preschool (Field notes, 25 July, 2014). As a result, an overwhelming majority of the children would have their first experience of a formal schooling system at the age of approximately six or seven years. However, most homes had one woman in the family who would leave the community daily either in search of work, or to attend work. In these cases, the children would be looked after by an aunt, grandparent or, in some cases, by a neighbour.

If the mother was able to find work, and had the option, school age children would reside with family in other parts of the city that were closer to the Afrikaans schools during the week. In these cases, the child would often come back to the community over weekends and for holidays. This arrangement was predominantly in family structures where the mother had a child from a previous relationship, as well as a child from her current relationship. The older child would then often live with relatives in other parts of the city.

One family who worked closely with their church had two different people, who were experiencing a particularly difficult time, living with them (Field notes, 29 July, 2014). These individuals would be referred to as relatives of the family in order to avoid being asked to leave by the Council. It was obvious, therefore, that the fear of the Council, and of eviction, remained even though the Council itself paid little attention to the community. The mother of the family with individuals from the church staying with her said she did not mind saying they were family, even though they were not blood family (Field notes, 14 October, 2014). She justified this as, in her opinion, they were members of the same church and were thus 'actually family' (*ibid*). The church assisted in providing food and supplies to help with the extra members. The mother received weekly supplies, even cooked meals in some cases (Field notes, 28 October, 2014). If she had extra, she would contact the family down the road (that housed the most informal residents) and ask them to bring plastic containers to collect the food (*ibid*). Often, when they did not even have a plastic container, she would lend them old yogurt containers, which she requested should be returned after use (*ibid*). I was informed that these yogurt containers were used as 'Tupperware' and that the woman needed to take care of them as only very occasionally could she afford to buy yogurt and, thus, acquire more (*ibid*).

Other families who also had numerous additional members living with them, did not benefit from such support as they were not part of the church community.

The shifting family and living arrangements noted above meant that the children of the community were more than likely to experience numerous different caregivers. The availability of caregivers was generally dependent on the relationship to the child (mothers, older siblings, aunts, grandmothers and neighbours) and whether or not individuals were working (Field notes, 22 July, 2014; 5 August, 2014 & 14 November, 2014). The ability to engage with the child around learning was therefore unstable and, obviously also dependant on the time afforded to the child directly, as well as the literacy and learning practices of the individual who was the caregiver at the time.

#### 5.4.6 *Occupations*

Many of the men in the community worked as car guards for the surrounding business and restaurants (Field notes, 21 July, 2014; 25 August 2014; 19 September, 2014 & 14 October, 2014). In lieu of a formal parking garages in South Africa, a 'car guard' is a term used torefer to a person who is employed to keep their cars under surveillance for their owners. They are generally self-appointed, but can also be formally employed by a business or an establishment. Normally an informal car guard will hold territory of a certain street in a few different commercial areas and watch over the cars of the employees and clientele of the surrounding business while they are parked outside. This is a common job title in South Africa as vehicles are regularly subject to crime including the theft of parts (such as tires or hubcaps) or being stolen altogether. People who make use of informal car guards are not legally required to pay for the service, although payment is expected and patrons maybe be pressurised to pay for the protection of the vehicle. There is no set price for this form of informal work, and the amount of payment is normally left to the discretion of the car owner. Car guards often offer to wash cars at an extra charge. In areas near the community, competition amongst car guards for control over parking areas and working times was common. Sometimes arrangements were made to share streets by working in shifts. If contestation occurred, physical altercations would sometimes erupt in an attempt to maintain control of working areas, and thus, protect livelihoods.

At the start of the data collection process, there were four small ‘spaza’ shops run from homes in the community (Field notes, 23 August, 2014; 12 September 2014; 15 September, 2014 & 22 September, 2014). In each case an older woman within the household would be in charge of running the shop which was often an important source of income for women forced to remain at home to look after children. High levels of competition existed between shops and, in the time I visited the community regularly threatening behaviour led to the closure of one (Field notes, 23 August, 2014). The largest of the shops provided cheap fast-food meals (such as vetkoek[30], and sausages), fried chips, crisps, loose cigarettes, cold drinks and non-prescription pain medication such as Grandpa powders (over the counter pain killers) or aspirin for the factory workers in the area, as well as for other members of the community (Field notes, 20 October, 2014). Generally, a few of the younger women would prepare the food, depending on what they could locate at discount prices at the local supermarkets or quick-shops (Field notes, 12 September, 2014). Two of these shops kept small books in which to record payments and food requests from their patrons. If a patron had purchased goods on ‘credit’, they would not be allowed to purchase other items the following day unless they had repaid the previous day’s expenses (Field notes, 15 September, 2014 & 20 October, 2014). This rule was upheld strictly as, if shop owners had not received payment, they would be unable to purchase stock sufficient to keep the shop running. In operating the shop, the woman in charge would calculate cost and, if in the vicinity, children were often asked to collect the requested items and give the customers their change.

A few members of the community would provide menial labour for other members of the community or for people in town (Field notes, 16 September, 2014; 19 September, 2014; 14 October, 2014 & 17 October, 2014). This work generally involved painting, gardening, light woodwork and small-scale construction (*ibid*). If the work was completed for another member of the community, it was very rarely paid in actual money. In such cases, a member of the community would exchange their services for board, food, or some material item (Field notes, 22

[30] A vetkoek is a traditional deep-fried bread of Malay origin, sometimes stuffed with curried mince.

October, 2014). But if they worked for someone in town, then they would request to be paid in actual money. Although these jobs were short term in nature they were highly valued because of their potential to assist with day-to-day expenses.

Some of the members of the community who had obtained some form of qualification were able to find jobs in the formal economy, which contributed to a greater level of general stability (Field notes, 22 July & 29 July, 2014). Such individuals were factory workers, truck drivers, car mechanics, domestic cleaners and cashiers in shops (Field notes, 5 August, 2014; 7 August, 2014 & 21 January, 2014). Very few individuals enjoyed formal employment of this nature. The members who were able to attain these jobs were infrequently located in the community during my time spent with the families. They experienced long working hours, with little time off (Field notes, 23 August, 2014 &14 November, 2014). The fact that such jobs required a qualification such as a school leaving certificate meant that the most educated members of the community were away during the times when children were up and about and, as a result, were unable to offer guidance with reading and other school-based activities (Field notes, 21 July, 2014; 21 January, 2014 & 26 January, 2014).

#### 5.4.7 *Financial situation and access to financial support*

Although members of the community did have access to state support in the form of social welfare grants and subsidies for school fees, securing such support involved individuals having to provide personal information and spend time in queues at relevant government departments as well as at the schools themselves (Field notes, 22 September, 2014). Quite regularly parents were unable to take the time from work or household duties to go to the schools to secure reductions in fees on time. This resulted in their being charged for the full amount for fees, or being told that they would be sued for not paying their fees in full. On a few occasions children had been sent home from school as a result, even though this is not legal within the South African educational system (Field notes, 22 September, 2014).

I have already described the pre-paid electricity system in use in the community (Field notes, 5 August, 2014; 22 September, 2014 & 14 October, 2014). Homes sometimes did not have electricity for several days a week. When this happened, the family would have to wait for any individuals

working to bring home a prepaid coupon to buy electricity for the evening's activities when most of the family would be home (Field notes, 14 October, 2014). On the days when electricity was not available, spaza shops could only sell pre-packaged items such as chips and cold sausages (*ibid*). Consequently, a shortage of electricity resulted in a fall in profit. This lack of access to financial resources tended to have a knock-on effect. If individuals needed their cell phones charged they would visit a neighbour and request to use their electricity with the result that sharing became a form of resourcing.

On one occasion a woman informed me that her family had wanted to buy a fridge in the month in which we were speaking (Field notes, 31 October, 2014). Although they had saved enough money to fund the purchase, a friend called her saying that she could not pay her rent since her medical aid had debited her bank account with too much money and a refund would only be possible at the end of the month (*ibid*). As a result, my informant had had to lend her friend the money she wanted to use to buy a fridge (*ibid*). She consoled herself by saying that she did not think that her family really needed a fridge in any case and that she had told her husband that it was not as if they had 'all that stuff to put into it anyway' (*ibid*). It is probably worth noting that, in South Africa, the absence of refrigeration in the hot summer months at least means that food cannot be stored and has to be consumed on the day of purchase. For the community, this meant that purchases had to be made from shops in the vicinity rather than from supermarkets that offered lower prices at some distance away. The case of the fridge is but another example of the knock-on effect of the lack of resources in the community.

Many of the families admitted to being in constant monthly debt (Field notes, 22 July, 2014; 28 July, 2014; 4 August, 2014; 14 August, 2014 & 31 October, 2014). A father informed me that he wanted to what was best for his children (Field notes, 19 October, 2014). He noted that buying items on credit was the only way that they could try to achieve this (*ibid*). He said that it was important to buy them label brand goods as this meant that they were of a better quality, and would last longer (*ibid*).

Another father informed me that he had found himself in quite severe debt over the years (Field notes, 22 July, 2014). He had a friend who worked at an electronics store who would contact him regarding new items and good deals (*ibid*). He noted that he liked to have the newest technology in his

home and he was willing to buy an item on credit so that he could have it as soon as possible (*ibid*). He could not find a job, but his wife worked and her sister would regularly assist them with monthly payments (*ibid*). If they did not have this help, they would have had many of their household items repossessed (*ibid*). He said that he was able to construct plant holders, dog kennels and picket fences, which he displayed outside his home with a sign displaying his contact number (Field notes, 4 August, 2014). He said he enjoyed this work, but had many problems with customers noting that many of the 'white people' who would ask him to make an item for them would try to get a cheaper deal after he had done the work (*ibid*). In such cases, he would make the item to the customer's exact specifications, and agree on a price (*ibid*). But once he had completed the item, the customer would try to talk him down from the price initially agreed (*ibid*). My informant said this made him angry and disheartened (*ibid*). In addition, he noted that he had to pay for broken equipment himself and this impacted on his ability to make a profit (*ibid*). His sister in-law was only able to help with the monthly debt, and not with his small business that he ran from home (Field notes, 22 July, 2014). In this sense, many of the homes were structured by means of shared economic input and output. Here families had been conditioned into the idea that the sharing of resources within the family was the most effective manner to cope with their economic situation.

With regard to the renegotiation of prices, my informant noted experiences with some of his customers had hardened him; if customers who had negotiated a reduced price wanted more work done he would tell them he was in the process of completing the job but, in truth, he would not even begin the job (Field notes, 4 August, 2014). He said that this would be a lesson to them, since they had been dishonest with him (*ibid*). In the time that I spent in the community, this man's daughter was completing her final year of school and wanted to study to become a nurse (Field notes, 22 September, 2014). He said he did not know how to make this possible for her, since the only way for this to happen would be if she were able to receive funding (*ibid*). She had tried to look for a scholarship, but she had been told that she had already missed the application deadline for the following year (*ibid*). He said he could not understand this, as it was still 6 months before the classes would start, and she still had not even written her examinations (*ibid*). He said she would have to find a job to help support herself and the family now until such time as she could study (*ibid*).

In this example, we can see how a lack of social and cultural capital compounds the situation of families and contributes to the reproduction of their economic and social standing. The daughter in question would probably have been eligible for funding from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) given the low level of her family's income. However, a lack of knowledge about the scheme coupled with the lack of resources to make an online application meant that she was denied the ability to access the education she sought.

### 5.4.8 *Education*

As I have indicated earlier in this Chapter, following the advent of democracy, the educational system has been under constant modification. In my time in the community, it was apparent that these changes had not directly impacted on the quality of education available to its children.

The majority of the children in the community attended schools at a distance from their homes (Field notes, 25 July, 2014; 22 September, 2014; 14 October, 2014 & 17 October, 2014). In this main, this was attributed to schools nearby having long waiting lists, as well as charging high fees that could not be afforded (Field notes, 25 July 2014). In addition, schools located closer to the community all used English as a language of learning and teaching and most of the community children could only speak Afrikaans by the average school going age (Field notes, 25 July, 2014; 15 September, 2014 & 17 October, 2014).

Some viewed the need to attend schools in other areas of the city positively noting that children who lived with extended family members in areas in which the schools were located were able to spend more time with cousins and other members of the family during school terms (Field notes, 5 August, 2014). However, the distance between the community and the areas in which the schools were located coupled with poverty meant that attendance was often inconsistent. If some of the older children were sick, the younger ones often did not attend school as they had no one to accompany them on the walk to the school itself or to taxi ranks[31] (Field notes, 26 August, 2014 & 16 Octover, 2014).

[31] Considering that there is an absence of reliable and affordable public formal transport systems in the area, communal taxis are the most common form of transport in South Africa. A 'taxi rank' is the term given to the area where the taxi's congregate, waiting for their patrons.

If it was raining the children would also not attend, as the parents were concerned that they could become sick (Field notes, 16 October, 2014). Taxi fare was not readily available (*ibid*). During the time I spent in the community, one of the younger boys broke his leg falling from a tree in the garden of his home (Field notes, 21 January, 2014). This meant that he did not attend school for approximately 2 months since he could not walk the distance on his crutches and his parents did not have money for taxi fare.

The period of time of spent with the community corresponded with parents exercising their agency to communicate their dismay at the quality of schooling in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth (Field notes, 29 July, 2014; 23 August, 2014; 15 September, 2014 & 19 September, 2014). Conflict within the school system has caused numerous shut downs over the last two years often due to union intervention. As a result, teaching as well as examinations have been disrupted at all levels of primary and high school. Numerous local papers followed the development of this crisis reporting a lack of resources and a failure on the part of the provincial government to appoint sufficient teachers.

Entry into and success in tertiary level education is largely dependent on one's primary and high school education. In the northern areas of Port Elizabeth, not only has the lack of qualified teachers and resources been reported, but also the number of teachers leaving the profession. Consequently, at the time of data collection for this thesis there was a high level of instability in these schools. This was extensively covered by the local newspapers and news stations at the time. Classes had not taken place, parents protested by keeping their children at home, and the parents themselves forcibly closed these schools ('Meet our demands or schools could be closed', 2016). Problems in these schools were and still are exacerbated by high levels of gang violence and an increased police presence ('PE education protests set to escalate', 2015; 'Strong police presence in PE's Northern Areas amid education protests', 2015; 'Cops issue stern warning to parents in Northern Areas', 2016). The education department in the Eastern Cape has since been taken to court over the lack of promised funding for school infrastructure, teacher salaries, teacher training, textbooks and so on ('Charges laid against EC department of Education', 2016; 'More than 50 Port Elizabeth schools closed because of teacher shortage', 2016). The poor conditions were compounded by the fact that numerous schools in the area reported overcrowding in classrooms and therefore had to refuse admission to a large number of potential students ('Schools in PE's Northen Areas closed again', 2016).

It is to such a dysfunctional system that the children of the community were being admitted, as a majority of the communities' children attend these particular schools. The lack of adequate, let alone quality schooling, can serve to reinforce dominant discourses promoting crime and gangsterism as a viable means of gaining relief from poverty. Certainly, gang numbers reported in the Northern Areas of the city (Van Aardt, 2016) would appear to attest to the fact that many young people have subscribed to such ideas. Van Aardt (2016) noted that there has been a sharp increase of gang-related issues in the area over the previous four years (2012-2016), with a total of 137 murders being reported between April 2015 and March 2016 alone. A police spokesperson noted that 'socio-economic factors including unemployment, poverty, no or little scholastic education, alcoholism, and drug addiction, overcrowded housing, and child-headed families feed into gangsterism (Van Aardt, 2016).

### 5.4.9 *Religious beliefs*

A high percentage of families in the community identified as Christian within a myriad of denominations and many attended church functions within the area on a regular basis (Field notes, 21 July, 2014; 22 July, 2014; 25 July, 2014; 28 July, 2014; 29 July, 2014; 4 August, 2014; 13 August, 2014; 19 September, 2014; 16 October, 2014; 17 October, 2014; 19 October, 2014; 28 October, 2014 & 4 November, 2014). One family stated that they did not affiliate with any particular religion, and others refrained from comment. One family noted that they encompassed Muslim as well as Christian family members and therefore celebrated holidays reserved for both religions (Field notes, 16 September, 2014).

The extent to which individuals practised a religion varied between generations, as the older family members seemed to hold their religion in higher regard when compared to younger relatives. Many of the grandmothers attended church regularly and spoke of their religion as a foundation to their lives and their value systems. These grandmothers would regularly make use of parables and bible verses as references to explain different topics (Field notes, 4 August, 2014).

Some of the families made use of the numerous charity stores and second-hand shops in the area (Field notes, 13 August, 2014; 22 September, 2014; 17 October, 2014; 22 October, 2014; 21 January, 2015). Others stated that they were not that interested in buying second-hand goods, as they were not 'second-hand' people. On one occasion a Grandmother and I were speaking about the costs of living and making use of second hand shops as a cheaper option (Field notes, 28 July, 2014). She said that she did use second hand shops, and said that her church pastor had told the congregation during a sermon that they must not settle for second- hand goods, as this would mean they lived a 'second hand life'. She informed me that this was not an issue of pride. She said it was something for them to work towards. She said she wanted 'nice' things for her and her family, but financially they could not afford them without purchasing items them on credit (Field notes, 19 October 2014). This held both positive and negative implications. On the negative side the family held a high level of financial debt as they would purchase items on credit and could sometimes not afford to pay the monthly bills. On the positive side, it allowed them to feel more value in and of themselves. In this they believed that they needed to make use of the life they had, and not only to store reward for 'the next life'. One of my informant's daughters who had two children who lived on and off in the community informed me that she and her partner were in monthly debt mostly related to purchasing clothes and items for their two children (Field notes, 19 October, 2014).

#### 5.4.10 *Gendered discourses*

Gendered roles were constructed discursively within the community and those who did not comply with accepted norms within the community were teased or called derogatory names. On one occasion, while I was assisting with washing in a garden at the rear of a house, a young boy walked down the stairs from the house into the garden wearing a pair of his mother's pink sippers (Field notes, 29 July, 2014). He was met with laughs from all who were in the garden at the time. One of the men began to tease him, and called him a 'moffie'[32] (*ibid*). This was not the only occasion on which I observed the use of sexist terminology when one of the boys or men engaged in overtly female behaviour. I did not witness the same treatment with girls or women, as they generally did not engage in any activities that had been gendered as 'male' in the community.

[32] The term 'moffie' is a derogatory Afrikaans word that is used to refer to a homosexual.

They did not seem to have interest in these activities, or just refrained from engaging in any.

Most household activities within the community were split along traditional gendered lines. The women were generally expected to oversee and complete the housework, the cooking, the cleaning as well as looking after the children (Field notes, 29 July, 2014; 1 August, 2014; 5 August, 2014; 7 August, 2014; 18 August, 2014). On occasion the children would play near the car park where the men worked if the mother of the household needed to go into town or if she had been able to find short-term work (Field notes, 22 August, 2014). They would be restricted to play under the tree near the river within eye sight of the men guarding the cars (Field notes, 22 August, 2014 & 12 September, 2014). On occasion the children would be allowed closer to the car park, but only if it was not a busy time of the day. Generally, children older than 5 years were not closely monitored and most would play together. As long as there were two or more children, they would be allowed play between homes while the women completed the house work.

One home consisted of approximately five different family units who all shared the use of one washing machine (Field notes, 19 August, 2014 & 20 October, 2014). As a result of the amount of washing that needed to done weekly, each family unit had been allocated a certain day of the week to use the machine. The washing machine was a top loader that did not function properly. The women would have to rinse out the soap by hand in the same large plastic basin that was also used for bathing in the mornings. While spending time with one of the young mothers while she was completing washing for her family unit, her 3-year-old daughter carried out a small bundle of washing from inside the house (Field notes, 20 October, 2014). She then filled a small cracked plastic bucket with water and added washing powder. The mother sat her daughter down on the step, and added the small bundle of clothes to the bucket. She then instructed her to rub the dirty parts of the clothes after they had been fully immersed. The mother explained that she would only give her daughter her own clothes to wash, as her hands were still small (*ibid*). She explained that she did this so her daughter could learn to be responsible for herself. She continued to say that once the child was older, she would be expected to take over the chore of washing the family's clothes from her mother (*ibid*). This was not the case with the child's male cousin, who was allowed to play during these working times.

The mother explained that he would not have to learn how to do the washing since he was a boy and would be expected to leave home to find work when he was had completed school. She noted that she thought that it was very important for her daughter to learn about household chores, as she would have to run her own home someday. She explained that starting at an early age was the best method so that it would become part of her daily routine in the future.

One mother who lived with her boyfriend and his parents informed me that they would cook and eat on two different time schedules (Field notes, 29 July, 2014). As a result, the grandmother would prepare food for her and her husband first (*ibid*). Then the mother would prepare the food for her boyfriend, their two children and herself. She noted that it had to be done this way, as they owned limited cooking and eating utensils (*ibid*). The dishes would either have to washed in-between each session or the mother would have to prepare their dinner at a much earlier time in the day, then heat it up when they wished to eat (*ibid*). The latter was the preferred method, as her husband's work schedule was unpredictable which meant that it would be difficult to estimate when he would be home for dinner. Here neither the grandfather nor the father would be expected to prepare or cook food for the family. Even though the grandfather did not work at this stage, he openly did not have any interest in meal preparation stating he did not know how to cook. My informant explained that the father did not cook as he worked long hours, and expected to have dinner prepared when he arrived home after work (*ibid*).

Each of the community homes had a small piece of garden in front of the homes, as well as a small garden at the rear. Most of these areas were strewn with debris and rubbish, with a few patches of grass. During one of my visits just before the end of year school holidays, a few municipal workers were making use of weed eaters to clear an over grown area near the river (Field notes, 17 October, 2014). The mother of one of the homes had been complaining about the length of grass in front of their home and had asked one of the car guards to enquire if they could borrow the weed eater for an hour after they had finished cutting the grass near the river (*ibid*). None of the women in the house wanted to make use of the weed eater, but insisted that the car guard should complete this work as it was not their place to be making use of potentially dangerous equipment (*ibid*). This example is indicative of the fact that men were generally expected to complete any work that involved the use of any heavy duty motorised equipment.

