Youth transitions in South African communities

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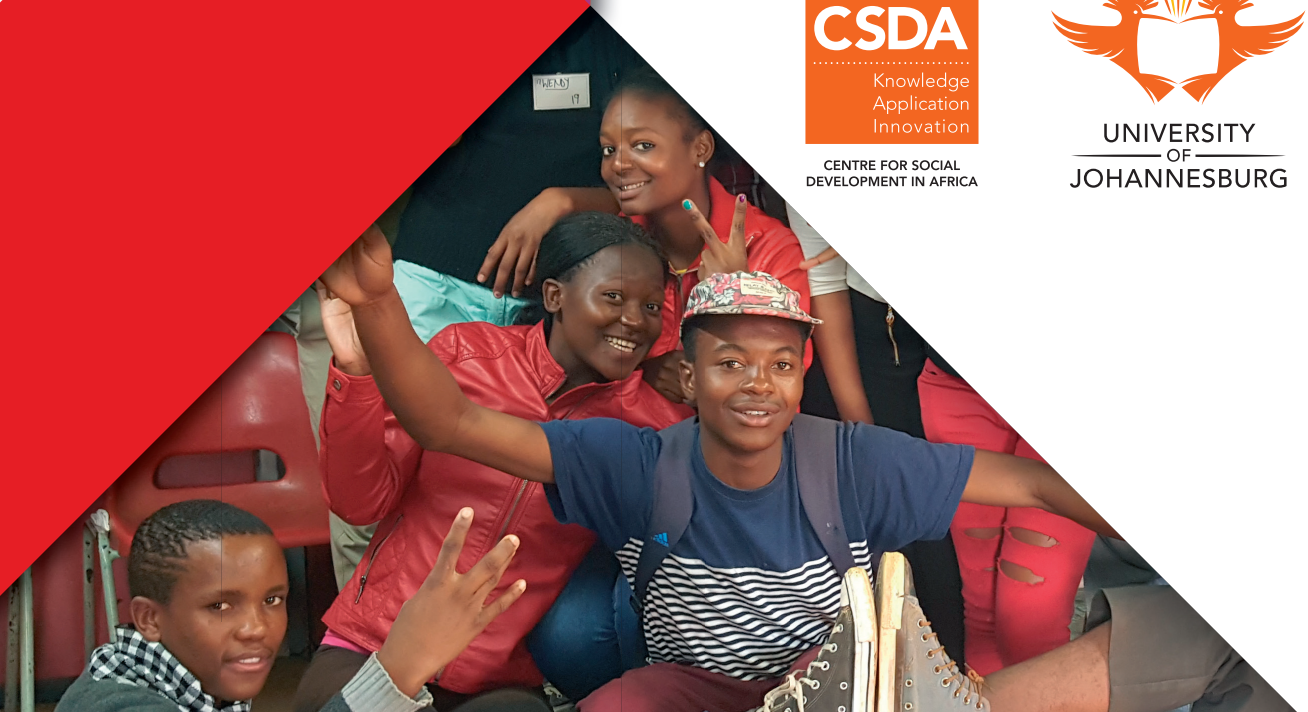

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The Centre for Social Development in Africa (CSDA), at the University of Johannesburg, was established in 2003 and is dedicated to basic, applied and strategic research in social development and developmental welfare. The CSDA aims to positively influence development issues in the Southern African region through contributing to debates on social policy, improvements in service delivery, and the expansion of knowledge through cutting-edge research.

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INTRODUCTION

Young people of today – those who have recently matriculated and are transitioning into the labour market – are "born frees". They were born after 1994 and as such were not subject to the legal constraints of apartheid in the same way their parental generation was. However, it is clear that inherited inequalities as well as new inequalities shape their lives. What are young people's views on South Africa and their prospects within it 24 years after the advent of democracy? This is the research question this study sought to answer.

Young people have been the focus of a great deal of research attention both locally and internationally. However, much of what we know about young people in South Africa comes from literature which points to their vulnerability and the challenges and risks they face. For instance the problem of youth unemployment has been a critical issue of research interest (Bhorat 2014; Cassim and Oosthuizen 2014; Graham and Mlatsheni 2015) and is rightly a key area of research and policy interest. Relatedly, the education challenges that young people face, including lack of quality education for many youth, high levels of early school exit and challenges with accessing post-secondary education and training; have received significant research interest, particularly during and following the #feesmustfall protests (Grant and Hallman 2008; Bhana 2012; Spaull 2015; Branson and Khan 2016)Similarly there is a significant amount of research and intervention attention paid to young people's risk behaviour in relation to sexual and reproductive health (Bhana and Pattman 2009, 2011; Jewkes and Morrell 2012; Bhana and Anderson 2013) and crime and violence (Bruce 2007; Burton 2007; Ward 2007; Burton, Leoschut, and Bonora 2009; Graham, Bruce, and Perold 2010). De Lannoy, Frame and Leibbrandt (2015) engage with how these challenges and vulnerabilities intersect, creating multiple deprivations for many young people in South Africa. All of these contributions to our understanding of the challenges that young people face are critical as areas of research interest and policy or programmatic intervention. However, there has been relatively less attention paid to the perceptions and attitudes of young people themselves regarding their lives, their communities and their plans for the future. We have very limited knowledge of the day-to-day experiences of young people outside of challenges and risks. The voices of young people are often not heard in research about them. Similarly interest in young people's sense of belonging and citizenship has waned, despite evidence of their voice in the #feesmustfall protests. A few key studies stand out in contrast to this situation.

Ramphele (2002) recounts the stories of a group of young people originating from poor communities in Cape Town. She is interested in how their life trajectories unfold and what decisions and opportunities shape their differing outcomes. Swartz (2009) provides insight into how young people in poor communities of Cape Town make decisions and the morality that informs their decision-making. In doing so she highlights their day-to-day realities of township life for young people. Bray, Gooskens, Moses et al. (2010) engage with young people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds ranging from Hout Bay to Masiphumelele in Cape Town. Drawing on the Cape Area Panel Study and associated in-depth interviews they highlight the differences between these young people and how such differences shape their opportunities, outcomes and attitudes. Newman and De Lannoy (2014)tell the stories of a group of Capetonian adolescents and young adults, highlighting their dreams and hopes and how the ending of apartheid brought them both promise and disappointment. All of these writers have provided important insight into the lived realities of mainly Capetonian, young people. They have highlighted their voices, dreams and aspirations and what their day-to-day lives are like.

Given this situation of our knowledge about young people in South Africa, is there space for another such study? Most of the studies mentioned, with the exception of Bray et al (2010) focus on the lives of poor youth and thus inevitably engage with challenge and vulnerability, despite also emphasising the agency and resilience of young people. In addition, all of the studies were conducted in Cape Town and are not necessarily typical of a wider youth population. Therefore we were interested to engage with young people residing in Gauteng and the Eastern Cape who were going through a time of transition – as they were nearing the end of or exiting high school. We selected young people across a range of socio-economic status groups and included those from wealthy, working class and poor backgrounds in the sample. Our primary interest was not in the challenges they faced, but in their perceptions about their futures, their views on the country, their sense of themselves in relation to their communities and country, and the mechanisms that either support or challenge their transition towards adulthood. We were interested to understand whether there are differences in how young people from different socio-economic backgrounds perceive themselves in relation to their communities and country. By seeking to listen to the voices of young people themselves, about a range of issues; we were able to generate a better understanding of how they view their own situations as they transition out of school. The starting point for the study is viewing young people as individuals who are making multiple transitions in their lives – to partnering, to parenting, to production (work), to post-secondary education, and to participation (citizenship). In this study we prioritise their voices about some of these transitions in their lives, their

communities and South Africa in this transitory phase of their lives and attempt to understand their agency in relation to these transitions.

Two of the research team members were involved in a similar study conducted in the mid-1990s as South Africa was transitioning to democracy. The study sought to highlight the voices of young people and understand their hopes and dreams for themselves in the (then) new South Africa, and culminated in a book "My life in the new South Africa: A youth perspective" (Leggett, Møller, and Richards 1997). We draw on this history by identifying the ways in which the thoughts, dreams and ideas of young people today compare to those of young people in the mid- to late-1990s.

Background to youth in South Africa

Young people (15 – 34 years) make up 36% of the population of South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2016), leading to what many term a demographic dividend (Oosthuizen 2013; Ssewamala 2015). The idea of the demographic dividend postulates that the youth population is an important segment of the society as it can be an engine that propels future growth and prosperity. Due to the demographic transitions, there will be increasing numbers of working age people with fewer dependents, and therefore increased income that can be used for consumption. The demographic dividend is assumed to be specifically pertinent in countries experiencing a 'youth bulge', such as South Africa, which is expected to face the youth bulge until the mid-2040s (Arowolo et al. 2016). A demographic dividend would only be realised if significant investments into young people happen now. These include investments into education and health, among others.

Although the idea of the demographic dividend advocates for greater investments in young people, it does so on the basis of an economic concept – that to invest in the lives of young people now will bring positive return on investment in the future. In contrast, this study is underpinned by the idea that young people are of value in and of themselves, regardless of what they will contribute in the future, and it is thus important to understand their lives, their futures and their views about their communities and their country in the present.

Young people in South Africa continue to face a myriad of challenges, more than 20 years after the first democratic elections and the end of apartheid. While some of the challenges differ to those that the youth then faced, some crucial issues remain, such as inequality, access to quality education, high unemployment rates which disproportionately affect youth, and the knock-on effects of increased poverty and vulnerability. It has become ever more crucial for the voices of young people themselves to be heard and for stakeholders to understand youth issues from a youth perspective in order to put the appropriate policy measures in place.

A youth development approach to youth transitions

Given the focus on young people and problems as discussed above, the perspective that often informs such research is a deficit-based one in which problems are identified to be addressed. In contrast, in this study we approach youth from a youth development perspective, assuming that they are resilient and have strengths that inform their decisions and perspectives. A youth development approach requires that young people's assets and capabilities (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2001) are understood and that there is focus on what young people do well under sometimes difficult circumstances, rather than focusing exclusively on young people's 'problem' behaviour. The approach also seeks to understand young people's views on the issues that concern them – to highlight their voices (Pittman et al. 2003). Their perceptions and their understandings are therefore seen as being significant, rather than relying on adults or 'experts' to speak on their behalf.

Structure of the report

In the next chapter we explain the methodology we used in the study and provide a description of the selected areas as well as an overview of the sample. We then move on to discuss three key themes emerging from the study in Chapter 3. First, we describe young people's day-to-day activities. A key argument that is revealed in this chapter is how young people are typically not "lazy" and "problematic". The chapter counters this common negative discourse about youth. Second, we reveal young people's views on politics and citizenship. Again, it is a chapter that disrupts common discourses about youth. The young people in this study emerged as neither apathetic nor radical in their political views and actions, but as agents with considered opinions about critical issues facing their communities and country. Third, we foreground their hopes and dreams for their own futures as well as for the future of the country. We conclude with a chapter contrasting how the opinions of our participants compare with young people in the mid- to late-1990s in views of their futures and the country. This allows us to reflect on what we have achieved as a country as well as the areas in which we have failed through the eyes of two generations of young people. We conclude the report with emerging recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

A key aim of the study, which was conducted in 2015, was to prioritise young people's voices about their own lives, their communities and to discuss their hopes and dreams and plans for their own futures as well as their views on the future of their country. A secondary aim was to compare the findings of this group of young people to the views of young people who participated in a similar study in the mid-1990s documented in the book "My life in the new South Africa: A youth perspective" (Leggett et al. 1997). As argued above, research has often been about young people but has not worked with young people. In contrast, a new sociology of childhood approach argues for viewing children and young people as social actors who construct and make sense of their surroundings, their social position and their identities, and who should be valued, not as human 'becomings' but as human beings (Corsaro 2005). This philosophy then suggests that the research methods used during research with young people should be decided upon based on how well they allow young people's voices to be heard, and the degree to which they encourage young people's participation. We therefore employed a qualitative research approach, employing methods that encouraged youth participation and voice (Heath et al. 2009).

Methods

Our primary method was that of focus groups, but we also included a short survey with the participants, intended to generate an overview of their demographics and opinions. Engaging with young people in groups often helps to diffuse perceived power imbalances between older researchers and younger participants, since young people can rely on a sense of security in numbers (Heath et al. 2009), provided they identify with other focus group members. Well run focus groups can also encourage a sense of mutual trust among participants and the facilitator, which in turn provides a safe space for young people to speak out. Techniques to encourage the creation of this "safe space" included running the focus groups in vernacular; engaging in "ice-breaker" games at the beginning of the group; setting ground rules that indicated that any viewpoint was acceptable albeit debatable within the group; indicating that participants were not allowed to laugh at other's opinions; and ensuring that facilitators were trained to avoid judgement in their responses to the discussions.

During the focus groups, various practices were employed to stimulate discussion and make the focus groups fun and engaging for the participants. We included activities where participants had to "vote" on critical questions and then explain their choices. We used hypothetical stories about "typical" young people in their communities and used these stories to engage them on key community issues, and we allowed them to draw their responses to some of the questions and then explain their drawings. The key themes that the focus groups covered included time use, views about their community, dreams and plans for the future, views on critical issues of the time, civic engagement, and views about the future of the country.

The short questionnaire they were asked to complete at the end of the focus group discussions included questions about their demographics – age, sex, living situation – and their opinions on many of the questions discussed in the focus groups, which they had to respond to on a Likert scale. This data enabled us to summarise their views while the focus groups provided the descriptive content to explain their opinions.

In addition to the focus groups, we also introduced a comparative element to the study. One of the ideas behind this project was to obtain a snapshot of young people's opinions about life in South Africa more than two decades after South Africa transitioned to a new democratic order. A useful backdrop to this study was a project undertaken in 1995, by the Quality of Life Unit, Centre for Social and Development Studies, University of Natal (Legget et al. 1997). In the mid-1990s a unique research project that aimed to solicit the views of young people about life in a new democratic society, shortly after the country's first democratic elections, was launched. The project was in the form of a letter writing competition in which young people were asked to write a letter, addressed to a fellow South African, telling them what life was like for them in the new South Africa. Entrants were given some guidelines for the writing of their letters and were asked to describe their everyday lives; their free time activities; what they would like to do in the future; their likes and dislikes and if there was anything that they felt strongly about.