When it came to general garden work, which was completed very occasionally, the women would plant seeds and tend the gardens (Field notes, 26 August, 2014). The younger adolescent boys who were still at school would be asked to help in garden quite often. However, once they had completed schooling and were either working or looking for a job, they did not assist with the garden work.

Only one of the homes did not adhere as strictly to these roles. However, this seemed to be more connected with necessity than choice. In this home, all of the women had become estranged from their husbands or partners, except one of the younger mothers who had a long term partner who did not live in the community. He did contribute towards his child's expenses, but not towards the household (Field notes, 19 October, 2014). Only one elderly disabled male, who had had to have his leg amputated when he was younger, lived with the women and their children. In this home of three sisters, the eldest stayed at home to look after the children and to ensure the house work and cooking was completed (Field notes, 14 October, 2014). The youngest daughter would go to work daily to support the whole family financially (Field notes, October, 2014). Their income was marginally supplemented by the older man who received a monthly disability grant as a result of his amputated leg. The middle sister suffered from alcoholism, and worked where she could, but would generally spend her earnings on alcohol and did not regularly contribute in any way to household running costs (Field notes, 19 September, 2014 & 28 October 2014). The eldest male child of the family was expected to help with some of the chores, such as looking after the younger children in the house when his mother had to do the shopping (Field notes, 22 September, 2014). However, he spent most of this day ay school, as he would play sport in the afternoons.

#### 5.4.11 *Racial discourses*

Much of the talk in the community focused on social status, although individuals were aware of the way race impacted on positioning in society. On one occasion, for example, one of the young mothers and I were completing the day's clothes washing and speaking about different aspects of the study (Field notes, 28 July, 2014). As she dug in the mud for a clothespin on the ground she

commented that they (some of the other mothers and herself) had been speaking about the reasons for choosing their community for the study. She went on to note that they had decided between themselves that I wanted to know how the '99%[33]' lived and what struggles they lived with on a daily basis (*ibid*). This particular mother was in her early 20's and had recently moved to the community from Cape Town saying she preferred the smaller city life even though she had had to leave her daughter in Cape Town due to financial and other reasons (*ibid*).

Quite a few of my Fridays with the women were spent under a tree next to the river where they would share a box of wine and one glass between them while the children played close by. Only the most important chores would be completed on Friday mornings, and the afternoon was set aside to relax. On one such occasion one of the older mothers had just finished hanging up the washing and had taken a seat quite far from the rest of us, but still within visual distance (Field notes, 12 September, 2014). One of the younger mothers sitting under the tree called to her saying; "Why don't you come and sit here under the tree? Are you too white for us?" The older mother smiled, while the others giggled, then she brought the bucket she was sitting on and moved to sit with us (*ibid*).

One of the fathers made plant boxes for a living (Field notes, 4 August, 2014). He informed me that earning money in this way that it helped with the bills every month but did not pay enough for any money to be saved (*ibid*). He would collect crates, or buy them cheaply, then makes the plant boxes at home. He took me to the room off the side of their lounge and uncovered a 3-layer plant box that he was waiting for the buyer to come and collect. He said he had made the plant box for a white woman from Walmer[34] and noted that he had quoted a price of R350 when taking the order, R100 below his usual charge (*ibid*). In spite of the box having been made to the

[33] The term the '99%', refers to a motion coined by the 'occupy movement', which is an international socio-political movement that holds against social and economic inequality (Fuchs, 2014). Here there has been a steady increase of inequality since the 1970's as a majority of the worlds wealth is in the United States is possessed by 1% of the population. Whereas the 99% believed that they were suffering for the lifestyle of the 1%. Even though this movement was initiated in the United States of America, in response South Africa began a closely associated movement referred to as 'Taking back South Africa' (Taking back South Africa, 2012). This became entangled in the *#Feesmustfall* movement, where protestors and activists also made use of the slogan *#Occupy4FreeEducation*. This was an attempt to address what was interpreted as the governments absence of action on the dire state of socio-economic inequality, and lack of affordable education in the country.

[34] 'Walmer' is considered a more upmarket suburb in Port Elizabeth.

specifications provided by the woman, he was informed that the customer would only pay R300 when she came to collect the box (*ibid*). My informant was disheartened as he noted that the manufacture of the box had taken a considerable amount of time (*ibid*). He also noted that he recently had broken his sander, and a replacement would cost R700 (*ibid*). As a result, he would have to make do until he had saved enough to purchase a new tool.

This man calculated the cost of the boxes he made by visiting shops in the city to see how much was being charged for similar items (*ibid*). He would then quote prices that were cheaper than the shops for items he believed were more well made. The woman who had commissioned the plant box and had refused to pay the quoted price had also asked him to make a picket fence (*ibid*). He told me that after the way he had been treated he would not do this but would rather tell her that he would make it and then fail to complete the order. He then pointed to the picket fence along the front of his house noting that he had made it himself 20 years ago when they first moved into the house (*ibid*). This conversation has been included here as it is indicative of discourses that construct 'wealthy white' people as continuing to behave badly towards their black fellows in spite of political shifts.

The one white mother said that she was very cautious about allowing her children to play with the children from the rest of the community (Field notes, 22 September, 2014). The family had not lived in the community for as long as others, had built few friendships with their neighbours and, according to my informant 'had made a few enemies'. The mother generally would not allow her children to play at the other homes or on the road with the group of other children from the community (*ibid*). Her children would normally play inside the home or in their garden at the rear of the house. She said that when they first moved in she would allow them to interact with the other children but, after a few instances of observing the other children being physically abusive or violent, she had decided to keep her children in their home instead (*ibid*). She did not mind one or two of the other children coming and playing at her house, but she would closely monitor them as previously some of her children's toys had gone missing and no one claimed responsibility for the loss. She said she had learned whom she could trust and whom she could not through these experiences (*ibid*). Therefore, she would allow some of the other children from the community into the house, but not others.

The mother's conversation with me held an undertone of the 'apartheid voice'. Even though neighbours shared certain resources, the lack of trust or willingness to discern intentions based on social background and skin colour arguably shows a form of conditioning reproduced through the mind-set of separation.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Currently all sections of South Africa's educational system are experiencing immense difficulty with the repercussions of the lack of social inclusion as a result of apartheid legislature. The direct effects of these frustrations have become increasingly apparent in the last few years given protests such as those I have described in the northern suburbs of Port Elizabeth about the quality of schooling, and the *#Feesmustfall* movement which caused massive disturbances in the tertiary sector on a national level.

Despite the shift to democracy, high levels of inequality still exist and complaints about the way the government has not delivered on expectations abound. How do these conditions begin to play out in the everyday life of the child? How do these historical conditions and events begin to create literacy and learning practices for the children of the community? It is to questions such as these that I now turn.

# CHAPTER SIX

## Exercising Agency in Preparation for Schooling ($T_2$-$T_3$)

### 6.1 Introduction

Academics such as Gee (2008) and Street (2000) affirm the role of social practices in learning and in demonstrating membership of learning communities, some of which may be focused on formal schooling. As I have indicated in Chapter Three, Street (2000) states that literacy is not just the act of gaining a skill set, but is rather a set of social practices. These practices encompass the way individuals interact with printed texts in their everyday environment and could include the 'setting aside' of print. Gee (2008, p.154) goes further and sees literacy as more than engagement with print insofar as he identifies it as the demonstration of mastery of a 'Discourse' involving 'ways of speaking/listening and often, too, writing/reading with distinctive ways of acting, interacting valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, believing'. Where Discourses relate to schooling and education, demonstrating such mastery would involve interacting with certain kinds of texts in certain ways. Amongst others, Heath (1983 & 2010) identifies the complex relationships between power and practice as well as power and language. If an individual is able to acquire socially legitimated practices, then social and cultural capital can also accrue along with the power that goes with it. Since the South African schooling structure is based on an educational system with roots in the north and west, children who are exposed to home-based literacies that are aligned with school-based practices will be more prepared for what is expected as they enter school and supported as their school-based learning progresses. Accordingly, such children stand to be more rewarded than others, whose home- based practices are not aligned with those of schooling, in formal educational contexts.

In the previous chapter, and following Archer (2000) the structural and cultural conditions with the potential to enable or constrain the exercise of agency on the part of parents, caregivers and children themselves were discussed. This Chapter moves to the next part of the morphogenetic cycle, termed T2 – T3, in order to look at the ways in which the members of the community are able to exercise their agency given the social and cultural conditioning to which they have been subjected, and the conditions in place as they try to exercise this agency. The focus of this Chapter will therefore be

the manner in which members of the community, and children themselves, are able to draw on SEP's and CEP's in their everyday lives in order to further educational chances available to them.

In her work, Archer (1995, 1996, 1998 & 2000) makes a distinction between 'primary' and 'corporate' agents. For Archer (2000, p. 263) primary agents are "collectivities sharing the same life chances" (2000, p. 263). Primary agents can "play no part in the strategic guidance of society because they literally have no say" (2000, p. 268). However, agents are not passive since they possess PEP's which are exercised as a result of reflection on concerns and the identification of projects to pursue those concerns. Archer (2000, p. 308) notes that

> '... it is possible for human beings to become agentially effective ... in evaluating their social context, creatively envisaging alternatives, and collaborating with others in bringing about transformation.'

As a result, primary agents can transform themselves into a group of corporate agents defined as groups who 'are aware of what they want, can articulate it to themselves and others, and have organized in order to get it, can engage in concerted action to re-shape or retain the structural or cultural feature in question' (1995, p. 258).

Primary agents, therefore, have an interest in developing the collective action which will improve their life chances. In Archerian terms, this is what can be seen to have happened in the case of parents and caregivers in the Northern suburbs of Port Elizabeth who mobilized in order to protest against the poor quality of education offered to children in their care noted in Chapter Five.

Although I found this section of my research the most interesting to deal with, it was also the most challenging and complex. This was because it required me to try to understand how my theoretical framework could be used to analyse what I had observed and experienced during the data collection period. For a time, I had to borrow the perspective or lens of my supervisor until my focus adjusted. This meant going through several iterations of analysis, each time excavating for more in-depth explanations of the observations, interviews, conversations, recollections and reflections that emanated from the time I had spent in the community.

## 6.2 Financial indigence

As of early 2017, international rating agencies officially downgraded South Africa to ‘financial junk status’ a consequence of repercussions from on-going contention over the reshuffle of ministerial heads within President Jacob Zuma’s cabinet (‘How junk status will affect South Africans’, 2017). Although events early in 2018 saw Cyril Ramaposa taking over the Presidency from Jacob Zuma, the world’s financial markets continue to withhold confidence in South Africa. The hyper capitalist financial system, which involves the movement of money across national borders in global trading thus has the potential to impact on the lives of ordinary South Africans such as those in the community on which this study is based.

Before leaving the presidency, in mid-December 2017, Jacob Zuma announced changes to the financial support available to students in higher and further education. Calculations of the cost of this support run into billions and the increased financial aid was announced without careful thought about ways in which the money would be raised by government. The national budget presented in February 2018 had to find this money in a 1% increase in value added tax (VAT). Although some basic foodstuffs are exempt from VAT, the 1% increase has hit consumers hard, the poor in particular.

From a perspective in critical realism, poverty can be understood as a set of experiences and observations at the level of the *Empirical* emerging from events (for example, the loss of a job or an increase in taxes) at manifest the level of the *Actual*. Both the events and the experiences and observations can then be understood as emerging from the interplay at mechanisms at the level of the *Real*. In South Africa, there is no doubt that black people experience poverty on a greater and more humiliating scale than their white counterparts. Social class is yet another structure that leads to the emergence of poverty with black middle classes arguably experiencing less poverty than their working-class peers. Education, or the lack of it in this case, is yet another mechanism related to the emergence of events and experiences related to poverty.

A critical realist philosophy allows us to acknowledge the relativity of experiences and observations of poverty. It is quite possible, for example, for one person or group of people to

feel poor whist others, in exactly the same circumstances do not have the same experiences and observation.

The effects of financial indigence more often than not act to constrain the agency of the afflicted individual as they attempt to pursue projects and attain personal as well as collective goals in their everyday lives. The state of poverty causes limitation of freedom, access to adequate basic amenities, and the standard of education received. But even in the face of these difficulties, people still exercise their agency in numerous, and often novel ways in order to address concerns and the projects, as well as goals they have identified in relation to those concerns.

In the community I studied, there is no doubt that mechanisms leading to the emergence of events and experiences related to the poverty generally did work to constrain agency, for both the adults as well as the children. Amongst others, mechanisms such as race, social class, education, geographical location led to the emergence of a lack of access to material resources and the extent to which individuals were able to overcome obstacles. This section of this Chapter looks at events and experiences related to a lack of access to material resources and the courses of action taken by individuals and groups of individuals as they pursued their goals in life.

#### *6.2.1 Overcrowding*

As described in Chapter Five, the majority of the community houses were home to a large number of people. In order to make more space to accommodate the number of individuals in need of housing, many of the families had constructed shacks and converted old caravans in located at the rear of their homes (please see Appendix A.1 and Appendix A.2 on page 217). In the most severe instance, a family of four to five members were sharing a bunk bed in a bedroom with three other families (Field notes, 26 August, 2014) (please see Appendix A.3 and A.4 on page 218). In the less crowded homes, a family of four was able to share one room in a house with extended family occupying other rooms (Field notes, 18 August, 2014). In other cases, children from more than one family shared a room and adults another (Field notes, 21 July, 2014). It was the norm for sleeping spaces to be shared. The number of individuals sharing living spaces meant that schedules

needed to be constructed and adhered to in order to allow for day-to-day tasks to be completed. For example, the need for three or four different family units to share a bathroom or kitchen, usually without access to running water, meant that schedules for bathing and cooking needed to be drawn up and followed carefully (please see Appendix A.5 and A.6 on page 219).

Given the large number of people living in the homes, this often made for a noisy and high-tension living environment. Children at all ages were generally expected to complete their school homework in the main living area, since the grandparents or older generations made use of the bedrooms to nap in the afternoons and, in some cases, they were occupied by those on shift work. The main living areas were a hub of activity, since this is where the television sets were located, where the spaza shops were run, and visitors entertained (please see Appendix A.7 and A.8 on page 220). This meant that the environment was often loud, with numerous distractions making it extremely difficult for children to complete homework (Field notes, 26 July, 2014 & 5 August, 2014).

On one occasion, I witnessed a mother asking her daughter to interrupt her homework to assist in the spaza shop which was experiencing a sudden rush of customers (Field notes, 12 August, 2014). Television sets were never turned off if there was someone awake in the home at the time, although, on occasions, the volume was reduced to allow adults to talk. When the volume was turned up, household members generally commented loudly on the story being portrayed, and often striking up conversations as a result, leading to further distractions.

Hence, the structural conditions leading to poverty and, thus, overcrowding, were not the only mechanisms impacting on the ability of children to complete homework or study. A set of discourses in the community privileging the value of schooling did not encompass the need to support children by, for example, allowing them the quiet space needed to complete homework. Rather, discourses privileging the watching of television and the need to, for example, keep up with developments on the soap operas that play on South African television every afternoon, competed with those privileging schooling and, in the process, won (Field notes, 1 August, 2014 & 4 August, 2014). In a somewhat similar vein, the need to run spaza shops, discursively constructed as the need to ensure day-to-day survival was privileged over what might be understood in

other places as a more long-term investment in children's education. In some respects, this presented an interesting clash. The operation of the spaza shops was often cited as a means of providing the income to fund school-related expenses yet their operation then worked to negate some of the benefits of schooling.

My analysis therefore sees the interplay of mechanisms in the domains of structure and culture leading to the emergence of events where children are either unable to complete schoolwork, or are interrupted as they do so. For both adults and children in the homes these events appeared to be considered 'normal' with the result that dominant discourses were strengthened.

### 6.2.2 *Health*

Health can be seen to be central to learning and schooling. Ill health or other physical impediments prevent attendance at school and, in some cases, learning itself.

As I have indicated in Chapter Five, the South African Health care system comprises parallel state-run and private systems with the system offered by the government offering minimal, and often poor quality, services to those who do not have the financial means to seek private medical care generally funded by 'medical aid schemes'.

These schemes are generally offered to those in full time permanent employment and require contributions from both the employer and employee. Sometimes several differently priced options within a single scheme are available and employees are able to choose accordingly depending on their willingness and ability to contribute to the health care of themselves and their families. Different pricing options will often include access to specialist services such as dentistry and may even regulate the number of visits that can be made to a general medical practitioner.

Many of the members of the community suffered from poor health. This was caused by an array of different reasons affecting all ages and ranging from short-term problems such as colds, flu and minor parasitic infestations, and eczema, to more severe ailments such as heart conditions,

foetal alcohol syndrome and autoimmune disease (Field notes, 21 July, 2014; 25 July; 28 July, 2014; 29 July, 2014; 11 August, 2014; 14 August, 2014; 19 August, 2014; 22 August, 2014; 23 August, 2014; 26 August, 2014; 9 September, 2014; 15 September, 2014; 22 September, 2014; 4 November, 2014; 6 November, 2014 & 21 January, 2014). I was also made aware of problems related to female reproductive health (Field notes, 28 July, 2014 & 17 October, 2014). Generally, at least one child residing in the community was sick on any given day during the data collection period.

On one occasion, I observed the mother from the first family I met in the community walking down the street (Field notes, 29 July, 2014). Her hair was covered and she was wearing pink pyjama pants topped by a nightdress and dressing gown (*ibid*). She greeted me and went into a neighbour's house. I was aware that this mother had been ill although, the week before, she had told me she was feeling better the and would be well soon. I comment to the mother of the family I was at the time that her neighbour was still looking quite sickly. I was informed that the person I had observed had tuberculosis (TB)[35] (*ibid*). My informant continued to note that the mother in question had been sick for a very long time now, which was why she was so thin (*ibid*). Apparently, she went to the clinic once a week to collect medication, and occasionally saw a doctor for a check-up. The person suffering from TB had informed me that she could not afford to go to a 'real' doctor where the term 'real' was being contrasted with the care available in the state-run clinic (Field notes, 22 July, 2014). The long waiting periods in the clinic were noted along with the fact that although one was guaranteed a consultation with a nurse on a clinic visit, only on rare occasions was it possible to see a qualified medical doctor.

Another mother of three children in the community had been diagnosed with a severe heart condition (Field notes, 21 July, 2014). This meant that she had been forced to leave her work as a nurse after the birth of her first child (Field notes, 22 July, 2014). This woman informed me that she had loved her job, but the arduous work load and stress it involved had led to a heart attack before her 30th birthday (Field notes, 21 July, 2014). She said that since she could not work, her husband had to work longer hours to make up for the money she had been providing to the family (*ibid*).

[35] Tuberculosis (TB) is a highly infectious disease that is commonly associated with HIV and AIDS in South Africa.

One of the main concerns expressed by this woman in our conversation was around the fact that she did not want her family to fall further into debt (*ibid*). As I indicated in Chapter Five, many schools in South Africa charge fees. This woman had managed to arrange a discount with her children's school, but had been unable to keep up the payments even with the discount (Field notes, 22 September, 2014). She said the school had arranged for a lawyer to contact her, and they had now agreed on lower monthly payments (*ibid*). In spite of this, the woman did not think her family could afford even the newly agreed monthly payment (*ibid*). However, since it had been such a struggle to get her daughter enrolled in this particular school and to buy the uniform and other equipment needed, the woman was unwilling to keep her child away from school solely because the family could not afford the monthly fees (*ibid*).

In this example, we can see how the determination on the part of one family to provide education of a slightly better quality for their child was being affected by ill health which, possibly, could have been ameliorated with better quality health care. Structural conditions were therefore impacting on the quality of schooling available to this child in spite of the family's valuing of high quality schooling.

Viral infections such as colds and flu were very common amongst the children and adolescents (Field notes, 21 July, 2014; 25 July; 28 July, 2014; 29 July, 2014; 11 August, 2014; 14 August, 2014; 19 August, 2014; 22 August, 2014; 23 August, 2014; 26 August, 2014; 9 September, 2014; 15 September, 2014; 22 September, 2014; 4 November, 2014 & 21 January, 2014). They were also spread to mothers and grandmothers, as these were the ones to comfort and tend to sick children in overcrowded living conditions. Such infections were initially treated with home remedies, made from water and an assortment of herbs. However, these small ailments often lead to more acute problems such as chest infections and bronchitis (Field notes, 19 August, 2014). At this stage, the child would be taken to the clinic for a check-up and be provided with some medication. The medications would more often than not be very basic painkillers or cough syrups since the nurses were not able to prescribe medications with a higher schedule[36] without

authorisation from a doctor (Field notes, 29 July, 2014). As previously noted, it was quite rare for those attending a clinic to see an actual doctor. If the issue escalated past what could be dealt with in the clinic, they would be admitted to a governmental hospital (Field notes, 26 January, 2015).

Children would often be kept home from school if they were unwell. The teachers would also contact parents to fetch their children from school if they were sick, to avoid the spread of infection (Field notes, 23 August, 2014). Parents were generally not be able to collect the children from school during the morning because of the cost of taxi fares or the need to complete other tasks. As a result, the sick child would have to wait until the end of the school day when he or she would be brought home by siblings or other members of the extended family (Field notes, 22 September, 2014). If an older child was ill, younger children would also not attend school at least for the first day of ill health, as their older sibling was not available to accompany them on the journey to school and it was often not possible to secure a replacement chaperone at short notice (Field notes, 17 October, 2014). If one of the older children were sick for more than a few days, the parents would try to arrange for the younger to be accompanied by another older child or by an adult who had the time. This normally came at an additional financial cost or involved the need to barter a favour such as baby-sitting in the following few days (Field notes, 14 August, 2014 & 22 September, 2014). But by the time alternative arrangements were made, younger children would often have missed at least one day of schooling. Since minor infections were common, absence from school either because the child was ill or because of the ill health of an older sibling, absences from school were relatively frequent. On occasions, other children would be able to collect work for the sick child to complete at home. This only happened, however, if the teacher was invested enough to offer assistance. One household did try to arrange for work to be sent home for their children as they were sick frequently. However, the possibility of having work sent home was not guaranteed, and children were normally expected to catch up on the work they had missed upon their return to crowded classrooms. It is not difficult to see, therefore, how minor ailments and the rudimentary health care available were of the mechanisms leading to children falling behind at school.

[36] Medicines in South Africa are classified under a system where Schedule one and two medications are available over the counter to anyone that can afford them. Schedule three or higher can only be obtained when a formal doctors prescription has been provided to the patient.

Another common problem involved lice infestations (Field notes, 22 September, 2014 & 23 August, 2014). During an afternoon conversation with two mothers from different homes, one mother commented that her daughter had been playing with a neighbour's child who had been sent home from school following the discovery of lice in her hair (Field notes, 23 August, 2014). The neighbour's child, who attended a much better resourced school than that attended by the daughter of my informant, had been provided with shampoo intended to kill lice and had been prevented from returning to school until the lice had been completely eradicated (*ibid*). My informant commented that she hoped her daughter had not been infested as she not did have the 'right stuff' to kill the lice (*ibid*). The school her children attended was not so well resourced and parents were expected to meet the cost of dealing with infestations.

In the course of the conversation, the women laughed and asked if I understood that they are talking about lice, I said I did (*ibid*). They went on to explain to me what lice looked like, and told me they made 'your hair itchy' (*ibid*). The woman providing the explanation played with her hair imitating the action of picking something small off her scalp (*ibid*). The other mother laughed saying since she had heard of the lice problem with the neighbour's daughter, she now thought that any itch she had was due to lice (*ibid*).

Even though lice are a common problem in most schools, the lack of resources to deal with them meant that infestations spread quickly. As a result, children were often kept home from school regardless of whether or not they had contracted lice as parents generally tried to avoid infestation by isolating their children. When a lice infestation did occur, children would often need to wait for their family to have the means of dealing with it. Sometimes, I observed families using collective agency to share the cost of purchasing shampoo to eradicate infestations. Regardless of efforts made, a simple problem such as head lice meant that children lost schooling.

I also observed problems related to menstruation and school attendance (Field notes, 17 October, 2014). On one visit, and having noticed that a teenage daughter was not at school, I asked

whether she was suffering from a cold or flu as the smaller children in the family had succumbed to a cold the previous week. The young woman did not reply but rather looked to her mother for a response. My experience of this young woman was that she usually shared information and opinions easily. On this occasion, however, she looked to her mother for assistance. The mother replied that, as the young woman was menstruating, she could not attend school explaining that, during this time, it was not 'good' for her to leave the house and that she needed to stay home until the bleeding had ceased (*ibid*). In this case, what would appear to be cultural beliefs related to a normal bodily function were preventing a young woman from attending school.

According to Kelland, Paphitis & Macleod (2017), the challenges experienced by women in relation to menstruation on the African continent overall are widely misinterpreted. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Kelland et al, 2017) estimates that 1 out of 10 adolescent girls on the African continent do not attend school whilst menstruating. This social group also has a much higher chance of abandoning education as a result of problems and misconceptions related to menstruation (*ibid*). Problems are related to not being able to afford sanitary products and the development of infections as a result of having to make use of substitutes for sanitary products such as newspapers, rags and leaves. Researchers found that adolescent girls who did attend school were fearful of leaks when using substitutes for sanitary products and of not being afforded the privacy to clean and/or dry themselves. This then resulted the in experience of anxiety and shame with regard to the menstrual cycle and adolescents reported preferring not attend school or to drop out altogether in order to avoid the negative social stigma.

Kelland *et al.* (2017, p. 38) go on to note that:

> 'Social science and public health also confirms that menstruation is often and largely associated with negative and symbolic accusations: the menstruating body is frequently associated with contamination, illness, filth and impurity. It is also often surrounded by a culture of silence and a network of taboos, which are themselves informed by culture, religious and social norms.'

Notwithstanding, South Africa has begun to address these issues. At the start of 2017, KwaZulu Natal was the first province in South Africa to provide free sanitary products to young women enrolled at impoverished schools as the result of a government-initiated programme. The African National Congress led government stated that this was instituted in order to address the problem of low school attendance of menstruating learners (Sinqobile, 2017). However, even though the government has may have begun to address the cost of buying sanitary products, the negative stigma attached to the menstruating body still prevails. This would appear to be the case for the young woman I encountered on my visit.

While health related matters impacted on schooling because of access to health services and the cost of medication, it can also be seen that discourses in the domain of culture were also involved in the interplay of mechanisms leading to absences from school and the experience and observation of community members that such absences were appropriate.

### 6.2.3 *Alcohol use and domestic violence*

I have included this sub-section on alcohol use in the section on Financial Indigence, as I believe they are linked. I believe that the use of alcohol and instances of domestic violence (themselves often linked) emerge from the conditions in which members of the community found themselves. From a critical realist perspective, therefore, I am arguing that the financial system, along with structures related to apartheid, lead to the emergence of events involving the use of alcohol which are then linked to domestic violence as, discursively, alcohol becomes a means of dealing with the situation in which members of the community found themselves.

Levels of alcohol use were relatively high within the community and, as I have indicated, these were then linked to domestic violence (Field notes, 22 July, 2014; 28 July, 2014; 19 September, 2014; 23 August, 2014; 16 October, 2014; 28 October, 2014 & 6 November, 2014). This was particularly the case during the weekends when many of the adults would drink excessively (Field notes, 22 July& 28 October, 2014).

It was my observation that activities such as alcohol consumption and smoking generally started at a young age, with 7 out of the 9 homes containing family member that were daily smokers. Values related to smoking and the consumption of alcohol made both activities acceptable in spite of their cost in a context of great need.

There were a few occasions where I was unable to visit the homes, or conduct interviews as a result of one or more of the family members either suffering from a hangover, or being heavily under the influence of alcohol at the time of my arrival (Field notes, 17 October, 2014; 19 October, 2014; 20 October, 2014). Nonetheless, some families noted that they did not drink at all for financial, health or religious reasons. What was apparent, therefore, was that different sets of discursively constructed values were at play in the domain of culture. Excessive use of alcohol had reached the point where some families had reached the point of desperation in dealing with the consequences. These families regularly had to deal with the effects of drinking on a daily basis including domestic abuse, job loss, not being able to assist around the home or spending money meant for food, miscellaneous items and general amenities on alcohol.

In noting these effects, arguably alcohol and cigarette consumption has emerged from a set of values that have not only contributed to this consumption being acceptable, but also desirable over the years. Older members of the community grew up with these behaviours being common place, and values and attitudes towards them have been cemented though the generations (Filed notes, 23 August 2014). Community members draw on these values which, in turn, drive their behaviour. The values impact on what needs are considered a necessity and which are not. As a result, many members chose to spend their money on cigarettes and alcohol in preference to goods that others over that of others may have deemed more essential. Although some community members did not consider the consumption of cigarettes and alcohol as a basic need, their use in the amelioration of day to day living conditions was widely acknowledged. In many respects, in critical realist terms, addiction could be considered a mechanism at the level of the *Real* contributing to the emergence of behaviours (conceptualised as events that continued even though the negative consequences were very apparent.

In the time that I was a regular visitor, the car guards would drink on a daily basis. On Fridays, they would share the cost of a five-litre box of wine, or 'papsak'[37], bring one glass from one of their homes and sit next the parking lot while watching the cars (Field notes, 12 September, 2014). Each person would be allowed to consume a full glass of wine as quickly as possible, then refill it and pass it on to the next member until the box was finished, a process that occupied most of the afternoon (*ibid*). During this activity, a few of the women would also come and drink. Whilst this was happening, the children would play with what they could find around them. This often involved playing with rubbish left on informal dumpsite next to the river (*ibid*).

The effects of alcohol abuse were omnipresent in the community. The grandmother of one of the families informed me that her parents had not grown up in the area (Field notes, 23 August, 2014). They had been farm workers in a smaller coastal town, located approximately an hour away from Port Elizabeth. At this time, one of the main forms of payment for farm workers was alcohol, as per the 'dop system', in place of a full monetary wage (Schneider, Norman, Parry, Bradshaw & Pluddemann, 2007). Her family had gained a reputation in the community for excessive drinking if money allowed (Field notes, 14 October, 2014 & 28 October, 2014). The grandmother's oldest brother had been born with foetal alcohol syndrome as a result of his mother's drinking during her pregnancy. The grandmother felt that now her brother was a burden, as he had not found, and would not be able to find, work or contribute to the family as a result of his condition (Field notes, 20 October, 2014). He would often wander off into town and remain away, sometimes overnight (*ibid*). Sometimes his brother was sent to find him, or the police would bring him back to the community (*ibid*). The man had been sent for treatment at a government funded psychiatric hospital, and had been provided with medication (*ibid*). His older brother felt that he benefited from the stay in hospital and thought that he should live there permanently (*ibid*). The man was often found at the clinic, as this is where his sister would accompany him to collect his medication once a week and he knew the route well (*ibid*).

There were also instances where drunken behaviour meant that a community member would have to contact the authorities (Field notes, 22 July; 19 September, 2014; 23 August, 2014 & 6 November, 2014).

[37] 'Papsak' is an Afrikaans word for a 'flat-bag', which is a foil bag that contains a cheap wine.

These unpleasant situations typically resulted in arrests and future court dates. Here family members were forced to bring charges against their kin in order to protect the younger members of the family, as well as their own wellbeing. In these cases, children were often sent to live with relatives in other parts of Port Elizabeth, or even with grandparents in other towns, for varied periods of time until the host family could no longer support them, or the problems had been resolved (Field notes, 5 August, 2014 & 19 September, 2014).

The police were called on as a last resort when community members simply were not able to cope. On a few occasions while I was visiting, I became aware that the police had been called to attend to a problem involving intoxication (Field notes, 22 July; 19 September, 2014; 23 August, 2014 & 6 November, 2014). However, talk of the police coming into the community at times when I was not present, such as evenings or weekends, was pervasive.

One young mother had had her children taken away by their grandmother who lived in another town because of her constant drinking (Field notes, 19 September, 2014). The mother was residing in the community at the start of the study, but had obtained a job and moved closer to her place of work during the course of the data collection. The grandmother visited the community regularly over weekends and holidays. During the study, she decided to move back to the community with her grandchildren. She said that the house in the community was registered in her name and there had been talk that the government and/or private investors wanted to move them to another area with newer homes (Field notes, 22 August, 2014). The information regarding this move seemed quite problematic as there was very little formal information being disseminated through the community.

According to the grandmother, her grandchildren were suffering as a result of their parent's addictions and, as a result, the grandmother had felt that she had no choice but to intervene (Field notes, 14 October, 2014). The grandmother's eldest daughter (that is, the sister of the mother who drank excessively) had contacted her stating that the family could no longer cope with her daughter's drinking without help, and had said that the grandmother was the only person who would be able to intervene. I was witness a few of the phone calls between the mother suffering from alcohol addiction and her youngest son, who was four years old (Field notes, 21 January, 2015). She would apologise to him for not being able to be with him.

She would cry saying she wanted to be a better mother. The son, even at such a young age, would reply that she must 'not stress' as it was not good for her (*ibid*). He would tell her not to worry since he was being well looked after by his grandmother and his aunts, and would be able to see her at the weekend for a visit.

On the few occasions that I spent time with this mother, her boyfriend stated that they knew they both had a problem with drinking (Field notes, 19 October, 2014). He said that they used alcohol in order to make themselves happier and reduce stress levels, given the conditions in which they found themselves (*ibid*). The mother confided in me that, when she had been drinking, she could forget about her problems for a while and noted that she knew of no other way of coping as alcohol had become a daily crutch. She said that she tried not to drink as much when the children were around, as her sisters had confronted her numerous times about the problem and she understood that it was not good to allow her children to see her in an inebriated condition (Field notes, 24 October, 2014). She noted that the situation had become so severe, that her sisters had contacted the police on numerous occasions in an attempt to try and ameliorate the situation. The youngest of her sisters had confided in me that, on one such occasion her older sister had become so highly intoxicated she had threatened her with a knife if she did not provide her with money for more alcohol (Field notes, 19 September, 2014). All sharp objects were hidden in the home from then onwards. The youngest sister was the only family member with a stable job at the time, and was providing financial support to her sisters, their children, and a few extended family members who were also living at the house. At this point the police had been contacted in order to obtain a restraining order from being in the community or near any members of the family (Field notes, 19 September, 2014 & 14 October, 2014). The sister with the addition had, however, managed to find some work and, after a short time, was allowed to move back into the community (Field notes, 19 October, 2014). Subsequently, she was able to find a small apartment in town with her boyfriend, and the two children left to live with them. However, the children were sent back to live with their grandmother and aunts soon after this move. The mother and the boyfriend had decided, and the family had agreed, that their current lifestyle was not conducive to rearing the children and it would be in their best interest to move back to the community. The mother would, however, visit at weekends, and still tried to assist with her children's financial needs whenever she could.

The examples I have provided show the effects of alcohol abuse very clearly. Families were broken up and lives disrupted with the result that children were sent to live elsewhere, often several times. This then impacted on schooling since a move to a different location might mean that attendance at the school at which the child was registered was difficult or impossible.

Domestic abuse was often associated with alcohol abuse in the community although this was so prevalent that it sometimes occurred without intoxication.

One of the older mothers, whose child had since left home, informed me that she had lived in the community for a long time (Field notes, 22 July, 2014). She wanted to move and was waiting for another home from the City Council (*ibid*). She was unsure of her status as a householder as she did not know whether the house she occupied was actually registered in her name (*ibid*). In our conversation, she confided that her partner had moved into the home she occupied about five years ago having previously lived nearby with his family (*ibid*). Although she had not shared her concerns with her partner, she explained that she suspected he may have changed the names on documents entitling her to the house with the Council (*ibid*). All the children in her home had different mothers or fathers, a situation she described as a 'bit of a mix up'. The woman and her partner had had a child together about four years ago (Field notes, 22 July, 2014). I was informed that the woman had not wanted this child to grow up in the community with her, as they thought it was too dangerous and, in any case, she could not afford to look after a child and wanted better for her *(ibid*). She had delivered the baby by herself at home, but she informed me that the baby 'came out perfect' (*ibid*). Following the birth, she had given her child up for adoption to a 'wealthy' family who could not have children of their own (*ibid*). It was felt by the birth parents and the adoptive parents that the adoption was better for all. Her partner had been upset by this decision as he felt that assistance would have been available from his own family and, if he and the woman had supported each other they could have managed to care for the child (*ibid*). After much discussion, the woman had managed to convince her partner that the adoption would be best for the baby's future (*ibid*). Her eldest son who, by the time of our conversation, was in his 20s had wanted to keep in contact with the family as the baby would be his only sibling (*ibid*). For this reason, he had loaded the Facebook application onto his cell phone and would show his mother pictures of her daughter (*ibid*). She herself did not keep in contact with the adoptive family but was happy to see the pictures (*ibid*).

She said it made her happy to see how well her daughter was doing but emphasised how much she did not want to have the baby living with her in the area (*ibid*).

The woman continued our conversation by noting that she had endured 'a rough life' in the community (Field notes, 22 July 2014). She detailed some 'horror stories' of women being physically abused and murdered in other areas of the Port Elizabeth (*ibid*). She cited two of the victims by name, and explained the circumstances in which they had been found (*ibid*). She then admitted that her previous partner had been very abusive towards her, and felt happy that her current partner was a 'good man' (*ibid*). Her eldest son had moved into his father's home in a safer suburb at a young age as she had been concerned about his safety in her home in the community (*ibid*). She noted she also did not have the financial means to care for him as she could not find work (*ibid*). Her last partner used to hit her on her lower back, and this had resulted in chronic, daily back pain (*ibid*). She treated her pain with 'at least two 'Grandpa's[38]' every day whenever she could afford to buy this over-the-counter pain killing remedy (*ibid*). If she could not afford the remedy, she would ask to be able to pay at a later stage or, if not provided with credit, would suffer for the day, and not be able to leave the couch. The woman confided that, in disputes, she would ask her previous partner to hit her on her lower back since she thought it would be better than being hit on her front which would leave her internal organs exposed to the blows (*ibid*). Although the woman claimed to be strong for her size and able to fight off her abusive partner much of the time, she confided that, on the last occasion before they had parted ways, she had been concerned for her life (*ibid*). She had managed to leave the house and shouted for someone to help her, but no one walking in the street stopped to assist (*ibid*). In addition, no one else in the community had come out of their homes to assist her (*ibid*). She had called the police but they had classed the incident as a domestic dispute and would not come to the woman's assistance (*ibid*). The woman had, however, been assisted by a student who had been driving past and who had stopped to assist (*ibid*). The student eventually took her to the hospital (*ibid*). She considered assistance from this passer-by as good fortune rather than a right and noted that the degree of violence that she had had to deal with previously played a deciding role in deciding whether to keep her baby or put her up for adoption (*ibid*).

[38] Grandpa's Powders are a South African pain killing remedy widely sold in spaza shops and general dealers.

One family withdrew from the study as a result of the level of domestic violence within the home. One of the children, who was of school going age, was removed from the home by members of extended family who resided closer to the school (Field notes, 28 October, 2014). The other, younger, child was sent to spend time with neighbours during the day, as he had not yet begun school. The mother did not want the children to witness any further altercations between their grandparents. The police were contacted in order to obtain a restraining order against the grandfather, as he would physically abuse the grandmother when he was intoxicated. Since he had no other place to live, he remained in the home, even though the restraining order was in place.

It is axiomatic that living in these types of environments can be highly damaging and stressful for children that have to deal with the consequences of alcoholism and domestic violence. In the community, children were often exposed to scenes of violent, uncontrolled drunken behaviour, and had to witness relatives being arrested and removed from their homes. During periods when these situations became inflamed, one of the caregivers or parents would usually try to remove the child from the situation as timeously as possible. These children would often be sent to stay with family in other areas, or would spend afternoons with neighbours in the community.

In many of these cases the children would be left not knowing how to deal with the circumstances in which they found themselves. Research identifies domestic violence and alcoholism as being highly prevalent in marginalised communities in South Africa, with women and children being the worst affected (see, for example, Barbarin, Richter, & de Wet, 2001). The negative environments can have dire consequences for the future of children dealing with the problems they encounter including deeply embedded psychological trauma, Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and associated behavioural problems (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). After exposure, children generally experience psychological side effects such as aggression, depression, ‘acting out’ and anxiety (Barbarin et al, 2001). These side effects can cause long term social and psychological problems, which can lower the level of their ability to process information, hinder their literacy and educational development and, ultimately, place even higher limitations on future (Barbarin et al, 2001).

### 6.2.4 *Crime and safety*

Some of the most socially destructive problems reported by the community were the high levels of crime with which they had to deal on a daily basis. The levels of crime within the community generally included burglary, petty theft from gardens and muggings on the walk to the taxi station or to town (Field notes, 28 October, 2014; 4 November, 2014 & 21 January 2014). However, more serious matters such as grievous bodily harm and murder had also been reported in the community over the years (Field notes, 22 July, 2014 & 28 July 2014).

High level of suspicion towards strangers on the street were obvious to me on my visits. In spite of some of the problems I have identified thus far in this Chapter, families in the community were closely knit, if not related, in many cases and this permitted for interaction between the children on most days. However, safety concerns limited the amount of freedom afforded to the children in terms of interacting with their immediate environment and some of their neighbours. Parents were extremely vigilant in respect of their children's safety, and children would be scolded for being late from school.

During one of the recorded interviews (Interview 2; 14 November, 2014), one mother noted:

> '… It's very important to have the foundations. Yah they understand. And when I was staying in 'an area of Port Elizabeth[39], Christopher[40] ran up with his cousin and friend to the Donkin. They were out the whole day, came back, give them a hiding[41]. The next time he didn't do it. Now you can't hit a children (sic) anymore. Then it's a whole police case and what, what.'

This short extract provides an example of the concern for a child's safety typical community members. In this instance, the mother responds to her son's absence by giving him a 'hiding' as a form of discipline. Furthermore, this mother problematises the issue of discipline. South African law no longer permits corporal punishment and allows for parents to be charged if found guilty (De wet, 2017).

[39] The area name has been removed, as it is close proximity to the community.
[40] Her son's name has been changed to protect their identity.
[41] A 'Hiding' refers to being smacked on the buttocks as a means of discipline.

The change in law resulted from the high number of domestic abuse cases justified as an attempt to correct or teach a child (*ibid*). At the time when I was completing my study, the law had not yet been finalised. Nonetheless, it was my distinct impression that members of the community would not have hesitated in contacting the police if they felt that corporal punishment had been taken too far. The fact that my informant, in the short extract quoted above, did give her son a 'hiding' can be understood in the context of her extreme fear for his safety on the day he was missing.

One of the oldest members of the community, a grandmother in her 80's would tell me daily that I needed to be careful on my walk through the community (Field notes, 5 August, 2014 & 21 January, 2015). She often used this warning as a parting piece of advice, insisting that I should walk quickly without becoming distracted. She said she afraid because of the crime rate in the area and was quite reluctant to leave her home in general (Field notes, 21 July, 2014 & 21 January, 2015). She always ensured that her security gate was locked at all times and kept the key in a pocket on the front of her dress, which she would hold onto while walking outside of the house (*ibid*). The woman needed to take medication daily for a chronic condition and would have to leave her house to collect supplies of the drugs prescribed regularly (Field notes, 21 July 2014). As she did not like to leave her home, she paid another member of the community a small fee to collect her medication for her from the clinic (Field notes, 7 August, 2014). Her concern for safety filtered into her interaction with her 6-year-old grandchild. She displayed a highly protective nature towards her, saying she was little and would be easy target if left to walk on her own (Field notes, 21 January, 2015). The grandmother would not allow her granddaughter to leave the house without being accompanied by an adult, or an adolescent that she knew personally (Field notes, 7 August, 2014). She would only permit the child to play outside the house in the front or the rear garden, and only under strict supervision. The grandmother also preferred other children to visit the house, but was content for the grandchild to visit their extended family in another house in the community so that she could play with her cousins in the afternoons.

On my first meeting with one of the older white mothers, she indicated to me that she grown up in a middle-class home (Field notes, 22 July,2014). She continued to say that her choices in life had not always been wise and, as a result, she had taken a path along which she could not return (*ibid*).