Site selection and background to the sites

Seven areas were selected for the study – five in Gauteng and two in the Eastern Cape – as shown in the Table below. We ran one focus group in each town except for Kensington, Grahamstown, and King Williams Town where we ran two focus groups. In Kensington two focus groups were conducted to try and group youth from middle-class backgrounds (recruited from a school in the area) in one group and those from working class backgrounds (recruited from another school in the area) in another group. In King Williams Town we were advised by the local facilitator to run focus groups with older youth (18-20 years) and younger youth (16-17 years) separately, hence the two groups in this area.

The study was conducted in Gauteng and the Eastern Cape in order to allow us to include views from young people located in the economic hub of South Africa (Gauteng) as well as from one of the poorer provinces with fewer economic opportunities (Eastern Cape). The areas were selected purposively to be cases of areas that were "typical" communities for the types we wanted represented in the study. Below we provide a description of each site that was selected.

Table 1: Selected sites with site description

Gauteng	Eastern Cape				
Name of community	**Type of community**	**# of groups**	**Name of community**	**Type of community**	**# of groups**
Madelakhufa 1, Tembisa	Informal settlement	1	Grahamstown	Peri-urban poor township area	2
Diepkloof, Soweto	Working class township area	1	King Williams Town	Rural area (Tribal authority)	2
Onverwacht	Peri-urban poor Coloured township	1			
Kensington	Racially mixed middle-class and working class area	2			
Orange Farm	Poor township area	1			

Tembisa

Tembisa, which is the second largest township in Gauteng after Soweto, was established in 1957 (South African History Archive 2018b). Forced removals and the creation of townships outside of the legally designated white areas increased as the Afrikaner-dominated National Party gained power in 1948 and began implementing apartheid. New townships for black people who were evicted from the city's freehold areas were established by the Johannesburg council.

In 1956 townships were laid out for particular ethnic groups as part of the state's strategy to group black people in such a way that they would later form the foundations of the so-called "independent homelands". This grouping of black people along ethnic lines into different sections of the township also caused division and tension among the black people (South African History Archive 2018a). While the effects of this policy on the unity of black people were crippling, this was only temporary since sports and other cultural activities that took place in schools would bring together young people from different ethnic groups (ibid).

Tembisa has had its fair share of political turmoil, particularly in the early 1990s, as violence broke out in the lead up to the first democratic elections (Simpson, Mokwena, and Segal 1991). Historically, the township was not allowed to create centres of employment within its own area, so almost all residents had to make daily commutes to their places of employment such as Kempton Park, Johannesburg and Midrand. Public transport has and continues to play an important role in the daily lives of the residents of Tembisa. Like in other townships, Tembisa has its own local transport system. The local public transport is frequent, operates at almost all hours of the day and is affordable.

Attempts have been made, by government, to develop the area through their Growth and Development Strategy 2055 (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality 2010; National Treasury, Republic of South Africa 2018). Despite these efforts, little has changed for many of the residents of Tembisa. Tembisa is still home to two large informal settlements in which unemployment and poverty rates remain high (Graham 2012).

Soweto

Soweto, an urban settlement or township in South Africa, southwest of Johannesburg, derives its name from the first two letters of each word in the phrase 'South-Western Townships' (ie, So-We-To). It has a population of 1.27 million, making it the largest township in Gauteng (Statistics South Africa 2018b).

Soweto was created in the 1930s as a settlement to house black residents working and living in other areas of Johannesburg as part of the National Party's efforts to separate black and white living areas (South African History Online 2011). In June 1976, mass protests erupted in Soweto over the apartheid government's plans to teach black school children in Afrikaans (Statistics South Africa 2018b). On 16 June police opened fire on 10 000 marching students; June 16 is now celebrated in South Africa as Youth Day.

Over the years it has grown into a large, densely populated, and socio-economically diverse city with upmarket suburbs, quiet neighbourhoods, working class suburbs, shopping malls, theatres, sports stadiums, cinemas and entertainment complexes, surrounded by poverty-stricken informal settlements (Gauteng Tourism Authority 2018).

Kensington

Kensington is one of the oldest suburbs in Johannesburg, lying just east of the city. It is a hilly suburb, which was established in 1897 by Max Langermann (City of Johannesburg 2018). The total population, as of 2011, is just under 20 000 and is made up of 45,9% black Africans, 37% whites, 9,5% Indian/Asians and 6,4% Coloureds (Frith no date). This means that the face of residents in the area is very mixed racially.

Kensington is laid out over the slopes of several hills. The streets were laid out in 1902, and were heavily planted with trees, which gives the area a distinctive, wooded appearance. It houses some of the oldest schools in Johannesburg including the Jeppe schools. It has a vibrant restaurant, coffee shop and antique shop economy in its main shopping street, Queen Street. There are also a number of shopping centres and the area is considered a working- and middle-class area with a rich sense of community and pride in the area. It is surrounded by the poorer inner city and the suburbs of Troyeville and Malvern as well as the wealthy suburb of Bedfordview to its east (City of Johannesburg 2018).

Orange Farm

Orange Farm is an urban township located approximately 45 km from Johannesburg. It is one of the youngest townships in South Africa with the original inhabitants – laid off farm workers – taking up residency in 1988 (Affordable Land and Housing Data Centre (ALHDC) no date). The township grew as tenants from neighbouring Soweto and those migrating to Johannesburg from rural areas began to move into the area. Currently just under 77 000 people live in the community (Statistics South Africa 2018a), making it one of the most densely settled regions in the City of Johannesburg (Richards & Taylor 2012). It forms part of Region G in the city, which is characterised by high rates of poverty and insecure sources of income (ibid.).

It is a long distance from Johannesburg and as a result most residents have to travel a great distance to work and face high transport costs (ALHDC no date). This means that unemployment rates in the community are high. Education levels of the general population are quite low in the area, with 42% having completed some secondary education, 30,6% with a matric, 11,6% with some primary school education, 7,1% having completed no schooling and only 3,8% accessing higher education (ibid.).

King Williams Town

King William's Town started as a mission station in 1834 on the banks of the Buffalo River near East London in today's Eastern Cape province (Amathole museum no date). The town is part of the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality in the Eastern Cape and forms part of an agricultural district. The Eastern Cape is one of the poorer provinces of South Africa.

King Williams Town is home to just over 34 000 people with 65% and 26% of the population being black African and Coloured respectively (Frith no date). The town is an important agricultural and commercial centre. The area is an administrative hub for the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality and is earmarked for industrial development (Invest Buffalo City no date).

Grahamstown

Grahamstown is located in the Makana local municipality of the Eastern Cape and houses just over 50 000 residents (Frith no date b) in a university town (home to Rhodes University) and surrounding townships. It is situated almost halfway between Port Elizabeth and East London – the hubs of the two main metropolitan municipalities of the province.

Grahamstown's population is made up of 73% who described themselves as "Black African" and 14% as "Coloured" (Frith, no date b). Grahamstown is home to many schools and Rhodes University, and is rich in museums. Its primary economy is education and culture. It also hosts the annual Arts Festival which is a major economic stimulus to the town and surrounding townships.

Onverwacht

Onverwacht is a small farming community that lies North-East of Cullinan, and is referred to as "bloedgrond" by the residents because of its rich history. Those who live there (predominantly Coloured and Black African Afrikaans-speaking people) face high levels of poverty. Onverwacht's descendants are mainly freed Malay slaves who arrived in 1857 and intermarried the Pedi's. During the Second Boer War, local blacks were promised their own land if they helped the Boers in the war, and the promise was kept despite the Boer defeat. They call themselves black Afrikaners after Paul Kruger gave them the land for their assistance during the Anglo Boer War1. The village was also the site of the Battle of Onverwacht, which took place on 4 January 1902 (Gauteng Tourism Authority 2013).

Located in the Lephalale Local Municipality, Onverwacht's small population of 31 708 is made up of 88% Africans, 9% of Whites and 1% Coloureds (Statistics South Africa 2011). The local inhabitants have petitioned the government to have their town declared a heritage site (ibid.).

Sampling

For the focus groups, within each area we aimed to purposively sample "typical" young people; that is, we were not interested to engage only with young people who were connected to a particular organisation or who had particular religious or political beliefs. Rather we were interested in talking to any young people from the community within the age range of 15 to 21 years (the years that are typically periods of high levels of transition with school exit being a key transition moment). We therefore avoided recruiting young people

1 https://showme.co.za/pretoria/tourism/townships-around-pretoria/

through youth organisations, political parties or religious organisations. Rather, we employed varying recruitment strategies that were context-specific in order to identify young people in the area. For instance, in Soweto we worked with a researcher who has worked previously in the area and knows the area well. He walked through the area and stopped to talk to adults, asking if they had teenage or young adult children living with them and whether he could talk to them. The recruiter collected phone numbers or spoke to the young people face-to-face about the study and invited them to participate. In King Williams Town the Tribal leader put out the word about the study and parents and young people themselves self-selected into the study. In Tembisa, we worked with a local youth leader who identified young people in the community for us. We then engaged with these young people and invited them to participate. In Kensington we recruited through two schools – one known to serve middle- class families and the other known to serve working class families.

The dataset of letters that was used as comparative data included letters from young people between the ages of 13 and 30. Young people in this age band who participated in the competition could be described as falling somewhere between the 'Struggle Generation' and the 'Born Free Generation'. The 'Struggle Generation' is young people who turned 16 between 1976 and 1996. The 'Born Frees' were aged 16, 17 and 18 in the late 1990s (1997 onwards) (Mattes 2012). Born Frees have also been defined as anyone born in or after 1990 (South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) 2015a). The participants self-selected by responding to the call to enter the letter writing competition. The competition was advertised nationally via the print and electronic media and through community-based organisations and NGOs working in the youth development field. Some 900 letters from across the country were received in response to the competition.

Ethics

The study employed various methods to ensure that it was conducted ethically. When young people were invited to participate, the study was explained to them and they were provided with an information sheet detailing what was being asked of them and what benefits or harms they were likely to experience as a result of their participation. Those youth who were 18 years or older signed an informed consent form if they were willing to participate. Those younger than 18 were asked to complete an informed assent form if they were willing to participate. Before doing so they had to request their parents to read the information sheet and provide informed consent. Where necessary we engaged with parents to clarify any concerns about the research before they provided consent. All information sheets and informed consent forms were translated into the primary language used in the area.

It was explained to potential participants that there were no direct benefits to participating in the study and that we also did not foresee any harm being experienced during the study, although we were cognisant of managing any sensitive issues raised in the course of the discussions. Although this did not happen we made provision to refer participants to local free counselling services where necessary.

We provided each participant with a "thank you" gift of R50 airtime and reimbursed them for travel costs after they participated in the study. Although they were aware that transport costs would be reimbursed they were not aware prior to consenting that they would receive the airtime. We also provided participants with refreshments during the focus group discussions.

Permission to conduct the study in King Williams Town was sought and received from the Tribal Authority. This was a requirement for conducting the research in the area. Similarly, where young people were recruited through schools, permission was sought from the principals of the schools.

The identities of the participants remain anonymous and pseudonyms are used in this report. We could not guarantee confidentiality among the focus group participants but did encourage participants to keep what was said in the group confidential. The researchers, facilitators and note-takers were committed to ensuring the confidentiality of the participants.

Analysis

All of the focus group discussions were transcribed and translated into English. The research team read through the transcripts and coded them thematically together using an inductive approach; that is, allowing the themes to emerge from the text. The emergent codes were compared and debated before a consolidated code list was agreed on. This code list was used to code the remaining transcripts. We engaged in a process of constant comparison across the transcripts to identify dominant themes, into which we grouped codes. The findings that emerged from the analysis were then compared to findings from the study conducted in the early 1990s (Leggett et al. 1997) to draw out similarities in youth perspectives as well as major areas of difference.

Trustworthiness, credibility and authenticity

The trustworthiness of the study was enhanced by ensuring that the focus groups were run in such a way as to create a "safe space" in which young people's voices could be heard and validated. The techniques discussed above helped to create this space and the discussions that ensued were open

and honest with the young people often engaging in intense debates. Feedback from the participants after the focus groups indicated that they enjoyed the focus groups and the opportunity to have their opinions heard. This indicates that engagements were genuine. Transferability in terms of applicability to other contexts is enhanced through a thick description of the sites and the processes that were followed. Consistency of the findings was enhanced by ensuring that we used the same research instrument across all of the focus groups and that all facilitators were trained on the research process and research instrument. During the focus groups the facilitators took opportunities to clarify what young people were saying to ensure that their inputs were not misinterpreted. The analysis process also involved a process of checking between the researchers so that each researcher took time to independently code transcripts. Codes were compared and debated thereafter to ensure that we minimised the risk of personal bias influencing the analysis.

To enhance credibility we engaged in peer debriefing in which our participation in each focus group and preliminary insights were interrogated by other team members based on their experiences of the focus groups. The analysis process discussed above also served to enhance the credibility of the research process.

Limitations

As with any study there were limitations that need to be accounted for. The first is that rural youth are under-represented in the sample. We had originally planned for more focus groups to be run in King Williams Town and other surrounding villages but time and budget constraints rendered this impossible. Similarly young people from particularly wealthy backgrounds are not represented in the sample at all. Attempts to run focus groups in wealthier schools were unsuccessful.

A further limitation is that there were some differences in how the participants were recruited. Our recruitment plan was two-fold: in schools, for the principal or allocated teacher to identify a range of students who were in Grade 11 or 12 and then for us to select from this group; and in neighbourhoods for our recruiters to identify young people by walking around the communities and speaking to young people (and their parents where these youth were younger than 18 years old). We thus had to use two different recruitment criteria to generate the sample.

In any qualitative research there are power dynamics that shape the conversations, more so in research involving young people. We sought to overcome this by ensuring that focus groups were run with focus group facilitators who could engage well with youth and who had a track record of doing so. We also ensured that the focus group discussion guide included activities that would 'break the ice' and set ground rules about respecting one another's opinions and reminding participants that there were no right or wrong answers. Significant efforts were made to build rapport in the focus group discussions. Nevertheless there is always the risk of socially desirable answers having been given.

Participant Profile

The Table below gives an overview of the sample by area and the total sample size. It demonstrates that there was a fairly even gender split. We engaged young men and women in the same groups wherever possible because we did not plan to discuss issues that could be gender sensitive.