She had an adult son and a baby daughter. Although neither lived with her in the time I spent in the community, her son would visit occasionally. This woman also told me that she no longer liked to leave her home because of negative experiences of crime and violence (*ibid*). During this meeting, she asked if I had walked to her home (*ibid*). I replied that I had as it only took about 30 minutes from where I was living to walk to the community (*ibid*). She asked if I was not scared to walk by myself (*ibid*). I told her no, that it was not far and there were many other people on the road on which I walked (*ibid*). It was mid-morning at the time, and I informed her that I would not walk after dark (*ibid*). She advised that I must be careful and insisted that I should not engage with people I do not know (*ibid*). She went on to inform me that her partner did the shopping and had, in fact, just returned from town before I arrived, as she did not like to leave her home (*ibid*). Even though the woman did, occasionally, visit her boyfriend's family in another house down the road in the same community, she informed me she far preferred to have visitors in her own home to leaving it to visit others (*ibid*).

The same mother informed me that she used to work as a bartender in one of the taverns in the area but that she had given up her job as it had become quite dangerous (*ibid*). She had then decided to start her own business selling small foodstuff from a 'spaza' shop (*ibid*). She said she ran the shop just outside her front door for about 5 years (*ibid*). In our conversation, she pointed to a dishevelled cardboard stand leaning against the chipped paint wall. It read 'coffee and tea bags 50c'. The woman informed me that she had been forced to give up her business about 6 months prior to our conversation (*ibid*). She told me her house had been broken into over the December holidays in the early hours of the morning, not the first time she had been burgled since she had moved to the community (*ibid*). On this occasion, the majority of her stock for the spaza shop had been stolen. Since she had worked on a day-to-day basis when it came to purchasing stock, she would only have been able to purchase more items if she had been able to sell the stock that had been stolen (*ibid*). She therefore had no choice but to close her spaza shop, as she could not recover her losses. As a result, the woman now had to rely her boyfriend, who worked as a car guard, for financial support. She informed me she could not provide for her children, which is why they no longer resided did with her (*ibid*).

The community was in general agreement about crime in the area. All members felt that they were equally vulnerable, and would take precautions to avoid becoming victims of crime.

Even the fathers noted that there were certain routes they did not like to have to walk, especially at night, but they always did not have the luxury of choice. From the community, the most direct route to reach the taxi rank in town was through the valley. This route was not well lit at night and was known for the number of muggings that regularly took place. The main targets of these, sometimes violent, attacks were women and children, who frequently needed treatment from a hospital or clinic as a result of their injuries. I was informed that many of the attacks during the early evening, or at night (Field notes, 4 November, 2014).

A few mothers noted that fear of attack was the reason they would allow their children the freedom to play outside only during daylight hours. Once dusk fell, children were called inside. Some children were not allowed to play outside their homes at any time, and were kept indoors unless there was an adult to watch over them. None of the children were allowed to leave the community by themselves, be it during the day or at night. An older adolescent or an adult would accompany them. Some families would even insist on their children being accompanied when walking between homes. What can be seen therefore is that the discourse of fear prevalent in the community had scared many residents into isolating themselves within their homes.

The younger fathers stated that they would retaliate if they were attacked. These younger men were particularly vulnerable to attack as they often had to carry their day's earnings home with them. Few members of the community had bank accounts because of the insecurity of their living conditions and because, even had they been allowed an account, banking charges were perceived to be prohibitive. If the men were relieved of their pay, they were unable to provide for their families for that day. If they sustained injuries as a result of the attack, depending on their severity, they needed time to recover before returning to work. A mugging might therefore mean that children would not have light to complete their homework in the evening as purchases of electricity were made on a day to day basis. There would also be a chance that they would not receive a proper meal before attending school the following day. In a more severe situation, it could mean that the breadwinner in the family would be incapacitated for a longer period and the family would have to make other arrangements to maintain the household until the injured person could return to work. This could lead to an even greater need for money for household costs, purchases for school, medical care and transportation.

The discourse of fear not only contributed to the emergence of practices intended to keep children from harm by isolating them within homes but also hindered the freedom of adults themselves. As a result, parents were reluctant to attend meetings and extra-curricular activities scheduled in the evenings. This meant, for example, that parents did not attend meetings with teachers to discuss their children's progress. It also meant that parents were reluctant to become involved in school governance. Since the 1994 election, enormous emphasis has been placed on participation by parents in structures such as School Governing Bodies (SGBs). The parents in the community, already disadvantaged by other socio-economic factors including as their own educational background, were further impeded from becoming involved in their children's education because of the fear that pervaded their lives.

#### 6.2.5 *Gangsterism*

Other forms of crime also affected the community, but most notably that of gangsterism which can be considered a form of organised crime was of high concern (Field notes, 16 September, 2014).

Gangsterism was mainly a problem in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth, but had also permeated into the central business district and its neighbouring areas. Many of the families from the community had extended families and friends living in the northern areas with whom, as I have indicated, children were sometimes sent to stay and where some children attended school. The community itself was located on the border of a neighbouring suburb well known for violent crime, drug use as well as human trafficking, activities that, more often than not, were also gang related. Awareness of such forms of organised crime contributed to the discourse of fear I have already noted as prevalent in the community.

One Mother informed me that on most weekends she and her family would go to visit relatives in the northern areas (Field notes, 5 August, 2014). On another occasion she noted that they had begun to visit less regularly as a result of gang related violence. She recounted a recent experience where she had attended a braai[42] with her extended family.

[42] 'Braai' is the Afrikaans word for 'barbeque', or cooking on an open fire.

She said they had heard what they thought to be gunshots, and one of the men had gone to investigate the commotion. Once he had returned, he informed the family group, who had taken shelter indoors, that a 'turf war' was taking place just a few metres up the street and they would have to wait until it had subsided until they could leave for home. She said that this experience had resulted in her family being fearful of visiting the area and that she found this saddening as many of her family members lived there. She noted that she had once sent her adolescent son to visit the extended family over the weekends but now this was no longer possible as she feared for his safety.

Gangster-related activities extended into many structures, one of the most prominent being the schools in the Northern Areas. There was little gang activity in the community itself, but they were still affected as a result of having many relatives residing in the Northern Areas (Field notes, 16 September, 2014). Gangs were known to target older primary school children as well as high school children. Some schools in the area had employed guards in an attempt restrict entry to unwanted visitors and to avoid the classrooms from being burgled as theft was common problem. The employment of guards only protected children who were within the confines of the school grounds during school hours. As a result, the guards did not serve as a deterrent to the recruitment of children, as gang members would wait for the children in more concealed areas outside the school grounds. Here, they would approach the children, and offer to purchase articles of branded clothing, alcohol or drugs in exchange for services such as small-scale drug trafficking. The items that were given to these children could also considered as bribes and the children would then be 'indebted' to the gang. If they resisted membership, the children would be threaded with violence. As a result, some children became familiar with gang lifestyles from a young age, and once considered a gang member, it would very difficult for them to divorce themselves from the group.

One mother explained to me that her younger brother had started to become involved with a gang. She blamed their level of poverty for her brother taking interest in the lifestyle. He was residing with their grandmother who was paying for his schooling and living expenses and had requested a new pair of branded shoes, which the grandmother and mother had said were too expensive for them to afford. A few days later, he arrived home with the new of pair shoes and stated that one of his older friends from outside school had bought them for him. The mother had said she was worried about her younger brother as he was just starting high school and knew the man who had

purchased the shoes for him to draw him into one of the gangs in the area. She noted that he was young and wanted things that his friends had but his family could not afford to give him. She said all they could do was talk to him about it, and alert him to the dangers of becoming part of a gang. She continued to say that he was stubborn when they tried to explain the seriousness of the problem, and he just did not understand the implications of what he had done. Her brother had already informed his family that he wanted to drop out of school as he was doing poorly, and felt that he could make better use of time by working full time. The woman concluded that it would be difficult for them to make sure he stayed in school so that he could obtain a final year pass, which was a highly-valued achievement in the family and the wider community.

In these examples, one can begin to note a discourse, identified elsewhere in my study, associated with a value system connected to the ownership of consumer goods. Gang members understand that children from poorer homes are likely to be tempted by goods their families cannot afford, but the children have a desire to own. This points to a discursively constructed belief system amongst children that values consumer goods more than attending school and avoiding becoming involved in gang activity.

### 6.2.6 *Educational related costs*

The ill effects of financial indigence on education were high in this community, and were noted in every household. A middle-aged mother informed me that she wanted to send her 5-year-old son to a nearby crèche. However, the fees for the crèche were R400 a month, more expensive than the cost of her daughter's primary schooling in the northern areas of the city (Field notes, 4 August, 2014). The woman explained that affording her daughter's school fees was difficult enough without even contemplating paying those of the crèche (*ibid*). The woman went on to tell me that finding a space for a child in a pre-school was often a problem but that she thought that the crèche in question prioritised giving space to those who could pay over those that needed to be subsidised, such as her own child. The woman informed me that she could see how much her son wanted to play with children his own age when she had taken him to the creche to enquire about enrolment. As fees were such a problem, her plans were to keep him at home for the time being and then to

send him to a reception class in one of the more affordable schools in the northern areas the following year. I was told that although her son would enjoy attending the crèche, the family did not have the money to pay for an additional year's schooling.

In homes where parents have low levels of education and precarious living conditions, pre-schooling can be enormously important in preparing a child for the more formal classroom (Barnett, 1998). Many of the parents in the community appeared to appreciate this, but were unable to follow through on their concern for their children because of the cost.

In many of the homes, there was a lack of paper or books for the children to utilise (Field notes, 19 August, 2014; 15 September, 2014 & 4 November, 2015). As a result, children made use of walls or fences on which to draw. I only started to notice the drawings when one of community members commented that the white wash they had used on their small wooden gate had not covered their child's drawings. I then began to look more closely at the exteriors of the rest of the homes, and saw some pictures along with some of the older children's names scribbled or scraped on exterior walls or on the partitions between the houses. When I asked the children to explain the pictures or enquired who had drawn them, I was conscious of a reluctance to respond possibly because of feelings of guilt or fear of punishment. The parents generally did not like the children to draw on the walls since they could not remove their artwork, and could only whitewash their walls when paint had been donated.

One family informed me that they had an agreement with a city dump worker (Field notes, 22 September, 2014). They explained to him what they needed and asked him to look for these items during his workday (*ibid*). He would then bring over the items of interest and, depending on the condition of the item, they would haggle to find a price that the family could afford. If they desperately wanted the item, but could not pay the asking price, they would exchange items that the father had fixed and they did not need at the time. The same family also would swop items at the second hand shop for items they needed (*ibid*). For example, the family had been given an angel fish and tank for their children by a friend at church. On one visit, I noticed that the fish tank was no longer on the shelf in the lounge and enquired of its whereabouts. I was informed that the oldest daughter had wanted to play hockey at school and the school would not supply the

sports equipment for her (Field notes, 22 October, 2014). When the mother went to price hockey sticks at the second-hand shop, the cheapest she could find was for R50. This was too expensive, but she was able to make a direct exchange of the fish and the fish tank for the hockey stick and thus, enable her daughter to engage in an after-school activity.

### 6.2.7 *Financial indigence and marginalisation*

I will conclude this section on the financial status of members of the community by discussing its relationship to their marginalised status. Clearly, a lack of financial means along with other apartheid related structures had led to their location in a group of dilapidated houses near the city centre. The daily lives of the community in this location were not the only events to emerge from the interplay of financial structures with other, apartheid-related, mechanisms such as housing policies. Ill health due to minor ailments left untreated was prevalent and the abuse of alcohol emerged as the result of the interplay of discourses related to perceptions regarding to its value in alleviating the problems of daily living. However, these same discourses did not only lead to alcohol abuse but, in conjunction with other mechanisms, for example the status of women in relation to men, also led to the emergence of incidents of domestic violence, crime and the experience of fear associated with such events.

For the children, the interplay of mechanisms I have identified in this section led to events impacting on their development. Bacterial, viral and parasitic infections led to absences from school and poor health. Domestic violence was not only associated with events such as children being sent away to stay with relatives but also the traumatic exposure to such events which could only impact on their well-being. Finally, crime and gangsterism led to experiences of fear, and to children not having the freedom to explore their environment in a way that might be conducive to learning. All this inevitably impacted on their development.

## 6.3 Family structures

It took a long time for me to try to unravel the different family structures in the community. In the home with the largest number of occupants, this was particularly challenging. I asked a twenty-four-year-old mother to help me draw a family tree of the household as I was so confused (Field notes, 5 August, 2014). She did not seem to understand what I wanted and said I should ask her mother (*ibid*). When I asked the older woman, she referred me back to her daughter saying she should tell me as a young child in the household was hers (*ibid*). Her daughter proceeded to inform me that she could not assist me beyond telling me who her own children were. The mother then prompted her daughter further, telling her I wanted to know how all the people who lived in the house were related (*ibid*).

As the daughter began to try to explain to me, it emerged that the understanding of relationships was not necessarily in relation to birth (in the sense of who had given birth to whom) but rather of who was responsible for a child. For example, I had thought that a girl and a boy were siblings or even twins (Field notes, 25 July, 2014). It later emerged that they were cousins. The older woman I had spoken to initially said the boy was hers. This confused me but, when I rephrased my question, it became apparent that this woman was responsible for the child while his birth mother, her daughter, was at work.

Links to and relationships with children were thus more tenuous than I had been accustomed to in my own family. The constraints of needing to work along with other problems such as domestic violence referred to earlier in this Chapter meant that relationships between parents and children were often disrupted. As a result, children could expect to experience a range of caregivers who might change almost on a daily basis. The implications of this for child rearing are profound. Even if, for example, a mother had completed secondary school, the chances of her staying at home with her child so that the child could benefit from being exposed to her own literacy practices were limited.

None of this is to say that children in the community were not loved as it was evident that they were. It was very apparent that they were cared for by all of the community. Nonetheless, the structural and cultural conditions in which they were being raised meant that parents could not necessarily

exercise their agency in ways which would allow them to devote time and attention to young children. This was more of result of their situation, than what they truly wanted for their children.

## 6.4 The constraints of geography

I have already described the geographical location of the houses in which the community resided in some detail in Chapter Five, along with the processes of 'gentrification' occurring in the immediate area.

The difference in the economic level of the community and those of the closest available amenities and retail outlets was very visible. As a result, daily travel to other areas of the city for shopping (Field notes, 28 July 2015; 29 July, 2014; 4 August, 2014 & 5 August, 2014; 7 August, 2014). Movement was constrained, however, as only one person owned a (functional) car and very few individuals had driving licenses. The remainder either walked, made use of lifts from cars on route, or used public minibus taxi system. None of these ways of moving out of the community were particularly safe but, in terms of providing access to cheaper goods, they were cost effective. Thanks to the processes of gentrification occurring around them, the standard of living in the community appeared to deteriorate steadily whilst their immediate surroundings continued to improve as a result of seemingly constant refurbishing of surrounding properties and a concomitant increase in property and business values.

Nearing the start of the time I spent in the community, I asked two mothers from one of the larger families what time they would normally have to get up in the morning to prepare for the day (Field notes, 1 August, 2014). The younger mother was quick to note that every day of the week, Monday to Sunday she would rise at 5am (*ibid*). This seemed to be a fairly common schedule for parents across the community. This was mainly attributed to having to undertake long commutes to places of work, to schools, to more affordable shopping areas, as well as to visit relatives. The mother informed me that the children were generally awoken first before she ensured that

everyone else was awake, bathed (only on designated bathing days[43]) and dressed (*ibid*). She said they would have to change the 'little ones' into dry clothes as their first chore in the morning (Field notes, 1 August, 2014). I asked if this meant that the toddlers wet their beds regularly. The mother was quick to reply that, on most nights, this was the case (*ibid*). Smaller children not always wear diapers every night since the cost of disposable products was very high. In addition, toilets were separate from the houses and could only be accessed by leaving through the back door. The children did not regularly go outside during the night without an adult to accompany them and, late at night, adults would be sleeping. The mothers would make sure that the children had something to eat, even it was something small before everyone left for school or work. The older children generally accompanied the younger ones on their walk to school. A few of the children would be walked to the taxi rank by an adult, who would return quickly to complete their chores for the day.

Their location in an area being 'gentrified' seemed to have brought about an increase in the level of entrepreneurship in the community. Adults had explored the area thoroughly in order to identify ways in which they could sustain themselves. Many of the adults would continually seek new ventures with the hope of improving their situation. Examples included the spaza shops run from the homes and an older man who constructed benches and pot plant holders for the nearby restaurants. As I have previously described, a group of younger men, mostly fathers, would watch the cars in the parking lot of the business area and a few of the women had found jobs washing dishes at the restaurants.

As I have indicated earlier in this thesis, the spaza shops sold their goods to the factory workers, neighbours, and to the employees of the office building in the immediate area. The spaza shops, even with their limited stock were considered more affordable than other options in the immediate area and, as a result, factory workers made use of them on a daily basis. Many regular customers returned to the spaza shops daily.

[43] As a result of water shortages, municipal water restrictions and the high cost of metered water in combination with high number of people occupying each house, a family would have to arrange certain days when each member of the home could make use of water to bath.

One of the grandmothers who ran a spaza shop from her home was helped by two of her daughters. The daughters would prepare the food and keep a small book of their expenses, and their customers who had purchased items or food stuff on 'lay buy'[44] (Field notes, 22 September, 2014 & 20 October, 2014). In the evenings, after local factories and businesses had closed, she would still run the shop selling Grandpa Powders (painkillers), chips and cigarettes to passers-by and neighbours. The grandmother said they could depend on a small number of customers who would pay them daily. However, other customers took longer to pay for goods. The factory workers knew that the food sold at the spaza shop will be cheaper than the meals they could buy from the shop located quite a walk away. Although there was not as much variety available at the spaza shop, if they were regular customers they were permitted to sit down for a few moments and, for example, find out the latest cricket score while the family watched the sport on the television.

The office workers from the business building proved to be less regular customers than the factory workers. The owners of the shop noted that the office workers were generally fussier than customers from the factories as they wanted more variety in the goods on offer. Apart from the spaza shop, the nearest place goods could be purchased was a chain store grocery dealer that was about a steep, uphill 20-minute walk from the community. The office workers normally had access to their own cars which they would use to drive to work. These were the same cars which the car guards looked after daily. They were thus able to access the chain grocery store more easily than the factory workers. If they did not want to drive to the store, they also had the option of the numerous restaurants and drinking establishments in their complex, but at an even heftier fee that the shops a few minutes' drive away.

Many children in South Africa are raised in homes where there is no history of regular employment (Kingdon & Knight, 2003). As a result of this lack of formal employment, children are not accustomed to the formation of a regular routine. This often impacts on their schooling as parents do not always appreciate the need for their children to be at school on time or, indeed, for any regularity in the structure of their daily activities. When, and if, young people from such homes

[44] The term 'lay buy' is a common business practice in South Africa where the customer pays for a portion of the full amount for an item, paying the remainder cost in instalments over an agreed period of time.

arrive at university, they often fail to appreciate that the timetable for lectures and tutorials is immutable and that deadlines for assignments are absolute. In the community, the workers in the factories and offices were forced to keep to regular working hours, even though there were very few who had managed to maintain these positions. The presence of a spaza shop in a child's home therefore, would mean that they would be exposed to some idea of regularity.

The location of the community impacted on schooling in numerous ways. The closest schools located to the community ranged from a good quality former 'Model C' school to a highly exclusive preparatory school charging expensive fees. Most of the schools in the immediate vicinity had long waiting lists of pupils even if members of the community had been able to afford the fees they charged. The schools which would have been more affordable that had been located in the area had ceased to function when the forced removals of apartheid took place.

I have already indicated that fears for safety and security meant that parents were reluctant to venture beyond the bounds of the community at night in order to attend parent-teacher meetings (Field notes, 28 July 2014). This problem was exacerbated by the fact that many of the schools attended by their children were located some distance away from their homes and taxis and buses were not available at night. A few of the mothers would attend parent and teacher evenings at the one school attended by community children in the vicinity (Field notes, 2 November 2014). As a result, the parents had to rely on verbal and written reports that the children would bring home for information about progress and school events (Field notes, 29 July, 2014). In the time I spent in the community, I noticed that families would often direct my questions about school to children, saying that they would be more informed as they were the ones attending the school.

The impact of geographical location therefore, was significant in so far as it served to structure parents' interaction with the school effectively excluding them from exercising their agency in relation to school matters. In Social Realist terms, they were constrained from exercising their personal emergent powers and properties by the structural emergent powers and properties related to by the SEPs geography.

The closest library to the community, located in central business district, had closed a short time before I started my study. The nearest library, located in the North End, area was at a fair distance. Two families would, however, walk their children to this library whenever they needed books to complete school projects (Field notes, 11 August, 2014). However, this was quite a rare occurrence as it meant that an adult or older child had to be willing to undertake the walk. The distance from the library to the community also meant that returning books was a problem. Books returned late incurred a fine which the families were usually unable to pay. Anyone with outstanding fines was not allowed to borrow more books from the library, until such time as they had settled their debt.

One mother informed me that she had chosen to send her daughter to the northern areas of Port Elizabeth for schooling. She had been able to negotiate a discount in the school fees which, since she was unemployed, was R50 per month (Field notes, 25 July, 2014). The school, however, was insisting that the child should participate in sporting activities in the afternoon so, according to the mother, she was 'not a sponge' on the institution (*ibid*). The child was a good athlete and participation in sport was seen by the school as a way of ensuring that something was given back to the institution in return for the reduction in fees (*ibid*). The mother went on to inform me that the need for the family to pay for school extras such as stationery, uniforms, travel costs and, now, sporting equipment, was a real problem (*ibid*). In this example, we can see that discourses discriminating against poor children in the school impacted on the way the child was constructed at her place of education. This was in spite of the fact that the majority of children attending schools in the northern areas of the city were working class. These same discourses arguably constrained the mother from exercising her agency in relation to her daughter's education in that she felt unable to make demands on the school other than requesting a reduction in school fees.

The same mother informed me that she was aware that her young son would benefit from some experience of pre-schooling (Field notes, 25 July, 2014). The nearest crèche, however, was located at some distance at the top of a steep hill and the community was not served by taxis going in its direction. In order to reach the school, the mother and her son would need to walk up the hill and then continue for an additional few blocks in order to take a taxi. This walk was not suitable for a four-year old child and the mother noted that, on the few occasions she had completed

it with her son, she had needed to carry him (*ibid*). In order to get her son to walk any distance, the mother informed me that she had to bribe him with the promise of ice-cream, something considered affordable once in a while, but not regularly.

In this example, once again, we can see the way in which geographical location served to constrain the agency of the mother evident in the desire to provide access to some form of pre-schooling. This agency was already constrained by the financial circumstances of families in the community.

## 6.5 Service delivery

At the time of my study, the two main political parties in South Africa were the African National Congress (ANC) and the Democratic Alliance (DA). In recent years, the ANC has lost some of the votes that swept it into power in 1994 to the extent that the DA has managed to gain control of several of the large 'metros' or metropolitan councils, including that of Nelson Mandela Bay, encompassing Port Elizabeth.

Many of the members of the community complained to me that they had been neglected by the government (Field note, 21 July, 2014; 22 July, 2014; 28 July, 2014). Some knew the names and contact details of their Ward Councillor and would contact him to deal with problems related to electricity and water and even disturbances (Field note, 21 July, 2014).

Discourses constructing the role of the government as being able to look after the people were dominant in the community. These discourses extended to the valuing of jobs in the public service. One woman, for example, informed me about her sister who had found such a job (Field notes, 22 July, 2014). According to my informant, public servants did not have to worry as all their life problems were solved (*ibid*). These perceptions extended to the woman advising me to see work in the public service once I had finished studying (*ibid*). It is, of course, true that public service salaries often allow for higher standards of living than others. The woman was keen to emphasise to me that her sister lived in a very nice house in a nice area and now kept herself apart from the rest of the family (*ibid*).

The construction of the government as having the responsibility of taking care of citizens had the effect of diminishing the agency of individuals. Such discourses are not surprising given the expectations placed on the African National Congress government which swept into power following the first democratic elections. Black South Africans had long been denied so much and the expectation at that time was that the new government would bring about change for the majority of the population.

Disappointment in the face of such expectations were obvious in the community. One woman informed me that she had been waiting to move to a 'real home' for nearly twenty-five years (Field notes, 14 October, 2014). She had contacted her Ward Councillor and had travelled to his office in town on several occasions and noted the amount of money she had spent on travel or airtime in trying to contact him (Field notes, 21 July, 2014). When she did telephone his office, she was provided with alternative contact numbers (*ibid*). However, these were often for the electricity or water departments and it seemed to me that the woman was simply being fobbed off by officials who were unable or unwilling to assist her.

Disappointment and anger at the way expectations have not been realised are manifest in numerous protests about 'service delivery' across South Africa. On one of my visits, a stream of water was flowing down the street (Field notes, 21 July, 2014). A woman informed me that this meant the water pressure in the homes in the community was very low or that it was disconnected completely (Field notes, 4 August, 2014). As this conversation was taking place, a lodger in the woman's house returned home and said he wanted to take a shower as it was some days since he had been able to have one because of the water situation (*ibid*). The woman responded that there was washing in the washing machine and he would have to wait until this had finished as the pressure would not allow for washing and showering to take place at the same time (*ibid*).

Several homes had secured drums in which water could be stored in case of outages (Field notes, 25 July, 2014). On another day, a woman informed me that her husband had brought a two litre container of cool drink home from work as the children had had little to drink during the day because of water outages (*ibid*).

Political parties make much of the problems with services such as water and sanitation. In July 2015, for example, Mmusi Maimane, leader of the Democratic Alliance, noted that:

> 'We are fast approaching a water crisis of disastrous proportions in our country, the 30$^{th}$ driest in the world . . . But this crisis is not only a climate change problem; it is a problem of governance. The burden of low rainfall is being exacerbated by poor maintenance, ageing infrastructure and an intermittent energy supply.'

As I have indicated, the DA is now in control of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan area. In spite of Maimane's promises that the DA would deliver where the ANC had failed, the water situation in the area continues to be hugely problematic. At the time of writing this thesis, severe water restrictions had been implemented. In the case where water was available, each person would only be allowed the use of 50lt of municipal water per day. If more than 50lt's of water was used per person per day (per the amount of people registered residing in the home), the municipality would institute fines in an attempt to reduce water usage.

For the community, the impact of failures in service delivery was huge. In times of water outage, children would not be sent to school and would sometimes become sick because of lack of access to clean water as the community would collect water from the river running nearby in desperation. To my eye, the river was filthy and was often contaminated with sewage which had leaked from broken pipes upstream, which were often left for extended periods of time before rectification, if at all.

## 6.6 The educational background of the parents

Many of the parents in the community had only completed the seven years of primary school. A few had completed nine years of schooling but the number who had gone on to finish the twelve years of schooling in order to achieve a National Senior Certificate (NSC)(widely known, in South Africa, as a 'matric') were very few (Field notes, 26 August, 2014). Of those who had a school leaving certificate, even fewer had passed at a level that would allow them to gain entrance to a university.

A larger strong discourse according value to a school leaving certificate was evident in the community. This discursive value was not accorded to the level of education per se but rather to the instrumental value of the school leaving certificate in securing a job. Those who had a school leaving certificate with a 'university level pass', that is with the grade that would allow entrance to a university, were acclaimed but problems in securing funding for study effectively meant that this avenue was not open to them[45]. A few members of the community aspired to complete national diplomas in vocational areas but the idea of a higher education as anything other than the means to securing better employment was not prevalent (Field notes, 19 September, 2014 & 22 September, 2014).

As I have indicated, those with school leaving certificates were generally able to find work as cashiers in shops or supermarkets. If older women worked it was usually in factories or as seamstresses. Men able to find work other than as car guards worked in the construction industry as labourers or in factories. To my knowledge, only one previous member of the community held a university degree. Once he had completed his studies, he had relocated to a more affluent area in Port Elizabeth and became a schoolteacher. His mother said that he did not visit the community that often, Rather, they generally had to visit him and his family.

One of the mothers in the community informed me that she had wanted to become a preschool teacher (Field notes, 22 September, 2014). She had applied to a local college, and had been told that she had received a bursary to pay for the full cost of the fees (*ibid*). The conditions of the bursary were that she study full time. She had tried to arrange to study on a part time basis as her commitments as a young mother, supporting her sister and her sister's children by working as a cashier at a fast-food outlet meant that full time study was not possible for her (*ibid*). The woman told me she felt sad that she had not been able to take up the offer of the place at the college as doing so would have made a massive difference to her own and her family's lives. She referred to her 'dream' and said that there had been no other option but to turn down the opportunity to study as, if she did not work, she would not have been able to support her family (*ibid*).

[45] At the time I completed my study, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) provided funding for students whose family income was less than R120 000 per annum. In late 2017, this threshold was increased to R350,000. Although many of the families would have qualified for such support, it is doubtful whether they i) realized this and ii) knew how to make an application.

She still wanted to try to achieve the qualification, however, but her life providing child care and working to earn money made this seem less and less a possibility. In this case, the structure of the extended family and discourses constructing a family member's responsibilities constrained her agency as she tried to pursue her project of attaining a qualification.

All this meant that there were no community members who had pursued a higher education able to act as role models. Those who had succeeded in school to the extent that they had obtained a school leaving certificate were still doing relatively menial work. This would have obvious implications for the way children came to understand school and the values they would place on it.

The mother who had wanted to gain a qualification in pre-school teaching had, however, managed to get her son into 'one of the white schools' (Field notes, 22 September, 2014). By this, she was referring to what is termed a 'Model C' school, a formerly white state school now able to charge fees. The mother was aware that this school had a better record of learners achieving passes in the school leaving certificate. She was also pleased that, although the language of teaching and learning in the school was Afrikaans, the quality of the language teaching meant that his English was better than that of the other children his age noting that a good command of English was necessary to succeed in today's world.

Many of the parents were aware of their children's need to succeed at school but were aware of their constraints on their own agency in supporting their children in this goal. These parents had an expectation for schools to teach their children how to gain educational literacies. One woman, for example, noted that her 10-year-old nephew struggled to concentrate at home while completing his homework (Field notes, 26 January, 2015). She went on to say that, after his mother had finished work in the evening, she would sit with him to try and help him (*ibid*). However, the mother was tired after a long day at work and often simply did not have the energy either to persuade her son to pay attention to homework tasks or force him to do them (*ibid*). This particular mother worked six days a week. Hence, parents and caregivers were frequently constrained in the using their agency to pursue the projects they had identified for their children in relation to school by the need to do menial work.

## 6.7 Technology

In the above section, I indicated that the lack of financial means meant that families could not afford to buy books or paper for their children who were not attending school. For those who were already in school attendance, there was also an issue with obtaining the prescribed writing books and resources sent to the parents from the schools (Field notes, 25 July, 2014 & 21 January, 2015). Here, they would buy what they could at the time, and buy additional materials when they had the financial means to do so (Field notes, 21 January, 2015). While the availability of reading and writing materials and literacy practices associated with book and writing have traditionally been associated with preparation for schooling, my time in the community led me to understand the role played by technology despite the impoverished circumstances in which children were raise.

Currently, technological developments appear at a rapid rate. Familiarity with the most common forms of technology, such as cell phones, is very common in South Africa. The ability to work with computers and applications such as word processing and email are increasingly necessary but access to these forms of technology is much more limited.

In Archerian terms, the extent to which individuals are able to access technology to participate in fast developing societies is related to their social and cultural conditioning and the ways in which they are able to exercise their PEP's in relation to their SEP's and CEP's. Ultimately, and given the nature of contemporary society, this speaks to their social inclusion.

Apart from the older generation in the community, all members demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm for the use of technology. There was at least one functional television in most households (Field notes, 21 July, 2014; 22 July, 2014 & 25 July, 2014). Approximately half of the community owned a DVD player, a select few with USB capabilities, but these were also shared between families across homes to watch movies (Field notes, 22 July 2014; 5 August, 2014; 11 August, 2014 & 22 September 2014). No one who lived in the community owned a tablet or iPod type device, but I was aware that a few had had access to one of these forms of technology on at least one occasion. This access was usually related to the device being used for storage when multimedia was being accessed (Field notes, 14 October, 2014).

The devices which were owned and used generally functioned primarily to play back some form of media (such as music or movies). It was considered an advantage if the device had a secondary storage function which enabled what was stored to be shared between homes. As flash drives could be used for nothing but storage and as some of the multimedia devices in use did not have USB capability, there seemed little motive to purchase a flash drive and I did not note anyone in the community who owned one.

Even though faulty cell phones were complained about as a serious inconvenience, broken televisions would be a priority for repair. Owners of faulty cell phones would not be supported by family members in paying for the cost of a repair. Cell phones were used daily by all but the oldest members of the community. Two of the children had been given old phones by their parents (Field notes, 18 August, 2014). The battery life of these phones was minimal, the applications were outdated and could no longer be updated. However, they could be used to play stored music and share videos when connected to a charger (*ibid*). Children did not have money to purchase data or airtime, unless they obtained their own part time jobs to do so.

Only two homes owned a computer and one these was sold during the time I spent in the community in order to purchase a malfunctioning car (please see Appendix A.14 on page 223) (Field notes, 21 July, 2014 & 1 August, 2014). Interestingly, the family that purchased the car had initially sold a television to purchase the computer (Field notes, 9 September, 2014). They then sold the computer to put the money accrued from its sale towards a car. The car was not in working condition at the time of purchase and none of the family members even held a driver's licence (*ibid*). The mother explained that her boyfriend had purchased the car as a safe place in which they could stay in the case of domestic violence.

The car was parked in the garden in front of their home. The mother said she wanted to write the test to gain a learner's licence so she could learn how to drive, but she could not afford the cost of the test (Field notes, 6 November, 2014). It was clear the mother did not know where she would need to go to do the test or how much it would cost (*ibid*). Even though the car was not in working order, the mother claimed it could be fixed once her family had saved enough money to pay a mechanic. For the time being, however, the car provided a place of refuge if there were fights in the house, the perceived need for which was apparently more than the value of owning a computer (*ibid*).

I have included this piece of information in this section as it provides some insight into the transient way material possessions were viewed.

At no point had either of the homes that had owned a computer ever installed a line-based internet connection, such as ADSL (Field notes, 11 August, 2014 & 19 October, 2014). This was not surprising as none of the homes had a landline telephone, as they could not afford the standard monthly costs of the line rental. Cell phones, rather than land lines, were used for communication. Nonetheless, some of the older children were able to access computers at school during designated times. However, these computers were often donated to the schools and were therefore older machines, with outdated software. In spite of these constraints, a few of the older children had been exposed to basics such as Microsoft word and knew how to access the internet during school.

If any of these technological devices were to malfunction or break, a few men and one of the women in the community had a working knowledge of ways in which they could be repaired (Field notes, 22 September, 2014; 17 October, 2014 & 20 October, 2014). If they could not actually repair the devices, they could at least diagnose the problem or identify where a possible problem could be located. Repairs to malfunctioning devices were mostly effected by using spare parts salvaged from other pieces of equipment owned by members of the community or by locating parts that could be adapted from second hand shops. The costs of these repairs were much lower than those charged by shops in town and bartering was an acceptable way of negotiating payment for the repair. These men would therefore be the first port of call when items malfunctioned and one man in particular had an excellent reputation for his ability to work with cell phones (Field notes, 17 October, 2014). This particular man kept a box of spare parts and odd pieces which he would use to fashion make-shift repairs where needed. If items could not be repaired in the community, then they had to be taken to one of the shops in town where they would often remain until payment for the repair could be made. If payment was not made within a certain time period, the item would be sold by the shop.

As I have indicated, no one in the community owned a tablet. On one occasion, I did, however, witness an iPad being used. It was a rainy day and one of the younger mothers and her children were lying in bed watching a movie on the device while the rest of the household, mostly older people, sat watching television in another room. I asked if the iPad was a recent purchase and was informed by the mother that it belonged to her father who lived in the northern areas with his 'other family' (Field notes, 14 October, 2014). The device was an older model and was obviously quite worn. The device had been loaned to the woman so she could transfer some movies and music onto cell phones. As the device was only going to be collected the next day, the mother had taken the opportunity to watch movies in the bedroom with her children rather than the standard channels available on the television that older members of the household enjoyed watching.

It was obvious that the mother knew how to use the iPad to watch movies and television shows stored on the device. She held the iPad while her immediate family watched and scolded the children if they tried to touch it or take it from her. Her scolding included telling the children that the device was expensive and that her father would not be happy with her if it was broken or damaged as it could not be easily fixed or replaced as the two men known for the ability to repair technology had no experience with iPads. Regardless, the younger children were very curious and tried to gain possession of the device on several occasions. As a result of the mother's concerns, the children were able to observe how the device functioned as the mother accessed movies and music but could not interact with it. In this case, therefore, concern for the cost of the device overrode any interest in allowing the children to become familiar with this form of technology.

As I have indicated, cell phones were the most commonly used, owned, and accessed piece of technology in the community. An overwhelming majority of the teenagers and adults owned a cell phone, and many informed me that they considered the device essential in today's world. The high personal value accorded to cell phones lead to protective ownership.

Very few members of the community owned high-end smartphones although most possessed a basic device with the ability to use data purchased on a pay-as-you-go basis to access the internet.

Cell phones were generally acquired from a pawn shop, a second-hand shop or from someone who had the means to replace an existing device with very few acquired brand new.

Cell phones were used on a daily basis as a tool to complete a variety of tasks and projects. As a result, the devices were used for entertainment purposes was well as for more significant tasks (Field notes, 21 July, 2014; 25 July, 2014; 29 July, 2014; 1 August, 2014; 4 August, 2014; 5 August, 2014; 7 August, 2014; 18 August, 2014; 25 August, 2014; 26 August, 2014; 14 October, 2014, 28 October, 2014; 31 October, 2014; 9 September, 2014 & 4 November 2014). Phones enabled contact with schools, the police, the City Council, clinics, and hospitals (Field notes, 29 July, 2014). Since the majority of schools were located quite a distance from the community, phones allowed caregivers to check weather reports to see children should attempt to walk the journey. Phones were also used for job hunting, communicating with family and friends, taking and storing pictures of family events and for the use of social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and MIXIT (Field notes, 22 July, 2014; 28 October, 2014). They were also used to source information from the internet. Younger members of the community collected music and short video clips which were then also shared between homes via Bluetooth.

As a result of the high costs of data and airtime, one adult would generally check and share day- to-day information (such as the weather forecast) by word of mouth with the rest of the community. Members of the community were very aware of the rates for different functions charged by the different cell phone companies and avoided those charging most. The data function on the phones was normally turned off when not in actual use to avoid additional charges. In some cases, the need to turn off the data function had been learned the hard way with one mother complaining that she had lost all of her airtime because of unwanted automatic updates.

The software used to run applications on the cell phones would indicate the need for regular updates, some of which were unavoidable in terms of functionality. Community members knew which applications ran without using data and were wary of those that were free to download but then called for data. Learning which applications had ‘hidden’ charges often came at a cost with individuals losing all of their airtime unexpectedly. Lessons had been well learned, however, and members were very knowledgeable about ways to minimise data usage.

To all intents and purposes, therefore, community members were experts in the use of their phones and especially in knowing how to minimise costs. Knowledge of, for example, data charges was not acquired through reading information provided by cell phone companies but by word of mouth and practice.

I made use of my cell phone to contact each of the homes, and was provided with a cell phone number of at least one of the mothers in each home. Individuals would generally answer calls on their phones, but seldom called back. If they did call, they would ask me to return their call as they were low on airtime. Alternatively, they would ask me to call them using a WhatsApp message. Community members would also seldom reply to a standard text message. However, WhatsApp was used regularly and messages would receive a response quite quickly. WhatsApp was cheaper to use than text messaging as the purchase of data was cheaper than the airtime needed to send a text message. Again, information about these options were researched and shared by word of mouth. Suggestions for the use of new applications that were free, easy to use and did not involve any additional costs were made shared very proudly.

On one occasion, a grandmother informed me she wanted to contact one of the hospitals in the Northern Areas, but she was struggling trying to find the exact number of the doctor she wanted to contact (Field notes, 29 July, 2014). She had managed to call the hospital reception and asked them to provide her with the number the doctor who had treated one of the mothers in her family for a broken leg. The receptionists had not been able to provide her with the correct number. I asked whether the number was not listed under the name of the doctor in the hard copy of the telephone directory the grandmother was holding on her lap (*ibid*). The woman peered through her old reading glasses, straining to see the print in the directory and informed me that she could not find the name of the doctor. She went on to complain that she had already spent some of her airtime trying different numbers in the directory had been successful in locating the doctor and no one she had spoken to had been able to re-direct her call to the correct department. She handed the telephone directory to me so I could look but I could also not locate the name of the doctor for whom she had been searching (*ibid*). I offered to try and find the number using my own cell phone.

The woman told me that this would be helpful as she did not know how to do this using her own phone, and also wanted to conserve her airtime for the actual call to the doctor. I opened my internet browser, did a quick google search, and found the doctor's contact details very easily (*ibid*). After this success, the mother with the broken leg was very interested in my phone enquiring about applications I used and which games I had loaded (*ibid*).

National telephone directories are generally only distributed once a year in the Port Elizabeth area. However, as I have indicated, none of the homes in the community had a telephone landline installed and would therefore not receive a copy of the directory delivered to their door. In a conversation about landlines, using these services involved a connection and disconnection fee, which would have to be paid if the bill had not been paid the previous month. Such charges would have to be paid, in addition to a monthly line rental and the cost of actual calls, if the family missed a payment. In this context, the reliance on pay-as-you-go cell phones is entirely understandable especially since the system still allowed phone calls and short text messages to be received even if the owner themselves had no airtime. Most importantly, users knew that their service would not be terminated if they did not have the money to purchase airtime or data.

Many of the community members who had cell phones would also use the 'please call me' options supplied by service providers (Interview 3; 21 November, 2014). This meant that they could send a free text message to any other number asking the other person to call them back on their cell phone. Members of the community understood the number of such messages they could send differently. For example, during an interview, a heavily pregnant young mother told me about the way her 5-year-old daughter made use of cell phone (*ibid*):

> '. . . Even, even if she is in danger she can, you see, she can just ask someone to borrow his, their cell phone to phone my mother!'

This mother had taught her daughter to memorise her mother's and grandmother's cell numbers in case of emergencies. The young child not only knew how to make a call using a cell phone but also how to use the 'please call me' function. The mother continued to say (*ibid*):

> 'Yah, it was now, say two, two weeks ago I phoned my mother. No, I sent my mother three 'please call me's and she thought it was 'that time' already (referring to the birth of her third child). So, she rushed through and [her first born daughter] was there with my brother… But it was only because I wanted her to talk with [her second born child] on the phone... But anyway, so my mother left [her first born daughter] there by my brother. And [the daughter] did not know my mother came here. So, like two hours later, [the daughter] went to my brother's friend and asked him to borrow his cell phone and she phoned my mother from his cell phone.'

In another home, a grandmother informed me that her youngest son still lived with her in her house in spite of the fact that he was in his mid-thirties (Field notes, 21 July, 2014). She pointed to a room with a closed door on which a shabby dartboard with darts was affixed. She noted that was her son's room, which she did not enter as he cleaned it himself. The woman went on to bemoan the fact that her son did not talk to her much anymore in spite of the fact that they used to have long conversations (*ibid*). The son had bought a smart phone with his savings from working in town as a mechanic. The woman sighed, informing me that her son was always on his cell phone nowadays with the result that when they both sat in the living area after he had finished work he constantly paid attention to his phone and not to her (*ibid*). She had asked to whom he was speaking to all the time as the phone had a touch screen and it looked as if he was texting. The son had told her that he wasn't talking to anyone and was just playing games (*ibid*).

As I did my field work, the important roles played by cell phones became more and more apparent to me. Numerous practices centred on the use of this tool. Neighbours popped in and out of each other's homes frequently to charge their phones as the electricity in their own home had run out. This showed that direct social interactions not involving a phone call or message could be initiated through the device. Children generally showed a preference for amusing themselves with phones in comparison to other items regardless of their age. Caregivers and parents were very aware of this enthusiasm, and generally used it to their advantage while dealing with children.