Table 2: Sample overview

Area and group	Males	Females
GAUTENG		
Medelakhufa, Tembisa	6	5
Kensington Group 1	0	8
Kensington Group 2	6	4
Soweto	3	7
Orange Farm	11	7
Onverwacht	3	3
EASTERN CAPE		
King Williams Town	8	1
Grahamstown Group 1 (Younger Youth)	3	3
Grahamstown Group 2 (Older Youth)	3	4
TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE	43	42

The average age of the participants was 17.5 years, with the youngest participant being 14 years of age and the oldest 21 years of age. Most of the participants were African and Coloured. In the focus groups held in the middle-class areas there were a few white and Indian participants.

Most of the participants were in the early years of preparing to transition out of school and begin to plan for their futures. As such most were still at school as is shown in Figures 1 and 2 below.

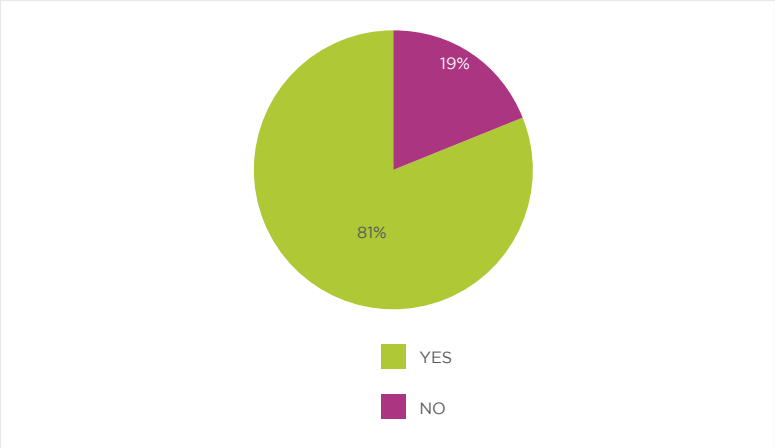

Figure 1: Proportion of young people still attending school (n=85)

Similarly, because they were still at school most were still living in households with a parent or primary caregiver at the time of the study. Very few had moved out of this living situation.

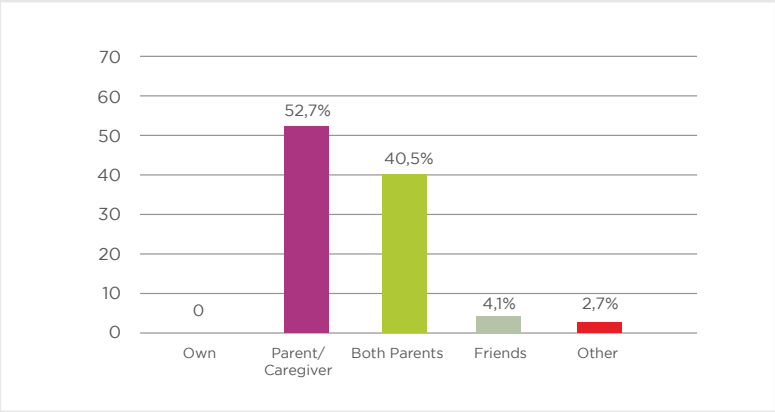

Figure 2: Household living situation of participants (n=85)

Having given an overview of the sample we now turn to understanding the day-to-day lived realities of this sample of youth.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A YOUNG SOUTH AFRICAN

This chapter explores how young people's current realities and contexts might influence the way they envisage their futures and to what extent their environments enable or restrict them from realising their aspirations. Further, it explores how these young people navigate and negotiate transitions to adulthood, given the often challenging and unpredictable circumstances they find themselves in. It begins with an exploration of time use studies conducted with young people, giving a brief background, and thereafter examines the significance of geographic location and context on decision-making and transitions for youth. It then gives a general account of the daily activities of the young people who participated in this study, comparing this with what young people two decades ago were doing. The multiple roles that young people play in the South African context, whether as household members, friends or in their broader communities, is then dealt with in the next section. Lastly, the chapter spends some time examining the aspirations and future plans of young people, given the different contexts they find themselves in.

Background

South Africa is a country that is continuously undergoing change. For this reason, it is expected that the quality of life and people's daily experiences would also change (and improve) over time and with the development of new policies. Studies that seek to understand the everyday experiences and complexities of young people's transitions and their attempts at navigating these transitions are not widespread in the African context, and particularly in the South African context. Understandably, the lack of adequate attention paid to leisure activities may have been the result of the prioritisation of basic needs such as education, health, and basic infrastructure. Despite this, leisure is better understood and accepted as having the potential to play an important role in improving livelihoods, in personal-development and in identity formation (MØller 1992 and MØller 1996). Most time use studies focusing on youth have taken place in developed country contexts (Lam and McHale 2015; McKay, Fitzgerald, and Perry 2017) with only a few studies concerned with the leisure activities of youth in developing contexts; one of which was a time-use study aimed at finding out what youth do with their spare time when they are not working or cannot complete their education (MØller, Richards, and Mthembu 1991; MØller 1992 and MØller 1996). While some time-use studies have looked at youth agency, particularly in South Africa, other studies conducted outside of South Africa are typically concerned with how time use and leisure in particular are associated with risk behaviour (Wegner et al. 2006; Weybright et al. 2014, 2015).

Time use studies are particularly useful in that they "generate databases for generalization about patterns of daily life and about historical changes in these patterns" (MØller, 1993: 93). Time use studies serve as a tool to help us uncover the way in which people live their lives, the decisions they make concerning how they spend their time and the options which are available for them to do this.

Quite a number of our focus groups took place in townships or in small towns outside of the urban, metropolitan city. The area in which a focus group takes place, as mentioned previously, has political and historical significance which has a direct impact on the particular area's landscape and the options available to young people living there. South African townships are a construct of apartheid. Special residential areas were demarcated through the 1966 Group Areas Act for the four official racial groups; that is, Black African, Coloured (mixed race), Indian and White. Black townships were initially developed as dormitory suburbs for guest workers, which meant they were temporary in structure. The effects of this planning were pertinent in the years following the transition to democracy where we saw evidence in the form of inadequate housing, civic, recreational and consumer facilities (ibid.). The apartheid city was organised in such a way that the poor had to travel the longest distance to work. And although some of these costs were subsidised, travel costs were and are burdensome on household incomes (Seekings and Nattrass 2005). Today, while there have been major investments in township communities, the after-effects of apartheid largely remain, with continued racially marked spaces and concomitant inequalities in access to resources including leisure activities. At the same time we have seen slow but steady changes in the face of suburbia with the emergent black middle-class moving out of township areas to suburban residences. Thus, while wealthier suburbs are still largely white-dominated we do see some changes in the racial makeup of middle-class areas. How do these changes in township and suburban life translate into the lived realities of young people growing up in these contexts? And are the lives of those living in rural South Africa any different?

The daily lives of young people

Through our focus groups, we found that although developments have taken place in the various areas, the range of activities that young people engaged in were quite similar to what young people were doing 20 years ago. Much of what emerges in the accounts of young people in the mid-1990s (Leggett et al. 1997) centres around their school or work activities, what goes on in the household and in their neighbourhoods. Despite the change in time period, many of the activities of young people in this more recent study remain unchanged. Daily activities are influenced, to a large extent by the social context and physical environment that young people find themselves in. Most of the focus groups were conducted in townships or small towns, while a few others were conducted in the suburbs. The range of available activities would differ somewhat depending on one's proximity to the large urban centres.

Youth and their multiple roles

The young people who participated in our focus groups have daily routines which are partially fixed, especially during the week. Their weekends seem more flexible than their weekdays since, for most, weekday activities are centred on attending school, volunteering or working (for the few that are employed or self-employed). The few participants who are unemployed and not in school, mostly older youth aged 19 and above, spend a lot of their time at home.

What is clear though is that young people have quite a number of responsibilities and roles to balance – they are school-goers or employees, friends, caregivers, household and community members. And while most of them live at home with their parents or extended families, largely dependent on their primary caregivers for many of their basic needs; they see themselves as contributing members of their households. Many of them exhibit relatively high levels of independence, have various sets of responsibilities such as doing school work, getting their uniforms ready for school and getting to school on time, as well as performing household chores and responsibilities and looking after other members of the household. There were some differences in the types of household chores that young people were responsible for and this was largely dependent on geographic location and the types of households they were living in.

Young people from rural areas or small towns, which tend to be poorer households, differ in some ways from those in middle-class and working class households. It appears that on top of the standard household chores that most youth had in common, those in rural areas had more responsibilities and that these tasks sometimes interfere with time for school work.

> *"I wake up and wash the school uniform I wore yesterday, clean the house."* (King Williams Town Focus Group)

> *"You cook first then you do dishes."* (Kensington Focus Group 2)

> *"I clean in the morning, cut the grass outside and work on our garden."* (Grahamstown Focus Group)

Others had slightly more responsibilities that extended beyond personal chores to doing things for other household members, and for those in smaller towns their activities extended outside of the physical house.

> *"I wake up and make coffee for my granny and there after cook porridge, clean the house and do my washing."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

> *"[When] I wake up in the morning I go and clean around the yard and then I make children food and eat and I clean I wash my clothes and then I wash I clean our room."* (Soweto Focus Group)

> *"[Make] the wood fire and cook water."* (King Williams Town Focus Group)

> *"I wake up and eat, thereafter I take the goats to the forest."* (King Williams Town Focus Group)

Aside from care responsibilities and household chores, young people do engage in a range of extra-mural activities. The young people we spoke to were involved in an array of cultural and physical activities located in and around their communities. Analysis of the data from the questionnaires shows that most youth were involved in at least one local organisation as is shown in Figure 3 below.

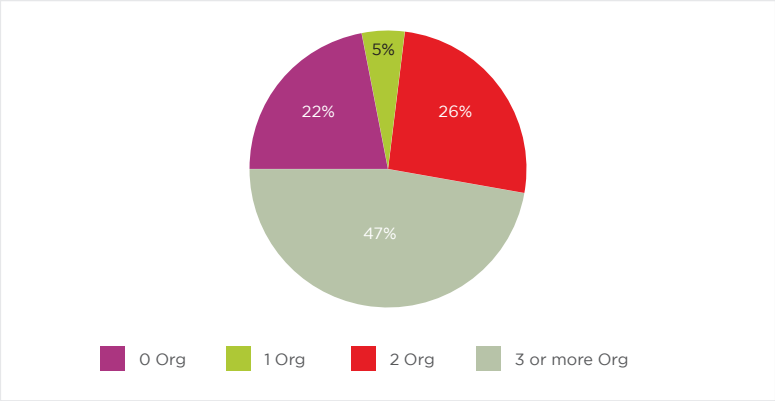

Figure 3: Number of organisations that young people indicated belonging to (n=85)

It is encouraging to hear that young people have access to clubs and other activities and that they are involved in these even outside of their school activities. Their participation in these activities contributes to their personal development and well-being but also contributes to positive community cultures. As might be expected involvement in sports and religious organisations were most popular with political involvement being very low (a point we return to in Section 5 of the report). Figure 4 below gives an overview of the kinds of organisations young people were involved in.

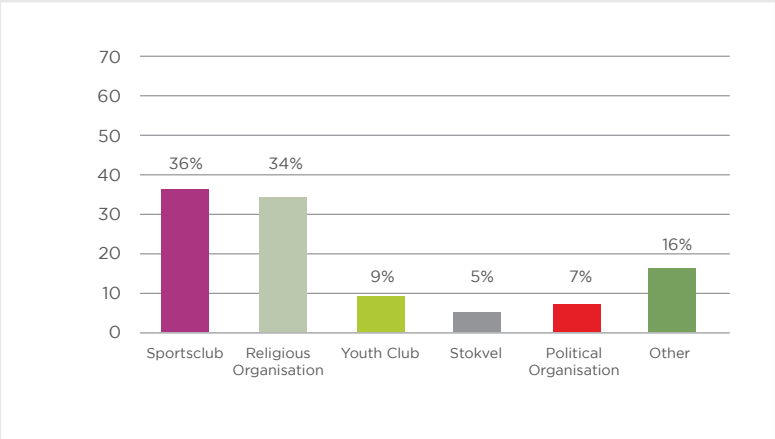

Figure 4: Types of organisations that young people engaged in (n=85)

Confirming the above analysis, in the focus group discussions many reported being involved in sporting activities:

> *"I train karate."*
> (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)

> *"From Monday to Friday I do sports after school and I can't think straight if I don't do any sports. I do sports every day."*
> (Kensington Focus Group 2)

> *"Every day after school I like to go and play netball."* (Soweto Focus Group)

> *"Some years ago I joined a local netball club and am an active member in it."*
> (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)

Quite a large number of focus group participants spend their Sundays engaged in spiritual or religious activities such as church, while others attend Madrassa (a Muslim school) during the week and see their involvement in their religious groups as a community activity. Their involvement in these groups gives them a sense of community belonging. There are also other activities, such as choir, which take place within these religious groups and attract young people.

> *"Sunday is a church day and I will be in church."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)

> *"After school I come back home, change and go to brass band practice, there after I go to ..... church choir practice."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

Other diverse cultural or community activities which young people reported doing are the following:

> *"We do a lot of cultural activities. I do public speaking, I do debating, I do cricket scoring...But there is also drama, we have a band and there is yoga."* (Kensington Focus Group 2)

One of the participants works on creative story writing during the week and indicated a preference for being alone but this was an isolated case:

> *"Me during the week Monday to Thursday writing, thinking and being creative in my mind, being alone and thinking and things like that."* (Onverwacht Focus Group)

Interestingly involvement in sports and other extra-curricular activities does not seem to be shaped by context with many of those from suburban and township contexts participating in such activities. Even in smaller towns, informal settlements and in rural areas sport and other activities were available, maybe sometimes to a lesser extent, for young people to enjoy.

> *"There is also sport that is played here like soccer, rugby and cricket although rugby has faded out. There is also talent here like a local music group, a Hip-hop group that is part of development in this area."* (King Williams Town Focus Group)

In King Williams Town, most youth agreed that helping neighbours and relatives when there was bereavement was something they did and they associated this with being active community members.

> *"I participate in digging a grave for burial or cutting wood for the deceased household. Also participate in playing local sport."*
> (King Williams Town Focus Group)

But there are also groups and organisations that assist in addressing social ills in some of these communities,

> *"During the week I normally go there is an organization, so during the week I normally go to Masakhisizwe to help there, it's an NGO so I normally go there to help."*
> (Orange Farm Focus Group)

While participants from rural areas and poorer communities noted that they were involved in sporting or volunteer activities, they also mentioned how quiet it was. Focus group members seemed to agree about King Williams Town being quiet.