Many of the caregivers perceived the device as a blessing when dealing with tantrums or active toddlers. On one occasion, a 22-year-old mother was having difficulty calming her three-year- old daughter who unwell (Field notes, 29 July, 2014). After a few minutes of attempting to stop her child's cries by providing physical comfort, the mother took out her cell phone (*ibid*). The moment the child saw the device, she stopped crying (*ibid*). The mother then began to play a song on the phone, while holding it to the child's ear. The mother handed the phone to her daughter who then gripped it tightly to her ear and they began to sing together (*ibid*). They both seemed to know the song well, and sang until the song had finished (*ibid*). This practice was regularly used in this home, as well as in three of the other houses.

On another occasion, I witnessed another mother handing over her cell phone to her five-year- old son was quite restless while sitting on the couch (Field notes, 25 July, 2014). She decided to give him her cell phone with which to play. As he handed it back to her, and she looked him in the eyes and said 'Dankie'[46], thus using the return of the device to instil appropriate social behaviour (*ibid*).

It was also apparent that members of the community appreciated the need to develop literacy practices in relation to phones. On one occasion, for example, a pregnant mother brought out her cell phone to show me a picture of her eldest daughter, taken a few weeks beforehand. This daughter lived with her grandmother in the Northern Areas since her mother's home was too far from her school to allow a daily commute. The sight of the device excited the mother's youngest daughter, a three-year-old. The mother showed her daughter the picture of her sister on the phone. She then told the child to show me how to reveal the next picture. The toddler hit her finger hard on the screen trying to swipe to the next picture. The mother quietly instructed her child to swipe softly with her finger by demonstrating the action herself, saying 'Swipe soft. Swipe soft'. She then took the toddler's finger in her own hand and repeated the action. Here, one can note a practical example of Vygotsky's concept of the 'zone of proximal development (ZPD)'. After the child was able to more or less complete the action, the mother allowed her to take the phone and look through the photographs to keep her occupied while we continued our conversation. The mother informed me that she would allow her daughter to use the phone, as long as she was supervised, gentle with it, and did not damage it.

[46] 'Dankie' translated from Afrikaans into English is 'Thank you'.

If the child became too rough with the phone, she would not be allowed to use it. In many respects, the action of showing a child how to use the touch screen could be compared to showing a child in another context how to turn the pages of a book. As I will discuss later, however, there were very few books in homes in the community.

Other examples of the use of cell phones in child development involved games and applications (Field notes, 5 August, 2014; 18 August, 2014). On the occasion of meeting a seven-year-old child for the first time, I asked the girl what games she liked to play (Field notes, 18 August, 2014). She ran to the bedroom she shared with her mother and returned with an old Blackberry cell phone. She told me the battery was 'bad' so she needed to charge the phone noting that the charge would not last for more than an hour (*ibid*). She plugged in the charger and turned on the phone. Her great-aunt told her not to charge it for too long as otherwise there might not be sufficient electricity to cook the evening meal and watch television later. The child went into a few different folders and started playing some music (*ibid*). She played each song for a few seconds then changed to the next one. She left one song to play, telling me that this was her favourite (*ibid*). The child also informed me that she could take pictures with the phone (*ibid*). She showed me the pictures she had taken of her brother's 'farewell matric[47]' party the previous week (*ibid*). I asked her how she was able to recognise the icons on the phone. She informed me that she could not read yet, but she still knew how to find what she wanted on the screen (*ibid*). I asked her how she was able to do this without reading any words. She said she was able to decide what she wanted by looking at pictures of the icons (*ibid*). She pointed to an icon showing musical notation and she proudly advised me that this particular icon would open her music folder. She told me she would have to play through a few of the songs listed before she found the one she wanted, since she could not read their words indicating their titles (*ibid*). The child told me that the order changed when she added new songs indicating that the order of the songs was not an indication of what they were (*ibid*). As a result, she had to listen to a few bars of each song to identify the one to which she wanted to listen. The child did go on to tell me that, after accessing the same songs over and over again, she would be able to tell which was which by the shape of the letters and the length of the title (*ibid*).

[47] In South Africa, it is common for school leavers to celebrate the approach of their 'matriculation' examinations with a party celebrating the end of their schooling.

In this example, therefore, the phone was being used to induct the child into some basic decoding practices as well as others related to visual literacy before she could read or write independently. The child was however not assisted by others in this regard instead having to rely on trial and error to confirm her hypotheses about meanings and their relationship to the symbols she saw on the screen. Goodman (1967) refers to reading as a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' involving the use of 'top down' reading strategies that draw on knowledge of language and textual features. The example of the seven-year-old-child provides insights into the way the 'psycholinguistic guessing game' was being played in the community and also to the kind of vocabulary and registers of language to which the child was being exposed and on which she would thus draw.

An older mother had a 20-year-old son who was in Grade 11[48] at the time I met him. I was informed that the young man used his cell phone all the time and would not leave the house without it unless he knew he had to walk through an area in which he knew he was susceptible to being mugged. This meant he took his phone to school even though this was generally not allowed. His mother informed me that she had not been able to afford to buy him a cell phone and could not afford to buy him airtime now he had a device. She, noted, however that, since a young age, her son had done odd jobs in and around the community for pocket money. Over time, he saved enough money by doing these jobs to afford the device. The mother noted that the young man made use of the 'WhatsApp' application to keep in contact with his father from whom she had been separated since the early years of her son's childhood. She herself had no contact with her former partner but was happy that her son is still able to communicate with him on a daily basis, especially since many children in the community had lost contact with a parent following the break-up of a relationship (Field notes, 6 November, 2014). The young man had clearly been very motivated to acquire the phone as he had had to save money over a long period in order to do so.

In the community, therefore, the ownership of a phone and mastery of the practices associated with it demonstrated group membership and, in Gee's (2008) terms, signalled a form of literacy.

[48] Children in South Africa begin the twelve years of schooling in their sixth year. The fact that this young man was completing the eleventh of these twelve years in his twentieth year shows that he must either have dropped out of school at some point or had been forced to repeat one or more years.

Unfortunately, the literacy practices associated with phones did not necessarily lead to the development of other practices related to the kinds of texts with which students needed to engage in school. It is also highly unlikely that practices related to the use of cell phones would lead to the development of the kind of language valued in school settings.

Apart from cell phones, and as I have indicated, televisions were the most commonly used items with at least one being owned by each household. They were used on a daily basis, and they were shared by all occupants in the home. In this sense, everyone had access to a television at any time during the day. Even though money for electricity was scarce, a majority of the homes had the television on from when they woke up in the morning, until the last person had retired to bed for the night.

If a television set broke, was to break, it was be sent for repair almost immediately and other general costs would have to be sacrificed for the period that is would take to make enough money for it to be repaired. Since it was considered a communal device, the responsibility for its maintenance was therefore considered group problem. In this respect, homes which housed a few different family units would work together as corporate agents (Archer, 1995) in order to have the television set fixed as soon as possible. Since many of the women spent a large portion of their day in the home, they noted that they needed the television to entertain themselves and the children. The value systems around television therefore privileged this form of entertainment above other forms.

Television sets were generally located in the common areas of the homes. Where a family shared a common living and sleeping space, this could mean that the set was located in this area. They were used to watch sporting events (mainly the cricket in summer and the rugby in winter), the news, many of the Afrikaans and English soap operas that appear on South African public television channels every afternoon and early evening, as well as to watch rented or borrowed video tapes or DVDs where the family also owned a device to play these back (Field notes, 22 July, 2014; 5 August, 2014; 11 August, 2014; 19 September, 2014).

If one family rented a DVD or video tape from the shop located quite close to the community, they would share it with other families as well (Field notes, 20 October, 2014).

Often the entertainment rented was movies for children. Once again, this practice exemplifies the exercise of corporate agency. The first home would watch the movie, often with a few of the children from other homes who did not have a DVD player in their own home. Afterwards, the DVD would then be sent to one of the other homes with children to watch the movie. One of the mothers worked at a DVD store and would bring home movies for the children when she could. These were generally the DVDs which were no longer on the current most popular list of series or movies. Older shows were unlikely to be rented and consequently the manager would allow for her take a few home overnight, as no financial loss would be incurred. The rental period was stated as being twenty-four hours, but a return at any time on the following day was generally acceptable.

Many daily events took place around the television. During meal times, while homework was being completed, or during daily chores the family would sit in front of the television. It was a common sight for one of the grandmothers to be preparing food for the spaza shop, or another mother sewing a hem on her child's clothing, while watching the television. If one of the mothers was cleaning in the kitchen, she would ask one of the others to turn up the television so that she could still hear it from the other room.

In one of the homes that ran a spaza shop, the door was always open for the customers, so that they would not miss a possible sale. On one particularly cold and rainy day, a younger mother was lying on the sofa wrapped in a duvet (Field notes, 4 August, 2014). She changed the channel and everyone in the room stopped talking and began to watch the television. I asked what they are watching, and without taking her attention from the screen, the mother replied 'Days'[49] (*ibid*). I could see that she did not really want to talk at that moment in time, and my questions were becoming something of a distraction. I stopped talking and sat and watched the show with the family for a while. There was a scene where a woman seemed quite distraught over something. As I did not watch the show, I did not understand what was going on. Fortunately, the mother was happy to fill in the storyline after I had informed them that I did not own a television and therefore did not watch any of the shows they would regularly watch (*ibid*).

[49] 'Days' is a commonly used colloquial term for a soap opera drama called 'Days of our Lives' which has been airing intermittently in South Africa on a daily basis. It has been running on television in since the mid-90's. The South African broadcasting committee attempted to remove it from regular scheduling in 2016 but this decision was overturned as a result of the level of complaints received from the general populace.

The woman on the screen spoke to herself about being taken advantage of, took a bottle of pills from the table, and swallowed most of the contents. At this, the mother of the family roared declaring 'Shew! Shew! Shew!'[50] (*ibid*) The children's attention darted between the faces of the adults in the room and the action taking place on the television screen (*ibid*). Other mothers and the grandmother joined in to exclaim loudly at the turn of events taken on the screen. One of the younger fathers heard the exclamation from the kitchen and rushed in to sit on the sofa, asking what has happened (*ibid*). He had left to complete a chore and was clearly disappointed to have missed the action. One of the mothers informed him that the woman on the screen was a 'druggie'. He replied 'Yoh! Yoh'[51] (*ibid*). The father then stayed in front of the screen and the entire household watched the remainder of the 'soapie' in silence.

As I have indicated, watching of soap operas was a daily occurrence. In cases where some members of the household had not been able to watch an episode when it was first screened, repeated episodes would also be watched. As a result, children would regularly see the same episode twice. As the family watched the show, members identified events they also experienced and discourses to which they themselves subscribed. As a result, children watching with adults were inducted into a set of practices related to the text on the screen. The soap operas watched so avidly inducted children into the following of visual and oral story lines. This did not mean, however, that children were introduced to the text markers and other rhetorical devices that indicate steps in a written narrative. Had home-based literacy practices been centred on such texts, then the children could have been expected to develop knowledge of these markers and devices.

Researchers such as Carrell (1988) draw on the notion of 'formal schemata', or knowledge about the way written texts are conventionally organised and sequenced as necessary for reading show (Ohlhausen & Roller, 1988) how reading is impeded when either of this form of knowledge is not available. Children would develop formal schemata from early childhood onwards typically as a result of caregivers reading stories to them.

[50] 'Shew? Shew! Shew!' is generally an expression of disbelief.
[51] 'Yoh yoh' is typically a South African exclamation in response to a surprising or shocking event.

The children in the community were not exposed to such practices. Rather, they experienced an entirely different set of practices focused on screen based texts.

During one of my visits, an advertisement break occurred in the middle of ‘Days’ (Field notes, 4 August, 2014). The children were generally permitted to make more noise during advertisement breaks, while the adults discussed the show and shared their opinions of what they thought of the story line. The children were expected to keep quiet during the actual show itself and, if they made too much noise, they would be sent to play outside. On this particular occasion, one of the advertisements depicted a collection of singing lips on the screen (*ibid*). A toddler leapt from her position on her mother's lap and stood excitedly jumping on the sofa in time with the music, her eyes fixed on the screen. The mother asked ‘Kan jy die lippie sien?’[52] (*ibid*). Without moving her attention from the screen, the daughter nodded her head in response her mother’s question while continuing to dance. The mother then sat her daughter back on her lap, took the toddlers lips between her fingers and said ‘lippe’[53], then pointed to the dancing lip images on the screen (*ibid*). The daughter giggled and the mother repeated this action a few more times while her daughter repeated ‘Lippe, lippe’[54] (*ibid*). Events such as this were a relatively common occurrence given that televisions were switched on for most of the day. Mothers would make use of the television as means of teaching their children by making a connection between what could be seen on the virtual world of the screen to the physical world of their homes.

Decisions about which channels would be watched were normally made by parents or grandparents. Children would sometimes ask to watch some shows intended for them and generally they were allowed to do so without interruption. On one mid-morning visit, a young mother called to her five-year-old nephew to come and bathe (Field notes, 7 August, 2014). The water was only heated once for bathing purposes each day. The children shared the water in a large basin, and the toddlers had already been bathed so the water was getting cold. The young mother was becoming irritated by her nephew who was watching a cartoon on the television, and ignoring her request for him to take his bath (*ibid*).

[52] ‘Kan jy die lippie sien?’ translated from Afrikaans into English is ‘Can you see the lips?’
[53] ‘Lippe’ translated from Afrikaans into English is ‘Lips’.
[54] ‘Lippe, lippe’ translated from Afrikaans into English is ‘Lips, lips’.

The grandmother who was watching with her grandson called to the mother saying they should let him finish watching his 'Poppe'[55] programme (*ibid*). This was a generous gesture as normally bathing would have taken priority given that the mother the mother would have had other chores to complete for the household before she could take time for her own projects.

As a consequence of financial indigence, access to more cutting-edge technology was very limited. Although I had been warned that this would probably be the case before I gained access to the community, I was nonetheless taken aback by the lack of what I would have considered 'normal' educational resources in the homes such as paper and pencils. There were also very few books. Given what I observed, it was quite likely the case that children arrived in school without having learned to control a pencil or turn the pages of a book. Few toys were available so children were not exposed to learning through using these tools. The high value placed on technological tools meant that were generally not allowed to touch them without adult supervision. If they were allowed, it was only for short periods. In addition, many of the older members of households were also unfamiliar with technology and the lack of interest on the part of those who had mastered these tools on showing elders how they could be used was marked.

Given the role played by and the valued placed on technology in the community, it would therefore appear to be the case that opportunities to use these tools for educational purposes were not generally exploited.

## 6.8 Home-based educational practices

It was very common for mothers to remain at home for the first three to four years of a child's life or until their youngest child was enrolled in a school. In many cases, however, one mother would look after her own child, as well as her nieces and nephews, in order to allow other family members to work. In some situations, this was extended to one mother minding other children from the community when work had been secured at short notice or after school hours.

[55] 'Poppe' is an Afrikaans word for 'dolls'. This term was used regularly to refer to animated cartoon characters in television shows and movies.

These mothers were generally responsible for day to day chores around the home and the preparation of meals. If a mother had a steady job at the time she became pregnant, other unemployed female family members would look after the baby while she was at work. In this situation, the woman would usually take a short period of maternity leave to give birth, and then return to work soon after. In cases where a woman to whom care of children had been delegated found work, the care of the children would be shifted to another female family member who was unemployed. There was thus instability in the children's lives as income generating work was valued above all else.

The children were generally enrolled into Grade R at the age of six. A majority of the mothers knew that they had to apply a year before the enrolment date. If they did not apply in time, there was a high chance that the classes would be full and the child would have to stay at home for another year. This had happened before, and one additional year having to look after the child could result in another year where the mother would more than likely not be able to look for employment. The schools in the northern areas which most of the children attended were known to suffer from overcrowding, a shortage of teachers and a general lack of resources. As a result, not being able to find a place for first time school was a genuine concern (Field notes, 20 October, 2014).

Generally speaking, the mothers expressed their frustration, annoyance and general boredom with having to stay at home to do the chores and look after the children with many noting that they could not wait to return to work so they could earn money again (Field notes, 16 October & 17 October, 2014). Although the idea of the 'working mother' is very common, some deliberately choose to stay at home to spend time with their children. The women within sample community experienced poverty as a constraint and this played a role in their reluctance to spend time with their children (Field notes, 17 October, 2014). In addition, there was a general expectation that it was the role of the schools to educate children and little sense of what families themselves could do to prepare their young for the experience of formal learning. This is in contrast to discourses constructing the role of parents in preparation for schooling that can proceed literally from conception (see, for example, Dellecese, 2018).

I asked what the mothers liked to do when their chores had been completed, or they had some time for themselves. Most noted a preference for relaxing in front of the television (14 August, 2014; 11 August, 2014 & 15 September, 2014). One mother said she enjoyed reading but that she did not really have to time to do this any longer. She also noted the difficulty in obtaining books. She did borrow books from the library but noted that she generally did not have time to finish the book before it was time to be returned. Another noted that she did not like to read books at all on her days off, she just wanted to spend time with her child, as she worked 6 days a week (Field notes, 22 October, 2014).

The children in the community played regardless of whether or not their caregivers were paying any attention to what they were doing. One particular pair of cousins were almost inseparable. The six-year old loved to collect different things from the garden to 'maak kos'[56] (make food) (Field notes, 28 October, 2014). She was meticulous with the preparation of her ‘food’, right down to making sure she has added the 'herbs and spices' (some grass and sand) at the end (*ibid*). She directed her three-year-old cousin to collect flowers, leaves and old eggshells, for the 'recipe'. In her play, she would say that, since her mother was tired after work in the evenings, she was helping her to make the dinner (*ibid*). She was very specific in asking her cousin to bring the ingredients for her cooking, asking for 'daai blom'[57] as she pointed to a specific plant (*ibid*). If her cousin returned with a flower different to that she had asked for, she would say ‘That’s OK’, pointing to a specific flower. But if the little cousin brought back a different flower she would say ‘OK, we can use this one instead’ or ‘We can use this one as well as the other one’ (*ibid*). The older child would insist on the particular flower being brought to her if it was within the three-year old’s reach. Like children elsewhere, this young girl was modelling her play on the behaviour of the adults around her, as she would help her mother in the kitchen in the evenings.

Most of the children were expected to help with the housework in some way or another from a very early age. As previously noted, one mother had already taught her 3-year-old daughter to wash clothes, noting that the child was only asked to wash her own clothing as her hands were so small (Field notes, 20 October, 2014).

[56] ‘Maak kos’ is the Afrikaans term for ‘making food’.
[57] ‘Daai Blom’ is Afrikaans for ‘that flower’.

One of the most common educational practices noted in my visits involved counting. Mothers would ask their children to count to 5 or 10, depending on the child's age, to exhibit their counting skills to others (Field notes, 25 July, 2014; 5 August, 2014; 9 September, 2014; 16 September, 2014; 16 October, 2014 & 6 November, 2014). Families with fewer material possessions would use their fingers (Field notes, 25 July & 16 September, 2014). Other families would use objects in the house to count to different numbers (Field note, 29 July, 2014). The children would generally be asked to tell visitors their age before being instructed to count their age on their fingers. The younger the child, the more assistance would be provided. Parents of younger children would hold their hand and then assist by lifting each finger and counting one, two, three and so on. Counting was thus a form of display of achievement on the part of the child (Field notes, 9 September, 2014).

On one of the first meetings I had with a four-year old boy and his mother, the boy hid behind the sofa on which I was sitting (Field notes, 25 July, 2014). As I spoke to his mother, he would steal a look at me from his hiding place and giggle. I began to cover my own face in order to mirror his own hiding in order to try to include him in the interaction with his mother. I asked how old he was. The response was more giggling. The mother explained to me that her son only spoke Afrikaans although the intention was that he would learn English once he went to school (*ibid*). Even though the mother spoke English, the expectation was therefore that it was the role of the school to instruct him in the language. Then, his mother asked him to show me how old he was using his fingers. The boy showed me five fingers and giggled. The mother said 'No!'. He proceeded to show four fingers and giggled some more. Again, the mother said 'No!' Finally, the boy showed four fingers and counting to four using his digits. This simple game between mother and child was one of the few I saw being played.

Many of the parents complained about their children's lack of concentration and perseverance with school work or simple chores (Field notes, 25 July 2014; 1 August, 2014; 18 August, 2014; 23 August, 2014 &16 September, 2014). These observations included children's ability to listen to instructions. A few of the mothers stated that they expected the crèche, or Grade R teachers to deal

with such aspects of their children's behaviour (Field notes, 26 January, 2014). As I have indicated, however, few children were afforded the luxury of attending a crèche. If they did so, attendance was irregular and only took place when there was no other option for child care.

One of my most overwhelming experiences related to the general air of transience in the community. People and objects moved in and out of homes constantly. Nothing seemed to stay in place for very long. Objects that may have held pride of place on one day would be broken the next or swopped or sold for something of more immediate need. Individuals moved in and out depending on their own circumstances and those of the families with whom they were staying. Consequently, children experienced a day-to-day existence in relation to the resources on which they could draw, with no continuity even in care giving.

Most of the parents purchased resources required for school only when needed. At the start of each year, schools provided children with lists of the items they would need during the year. One mother informed me that she had spent an entire day in town trying to find all the items her two boys would need for the year because of the difficulty of finding things they could afford (Filed notes, 21 January, 2015). She claimed that a failure to supply the children with the requirements at school would result in her sons 'not doing well' (*ibid*). I asked what would happen if they could not get all the books, pencils and other requirements on the list. She said they would just have to wait and hope they could get the item later (*ibid*). She continued by saying that she tried to make plans whenever possible but that, notwithstanding, it could be difficult to get the right items on time (*ibid*). One of her sons had broken his leg the week before the start of term and subsequently had to stay at home for a month because of the difficulty involved in transporting him to school (*ibid*). The mother complained that she could have waited to buy his books as he would not need them till his cast would be removed and he could go back to school (*ibid*). This is but one example of the way a family's financial indigence contributed to the sense of uncertainty in relation to schooling.

The one white mother in the community informed me that her oldest daughter was somewhat behind with her schooling (Field notes, 21 July, 2014 & 17 October, 2014). It had come to light that the girl was being abused at school with the result that her family had had to remove her halfway through the year (Field notes, 21 July, 2014).