> *"Let me accompany her by saying really there's not much happening here like we do have youth or used to as most have left this place as it was mentioned that it is quiet and there are no activities."* (King Williams Town Focus Group)

The other thing that was mentioned before is the quietness, the loneliness that drive people away." (King Williams Town Focus Group)

At the Soweto focus group a few participants agreed that their neighbourhood was boring. These sentiments can be seen in the quotes below:

> *"I disagree that is a good place. I don't find it that interesting even though I stay here but it's not that fun for me." (yes someone agreeing from background)* (Soweto Focus Group)

While many of the participants engaged in a range of activities after school, others were less active after school and go back home to wind down.

> *"After school go back home, you eat, you watch TV."* (Kensington Focus Group 2)

> *"I relax by watching the puppets on TV."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

As might be expected, another favoured pastime is spending time with friends catching up and enjoying one another's company. Young people seem to have designated friend-time and they use this time with friends to catch up.

> *"Friday and Saturday I am with my friends spending a lot of time with my friends."* (Onverwacht Focus Group)

> *"...like I go to the other guys, spend time with them, I mean valuable time, you know do our things, see other people and so on."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

> *"Stay in one place sharing our experiences during the week as we were not seeing enough of each other."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)

In sum then, young people's day-to-day activities beyond schooling and employment (for those who were employed) involved household chores and time with friends, but also a high level of engagement in extra-curricular and community activities. While some youth from small or rural towns were involved in cultural activities or sport it was in general to a lesser degree than those who were in middle-class neighbourhoods or big townships. The main struggle for youth, especially in King Williams Town, was there not being any activities in the area and this was understandably a detractor for young people. The focus group revealed that many people leave this town in pursuit of opportunities. Some of their household activities included herding livestock and collecting firewood to boil cooking water – activities distinctly different in nature than the activities of other youth; where domestic tasks were at the centre of their household chores.

Youth aspirations and future plans

The participants of the study had positive dreams and aspirations. They all expressed a desire to study further and improve their lives. This echoes research from the Cape Area Panel Study which demonstrates that young people, regardless of race and socio-economic background, have very high educational aspirations (Bray et al. 2010; Newman and De Lannoy 2014). They are optimistic of the bright futures they will have one day and of the positive contributions they will make to their communities and society at large. Youth generally feel positive about their lives as is shown in Figure 5 below.

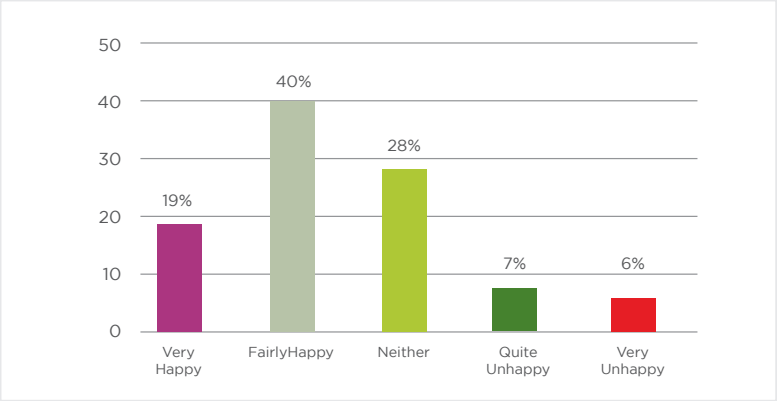

Figure 5: Responses to the question "How do you feel about your life in South Africa?"

Across all focus groups, from King Williams Town to Soweto to Kensington, most participants indicated wanting professional jobs such as being a lawyer, journalist, cardiologist, veterinarian or pilot. There were also those who wanted to be police officers or social workers. These jobs are associated with the perception of stability. One participant echoed this sentiment:

> *"...like corporate jobs and that is the only way we can sustain ourselves."* (Kensington Focus Group 1)

A few participants were drawn to the idea of entrepreneurship and had creative ideas of what businesses to start. One participant in Soweto wanted to open her own bakery and to one day have many of them. Another participant from Grahamstown wanted to open a hair salon one day as she is already doing people's hair. A Soweto-based participant said he was 'DJ'ing' at parties and wanted to continue with that as his career. A participant from Onverwacht wanted to open a catering company and another from King Williams Town would like to become a building contractor who helps create jobs. While these participants had exciting ideas for starting a business, entrepreneurship was certainly not a dominant desire for participants, most preferring the idea of a stable job. In fact, there was some discussion in one focus group about the large risks, and the tenacity that entrepreneurs must have.

> *"[T]hat is always like a question in the consumer's exam like label what is an entrepreneur and these are basic stuff but I think you have to have the determination and actually stick through for so many years for your business to actually work. You have to have that motivation not just for like "let me start this business one year down the line you are like let me not do it". You have to have that motivation for years to come. If you are motivated and you are inspired to do that then go for it."* (Kensington Focus Group 1)

> *"I think if you are 100% sure of what you are willing to risk your money and (members and interviewer talk all at once). You are willing to stick to it and be poor with that idea."* (Kensington Focus Group 1)

Alongside having very high career aspirations that are associated with university studies, they also expressed a desire to do something, which might transform their communities and their wider societies. Many of the participants expressed a desire to empower others and to improve things for the better. The comments below give us insight into the ideas that young people have for their future:

> *"I would like to become a lawyer so that I can defend those in need as it is easy to be accused of what you did not do."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

> *"To get sponsors so I can develop sport like in schools for junior phase [until] they play at a professional level."* (King Williams Town Focus Group)

> *"I would like to own a salon for men only, doing their hairs in all different styles. That's my passion."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)

> *"I want to be a chef not because of money."* (Kensington Focus Group 1)

> *"I would like to teach music to the young ones like have a degree in Music so I'd be empowered and more skilled in that area."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

Another participant says the following about why she would like to become a social worker:

> *"I like helping others. I also get touched when I see someone suffering like it gets to me and I can't shake the feeling of wanting to help that person like directing them to where they would get help."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)

Very few indicated a desire to engage in entrepreneurship, typically preferring office-based, secure jobs. But one of the participants did indicate an interest in entrepreneurship, but had little awareness of how to approach becoming a businessman:

> *"I could say that I see myself as a successful businessman in a better position of helping others like creating jobs."* (King Williams Town Focus Group)

The responses above indicate that young people that participated in the focus groups have high aspirations for their futures and that they typically exhibit a sense of social responsibility. These findings align with previous studies that have shown similar results regarding young people's aspirations for education and professional, white collar careers (Bray et al. 2010; Swartz, Harding, and De Lannoy 2012; Newman and De Lannoy 2014)". However, their dreams and aspirations are not always aligned

with their circumstances. Young people made sense of this by discussing the concept of a 'gap year'. A 'gap year' typically refers to a year in which young people (usually from wealthy backgrounds) take time out after completing their schooling or tertiary education in order to explore and decide what they want to do next. The 'gap year' might involve travelling and other self-enrichment activities. However, many of the young people who participated in this study had adopted the idea of the 'gap year' in order to explain why they were not studying after completing their schooling, despite it being clear that the situation was very much due to a lack of opportunity, finances and guidance. It appears that young people are not receiving an adequate amount of career-guidance throughout their schooling and become confused about their next move. This places them in a situation of being in a state of 'limbo' as they seek to transition to the next step in their journey to studying or the labour market. While some recognise the 'gap year' for what it is, others frame it as a choice.

> *"[So] like here I am taking a gap year not because I chose to but because I didn't have a career guidance."* (Orange Farm Focus Group)

> *"to me a gap year is not useless it's just preparing yourself for the next year because I have a chance to. I'm not just sitting at home. I had a chance to prepare myself for next year." (Orange Farm Focus Group)*

As mentioned before, some young people take a 'gap year' because the funds for studying further are not available:

> *"Yah, myself, I had planned that this year I would take a gap year to have a job so that I would have money to go to school next year although till now I have not had much luck."* (King William's Town Focus Group)

> *"[To] have a gap year that's why I am volunteering just because I did not have the money to pay for my studies for this year so early next year I can go to school."* (Orange Farm Focus Group)

One of the Kensington focus group participants explains the rationale behind deciding to take a 'gap year':

> *"I think right now to make a decision that you going to do your whole life is really hard. That's the fact why most people are thinking of taking a gap year. Because you still not sure exactly what you want to do. Because you keep on changing you think now I want to do law then the next day you want to become a chef...so it's quite hard picking."* (Kensington Focus Group 2)

Evidently many of the participants were taking a 'gap year' largely due to circumstances but nevertheless were using the time trying to take steps to achieve their next goal of studying or deciding what to do. This corroborates findings that show that young people do not make a smooth transition to the labour market, but rather engage in periods of inactivity, work-search, volunteering, training and short-term employment as they seek to secure longer-term training or employment opportunities (Newman and De Lannoy 2014; Mlatsheni and Ranchhod 2017). The difficulties they face in doing so, which include lack of finances and lack of guidance may mean that they will be unlikely to fulfil their plans.

This is because young people's expectations and hopes for the future are set against the backdrop of structural and community level challenges, especially in smaller towns. Young people shared that they were aware of these challenges concerning finding employment, for example, which was a recurring theme in the focus groups. The comments below highlight the recognition of the growing unemployment problem and the further recognition of the role that location and community level factors play in one's ability to successfully find employment.

> *"I think they struggle a lot, whether with or without a diploma, like there's a lot of youth who are unemployed but sitting with their degrees at home due to the scarcity of work in Grahamstown." (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)*

When asked about what they do and do not like about the community they reside in one participant from Onverwacht said the following:

> *"It's undeveloped. Yes and we don't get information about a lot of things." (Onverwacht Focus Group)*

She was then asked to elaborate what sorts of information she felt was missing and said, "Jobs and maybe bursaries and we all matriculated but we not studying further" highlighting the lack of information for accessing labour market opportunities as well as opportunities for post-secondary education and training.

The quotes above demonstrate that the youth in this study were well aware of the large youth unemployment challenge in the country, but tended to dissociate themselves from it (noted in the use of the third person plural in their comments), perhaps in the hopes that they would not be a victim of the challenge. The participants of the focus groups located in areas such as Grahamstown and Onverwacht were also keenly aware that they were located in areas that are more vulnerable to unemployment given the distance to work opportunities.

> *"They have to go bigger towns like P.E. so they can be employed as there are big companies there." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)*

> *"Some find it hard and others don't, like it depends where you go looking for a job. This place (Grahamstown) does not have enough employment." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)*

Some of the young people noted that unemployment itself was not the issue. Rather it was about the quality of employment available to young people.

> *"[If] I may add, to me it is ordinary jobs that are easy to find, like temporary jobs or domestic work or contractor work even when you have your degree." (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)*

> *"That's because work is scarce. The only work available is digging trenches and toilet pits." (King Williams Town Focus Group)*

Unemployment is a complex issue which is influenced by many factors (De Lannoy, Graham, Patel & Leibbrandt 2018). The complexity of the challenge was reflected in many of the comments from participants, who, while recognising the challenge also noted confusion about its causes.

> *"There are a lot of grade 12 students who are jobless as well as graduates and I have no clue as to why that is so." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)*

> *"I am Bongani what I can say is...I feel like it is a place where opportunities are there and people are connected to a lot of resources, problem maybe how to get those resources and having access to them and then being informed about the services that are available for them to help them but generally it's a nice place. Its peaceful at times and it just you know it is very fast you need to be fast to succeed." (Tembisa Focus Group)*

They did, however, recognise that a critical barrier to employment or to studying further was financial. Many expressed the high costs of work-seeking or not having money to study further as a challenge to their livelihoods.

> *"...if you ask a lot of people why you don't have a job they will tell you about that they don't have money to go look for jobs transport money." (Soweto Focus Group)*

> *"And sometimes when you find something on the internet and you have to fax your CV's and stuff and go to Cullinan and you sometimes you don't have money for some of the things." (Onverwacht Focus Group)*

This corroborates survey data which shows that among a sample of young work-seekers participating in youth employability programmes, the average monthly cost of work-seeking was over R500. This in a context of low per capita household income and high food insecurity (Graham et al. 2016).

Financial barriers were seen as a critical challenge to young people's dreams for their futures, even among the middle-class participants.

> *"I want to do medicine but we don't have lots of money so I hope to find what else I can do" (Kensington Focus Group 1)*

Others felt that a better economic status ensured better outcomes for you:

> *"You must be educated, but you can be educated and have matric and stay with us here hustling, you see but you have your matric, and I can say maybe it's become from the background. Where did you come from? Do you have money and stuffs? If at your home they have money, you can be educated and have money and get a better job but if you are coming from the poor background, you see, where you come from you don't have enough money, you see, to get, to go to university and stuff yeah." (Orange Farm Focus Group)*

The above narrative demonstrates that despite the unfulfilled promises of the democratic era, these young people retain a positive sense of future; but without the corresponding opportunities to achieve that future – something that can be referred to as the "quiet violence of dreams" (Swartz, Harding, and De Lannoy 2012). It represents, for us as a country, the loss of huge potential and energy among large groups of young people. While those from middle-class backgrounds are likely to be able to meet the goals they set for themselves; with some exceptions, those from poorer backgrounds are likely to be frustrated by their inability to meet their goals.

Conclusion

This section has provided a glimpse into the day-to-day lives of young people from various backgrounds. Contrary to popular opinion about young people; for instance that they are lazy and entitled; the evidence presented here points to young people who are engaged in household chores, and who view themselves as being responsible, contributing members of their households. Further, they are engaged in a range of positive activities, including sports and cultural activities. The availability of such activities is important, as it seems to provide them not only with something to do but also with a sense of meaning and purpose. When asked about their futures, they demonstrate very high educational aspirations, which confirms research previously conducted in Cape Town (Bray et al. 2010; Newman and De Lannoy 2014), and a desire to contribute to making a change in their communities and families. However, their aspirations for jobs that are professional such as law, social work, and medicine are at odds with the opportunities available to many of them. Even participants from middle-class backgrounds echoed concerns about financial constraints to studying medicine. Lack of career guidance among those from poorer schools, coupled with financial constraints meant that many were stuck in a "gap year" – a term used to ensure that they felt they were on a path to a better future, when in fact their realities may well mean that their opportunities to achieve their goals are very limited. This finding points to the very real ways in which our society continues to fail the vast majority of young people, the lost potential this has for their communities and wider society, and the negative impact this can have on their lives in the longer-term. At the time that we engaged with these young people, they were still hopeful of a brighter future. How long that optimism will last requires further investigation, but repeated failure to access the opportunities that will enable them to reach their goals is likely to have a negative effect on their mental well-being.

VIEWS ON POLITICS AND CITIZENSHIP

> *"We should be more active citizens, your most basic responsibility as a citizen is to vote"* (Respondent from Kensington Focus Group 1)

This chapter explores how and why the young people who participated in this study engage politically and civically. It begins by exploring some of the literature on youth's political and civic engagement in South Africa. It also shares some of the most salient observations and opinions expressed by the young people who participated in the research regarding their views about citizenship and their participation as citizens and agents for change.

Young people's citizenship – what do we know?

Two discourses about young people's citizenship are dominant in the media and popular perception – that young people are politically apathetic, and that young people are engaged in violent protests. In some ways these perceptions are borne out by some research but there are also caveats.

Although the #feesmustfall and #Rhodesmustfall movements, which were led by young university students, were by and large peaceful, there were

several incidents of violence which served to stoke the perception that young people exercise their citizenship through violence or "unconventional participation" (Mattes and Richmond 2014: 19). Alexander (2010)South Africa has experienced a movement of local protests amounting to a rebellion of the poor. This has been widespread and intense, reaching insurrectionary proportions in some cases. On the surface, the protests have been about service delivery and against uncaring, self-serving, and corrupt leaders of municipalities. A key feature has been mass participation by a new generation of fighters, especially unemployed youth but also school students. Many issues that underpinned the ascendency of Jacob Zuma also fuel the present action, including a sense of injustice arising from the realities of persistent inequality. While the inter-connections between the local protests, and between the local protests and militant action involving other elements of civil society, are limited, it is suggested that this is likely to change. The analysis presented here draws on rapid-response research conducted by the author and his colleagues in five of the so-called 'hot spots'. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]\nCopyright of Review of African Political Economy is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use. This abstract may be abridged. No warranty is given about the accuracy of the copy. Users should refer to the original published version of the material for the full abstract. (Copyright applies to all Abstracts., citing evidence from rapid assessments of several service delivery protests, notes that many such protests involve unemployed youth and school learners, suggesting that young people are being drawn into and perhaps even leading such protests. While this may well be the case in the protests assessed, Mattes and Richmond (2014) demonstrate, using nationally representative data, that young people are no more or less likely than older age cohorts to have engaged in political protests or violence as a means of political engagement. The conclusion therefore seems to be that while some young people are involved in protests, they are not over-represented in such protests, but simply engage in ways that older community members do too. The protests mentioned above certainly catapulted young people's activism into the spotlight and demonstrate that young people remain interested and capable organisers and participants when the issues directly affect them (Chikane 2018).

If we turn to the idea that young people are apathetic about politics and their role as citizens we must consider several "conventional forms" of political engagement such as voting and engaging with elected leaders (Mattes & Richmond 2014: 4). Mattes and Richmond (2014) assessed these and other forms of conventional engagement using national data. They note that young people are less likely to have voted in the previous elections and that they are increasingly less likely to vote. This may be because they also are less likely than older age cohorts to identify with a political party. However, this finding is not particular to South Africa; this is a global trend. They also found that young people were slightly less likely to attend community meetings and report problems to local councillors than older age cohorts, although rates for these actions were low across all age groups. They conclude therefore that while young people are certainly less likely to vote, there are only marginal differences in other measures of conventional political participation. This conclusion seems to suggest that there is increasing voter apathy among young people, which is indicative of what happens globally – as people age they are more likely to vote. This being said, South African youth are often saddled with the expectation that they will be more likely to engage as citizens because of how hard-won their political freedoms are. This is perhaps an unfair expectation and one that young people certainly do not seem to buy into. They are after all defining their place in a democratic space that is a totally different world to that of their parents (Mattes 2012).

In addition to the ideas of conventional and unconventional political engagement discussed above, Dalton (2013) adds to the notion of communal participation; attending community meetings or banding together to tackle a local problem. Malila, Oelofsen, Garman and Wasserman (2013), in a study conducted in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, reveal that young people typically prefer to participate in civic duties and community-related activities including social activities (communal), with political engagement being limited. Engagement in social media platforms and the possibilities that this offers for young people to read about and discuss issues may fall within this category of engagement. This is an area that has only recently become the focus of research. The research that does exist suggests that youth are using social media platforms to engage in political dialogue (Bosch 2013, 2017) and that these platforms can also be used to organise political movements. Bosch suggests that as young people engage increasingly with politics through these new forms of media they are developing "a new biography of citizenship which is characterized by more individualized forms of activism" (Bosch 2017: 221).

Having assessed the literature we now consider, as Mattes and Richmond (2014) suggest, how the participants of our study view their role as citizens and all that entails, including their level of interest and how frequently they discuss politics and current affairs with family and friends.

Participant's views on citizenship

Communal engagement

According to our survey and focus groups, if respondents were involved in some kind of communal activity it was either faith-based (34%; n=30) or centred on some kind of sporting activity (36%; n=31). Helping a neighbour was the most common answer from survey respondents (79.1%; n=67), with being involved in a social group (67.4%; n=57) and being active in a religious activity (64.9; n=55) following. This seems to confirm Malila et al.'s findings (2013) discussed above. The participants of this study were typically involved in cultural, civic or social activities rather than political activities. This may, however, have to do with opportunity availability. We therefore asked them what they 'would like' to involve themselves in communally or politically. The respondents' answers confirmed the above finding, showing that young people were interested in volunteering activities in their communities, ranging from initiating sports clubs, community forums or donating books. This echoes the findings discussed earlier concerning future hopes for careers, which revealed how young people have a desire to make a difference in their communities.

Despite not being actively involved in politics, respondents nevertheless had very strong opinions about current political affairs and had a very developed knowledge of critical issues facing the country. This suggests that they are in fact engaged and informed. Participants for instance gave quite detailed opinions of affairs that were pertinent in South Africa at the time of the study; from the Limpopo textbook dumping incident, to the murders at Marikana, and the first spate of #feesmustfall protests that rocked universities nationally in the second half of 2015. There were several critical issues of concern that came up across the focus groups. These are outlined below.

Unemployment

People between the ages of 18-25 are the most likely to experience joblessness and unemployment which has been persistently high in the last decade (Statistics South Africa 2016). When asked what some of the major challenges were, facing South Africa and their communities, unemployment was cited as a critical issue of concern:

> *"They (young people) didn't vote because they see that there is no jobs for them and that's why they not gonna register."* (Orange Farm Focus Group)

> *"Many people are unemployed and I think that South Africa does not have enough jobs. Even if I am qualified and have a tertiary level certificate there are still people sitting at home and don't have a job."* (Onverwacht Focus Group)

> *"There are a lot of grade 12 students who are jobless as well as graduates and I have no clue as to why that is so."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

> *"There aren't enough jobs in the market so it [entrepreneurship] will be a solution for everyone and if you create your job you creating jobs for everyone because to get a job is a struggle and it's something that people want and need."* (Kensington Focus Group 1)

> *"I think that they struggle a lot, whether with or without a diploma, like there's a lot of youth who are unemployed but sitting with their degrees at home due to the scarcity of work in Grahamstown."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)

High crime rates

The participants were very aware of the prevalence of crime in their communities – ranging from substance use and abuse to sexual- and gender-based violence. Their perceptions may partly be driven by the attention that crime receives in the media in South Africa, but they also recounted harrowing incidences they had witnessed or that had occurred within their communities. Indeed, young people are very likely to witness or be victimised by crime in South Africa. According to the South Africa Demographic and Health Survey (Statistics South Africa 2017) just under a fifth (17.6%) of women, 18-24 years, have ever experienced physical violence perpetrated by any partner in South Africa. The proportion increases to slightly over a fifth for women 25-39 years and, declines in women 40 years or older. Young men are more likely than young women to be victims of non-natural causes of death; that is, violent assaults and transport-related accidents. Young men (16-34 years) emerge not only as the main victims, but also as the perpetrators of violent assaults and robberies (Statistics South Africa 2016), more so than women in this age group and men older than 34 years. These statistics suggest that young people are exposed to violence and crime, explaining why they see this as a critical challenge in their communities:

"Drug abuse, alcohol abuse and crime (are the things I worry about most)." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

"Most of the people in our area have been raped and they kill one girl who was 9 years." (Orange Farm Focus Group)

"I agree with no.6 [another respondent in the group] that drugs, alcohol and resorting to prostitution are challenges facing youth." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

"This other day I was with my mom and dad and we were traveling to Joburg in town and this woman got hijacked like in front of us. And we just chilled like yeah go ahead take her car and everybody around just moved on like nothing happening. (Kensington Focus Group 2)

"And there are many drug lords (group members agree on the background some saying yes drug dealers) there are many drug dealers." (Soweto Focus Group)

"Our area is on the outside and behind there are no houses and very dark at night, all you hear is shooting of guns, people crying and so on." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

Lack of service delivery

A lack of service delivery was also an issue that young people were frustrated about. There did not seem to be particular class differences, with respondents from groups across the range of focus groups raising similar concerns:

"The other thing is the stealing of electricity cables which they cut and sell." (King Williams Town Focus Group)

"I live here and I stay near a park and there is a river full of sewage in it." (Kensington Focus Group 1)

"Nothing is happening here, people are not getting any services." (Onverwacht Focus Group)

"We also have a small park that used to have good playing facilities for children but the tsotsis stole everything and sold it. Children end up playing on the tar road and others are consequently survivors of car accidents." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

Inadequate education

Respondents were also very aware of the poor quality of education they and others had been exposed to. They noted the Limpopo textbook saga in which textbooks intended for schools in Limpopo were not delivered well into the school year:

"We have seen people who have been to school for 12 years and they can't even construct a simple sentence in English that makes sense, but they have been to school." (Kensington Focus Group 2)

"And I think the most gruesome thing about it (quality of education) is the fact that it is people [who] were willing to go further with their education and didn't have funds or it is people who are actually qualified but just can't find jobs. And it just doesn't make sense." (Kensington Focus Group 2)

General mistrust of government (corruption/ nepotism)

Malila's (2013:6) data highlighted that young people's trust in all three levels of government was very low, with local levels of government receiving the lowest levels of trust. Our findings corroborate this research with participants expressing frustration about nepotism and corruption, particularly at the local level, but also with reference to national government. Many for instance indicated having engaged in the #paybackthemoney twitter engagements – a response to the finding by the Public Protector that then President Jacob Zuma had wrongly benefitted from state resources allocated to the development of his personal home:

"There's a lot of nepotism that exists here like in our municipality, you need to have a popular surname or be a well-known comrade to be employed." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

"I think that those were the ones who had given up hope and trust in this government as they did not benefit from the service programmes." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

"Corruption has become second nature to us. It's not even appalling to slip a R50 in your ID to give to a cop." (Kensington Focus Group 2)

"They [the police] will search your place and find this thing and they bring money what they can do, you will give them big money because the police when they are hungry they take even R100." (Orange Farm Focus Group)

"I think corruption is behind everything. I mean if we had that community centre that was supposed to be built 5 years ago then we wouldn't be going to Rhodes Park to smoke weed. And if people were actually taking care of Rhodes Park the way they supposed to we wouldn't be going around doing things we are not supposed to do." (Kensington Focus Group 2)

Lack of good leadership

Focus group participants expressed a great deal of dissatisfaction with the current calibre of political leader, often citing poor political leadership as a central problem facing South Africa:

"Whenever I think about politicians I feel bored because I feel that this people are just making empty promises and their job is just to talk and pass the message to the people."(Onverwacht Focus Group)

"Because they [the government] do not deliver, they make promises that they can't meet and after you voted for them they feel relaxed." (Soweto Focus Group)

Related to their concern about poor leadership, many of the participants were well aware of developments within opposition parties and expressed some positive views:

"But also in the same elections [in 2014] we saw young people voting for the EFF and no one expected EFF to have votes." (Kensington Focus Group 1)

"I am so going to vote for the EFF." (Kensington Focus Group 2)

"I think that a good president would be Mmusi Maimane because Mmusi from where I am sitting, I think ukuthi uMmusi Maimane (that Mmusi Maimane) would make a great leader because he has a bathini, ufuna izinto (what do they say, he wants things) for the country and he only wants to do what's best for the country." (Soweto Focus Group)

Their engagement with these central issues and the fact that they are concerned about issues of national importance is driven by their engagement with media. Many reported that they follow the news, either through the internet, twitter or through television or radio broadcasts.

Political engagement begins with an awareness of citizenship and proceeds to some form of engagement (Mattes & Richmond 2014). The participants of this study clearly demonstrate an awareness of the political matters of the time, and keep themselves informed of the issues. But to what extent did this translate into engagement with the issues. It is to this question that we now turn.

Conventional engagement – the politically (un)engaged young person?

As has been discussed previously, there is a common assumption, supported to some extent by evidence, that young people are politically apathetic and alienated from traditional forms of politics. As Malila et al. (2013) note, young people are typically more interested in social activities and less interested in politics. We did find some evidence to support this notion. Most of the participants indicated an unwillingness to vote. A common thread in all the focus groups was the notion that voting would not bring about meaningful "change" to the lives of many of the participants:

"I don't see the importance anymore (of voting)." (Soweto Focus Group)

"It (voting) doesn't bring about change." (Kensington Focus Group 2)

"Why register if there won't be any difference?" (Orange Farm Focus Group)

"People are complaining that it doesn't make a difference." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

One respondent was clearly conflicted about the significance of their vote:

> *"I think we are told that your vote counts, but if you think about it doesn't really, it does but it doesn't count".* (Kensington Focus Group 1)

Such comments were typical and widespread among our respondents when asked about their opinions of the electoral process. One of the reasons for this was because they felt that government makes hefty promises to their electorate before elections, but then once safely installed in power they fail to meet these election-driven promises:

"Before the votes they make promises to people especially the youth, that there is going to be job and education and things like that, but after winning, those promises are not fulfilled." (Onverwacht Focus Group)

> *"Government provides just before elections, then after, fall back into old habits."* (Soweto Focus Group)

Some raised concerns about not being able to vote, as they wanted. They felt pressure to vote in line with their families. Even those from communities that are more affluent, felt pressure to vote along family loyalties:

> *"You vote how your family votes."* (Kensington Focus Group 2)

Yet they felt conflicted about this pressure given that they had reservations about the current leadership:

> *"I think they [the youth in general] feel it's not going to make a difference to vote for the ANC. The ANC I understand [they're] not perfect, they have large corruption scandals and whatever but we do have to admit that compared to what South Africa was, then the ANC has done a lot. They might all be in ruins now but they have done a lot."* (Kensington Focus Group 2)

> *"There are those who inherited ANC from their families but now they no longer see its impact on their lives and decide not to vote for any party because they still honour certain icons of ANC who did their best, and also not to go against their families." (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)*

A critical reason for their unwillingness to vote lies in their frustration with political leadership and lack of change rather than apathy that emanates from disinterest:

> *"Personally for me I would vote for a party that I have seen making the biggest difference but everyone is fighting in parliament and they are not going out and making the difference that they are supposed to do and when it comes to voting time then all the municipalities jumps up and start to do what they were supposed to do. I think that's the thing. They don't know who to vote for because no one is making a big difference." (*Kensington Focus Group 1)

This seems to suggest that young people are not politically unengaged or apathetic, but rather that they feel the formal electoral processes are not meaningful or useful. This seems to be confirmed by the findings of the short questionnaire we asked participants to complete at the end of the focus groups. This data shows that only six of the 85 participants indicated being a member of a political party. This finding is further corroborated by Malila et al (2013), whose survey and focus group discussions found that a willingness to vote and political activity were very low among their participants.