As other accessible schools were full, the family had not been able to find an alternative school for their daughter until the following year (Field notes, 4 November, 2014). The mother informed me that she had tried to home- school her daughter but this proved to be difficult as she had a new-born son at the time (Field notes, 21 July, 2014). Looking aver the baby and managing other household chores meant that she had not been able to cope with the demands of assisting a child with Grade 2 work. According to the mother (Interview 1; 11 November, 2014):

> 'We did home schooling. Well, not home . . . home schooling. I teach, taught her what I knew... Er, not exactly what a teacher would be teaching her, but you know, more from I knew from school, you know... And that the basic things, like the ABC, how to count, how to write her name, and her name, and surname. Learn her address, her colours ... Her nursery rhymes ... Sums... And things like that ... The basics... Um. I would take off an hour, an hour every day off everything I was doing for her.'

As a result of this experience, the parents asked her daughter's next school to keep her back a grade (Field notes, 21 July 2014). The girl proudly informed me she was now doing well. Her mother told her to tell me the marks she had been given. Her daughter complied by listing marks on her last report with ease. All were above 70%, a few in the 90s (*ibid*).

One of the boys who obtained a school leaving certificate with a university level pass was accepted to study Law at Nelson Mandela University, a large institution in Port Elizabeth (Field notes, 17 October, 2014). This represented a massive achievement for his entire family. Initially, the family had informed me that his application had been rejected[58] but, after receiving his final results for 2014, he was accepted. It was already clear to me from my visits to his home that it differed to others in the community.

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[58] Generally younger people in South Africa apply to universities in the year they complete their school leaving examinations. In order to apply, they submit the results of examinations held in the middle of the year and their Grade 11 results. Clearly, in the case of this boy, the results in the final examination surpassed those he had attained earlier.

There was more reading material in the home. For example, the family owned two bibles, collected the free daily newspaper and his six-year old sister received hand-me-down school books.

Furthermore, I had noticed that this family provided specific verbal instructions for tasks to be completed to the children. For example, an aunt, who looked after the children during the day, once asked a two-year old child to fetch her 'purple jersey from the cupboard in the bedroom' when I was present (Field notes, 4 November, 2014). The child came back with a purple jersey but it was not the particular item of clothing the aunt wanted. Then the woman went to fetch the jersey for herself and, when she returned, explained to the child that her mother had moved it from the cupboard to the bed which is why she had not been able to find it in the cupboard. This different from practices in neighbouring homes which generally owned far fewer items. As a result, this meant that languages of description used in the home did not need to be so detailed. I had noticed the extensive use of gesture, rather than verbal language, to convey meanings. For example, facial expressions and physical gestures were used to teach children how to react to objects in their environment (Field notes, 25 July, 2014; 28 July, 2014; 29 July, 2014). A parent wanting to convey to a child that something was bad, might screw up their face, with the corners of the mouth downcast and shake their heads (Field notes, 12 September, 2014). In a similar fashion, if an adult was asking a child to fetch something, the room in which it was located was often indicated with a gesture rather than being named (Field notes, 21 July 2014; 29 July, 2014; 4 August, 2014).

This simple example points to the way the social and economic conditions in the homes impacted on language development. In Chapter Three, I discussed a number of concepts and theories useful in thinking about language use and language development. One of these concepts, the 'Common Underlying Proficiency' (CUP) or 'Dual Iceberg Hypothesis', which illustrates the way meanings were expressed in two, or more, languages is relevant here. According to Cummins (1982), a common underlying proficiency is developed from early childhood onwards. This proficiency is hidden (rather like the nine tenths of an iceberg hidden from view). The proficiency would include, for example, the ability to categorise items. Once this proficiency has been developed, it is available for use in any language in manifestations appearing as the 'tip of the iceberg'. The ability to categorise and use descriptors for items as well as the ability to provide and respond to verbal instructions are part of the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) also identified by Cummins (1982).

It would seem, then, that in the case of the young man who had gained a place at university his home environment provided the means for the CALP to be developed. This was the same home that had access to old textbooks, which had been passed down from older siblings and relatives in their home language, Afrikaans (Field notes, 18 August, 2014).

As I have indicated, the majority of the families in the community valued English as a language needed to 'get on' in life (Field notes, 25 July, 2014; 29 July, 2014; 12 September, 2014 & 16 October, 2014). However, arguably more important than the mastery of the surface features of the additional language is the nature of the underlying language proficiency developed from early childhood. In many homes in the community, the development of this proficiency was not as complex or rich as the potential there more commonly is in homes with access to a wider range of social and economic resources.

In this section, I have indicated the values placed on formal education. Formal education privileges are but one kind of knowledge and learning, however, and it was evident that other kinds of knowledge and learning were practiced in the community. Men could work with wood, for example, and would make items to sell. However, sometimes this knowledge was guarded as it was considered a form of income and its potential to generate much needed money would be diluted if shared. For example, one woman in the community braided hair for a small fee (Field notes, 28 July, 2014). I asked if she would like to have her hair braided like the other women and was informed that she was the only person who knew how to braid (*ibid*). I asked whether she couldn't teach one of the other women to braid so they could assist her. The woman smiled and then pointed out that if she did this they would be able to do their own hair and she would lose her source of income (*ibid*). Accordingly, it is possible to see the way financial circumstances and the need to survive impacted on learning in ways other than being able to afford formal schooling.

## 6.9 Language

The topic of language has arisen in earlier sections of this Chapter. In South Africa, language and access to language has long been considered central to access to education. The 1976 Soweto Riots, for example, were the result of the imposition of Afrikaans as a language of learning and teaching and the realisation, on the part of young people, that this would impede their access to learning.

In higher education, language has long been considered as a major impediment to learning. As Bradbury (1993) points out, however, the labelling of the difficulties experienced as students as due to 'language problems', and more specifically to the status of English, a language of instruction in all universities, as an additional language for the majority of South African students, has been politically expedient as it has allowed a lack of success being linked to the apartheid-based idea of cognitive difference to be avoided. A number of researchers working on higher education (see, for example, Boughey 1999, 2002 & 2005; Boughey & McKenna, 2016; McKenna 2004 & 2010; Jacobs, 2005) have pointed out that it is not mastery of the forms of English per se that cause problems. Rather, it is the uses for which students can put language and the contexts in which they can use it which is a problem.

I have already noted the value placed on the mastery of English in the community. Like many other families in South Africa, access to English medium schooling from a very early age was prized by some members of the community (Field notes, 25 July, 2014; 29 July, 2014; 12 September, 2014 & 16 October, 2014). The one white family in the community that used both English and Afrikaans in the home had struggled to get their children into an English medium school but only with great difficulty as the most accessible schools in the northern areas were all Afrikaans medium (Field notes, 29 July, 2014). While English education is prized, research (Cummins & Swain, 1983) shows us that enliteration in an additional language that prevents children from using their 'top down' knowledge of the language to predict words and phrases (see, also, Section 6.8; '*home-based educational practices*', on page 173). Access to English can therefore be harmful for the development of literacy.

The transience of family members I have noted throughout this thesis, also impacted on language. One of the mothers in the community informed me about her seventeen-year-old daughter who had been raised by her grandparents as the mother was considered to be too young to take on the responsibility of a child when she was born (Field notes, 25 July, 2014). The girl had been living in a small inland town for many years and the feeling in the family was that it would now be better if she could move to Port Elizabeth for educational reasons (*ibid*). The girl, who was in Grade 11 at the time of our conversation, had been held back for a year as a result of the move (*ibid*). Her previous school had used English as the language of learning and teaching (*ibid*). However, the girl was now being forced to use Afrikaans. The mother claimed her daughter was now 'catching up' but the impact of a change in language cannot be underestimated (*ibid*).

## 6.10 **Reading and writing materials**

Notable in all the homes in the community was the lack of reading material. A free Afrikaans newspaper, published daily, could be collected from the shop located at a thirty-minute walk away from the homes (Field notes, 25 July, 2014; 5 August, 2014; 14 August, 2014; 25 August, 2014 & 14 October, 2014). For reasons discussed earlier, collection was not always possible. A few people made use of the library, but this also was not common for reasons I have already discussed. Another woman had a few badly worn school text books for primary age children (Field notes, 18 August, 2014). She had acquired these from members of her extended family whose children were older and no longer made use of them (*ibid*).

Four of the more religious homes had a least one bible available to them, two families owning children's bibles with pictures (Field notes, 25 July, 2014; 5 August, 2014; 14 August, 2014; 4 November, 2014 & 9 September, 2014). One mother showed me a collection of 'faith for daily living'[59] booklets she informed me were provided free by her church (Field notes, 4 August, 2014). One of the single women in the community informed me that she received religious booklets quite regularly and showed me one of the pamphlets that were dropped off at the

[59] 'Faith for Daily Living' booklets are distributed by the Faith for Daily Living Foundation to spread the word of God through daily devotions and prayer.

houses by a religious group about once per month (Field notes, 28 July, 2014). I noticed numerous copies of these pamphlets in her living area. The woman told me she did not mind which group brought the pamphlets as she was open-minded and accepted that all religions are a path to God (*ibid*). The pamphlet contained information on stress management and the woman laughed informing me that it was her partner who needed to read it, not her (*ibid*).

Religious texts in the community were also acquired from many of the places members frequented for assistance such as soup kitchens and the churches themselves. These pamphlets also seemed to be used as paper for writing down scraps of information and doing small calculations, which is not surprising given the general absence of writing materials in the community noted earlier.

Researchers in higher education have cited the influence of religious texts on students' writing (see for example, Prinsloo & Breier, 1996; Dison, 1997). Here, Dison (1997) found that one of the most available books used for reading material in the homes of their participants. Boughey (2005), following Halliday (1973 & 1978) draws on the construct of tenor, or the relationship of the writer to the reader and vice versa, to note that students viewed the authors of academic texts as 'preachers' who were to be believed and not challenged. This led them to misunderstand the role of philosophers and their philosophy in the course in which they were enrolled. As academic literacy involves taking up a position in relation to a text which may involve challenging it, this is problematic.

It was my observation that the older generations were most inclined to read the newspaper (Field notes, 5 August, 2014; 14 August, 2014 & 14 October, 2014). One grandfather would walk to store every morning after breakfast to collect the paper. Having read the paper, he would ask if anyone else would like to read it. I also observed articles of a sensationalised or shocking nature would be more likely to be read by younger groups presumably for their interest value (Field notes, 25 July, 2014). After the paper had been read, it would be purposed for use as a cleaning cloth or table cloth or for lining boxes and drawers.

One of the families in the community collected old magazines (and toys) from the city refuse dump but otherwise the dearth of reading materials was blatantly obvious (Field notes, 22 September, 2014).

In spite of the lack of materials, some practices conducive to the development of children's literacy were noticeable. On one occasion, I observed a grandmother with a group of five children (Field notes, 29 July, 2014). One of the smaller children had a copy of a children's book showing pictures of animals that actually belonged to a neighbour's daughter (*ibid*). The grandmother turned the pages of the book asking the names of the animals. The children responded in English saying 'horsie', 'doggy' and 'kitty' (*ibid*). However, they used the Afrikaans word 'slang' in response to a picture of a snake (*ibid*).

After about ten minutes of this activity, the children went outside to play taking the book with them (*ibid*). An older girl, who was absent from school on that day as a result of protests taking place in the northern areas, took the book and began to ask the children to name the animals in the pictures, just as the grandmother had done (*ibid*). After a short time, a disagreement broke out when the owner of the book, who was standing on the other side of the fence, began to shout at the girl who was 'reading' with the children (*ibid*). This resulted in the book being thrown over the fence to its owner. The owner picked up the book and went to sit alone with it on the other side of the yard leaving the children who had been interacting with it to go back into the house (*ibid*). In this instance, we see a dispute about ownership impacting on an activity which contributed to children's development in a context of enormous scarcity.

On occasion, I witnessed other disputes over small objects to which a child had laid claim of which an adult had given to the child. It was evident that children were made responsible for material possessions from a young age (Field notes, 5 August, 2014). School age children were very possessive of stationery and school books, and sharing was not at all common. One of the requirements for all the schools that the children attended was that each child should have their own set of books and stationery. Parents were generally only be able to supply one set of stationary per year per child, if that, with some children having to make use of the same stationery for even longer periods of time. For most of the children, the beginning of formal schooling was an exciting time and the first time they had ever been provided with pencils and crayons. As a result, they were reluctant to share with younger siblings and guarded their possessions fiercely.

One of the most noted forms of contention I witnessed in my time in the community related to the possession of stationery (Field notes, 16 October, 2014). Older siblings would be trying to complete their homework when a younger child would surreptitiously take a coloured pencil and run off so that they could draw as well (*ibid*). One of the grandmothers noted that they experienced the fights between children over the use of resources to be an enormous problem in her home. Even if it was possible to provide younger children with a pen or pencil and a few scraps of paper on which to draw, they would still be attracted to the colourful selection of crayons their older siblings had been given for school work. Attempts to retrieve crayons from younger children regularly resulted in wailing (*ibid*).

Small notebooks and a pen were used in relation to the spaza shops (Field notes, 15 September, 2104 & 20 October, 2014). Items that needed to be replaced in the shop along with the debts owed by customers were recorded. These items were thus central to the livelihoods of some of the families and were not considered toys (*ibid*). Very occasionally a page would be torn out of a notebook and provided to the child with a pen. Pens and pencils were shared between adults, and neighbours would often ask to borrow them for a particular task. They would need to be returned immediately after the task had been completed. Even though children were aware that items such as pens and paper were associated with school and adult work, they were rarely permitted the opportunity to make use of them before the age of about five or six.

It can be seen, therefore, that access to tools and resources associated with schooling was extremely limited. As a result, the extent to which cellular devices and televisions were used as a means of entertaining and placating children, noted earlier in this Chapter, is not surprising. Clearly the purchase of resources which could be used by the entire family or which had uses perceived to be more valuable than play, took precedence. Given the fact that children were not generally able to be enrolled in any form of pre-schooling, access to educational resources was usually provided for the first time in Grade R.

Children did not see adults writing or reading often. As a result, literacy practices were not affirmed for them. On one occasion, I witnessed a young mother, who had left school after only seven years of attendance, hiding the writing she had completed in relation to the spaza shop she ran from me (Field notes, 22 September, 2014).

She told me that she did not like people to see her writing as she 'does not write nice' and she could not spell (*ibid*).

Although children did observe their elders making use of cell phones and other technological devices, the ways they saw them being used was not always conducive to the development of school-based practices. I have noted that devices were frequently used only to play music or watch videos and that the internet was accessed rarely because of the costs of data.

However, as significant as the lack of access to material resources was the lack of access to the time of parents and caregivers. Older members of the community often did not have the time to spend with younger children who were habitually left in the company of older siblings. Vygotsky's (1930-1934/1978) notion of a novice being inducted into practices by a more knowledgeable person in what he termed the 'zone of proximal development' therefore had limitations in the community because of contextual constraints.

## 6.11 **Toys and games**

Toys and games were scarce in the community, and were often second hand or broken. When the children had access to playthings, they were frequently repurposed to be used as toys in different ways (please see Appendix A. 9, Appendix A.10 and Appendix A.11 on page 221). For example, on one occasion I noticed a child playing with a gun that had a cord running from its base (Field notes, 25 July, 2014). His mother informed me that the gun was from a TV game, which they had never owned, and that they should probably cut off the cord (*ibid*). Somehow, the family had obtained the gun presumably from a discarded TV gaming set.

On another occasion, I observed a small girl playing with a single marble (Field notes, 1 August, 2014). She rested the marble on the arm of the sofa and flicked it with her index finger with the result that the marble fell on the floor and rolled under the sofa (*ibid*). I asked her mother if the children often played with marbles and was told that this was a popular pastime and a game she had also played as a child (*ibid*). Again, I observed a father playing marbles with his son in the yard (*ibid*) (please see Appendix A.12 and Appendix A.13 on page 222). The father was wearing a pair of headphones attached to his phone which was playing music.

The father was able to listen to the music, play marbles and, occasionally, interact with his son at the same time (*ibid*). In theory, it would be possible to use a game of marbles to develop language related to, for example, distance, proportion and, even, angles. However, the minimal interaction between the father and his son would have ruled this out as a result of his sharing his concentration.

I have already described how children were encouraged to demonstrate their skills at counting (Field notes, 25 July, 2014; 5 August, 2014; 9 September, 2014; 16 September, 2014; 16 October, 2014 & 6 November, 2014). However, many of the activities in the home would have allowed numerical abilities to be developed beyond mere counting. For example, several of the homes ran spaza shops which would have offered opportunities for simple arithmetic to be practised.

Other games I observed included a 'memory skipping game' which I was told had been learned from other children at school (Field notes, 17 October). The parents I asked were not familiar with this game. When parents and caregivers did play with children, it was almost invariably the men who did so with the women claiming that the demand of household chores prevented them from spending time in this way.

## 6.12 **Conclusion**

In this Chapter I have outlined the structural and cultural constraints leading to the emergence of conditions and practices impacting on the development of young children. In the time I spent there, it was obvious to me that community members sorely wanted to improve their living conditions and do the best for their children. The constraints on the way they could exercise their agency not only because of the social and cultural conditioning to which they had been exposed, but also because of mechanisms in the domains of culture and structure with which they had to contend meant that they could actually do very little.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

School Readiness and Support ($T_4$)

## 7.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I have used a framework provided by sociologist Margaret Archer (1995, 1996, 1998 & 2000) to explore the child rearing practices of a marginalised community in South Africa. More specifically, I have looked at the way parents and caregivers exercise their agency in order to provide for their children both materially and educationally.

In terms of the framework, I have now arrived at what Archer (*ibid*) terms $T_4$, which for the purposes of this thesis is determined as the time children undergo the early years of schooling. I will conclude my study by examining and accounting for their levels of preparation and the level of support they are likely to receive in their homes.

## 7.2 PIRLS

South Africa has regularly participated in a number of international studies looking at literacy. The results of the Progress in Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS) conducted every five years (Mullins et al., 2017), allow us to see whether reading literacy has improved over time. In 2016, 50 countries[60] participated in the PIRLS study of fourth and fifth grade leaners (Howie, Combrink, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, & McLeod Palane; 2017). Researchers contributing to the study were able to gather information about literacy and learning across a wide range of different contexts. By collecting quantitative data as well as qualitative data, PIRLS researchers are able to comment on areas such as the way schools encourage learning, how leaners are instructed in schools, their access to resources, as well the home environments of learners (Howie et al., 2017).

[60] The participating countries were: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Chinese Taipei, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, England, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hong Kong SAR, Hungary, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lithuania, Malta, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Norway, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, and United States (PIRLS, 2017).

The study was able to identify conditions likely to contribute to the progress and improvement of reading and literacy development as well as those likely to impede it.

Conditions that were experienced by those deemed to be ‘good readers’ were identified as home environments that supported a child’s educational progress (Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Hooper, 2017). In such environments, parents or caregivers assisted children’s learning and took an active role their education. This included initiating children into literacy practices from early in their lives and offering ongoing support throughout their schooling careers. A practice that serves to initiate children’s literacy development could be reading a bedtime story (Heath, 1982b) or talking about a picture book with a child. For the most part, these learners judged to be ‘good readers’ attended well resourced, and academically orientated schools (Mullis et al., 2017). These schools provided access to a wide array of resources such as up to date libraries and computer laboratories. These schools were safe, with minimal levels of crime and/or violence, such as bullying and intimidation (Mullis et al., 2017). Here learners experienced lower levels of anxiety associated with crime and/or violence. Additionally, these ‘good readers’ attended school on a regular basis, with minimal, if any disruptions and generally were not tired or hungry (Mullis et al., 2017). These learners were provided with sufficient food, and were able to obtain an adequate amount of sleep before attending school. They also displayed a positive attitude towards reading and experienced minimal difficulty with reading online (Mullis et al., 2017).

It is not difficult to see how the conditions identified by the likes of Mullins et al., (*ibid*) differed from those I identified in the preceding Chapter of this thesis.

On average, the results of the 2016 study showed no significant improvement in reading and literacy in South Africa when compared to those of previous studies. The outcome of the 2016 tests showed South Africa’s position was the last of all the countries that took place in the study (Howie et al., 2017). A staggering 78% of South African learners were shown to be unable to read for meaning in any language, including their home language, by the end of the fourth grade, (Howie et al., 2017).

Howie et al., (2017) show that the majority of South Africa's grade 4 learners did not have the ability to reach the lowest benchmark in the study of being able to 'read for meaning, or retrieve basic information from the text to answer simple questions' (Howie et al., 2017, p. 4). Only 0.2% of the children tested in South Africa were rated at the other side of the scale against the advanced international benchmark which notes that learners are able to 'integrate ideas as well as evidence across a text to appreciate overall themes, understand the author's stance and interpret significant events' (Howie et al., 2017, p. 2). On one hand, the tests identified a small percentage of learners who excelled, and a much larger percentage who truly struggled with reading. These results are probably indicative of more general living conditions in the country where a small minority live in enormously privileged conditions whist the rest struggle.

#### 7.2.1 *Language*

In 2011, the test was translated into all of South Africa's eleven official languages, and in 2016, into ten of the official languages for the Grade 4 section (Mullis, Martin, Foy & Drucker; 2012). In 2016, only 6% of learners indicated that the language of learning and teaching at school was the same as their home language. As predicted, learners who completed the test in their home language, produced higher scores (Howie et al., 2017). However, this was not the case for English writers, as only 21% of learners who wrote in English spoke the language in their home environment. It was revealed that grade 4 leaners who wrote the tests in English, which was their home language, scored significantly higher than those whose home language was not English, but it was their language of instruction (Howie et al., 2017). The Tshivenda language was the only African Language that showed a high score comparatively speaking to rest of the African languages that were tested.

These results are all indicative of the fact that reading in the home language allows a learner to use their knowledge of the home language in the 'psycholinguistic guessing game' posited by Goodman (1967). As I have indicated previously, knowledge of an alphabetic language allows us to predict which symbols will follow each other and, thus, allow for minimal processing of the signs on the page.