However, this was contrasted by the fact that many of the participants were very well aware of current affairs and had opinions about them, and also correlated with the most recent Afrobarometer finding that 73% of young people discuss politics at least "occasionally" (Lekalake 2016: 2).

In attempting to understand this discrepancy between having strong opinions but not engaging politically, Farthing (2010) uses Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) idea of "unpolitical" politics, where he asserts that political engagement is defined by older generations, who have established "what it is to be a good citizen", and therefore young people are held to a set of standards which do not take their particular context into consideration. Viewed in this way, and held to a set of preconceived acceptable 'norms', many young people would most likely fall outside of what it is to be viewed as "acceptably politically engaged". Beck (ibid.) posits, however, that the "apolitical harbingers of an incipient 'crisis of democracy'", are in fact politically engaged, but engaged "unpolitically". He asserts that by being "unpolitical" young people are indeed flexing their political muscle by denying the political system of their voting power. The withholding of this action is a form of "protest" and therefore an act of political engagement. Our findings certainly confirm these views. Young people's views on voting did not emanate from

disinterest but rather from frustration with current processes and leadership. Their unwillingness to vote could therefore be seen as a form of protest and therefore of political engagement.

Unconventional engagement

There was vibrant debate over the efficacy of protest as a form of communication with government. Some respondents viewed public protest (whether physically or online) as a viable way to engage politically, particularly regarding the delivery of services, which was the most common issue to protest about. Others felt that protest was not the most efficient way to get government's attention. There was also debate as to which type of protest was the most effective; peaceful or violent:

> *"I think there is no way that we can do things unless we toi toi because here in South Africa if you are poor if you want the government to hear you have to destroy the government property and destroy the schools, clinics and if you want government to hear you they will give you attention. If you can go here and march peacefully, the government will not give you attention."* (Orange Farm Focus Group)

> *"Sometimes we feel like they don't care because if you protesting you won't be burning something it could be silent like submitting a memorandum but they will just take it and do nothing and you can't be patient on that you see. And especially waiting for someone to respond to you, they are taking too long to respond. But when people start burning things that's when they take you serious, they stop doing what they doing and concentrate on the people."* (Onverwacht Focus Group)

Respondents from the Grahamstown Older Youth, Soweto and Orange Farm groups shared the following opinions about protesting:

> *"Peace protest has good results and the Government listens to us through that but violence does not."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

> *"It's not a good way of communicating with the government because a lot of protests they end up being violent, they break things, they break into people's shops and take things, they leave the streets dirty. So how do you expect the government to give you a raise when you are ruining the infrastructure? Because now the infrastructure is growing the government ha[s] to fix it; instead of giving you the raise that you want, so I think it is not effective."* (Soweto Focus Group)

> *"I do not agree with the protesting they must sit and talk [instead of] protesting and burning streets and destroying….when they are done protesting they will have to protest again for all those things they had damaged. But if they sit down and talk, all things will be fine because they will need help again on the things they would have damaged."* (Orange Farm Focus Group)

A few respondents either knew someone or a family member who had participated in protest (usually service delivery related), and a handful themselves had protested peacefully around once-off causes that they specifically wanted to add their voice to. For example, one respondent protested outside of a magistrate's court in order to influence the ruling of a rape case. Another protested outside a courthouse to influence the hearing against a man accused of raping his grandchild. Another belonged to a sexual abuse organisation and signed a petition regarding a specific issue. These responses suggest that young people have mixed views about the value of protests and other unconventional forms of political engagement. Most felt that such forms were not useful, particularly if they were violent. The findings seem to confirm Mattes and Richmond's research that while some young people have engaged in protest action, they are no more or less likely than older groups to do so. However, they do suggest that other differences – such as race and class – shape political perceptions. While this might hold at the national level, our local level data does not support this finding. Our analysis shows that youth from different backgrounds did not hold particularly different views about substantive issues and protest action. Most, regardless of class and race, were concerned about the xenophobic attacks, horrified at the Marikana murders, excited about the #feesmustfall protests, and were not particularly interested in social protests unless it was about an issue they felt passionately about. Our findings suggest far more coalescence than convergence of opinion among young people across race and class.

Conclusion

The above findings confirm much of what is already known about youth's political participation in South Africa – that young people are less likely to vote and that they express dissatisfaction with voting, that they have mixed views about unconventional forms of political engagement such as protest action, and that they are engaging with new forms of media as a way of having conversation about issues they view as important.

We also reveal new insights about how not voting is not necessarily about apathy, but rather that it is about expressing dissatisfaction with the way electioneering is done, with failed promises of delivery on election promises, and with what is viewed as poor leadership across the political spectrum. Despite not voting, our research shows that young people are well-informed about current national debates and are particularly interested in issues that are of direct importance to them, and which they feel the effects of, such as unemployment, poor quality education, lack of service delivery, and crime. Corruption was an issue about which there was much discussion too. These findings suggest that while young people are not involving themselves in conventional forms of political engagement, and are ambivalent about unconventional forms of political engagement, communal engagement – including talking about issues among peers and volunteering in their communities – are ways in which they were more likely to express their citizenship.

HAVE THINGS CHANGED OR STAYED THE SAME? COMPARING YOUTH VIEWS BETWEEN 1995 AND 2015

This chapter contrasts some of the issues raised by the 1995 generation, as solicited from the letter writing competition discussed previously (Legget et al 1996) with the views of millennials today. The purpose of contrasting the views between these two generations of young people is to try to see if the lived-experiences and perceptions of young people have changed over the last two decades through the prism of two different generations.

Perceptions on the future

The letters written by the 1995 cohort were generally optimistic about the future and felt that democracy and the new Constitution had brought about improvements to their lives. They felt that the new democracy would improve their residential areas and create opportunities for personal development:

> *"I am preparing myself for the future. Introducing democracy into the working environment demands that young thinking people must grasp every available opportunities to study and train intensively. Exciting career opportunities are being created daily but are only directed at people prepared to invest time and effort in their education."* (Extract from letter, Deneysville -1996)

> *"Now we have a new constitution (set of law). Then South Africa was back to normal. It was the same like Summer season. The children were playing freely. The dams were full of water the crops were growing in the fields. The sky was blue and the birds were flying around."* (Extract from letter, Lamontville KwaZulu, Natal -1996)

> *"I have lived in a location and I have experienced this life with poor sanitation. With the RDP put in place there is hope for a better life for all."* (Extract from letter, 1996)

Nelson Mandela was viewed by many entrants as a shining light, giving young people hope that things would change for the better; as a champion of the poor; an important role model and a central figure in holding South African society together:

> *"The person I admire most in my country excluding my parents is Mr Nelson Mandela. I admire his courage and determination and because of him I feel our country is moving towards excellency."* (Extract from letter, 1996)

There were many positive policy initiatives taking place at the time of the competition, which letter writers reflected on: the ambitious Reconstruction and Development Programme and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were two prominent initiatives mentioned by letter writers. These interventions seemed to contribute to a feeling of optimism among young people, that things were changing for the better and that formerly underdeveloped township areas would be improved with new facilities, amenities and infrastructure and that there would be the beginnings of a healing process between black and white South Africans resulting from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hearings. Commitment to making democracy work and participation in the political process was a sentiment also expressed by letter writers.

In the 2015 groups, there was certainly a sense of hope and optimism about their personal futures – as discussed, many had dreams of studying further and taking up professional jobs. But this sense of hope for their personal future was at odds with their views about the country. Rather than reflecting a sense of hope and optimism about the country these participants were concerned about many of the issues raised above – unemployment, poor education, poor leadership, and corruption among others. Their sentiments may have been informed by the situation at the time of the focus groups, at which point there were waves of student protests and xenophobic violence occurring, as well as the growing awareness of the corruption of then President Jacob Zuma (discussed further below). But their lack of optimism may also have been shaped by the awareness that, despite the promises of the early democratic era, not much had changed for many of these young people. Particularly those from King Williams Town, Grahamstown and the poorer communities in Gauteng were aware of how their options were limited in terms of studying further and employment. But all of the participants in the 2015 study noted their concerns about issues such as unemployment limiting the future of the country.

Perceptions on political engagement and political leadership

Young essay writers in 1995 expressed mixed views on democracy and the power of voting to change their futures. For some, expectations were high as Erica highlights:

> *After 27 April 1994, I am expecting some, if not all of the South African problems such as political intolerance, race discrimination, equal education, employment and crime and housing to name a few. My expectations around these issues are very huge…I had hoped that when casting my vote that the newly elected government regardless of its political following will deal with these problems and finally remedy the majors." (Extract from letter, 1996)*

Expectations at the local councillor level for improved service delivery, particularly in impoverished areas that were neglected under apartheid; were expressed by another participant:

> *"…So what I want to say is that our councillors and mayors that have been voted for must work and do as the community want the areas which they live in more prettier than ever. There are a lot of work to be done in our locations. I did not vote for mahala (nothing). I want to [see] my location in good condition."* (Extract from letter, 1996)

Already in 1996, a sense of impatience with the dividends of democracy was being expressed by young people in progress towards improving their lives, as illustrated by the following comment:

> *"I feel the government we have voted for is cheating us. Where are all the jobs that were promised us during the general elections campaign? Where is the free and compulsory education that we were promised? I as a youth of this country feel that government should deliver expected goods or face the anger and frustrations of the youth of this country, otherwise they would kiss the parliament good-bye."* (Extract from letter, 1996)

Focus groups undertaken with young people in 2015 in the present study inquired into young people's commitment towards democratic processes, by asking them if they felt it was important to vote in elections and why young people chose not to register to vote in the 2014 national elections. As discussed above, young people raised issues such as unfulfilled promises by politicians; a lack of political party alternatives; the erosion of respect for institutions underpinning democracy such as Parliament; corruption; service delivery failures; and perceptions that the country's first citizen has failed to show moral leadership as a result of his perceived misdemeanours in the past. These were all reasons that young people felt detracted from their inclination to vote.

A feeling of disrespect by politicians for the institutions such as Parliament underpinning democracy; was viewed by some respondents as a reason for not taking voting in elections seriously and for taking democratic institutions less seriously themselves:

> *"They are mocking it….it is becoming more of a circus thing. Almost all parliaments in the world looks like that. They act like children and they use jokes against each other in parliament."* (Kensington Focus Group 1)

> *"And if we vote for you what respect are you going to give us, they can't even give the judge respect."* (Onverwacht Focus Group)

The perceived denigration of democratic institutions by some politicians with specific reference to the raucous nature of parliamentary debates recently have made some young people more interested in these parliamentary sessions as 'entertainment value':

> *"and I also think it has drawn lots of youth attention towards the issue because I will be honest I have never been interested in parliament previously over the years I have been growing up, but now that this is happening, I found myself inclined watch or listen even if it's just for entertainment but its bringing those issues to my attention now."* (Kensington Focus Group 1)

Cynicism with democratic processes such as voting to bring about change was expressed by some participants:

> *"Sometimes we think voting, we just voting for the president to just get rich (group talks) not ANC or something that's what we think because there is no change."* (Soweto Focus Group)

> *"Before the elections they do everything, they will make it, they do everything but immediately after elections they just..."* (Soweto Focus Group)

> *"Some did it deliberately due to being unemployed. The Government promise them all things but after voting there's no delivery. After five years they again expect people to vote for them."* (King Williams Town Focus Group)

Participants were further asked if voting for specific parties could change policies they were not happy with. Mixed views were expressed on this issue. Most focus group participants expressed a lack of confidence in any of the current political parties being able to change policies and their lives for the better:

> *"Some are those who are tired of repeating the same thing for no change like voting for the ANC."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)

> *"Well, there's ANC, an old promising party who is no longer keeping its promises, then follows DA [Democratic Alliance] which is led and dominated by white people and you'd think when they are in power they may neglect us and care for whites only and also there is Malema who we think is going to corrupt us, so you just think it's better not to vote. "* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

> *"there will never be any change with EFF, that man doesn't have mind you see and the mind is dead and there is a dom people, dom person you know and Malema thinks that he is a he is the one you see now is dom because the whites is the people that can make our life easy (members talk in the background while he is talking)."* (Orange Farm Focus Group)

There were some participants in the 2015 study who felt differently by believing that voting can result in positive policy changes, but this was a minority view:

> *"I think that that there is a difference because if you vote for a party that has the same initiatives as you and then you vote for it if the party has win the elections then they will initiate those initiatives".* (Soweto Focus Group)

As already indicated, the 1995 cohort of young people was virtually unanimous in their admiration for South Africa's first democratic president, Nelson Mandela. The 2015 participants, faced with

a very different president, were disparaging in their comments about then President Zuma, and in fact linked their views about him to their own reticence about voting:

> *"Other people want to vote for ANC but because of the bad things that Zuma is doing, they resort to not voting at all as they do not want to vote for other parties."* (King Williams Town Focus Group)

> *"Zuma was once implicated in a rape case, but still he had to be a president of the country when the majority was against it. It is also a well-known fact that Zuma is a wrong-doer but nobody is able to arrest, charge and sentence him because of lack of evidence which is very easy to those wealthy and whose organisation is in power."* (King Williams Town Focus Group)

> *"He does not have them all. He is old and marrying countless young girls. He commits crime and he has no justice like he abuses girls and he committed rape. He has no dignity."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

While many participants were negative about then President Zuma, some also attributed policies to his term of office (albeit incorrectly):

> *"I could say he has made a visible mark in his reign like we didn't have to pay school-fees, books and he also gave us school-bags. He also feeds us."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

Participants in the 2015 focus groups were asked what type of person they would want as a future leader of South Africa and to describe the qualities of such a person and whether they believed that the present leaders had such qualities. Interestingly the present cohort mentioned a few of the current leaders and their qualities. These included current political figures: Helen Zille, Thuli Madonsela, Mmusi Maimane and Cyril Ramaphosa, as well as former leaders (Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki):

> *"I think that a good president would be.... Musi because Musi from where I am seating I would make a great leader because he ... only wants to do what's best for the country."* (Soweto Focus Group)

> *"Cyril Ramaphosa because he is always coming up with ways creating voice to make South Africa a better country."* (Orange Farm Focus Group)

Steadfastness, respect, charisma, leadership skills, self-discipline, honesty, transparency and the ability to speak up without fear or favour; were mentioned as important characteristics of leadership. Helen Zille and Thuli Madonsela were mentioned as possessing some of these qualities:

> *"To me it should be an honest person who does not have their own relative's interest but every citizen. One who cares for everyone."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)

> *"I believe it should be an educated person and who thinks for the others rather than a certain group."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

> *"I would like a leader to be like down to earth and put people first and put like aah what do people need."* (Soweto Focus Group)

In addition to personal characteristics, many in the Eastern Cape felt that race, gender and ethnic background were important considerations for future leadership as president of South Africa by Eastern Cape participants:

> *"We've had enough of White and Black people, it should be a Coloured person's chance now."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)

> *"To me it's Nelson Mandela."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

> *"It would be better if it stays a Xhosa person".* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

> *"I think a suitable person should be a woman and everything will be okay."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

> *"No, not Zille, I agree with previous responses, they should be educated and Black as well."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

Evidently the kinds of leadership qualities that Mandela embodied and which the 1995 cohort valued are still values that today's youth look for in a leader. Interestingly they do note current leaders who embody such values, but also raise concern about the number of leaders who do not.

Perceptions on crime in South Africa

Fear of crime and especially violent crime was a central concern for young people in 1995. Some young people expressed the view that they felt unsafe in their neighbourhoods, restricting their activities:

> *"I am afraid, I'm afraid to walk home from school, afraid to ride my bicycle in the streets. There is fear in me that something terrible is going to happen."* (Extract from letter, Johannesburg -1996)

> *"Meticulously locked doors, forbidding burglar bars, security alarms...we live in deadly prisons."* (Extract from letter, 1996)

Most young people at that time said that crime had increased since the first democratic elections and were of the opinion that young people themselves were the perpetrators of crime. Main causes of crime attributed by young people were due to lack of effective justice, ineffective policing, inadequate entertainment and educational opportunities available to young people.

The SAIRR notes that Born Frees are living in one of the most violent societies not at war and that this generation are both perpetrators and victims of crime (SAIRR 2015). Gender and race appear to influence perceptions of vulnerability towards being victims of crime in South Africa as the Figure below shows.

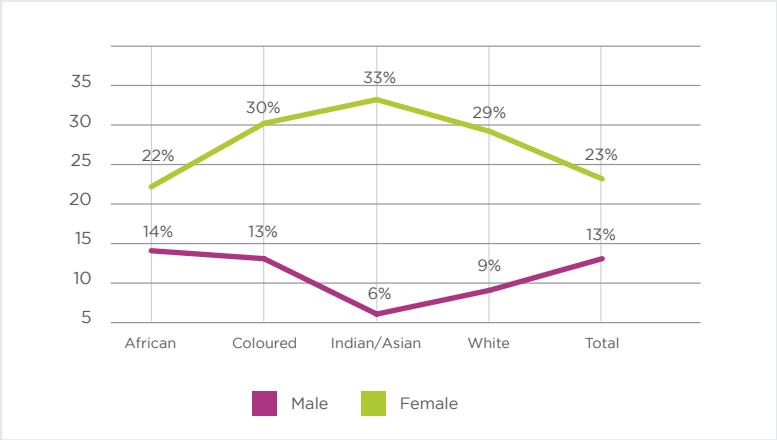

Figure 6: Households that feel safe walking alone in their area when it is dark by race and gender of household head, 2012 (Source: SAIRR 2015)

Crime and the fear of crime was also mentioned spontaneously as a major concern by participants in the 2015 focus groups when they were asked what aspects they disliked about the areas they lived in and also what one thing they would most like to change about living in their area. This concern was shared across all areas and classes, including those from middle income suburbia:

> *"...the other day we work from home so the security has to be proper so we let the customers in through the gates so now anyone can come through. So my dad has like put six different cameras and this other day the guy that stays like two houses from our house, his house was robbed and we just missed it on cameras." (Kensington Focus Group 1)*

> *"My parents are not very happy because for about four times we have had things stolen..." (Kensington Focus Group 1)*

In smaller towns, residents are also confronted with crime which affects their daily lives:

> *"Our area is on the outside and behind there are no houses and very dark at night, all you hear is shooting of guns, people crying and so on.*
> *Interviewer: So, what is it that you'd like to change there?*
> *I wish that we can rid it of tsotsis.*
> *Interviewer – How do you think that can be accomplished? Where do these tsotsis come from or stay?*
> *Perhaps the community can come together as one and hold meetings where police forums can be formed to fight crime.*
> *Surprisingly the tsotsis are part of us in that same area."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)

> *"The safety issue bothers me a lot and perhaps if we were to organise a night-watch, but most of our residents are workers which makes it impossible but I would like to see it becoming a safe and crime free area."* (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)

In townships and on the periphery of large cities where poverty and deprivation is greater, residents are more vulnerable to crime. Focus group participants of the 2015 study highlighted such challenges in these areas:

> *"This section is too dangerous in the night there is people who is called them called the wrong turns, they are killing people and this section abantwana bami bavan'ane, the young people have got lots of talent and we have got amasculdo, they have got ichoir, they can sing and there are so many Nyaupes around the people who smokes drugs." (Orange Farm Focus Group)*

In Tembisa smoking Nyaope2 was linked to crime:

> *"there is small guys smoking nyaope. They are steal close to railway, they finish to watch they steal things." (Tembisa Focus Group)*

Young people from Soweto also mentioned a high incidence of crime linked to drug consumption in their area as one of the least liked aspects of their area that they would like to change:

> *"I can say it's a painful place because things that happens in the night are not good. And there are many drug lords (group members agree in the background some saying yes drug dealers) there are many drug dealers." (Soweto Focus Group)*

Clearly the above findings demonstrate that perceptions of young people about crime and violence have not changed over two decades. Concerns about crime and violence remain high priorities for young people today, just as they did in 1995. These concerns are certainly warranted with young people being considerably more vulnerable to victimisation than other age groups (Statistics South Africa 2016).

Time use

In 1995 young letter writers' daily activities were influenced by their social and economic situation. For those young people attending school during weekdays, daily activities were usually arranged to fit around their school activities:

> *"In my everyday life I am always busy doing many kinds of works…On Monday to Thursday, I am doing my school work. And it is only after school time but…not immediately after school work. I do my school work from half past three to 5 o clock till Thursday'…on Friday, I clean the yard and on Saturday I go for shopping if possible. But I sometimes visit my friends or relatives. Then on Sunday I go to church and when I come back I just relax. But at night time I sometimes read my school books." (Extract from letter, Driekop -1996)*

Some domestic work such as household chores occurred before and after school hours. Socialising, relaxing, watching TV; listening to music and some sports activities were listed as activities after school hours. On weekends, there was the possibility of more leisure activities and relaxation. Mentioned weekend activities included shopping, church activities, choir and band practice, socialising, watching or playing sports. Young people not attending school and unemployed listed looking for work or self-employment as alternatives; while others spent time thinking about the future.

In 2015 focus groups, the range of activities young people engaged in during the week and over weekends was similar to the activities listed by young letter writers in 1995. Daily activities were also shaped by young people's social context; their physical environment and geographic locality. More than 80% (60) of young people who took part in the focus group discussions were still at school and some 93% (69) were living with either a parent or caregiver or both parents. As discussed above, those living in smaller towns, further from large

2 A highly addictive street drug made from heroin and marijuana

urban centres, noted that free time activities were more limited in comparison to young people living in or closer to large urban centres.

For the 2015 cohort, typical weekday activities for school going youth are organised around their school routines, chores and extra-curricular activities as highlighted in their comments below:

> *"I also go to school in the morning, come back, relax a little and there after tidy and cook supper before going to church choir practise." (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)*

> *"Eish after school just like number 5 after school I go to choir, after choir I come back home and do my stuff even tomorrow I do the same stuff nothing much." (Orange Farm Focus group)*

> *"I wake up and wash myself, make up the bed, eat and go to school. After school I rush to the choir practice then later chat to my friends for an hour then at 7 we all part our ways to our homes." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)*

During the week, for those youth not attending school, other ways were found to pass the time including looking for work and some appear to be in employment:

> *"For me Monday and Sunday is the same, I do the same things I'm just at home and I don't do anything. Be on my cell and maybe looking for jobs on the internet." (Onverwacht Focus Group)*

> *"Monday to Friday I follow the same pattern of going to my job at the salon. On week-ends it's extra money if I choose to work but I always try to be in church on Sunday." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)*

As mentioned above, for some young people living in more rural areas, weekday activities include outside chores, such as looking after livestock.

Weekend activities appear to be more circumscribed for those living in areas further from larger urban centres:

> *"Week-ends are my cooking days so I also cook. Thereafter I wash myself and go to my friends and we sit and chat or listen to the radio, alternatively I stay at home and chat with my mother." (King Williams Town Focus Group)*

> *"On Saturday I go to the soccer field to watch with my friends and Sundays I go to church." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)*

For young people living in the larger urban centres, visiting shopping malls is also an option:

> *"What I do mostly besides going to school … (when I come back from school) I go to my friends mostly we go to amaMalls (to the malls)." (Soweto Focus Group)*

For focus group participants who were engaged in other studies, the weekend is also a time for extra studies as well as some relaxation with family members:

> *"Most of the weekends, most of the times I go to school and when I come back I pass by there at the library to study after that I come back home to chill with my family, then at Sunday I am going to church." (Tembisa Focus Group)*

> *"Well, like on Friday I would wake up and prepare for my class at 08:00 a.m. and my classes end at 12:00 and if I have a test on Monday I would go to the library in preparation for that test. Later I would go to my friends for a chat, as the following day is not a school day we would relax and spend time together in one place." (King Williams Town Focus Group)*

Perceptions on race relations

In 1995, the issue of race and race relations was on the minds of young people. Institutionalised racism at schools and tertiary institutions as well as the legacy of apartheid were mentioned:

> *"We now rule shoulder to shoulder with white kids at school, in sports and in places of leisure like our beaches. I respect white kids because they also now respect me and see me as a person. Cases of black people in court are now judged like any other white men's. Every man now has a vote." (Extract from letter-1996)*

> *"About a month ago a new classmate walked in the door. He was shy and frightened. I was also shy when I went to school on the first day. But it was not just a new classmate. He was our first black pupil. I became jealous and outraged because suddenly I was not the centre of attention anymore. Although I do not think I would have wanted everyone staring at me like they were staring at him...I began to talk to him and slowly, slowly we became friends." (Extract from letter-1996)*

> *"What I hate about schools in this new South Africa is that schools are not even started to be improved, they are still the same. Instead they are improving schools that are already improved...schools that are in rural areas are so shamed but if you go to the whites schools, you will see a big difference there" (Extract from letter-1996)*

Reference was made, for example, to continuing unequal education; differences in living standards between blacks and whites and the high rate of crime in black areas. Young letter writers felt that just because apartheid had ended in the statute books, the daily lived reality of many black South Africans was a reminder that the consequences of racial discrimination lived on. For white letter writers, the fear of reverse discrimination in the workplace with whites losing jobs to blacks was expressed. The potential perceived pitfalls of affirmative action were mentioned also by young black entrants who felt that affirmative action may result in replacing qualified people with those who are unqualified. It was felt that this could have a negative impact on productivity and increase corruption in the newly elected democratic government. Young letter writers were positive about the effects of the integration at schools and the role this plays in developing a better understanding between the different races. According to a recent survey, South Africans feel that race relations since 1994 have improved across all race groups as the Figure below shows.

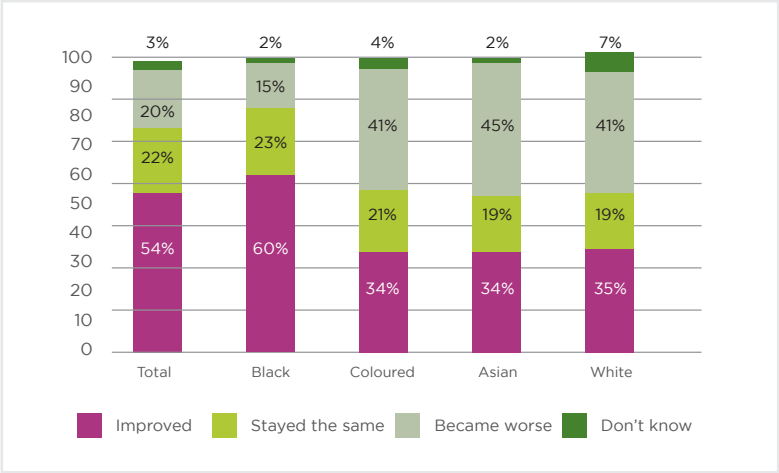

Figure 7: Perceptions on whether race relations have improved since 1994 by race group (Source: South African Institute of Race Relations 2015)

Young people in the 2015 focus groups continue to raise apartheid legacy issues such as the inequality between the race groups and the way this plays out in separating the colours of the 'Rainbow Nation'. As highlighted already, when asked if voting for specific parties could bring about policy change, some participants in 2015 voiced their concern that race was still a factor within some parties. For example some felt that race was still a factor in the DA and if they voted for this party blacks would be discriminated again as in the past. As discussed above, when asked about the criteria for the selection of future leaders, race was also brought up as an issue for some participants who felt that South Africa's future president should not be white.