Statistically speaking, the highest performing tests were those written in English and Afrikaans, with performances significantly higher than those taken in the African languages. The lowest performing tests were completed in isiXhosa and Sepedi (Howie et al., 2017). The Eastern Cape (the same province as the sample community), scored second last in the final results, with Limpopo holding the last position (Howie et al., 2017). The most telling of the statistics showing that 80% of learners who completed the tests in African languages failed to make the lowest benchmark (Howie et al., 2017). This is in comparison to 57% of those completing in English and 56% of those completing in Afrikaans.

As I have indicated earlier in this thesis, language is a highly emotive topic in South Africa given the role it has played in denying access to education to generations of children. I have therefore chosen language to discuss the way the interplay of mechanisms in the domains of structure and culture led to the emergence of events that were not conducive to the development of language and literacy. As I explained in Chapter Two, critical realists argue that it is the interplay of mechanisms that leads to emergence and that, because of this, critical realism cannot provide strict cause/effect accounts of events, experiences and observations. Emergence is thus seen to be tendential. However, I believe that it is nonetheless possible to see that the interplay of mechanisms from the domains of both structure and culture led to the recurrence of events that were not conducive to development.

For example, I discussed the role of technology, specifically, television sets in the lives of families. Technology can be seen as a structure that distributes access to knowing, knowledge and development. In the homes I visited, television sets were switched on as families arose in the morning, and remained on all day provided there was sufficient money for electricity. The value of watching television then meant that families interacted with the screen and not necessarily with children around them. The subject matter watched in the form of soap operas was not accessible to children who could probably make little sense of the dilemmas being discussed and the judgements of behaviour offered by their elders.

As previously stated, the majority of the families in the sample community spoke Afrikaans in their homes, with very few learning English before attending school. They were also generally enrolled in schools which used Afrikaans as a language of learning and teaching.

While families valued the role of language, and particularly the English language, in education and employment, not only was responsibility for language left to schools, but also the material conditions in which children lived where not necessarily related to its development. On page 179, I described a child being asked to fetch a sweater and noted that the paucity of possessions in homes, as well as the homes themselves, meant that opportunities for languages of description to be developed were not as frequent as they might have been. In a home with lots of possessions, language is used to categorise and differentiate between them. If there is only one possession of a particular class (for example, a sweater) then there is no need for language to be developed to distinguish between members of that class. In this example, therefore, we see the interplay of discourses related to the valuing of language and the allocation of responsibility for developing to schools with severe structural constraints in terms of possessions leading to the 'non-emergence' of events related to categorisation and description.

The loss of traditional practices such as storytelling and riddling described in Section 3.3.1 (page 39) as a result of the so called 'modernisation' of society related to colonialism has also played a part in language development. Brock-Utne (2006) describes activities such as storytelling and riddling as rich sources of numeracy and literacy development. As Heath (1983) also argues, stories provide the means for the development of knowledge of the way information is typically organised in narratives and other genres. I was not able to observe any instances of storytelling or riddling in the time I spent in the community. Even had such practices survived, the structure of the capitalist economy meant that parents and caregivers were often required to work long hours in menial jobs and were not available to spend time with their children. The convergence of multiple mechanisms thus led to the non-emergence of events conducive to language and literacy development.

### 7.2.2 *Schooling conditions*

In terms of geography, it was noted by PIRLS that schools located in remote, rural areas and townships obtained the lowest scores. Schools in remote rural areas are attended by 39% of South African learners with only 3% attending schools in small cities and towns. Learners from suburban and city areas tended to score consistently higher (Howie et al., 2017).

One of the first most prominent problems identified in the study was overcrowding in classrooms. In the 2016 study, it was calculated that there are approximately 45 leaners per teacher in each classroom. This number had increased since 2011 when the PIRLS study recorded an average of 40 learners per teacher (Howie et al., 2017). Higher scores correlated with a lower number of learners per class.

One of the most telling statistics was that 94% of Grade 4 learners attended schools that had been affected in some way in differing degrees by resource shortages. Learners with minimal access to educational resources were shown to struggle with school-based learning more generally (Howie et al., 2017). Schools reporting that they did not suffer from shortages were able to obtain the highest scores in the South African context (Howie et al., 2017). A full 62% of schools indicated that they did not have their own school library on the premises (Howie et al., 2017). These schools were shown to perform more poorly than those who did have access to an on-site library (Howie et al., 2017). Lack of access to a library is exacerbated by shortages in the supply of text books reported annually in South Africa (Legotlo, Maaga & Sebego, 2002; Prince, 2010; Nkosi, 2013; Hartley, 2016; Wicks, 2017).

Bullying was reported by 42% of learners, with those reporting bullying generally achieving less well than those who were not, or only very rarely bullied (Howie et al., 2017). This was one of the highest scores internationally, with 42% South African learners stating that they were subject to bulling and/or intimidation on a weekly basis (Howie et al., 2017).

It is not difficult to see that the conditions conducive to scoring highly on the tests are associated with better resourced schools more likely to have been accessed by parents with more favourable financial means. Even though the community was located close to a number of well-resourced schools, the children could attend as they were too expensive. The children would therefore have to travel a further distance to attend more affordable schools. These schools suffered from a lack of recourses, a large number of disruptions, and were vulnerable to violence, crime and gangsterism. There were also periods where these schools experienced unrest, violence and protest action as a failure to pay teachers' salaries over a prolonged period.

In 2015, the schools attended by the majority of the learners in the community were closed because of protest action. Before the closures, learners in the schools were exposed to even higher levels of overcrowding than normal as teacher who were not taking part in protest action combined classes. The protests occurred towards the end of the school year causing disruptions in the writing of tests and examinations. At this time, parents came to know whether a particular school was open or closed only by word of mouth. As a result, it was difficult for them to know whether or not they should send their children to school. The lack of social inclusion of the community was is painfully evident at times of protest.

### 7.2.3 *Pre-schooling and parental/caregiver involvement in literacy development*

The PIRLS showed that 85% of learners were able to attend some form of pre-school. Of these, 22% were able to benefit only 1 year or less of preschool, 16% attending for 2 years or less, and 47% attending for 3 years or more. Approximately 15% of learners did not attend any form of preschool before enrolling in their first year of primary school. Overall, the PIRLS testing showed that learners who attended preschool generally obtained higher scores than those who did not (Howie et al., 2017 & Mullis et al., 2017).

The children in community I studied very rarely attended any form of pre-school. This was attributed by parents and caregivers to the cost of the pre-schools located close to the homes. Only one family was able to pay for one of their children to attend pre-school on a full-time basis. If other children of the community attended pre-school, it was on a very inconsistent basis as it used more as a day-care facility while caregivers had short term work and could not find another in the family or the community to look after their child. In a more positive vein, the vast majority of the children were enrolled in Grade R, that is in the year preliminary to Grade 1. There was general agreement amongst parents and caregivers that attending one year of Grade R would be sufficient in terms of school preparation. I have noted the discourse dominant in the community that it is schools who are responsible for introducing children to the practices associated with literacy and schooling and have provided examples of instances where opportunities for engaging with children were ignored.

Throughout this thesis, I have identified geography as a structure constraining access to schooling. Had families lived in one of the larger townships in the Port Elizabeth area, more opportunities for pre-schooling may have presented themselves. Offering pre-schooling is often understood as a business opportunity for women in township areas and training is available when such enterprises are started from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including the Centre for Social Development at the university at which I studied. The location of children's homes in a relatively upmarket and 'gentrifying' area meant that the opportunities for pre-schooling available to them were beyond their families' means.

Making an application for children to attend some sort of school was difficult for the majority of families in the community. In order to go to the school to make an application in person, they would either need to take time off work or find someone else to tend to the younger children. Application forms were available for download on the school websites. However, access to a computer, printer and internet access was not available. In addition, community members did not have email addresses. Technology, in this case, was a structure constraining access to poorer families.

The PIRLS also took into account what involvement parents may have had with their children before the start of primary school. In order to explore this area, researchers questioned parents and caregivers about the practices in which they engaged in order to identify those commonly associated with early literacy development and preparation for schooling. Practices such as the regular reading of stories, singing songs, talking and playing with children have all been previously shown to be conducive to literacy development (Howie, et al., 2017). When responses to questions enquiring about parenting and care-giving practices were examined alongside the results of the testing, 34% of learners whose parents or caregivers regularly engaged in such practices achieved higher scores (Mullis et al., 2017). Included in this finding were practices that parents and caregivers themselves may have modelled for their children, such as reading in the home (Mullis et al., 2017). The scores of children whose parents or caregivers noted that they themselves regularly read, and enjoyed reading, in their homes achieved higher than children who were not exposed to such practices. The lowest scores were achieved by children whose parents or caregivers did not engage in forms of literacy practices with their children before they began formal schooling (Howie et. al., 2017).

One of the things I observed in my own study was that the children from those homes in which some reading material was available, where some reading was modelled and where parents expressed more interest in their children's education had been able to find places in better resourced schools achieving higher pass rates. Overall, the number of such homes was small. In others, there was simply no access to books or other reading materials, and parents and care givers showed no interest in reading for themselves preferring instead to use the television as a means of entertainment and source of information.

Almost all the families in the community subscribed to a discourse that stressed the importance of education, where value was ascribed to educational achievement as a means of gaining access to opportunities, particularly employment opportunities, in life. Within this discourse was also the idea that, if a child could gain an education, this would provide a means of achieving prosperity for generations to come, where prosperity involved getting a better job and, thus, improved social status.

Although parents and caregivers of the community embraced the value in obtaining a good quality education for their children, they had to engage with constraining conditions as they pursued their agency to pursue this project. As a result of a lack of social capital overall, misunderstandings of ways in which their situation could be improved were numerous. Deadlines for applications to schools were missed, sometimes with the result that students were held back from education for an entire year. The problem of financial need also impacted on their pursuit of quality education as they simply could not afford to send their children to better resourced schools.

My observations in the community showed that parents and caregivers who themselves had higher levels of education not only had 'better' jobs. This not only gave them the means to access better education for their children but also to provide the resources necessary for development in the home, even if they were second hand or obtained from someone working on the city dump. This observation accords with that of Howie et al. (2017) that children of such parents generally obtained higher scores than those whose parents or caregivers with minimal qualifications, holding at best, menial jobs.

As I have indicated in Chapter Six, there was a range of level of education of the parents and caregivers, with a majority not having been able to complete their high school education. The highest common standard obtained being a matric certificate without university exemption. This meant that even though they acquired a matric certificate, they would be unable to apply for education and scholarships. Some may have had the level of qualification enabling study at, say, further education level but most did not have the financial means to enrol, or were unable to take the time off providing financially for their families in order to take advantage of sponsorships. As I have indicated, at the time of my study, only one member of the community had been able to secure a university place with funding.

Apart from entrepreneurship, such as car guards and running the spaza shops (which was generally separated along gendered lines), the jobs held by community members were factory line positions, domestic work, cashier employment and small menial jobs that could be found. The few that possessed contract positions which produced a monthly pay check were responsible for the bulk of financial support for larger and extended families. The menial jobs which were able to be obtained were normally short term, and not well paid. This meant that all the families lived day-to-day, without much support from external entities apart from religious organisations, and to a lesser degree, the government.

In the PIRLS, South Africa showed the second highest gap between genders in the world (Mullis et al., 2017). Grade four girls performed consistently better across all languages over that of boys (Mullis et al., 2017). It can also be noted that in the community, it was mainly the women that were offered sponsorships to support their education. These women had, however, been forced to turn down assistance because of their domestic and child rearing duties. As previously noted, women in the community tended to focus on teaching their female children how to do household chores before they began formal schooling. These girls were then expected to disseminate this learning to their younger siblings. Younger boys were not allocated as much responsibility in the home and were permitted to spend more time away than the girls. This observation does not account for the PIRLS finding but does indicate gender based differences in the way children were raised.

### 7.2.4 *Home environment*

Overall, the PIRLS revealed an enormous disparity in levels of achievement between learners from different socio-economic backgrounds (Mullis et al., 2017). Of learners who achieved the lowest scores on the tests, 75% came from disadvantaged backgrounds, 16% from backgrounds that could be considered neither disadvantaged or privileged and only 9% from affluent contexts (Howie et al., 2017).

In this respect, resources such as books, internet access, personal living space (such as a bedroom dedicated for sole use) were shown to be beneficial in reading and literacy development. Tragically only 1% of the South African population fitted this category. Of the remainder, 70% stated that they had access to a moderate amount of resources and 29% that they had very little access to any forms of resources (Howie et al., 2017).

Even though the community in my study was located in an urban area, they can be categorised living in poverty and as being marginalised. In addition, the structural constraints they experienced meant that they had very little chance of improving their situation regardless of a strong adherence to discourses valuing ‘getting on in life’ and the role of education in this process. They lived in cramped conditions, with children commonly sharing bedrooms with parents, siblings and/or extended family members. Other living areas were dominated by the television, which was switched on as the family arose and was only switched off late at night, access to electricity permitting. Occasionally, family or community members worked as corporate agents to resources in order to access equipment such as a computer. However, even here, financial constraints and demands often meant that the availability of such objects in the homes was short-lived and they were sold or exchanged for other possessions deemed more important at any one time. In the few cases where a computer was, for a short time, available, there was no access to internet because of the cost of a fixed telephone line and data. No home ever owned a printer in the time I spent in the community.

The PIRLS results reported in this section focus on access to material possessions. It is not difficult to see that children from the community studied were part of the 75% of learners coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and, thus, were more likely to score badly on the tests.

My use of Archer's framework allowed me to explore structural and cultural domains separately, however, and I believe that this allows me to posit more constraints to the development of reading and literacy on the part of children in the community.

### 7.2.5 *Cultural constraints*

As I indicated in Chapter Four, for the purposes of the study underpinning this thesis I understood the domain of culture to be discursively constituted where 'discourses', following Kress (1989), were themselves understood to be groups of ideas that constructed what it is possible to do, say, believe and so on. While the members of the community faced innumerable structural constraints, they also subscribed to discourses which, in the interplay with mechanisms in the domain of structure contributed to the emergence of events that were not conducive to the development of reading or literacy.

For example, one set of discourses privileged the cell phone as a source of entertainment with children being provided with access to cell phones to amuse themselves by listening to music or watching videos. My study (page 167) showed a child who could access music on the phone and who used some of the symbols on the screen to try to decode the names of songs. No other member of her family assisted her with this when, doing so, could have provided a means of literacy development in the absence of books. The phone was solely constructed as a tool for entertainment where children were concerned.

Another set of discourses located responsibility for children's educational development in schools. Admittedly the roots of such discourses in adults' own lack of experience of and success in education can be understood. However, the location of responsibility for all development in the schooling system meant that adults could be absolved from interacting with children in ways that was conducive to their development.

On page 186, for example, I describe a father playing marbles with his child. Although the game could have provided the means for interaction, the child was effectively ignored as the father played with the marbles whilst listening to music on his cell phone.

Other discourses constructed school-based achievement with the means of accessing better paid employment rather than as a means to learning and ongoing education itself. Although very few members of the community achieved the level of pass on the school leaving examination that allowed them to access further or higher education, it is also likely that only seeing schooling as a path to employment constrained enjoyment, certainly of subjects with less instrumental value.

In many respects discourses constructing responsibility for child-rearing as loosely shared between members of a (very) extended family were also constraints to development. Children were left with many different caregivers depending on other circumstances. At times, this meant that they were sent to live with family members housed some way away from the community. Whilst such practices exposed children to the love and care of many people, the lack of continuity also had the potential to impact on their development as activities were not carried over from one care giver to the next.

## 7.3. The contribution of this thesis

It is conventional for a doctoral candidate to conclude a thesis by attempting to identify the contribution to knowledge the study underpinning it has made.

As I indicated in Chapter Four, my aim in conducting the study underpinning this thesis was to contribute to the literature on literacy and child development in South Africa. Although the insights I derived from the time spent in the community could be argued to have added nothing new to our understandings of the situation in the country as depicted by the PIRLS, I would argue that the theoretical lens that I brought to my work in the form of critical and social realism allowed for a disentangling of the myriad of mechanisms in both cultural and structural domains. Structural constraints are often noted. Less frequently observed are the way discourses subscribed to by parents and caregivers are themselves an impediment to their children's development.

Perhaps what this study most offers to our understanding of the situation in marginalised communities in South Africa is its design. My use of critical ethnography allowed for a close- up engagement with children and their parents over a prolonged period of time. This provided rich descriptions which, arguably, could be teased out more to provide even deeper understandings of the constraints on children's development.

## 7.4 Conclusion

This thesis ends at $T_4$, a time when the children are undergoing their most formative years of education. My study looked at the way structural and cultural constraints impacted on the exercise of parents' and caregivers' agency in contributing to their children's development. At $T_4$, it is possible to evaluate and, sadly, the picture that emerges from my study is that the children in the community are not well placed to benefit from the schooling that is available to them. Here, the limited epistemological access to which the sample community have admission has acted to perpetuate a state of social exclusion, especially in terms of literacy development. The fact that their schooling is of poor quality makes their situation even more lamentable.

However, there is no doubt that their parents and caregivers did try to exercise their agency to the best of their ability within these constraints, as it was obvious that the children themselves were loved. This was made exceedingly apparent, where parents expressed the desire for their children to surpass their own educational standing by doing the best that they could with the resources and knowledge available to them.

As I write these concluding words of my thesis, many of the houses I visited so regularly have been informed that instead of being relocated once again to other parts of the city, their homes are to be repaired. This reparation will be at the cost of the city's development agency, with no extended cost to the community themselves. The hope being that this promise of renewed homes, instead of continuing the mistakes of the past in forced relocation, will assist in their endeavours to make a better life for their children, and themselves.

For now, it is only for me to express my heartfelt thanks, once again, for all in the community who made this work possible for me.

***Hamba Kahle,*** Uhambe Kuhle, Totsiens, Sepela Gabotse, Tsamaya Hantle, Tsamaya Sentle, Hamba Kahle, Kha Vha Sale Zwavhudi, Salani, and Goodbye.

*Albuca Longifolia*

'As this memory shapes, miles away,
and times from the everyday glare of
smells, sight and feel of the then
that once made a passing moment real with
politics, history, its own mythology, you
have gone, and I don't know where'

Brian Walters, excerpt from *Albuca Longifolia*, *Baakens,* Port Elizabeth

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**APPENDIX A**
**Selected Photographs of the participant community**[61]

**A. 1 Photograph of a shack located out of public view in the back garden of the main dwelling (taken from the kitchen window)**

**A. 2 Photograph of the entrance to an outside shack**

[61] Photographs have been digitally edited in order to protect the identity of the participants.

**A. 3 Photograph of a bedroom shared by three families**

**A. 4 Photograph of the same bedroom, with young mother**

## A. 5 Photograph of a bathroom shared by six family members

## A. 6 Photograph of the kitchen area of the same family

## A. 7 Photograph of the view into the lounge area taken from the main bedroom

## A. 8 Photograph of the view of a lounge

### A. 9 Photograph of a broken doll 1

### A. 10 Photograph of a broken doll 2

### A. 11 Photograph of soft toys of four children on their shared bed

**A. 12 Photograph of a child playing with marbles 1**

**A. 13 Photograph of a child playing with marbles 2**

## A. 14 Photograph of a computer in the community

## APPENDIX B
## Consent Forms

### B. 1 Guardian consent form

**Learning to Learn: How do children in this community learn at home?**
**Adult Consent Form for Critical Ethnographic Study:**

Dear Community member,

My name is Meredith Armstrong, and I am a doctoral student in the Higher Education Department at Rhodes University. As explained verbally, I want to conduct ethnographic research by spending time with you and your family over the next 12 to 18 months. I am interested in finding out how the children of your community learn at home. I want to encourage you to ask questions throughout the study if you need clarity on any aspect of the research. If you wish to contact me at any time, my personal cell number is 07********. This document is a written record of your consent to be a part of this study. Thank you for showing an interest in this area of work and agreeing to be in this study.

**Confidentiality and Consent:**

I, ____________________ hereby agree to allow Meredith Armstrong (the researcher) to

conduct ethnographic observations and interviews in my home and community to complete her Doctorate in Higher Education. If at any time I wish to withdraw from this study, I have the rights to do so without penalty and my participation in this research is strictly on a voluntary basis. Meredith Armstrong has explained to me the reasons why she wishes to do this research, as well as the methods she will use to collect information. My real name will not be used in any written accounts. I will remain anonymous in the final write-up of the thesis, and she will endeavour to protect my identity at all stages of the research.

**Name of Community Member: Signature**
**of Community Member: Date:**

**Name of Researcher:** Meredith Armstrong
**Signature of Researcher: Date:**
14 July 2014

## B. 2 Guardian and children's consent form

**Learning to Learn: How do children in this community learn at home?**
**Legal Guardian and Child Consent Form for Critical Ethnographic Study:**

Dear Parent/Legal Guardian/Child of the Community,

My name is Meredith Armstrong, and I am a doctoral student in the Higher Education Department at Rhodes University. As explained verbally, I want to conduct ethnographic research by spending time with you and your family over the next 12 to 18 months. I am interested in finding out how the children of your community learn at home. I want to encourage you to ask questions throughout the study if you need clarity on any aspect of the research. If you wish to contact me at any time, my personal cell number is **07********. This document is a written record of your consent for your child or children to participate in this study. Thank you for showing an interest in this area of work and agreeing to be a part of this study.

**Confidentiality and Consent:**

I, ____________________ (legal guardian) hereby agree to allow ____________________

(name of child) to participate in the research study conducted by Meredith Armstrong (the researcher). If at any time the child or I wish to terminate his/her participation in this study, they/I have the right to do so without penalty. I understand that my child's participation in this research project is strictly voluntary. Meredith Armstrong has explained to my child/children and I the reasons why she wishes to do this research, as well as the methods she will use to collect information. My child's real name will not be used in any written accounts and they will remain anonymous in the final write-up of the thesis. Meredith Armstrong will endeavour to protect my child's identity at all stages of the research.

**Guardian Name:**
**Guardian Signature:**
**Date:**
**Name of Child:**

**Researcher's Name:** Meredith Armstrong
**Researcher's Signature:**
**Date:** 14 June 2014

Picture for the child to colour in if they want to take part in the study:

**Or the child may sign/print their name here:** ________________