Young people in the 2015 focus groups also brought up the issue of race when asked a series of questions relating to their residential area; changes they had noticed in South Africa since they were children; and whether their community or neighbourhood had changed or stayed the same. When compared against other issues raised during focus group discussions, race came up less frequently but sometimes in different ways. Some youth commented on improvements in racial integration at schools these days:

> *"The primary school I went to when I got there in grade one there were two Indian kids, five black kids and everyone was white around but as of today it is completely mixed." (Kensington Focus Group 1)*

In talking about community changes since childhood another respondent, however, noted that although blacks and whites have access to the same quality of education, providing they can afford it; there is still a sense of racism in thinking about levels of education attainment in South Africa. Whereas apartheid policies have been removed from the statute books, racialised thinking continues:

> *"like a black person doesn't not to have to get educated but we are busy saying equal education equal education but a white person if he is not educated is not accepted is not acceptable in our community, do you understand?" (Orange Farm Focus Group)*

An opinion was expressed that wealth levels continue to overlap with race and this persists in separating South Africans:

> *"Interviewer: is it mixed, so do you think it is for everyone in the middle class, is it a middle class area?*
> *Participant: yes.*
> *Participant: it is depending on where you are going. If you going that way [towards suburbs that are largely White] you get richer and if you going that way [towards the predominantly Black areas] you get poorer." (Kensington Focus Group 1)*

In response to the question "tell me about this area", a respondent from Grahamstown felt that their area was defined along race and that income status is a further impediment to racial integration:

> *"Our town is categorised in three colours, i.e. white, black and coloured people and our residential areas are also divided in those colours as you can hardly find a white person in our areas, perhaps a very few of blacks in their area especially the wealthy ones, so that's our inheritance in apartheid". (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)*

Orange Farm participants brought up the issue of reverse racism when they were asked about the changes they had seen in their community since they were a child growing up:

> *"the most important part is this when a white person says these black people immediately the law arrest this man fast but if us as black people we racist a white person we don't go to jail we are free in this country because it's our country and that is not fair." (Orange Farm Focus Group)*

The findings above demonstrate that young people in the 2015 focus groups were very aware of the legacy of apartheid and how it still determined class and opportunity for most people. They show that the perceptions of 1995 youth and 2015 youth have not shifted substantially, which is an unfortunate reflection on the failures of our society to significantly shift the underlying racialised systems that constrain social mobility for black and Coloured families.


WENDY
19

Perceptions on education

In the 1990s the view was expressed that young black South Africans wanted free school education. Letter writers also wanted financial aid to be able to enter higher education:

> *"In everyday news magazines and newspapers, they talk of how good education is, but they do not offer student teachers with bursaries…So where is our new South Africa we are supposed to live?" (Extract from letter-1996)*

Their views largely reflected the election promises of the ANC government. In 1995 many letter writers aspired to enter higher education, for personal, social and economic improvement or to be able to render a service to their community. Education was, and still is, seen as the key to a better life:

> *"…increase the number of schools in all township because people are growing and school remain the same. And can increase the number of colleges, Technikons and universities. Because we need educated people who can lead the country of South Africa." (Extract from letter-1996)*

Some young letter writers in 1995 were nevertheless weary of 'qualification inflation' and noted that obtaining a matric and even a degree did not guarantee them a job in the future.

In 2015 young people were asked how much education young people need to stand a better chance of being employed. Diverse opinions were expressed on this issue. But generally it was felt that young people should attain the highest level of education they possibly could to stand a better chance of being employed. These views corroborate previous research which shows that young people generally have very high educational aspirations (Bray et al 2010). Like in Bray et al.'s study, high educational aspirations persisted across class and race groups:

> *"Me I'm saying education plays a big role in South Africa because if you don't have education you are nothing." (Orange Farm Focus Group)*

A range of opinions were expressed on how much is enough education to secure employment, but for many, some form of tertiary education is necessary:

> *"I think like if you don't have money to go to tertiary at least get matric." [Soweto Focus Group]*

> *"More than a matric." (Kensington Focus Group 1)*

> *"a degree actually because my mother didn't study a degree but she has been working at standard bank for 25 years but now people are coming in with their degrees and they immediately get shot up but they do not know what they are doing but they immediately got shot up to too high positions but she knows what is going on." [Kensington Focus Group 1]*

> *"It's best if one studies further like in university to obtain a degree that qualifies them so they could get employed easily." (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)*

> *"You need a degree or a diploma to stand a better chance of getting employed although here in our town that only applies to a few since most graduates have turned to be drunkards and thieves due to unavailability of jobs." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)*

> *"I believe it is best to be well equipped in life especially education-wise so you can get a better and permanent job whether now or in future. To me further education is most essential in life, i.e. university or college." [Grahamstown Focus Group 2]*

> *"One should go to university and finish there." [King Williams Town Focus Group]*

The quality and level of tertiary training was mentioned by some respondents as possible factors in being successful in a competitive job market:

> *"I think when people submit CVs the panel looks at what you have like a degree or a diploma, honours and master's, everything so even if you all qualify for the same job, those with master's and honours will be more qualified. So, when studying you must do your best in obtaining best results like a distinction and so on." (King Williams Town Focus Group)*

Other participants felt that one's level of education attainment depends on one's further education or career goals:

> *"I think grade 12 is the exit point and a must have to open doors whether in finding a job or going to university." (Grahamstown Focus Group 1)*

> *"In other jobs like Police force and Army, Grade 10 and 12 are a requirement but in other jobs one needs tertiary education." (Grahamstown Focus Group 2)*

For other respondents education is less important because there are opportunities for starting your own business:

> *"Think education is not important in South Africa....because you can get a job there and drive the ventures ." (Orange Farm Focus Group)*

> *"The same point, although education is important I think uuum, just to answer the question of how much education you need? I think you only need the basics because if you have only matric, if you you know how to use money can do other stuff that can provide you know income, so yeah it's a matter of knowing the basics for me." (Orange Farm Focus Group)*

The above discussion demonstrates that young people have retained high expectations concerning education. Like their 1995 counterparts, most have high educational aspirations for themselves and they view education as key to enabling them to strive for a better life. Their views are reflective of the reality. National data demonstrates that those with some form of tertiary education are far more likely to find a job than those with only a matric (van Broekhuizen and Van der Berg 2016), and those without a matric are most vulnerable to unemployment (Hofmeyr et al. 2013; L Graham and Mlatsheni 2015).

Perceptions on jobs and careers

Young letter writers in 1995 were optimistic about their lives after they completed their schooling, but were nevertheless aware of the challenges they faced in terms of unemployment and a lack of finance to be able to further their education at a tertiary level to achieve career goals. The limitations of their secondary education were frequently alluded to as obstacles to achieving their career and work dreams, but this appeared not to put a damper on their career ambitions. Career ambitions covered a wide spectrum of jobs across many different fields (see comparative Table below including views from the 2015 focus groups). Interestingly the 1995 generation appeared to make little or no mention of starting their own businesses or becoming involved in entrepreneurship activities as a route to viable livelihoods.

Since 1995 unemployment rates have increased for high school graduates and between 1995 and 1999 unemployment rates for this demographic of youth increased considerably from 28% to 38%. In 2009 at the height of the global financial crisis it rose further to 48% (Mmesi 2015). The unemployment rate for young people has therefore worsened after the first decade of democracy. Millennials face higher unemployment rates and lower labour absorption rates in comparison to adults. The unemployment rate was highest for youth aged 15-24 (50,1%) in 2015 and the employment absorption was 13,3% (Statistics South Africa 2015).

Young people who participated in the focus groups in 2015 were very aware of the scale of unemployment and how it might affect them. It was a critical concern they raised when asked about the major challenges facing the country, as discussed above. Participants from all focus groups were of the opinion that young people struggle to find work. The biggest obstacles to finding work were viewed as being a scarcity of work, a lack of work experience, low skills and qualifications, and nepotism; as has been discussed previously.

Despite the challenges facing young people, particularly in terms of sufficient work experience and qualifications that were mentioned by young people in the 1995 group of letter writers and in the 2015 focus groups, career aspirations were not dampened by such obstacles. At both time points, young people had high career aspirations with emphasis largely placed on professional jobs. As discussed above youth in the 2015 study associated professional jobs with security and stability of income. Although the two groups share this desire for professional jobs there were some differences noted over time. For instance, the 1995 group included a range of lower-paying jobs in their aspirations. These included childcare worker, security guard, and a range of clerical positions that the 2015 group did not mention. There was also less emphasis placed on health occupations by the 2015 than the 1995 group. Similarly, the 2015 group had little desire for trade jobs such as becoming an electrician or carpenter. This suggests that the 2015 group have expectations of higher paying jobs than the 1995 group.

Sector	Job	1994	2015
Government executives	State president	X	
Legal	Lawyer	X	X
	Judge	X	
Health Occupations	Doctor	X	X
	Dentist	X	
	Nurse	X	
	Chemist	X	
	Pharmacist	X	
	Physiotherapist	X	
	Veterinarian	X	X
	Optometrist	X	
	Cardiologist		X
Education	School teacher	X	
	Adult education teacher	X	
	University teacher	X	
	Music teacher		X
Travel and transportation	Pilot	X	X
	Flight attendant	X	

Clerical and secretarial	Clerk	X	
	Administrator	X	
	Secretary	X	
Social services	Social worker	X	X
	Childcare worker	X	
	Hairdresser	X	X
	Psychiatrist	X	
	Psychologist	X	X
	Au pair	X	
Communications	Broadcaster	X	
	Public relations	X	
	Foreign exchange director	X	
	Journalist	X	X
	Writer	X	
	Interpreter	X	
Arts	Designer	X	
	Actor	X	X
	Musician	X	
	Artist	X	
	Cartoonist	X	
	Songwriter	X	
	Graphic designer		X
	Sound engineer		X
	Disc Jockey		X
Protective services	Security guard	X	
	Police officer	X	X
	Detective	X	
	Soldier	X	X
	Traffic warden	X	
Business	Accountant	X	
	Auditor	X	
	Administrative manager	X	
	Economist	X	
	Financial manager	X	
	Insurance broker	X	
	Hotel manager	X	
	Human resources		X
Construction	Electrician	X	
	Carpenter	X	
Other occupations	Geologist		X
	Chef		X
	Farmer		X
	Entrepreneur		X
	Taxi driver		X
	Engineer		X

Table 3: Comparison of career aspirations of youth in 1995 and 2015


DONATE
BLOOD

Interestingly, in 1995 there were almost no participants that mentioned entrepreneurship as a career option. While we do see more appetite for entrepreneurship among the 2015 group, perhaps shaped in part by the emphasis on entrepreneurship in the school curriculum or of ongoing difficulties with finding work or new government policies to promote entrepreneurship and small business development; this was still not a preferred career path for most of the 2015 participants.

In sum then, both the 1995 and 2015 participants were well aware of the difficulties of finding work and the major challenge that unemployment was and is in the country. They nevertheless had high career aspirations, with the 2015 group perhaps demonstrating even higher expectations in terms of the kinds of careers they aspired to. Across the groups though, there was a sense that professional jobs offered stability and income mobility, with limited preference for the risky business of entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

The lived experiences and views on different aspects of life of young people between the 1995 and 2015 youth groups show similarities and differences. Young people in both generations exhibit a sense of energy and optimism in life and this is clearly depicted in their career aspirations and goals. This is in spite of the difficult conditions that both groups face(d) especially in the context of limited employment opportunities and obstacles to accessing education.

In comparing the daily activities of the two generations of young people, their activity choices were very similar. On the weekends and during the week these were shaped by their social context, economic circumstances and geographic locality. The range of free time activities does not seem to have changed substantially over time. However, the 2015 group mentioned more time online and on their smart-phones. For school going youth in both time periods, free time was an activity around which other events and activities were arranged throughout the week. On weekends more leisure activities were mentioned, especially for those young people either working or attending school during the week.

Whereas the 1995 group had the symbol of hope of Madiba as a powerful role model and political father-figure, the 2015 group no longer have a distinct political hero or leader to look up to that unites or excites them. The 1995 group appeared to be a cohort of young people that was more enthusiastic about politics and civic activities. Perhaps the reason for this is that this was the generation of young people who were in the trenches, participating actively in bringing about change to the South African political system by ending apartheid. The corollary is that this generation witnessed the change of power and the fresh new policies that arose, giving further hope that things would improve; such as through the Reconstruction and Development Programme and the drafting of the Constitution and the realisation of first generation rights. These developments were proof positive of the value of political involvement and activism. On the other hand, cynicism is more evident in the 2015 group who are still waiting for better services in their areas and observe the current failures with the elected political leadership. The socio-economic situation does not seem to have changed substantially in their favour since the turn to democracy. Politically, the 2015 group are more disenchanted with the performance of democracy, voting, and their leaders. Participation in elections to bring about positive change is therefore viewed more sceptically. Parliament is seen by some as a 'circus' rather than a founding institution bringing democracy and political accountability to voters. Their scepticism should not, however, be read as political disinterest. The 2015 group was nevertheless very aware of current political challenges, and spoke about these with friends. It could be argued that their lack of engagement with formal political processes is an act of political agency.

With the ongoing challenges facing the 2015 group to be able to improve their lives beyond the achievements of the 1995 group, it is possible to speculate that the age at which youthful ambitions and optimism cease may become lower in the future as frustration grows with limited opportunities for further development for movement into the traditional markers of adulthood such as employment and limited sense of how one's individual actions can bring about positive change.

CONCLUSION

The findings that have been discussed above demonstrate that many of the dominant public perceptions of young people do not in fact hold true. Discourses such as "young people are lazy and sitting on the side of the road', "young people are politically disengaged" or "young people are politically disruptive and violent" do not match the lived realities and perceptions of the ordinary young people that participated in this research. Similarly, expected class differences and divisions were not evident in our analysis, and as we consider the views of a youth generation 20 years ago as compared to the views of the current generation of youth we might have expected that much had changed. Sadly this is not the case with far more similarities than differences recorded, which demonstrates that many of the promises of the democratic era have not been realised for the current generation of young people. In this chapter the findings discussed above are summarised with reference to some of the dominant discourses about young people.

The evidence presented in Chapter 3 shows that young people are most certainly not lazy and sitting on the side of the road. By and large their days are shaped around schooling (for younger youth) and looking for work or working (for older youth). They do household chores and engage in sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities during the week. Weekends are largely made up of community events, socialising with friends and sporting or cultural activities. Although these day-to-day activities were similar across the groups, there were some differences with those in rural areas also expected to engage in outdoor chores such as tending to livestock, and those from rural areas and small towns noting that their options for leisure activities were limited in comparison to those in urban areas. Overwhelmingly the findings demonstrate that the participants of this study, like those in 1995, were engaged in healthy, positive activities.

They also had high expectations for themselves, demonstrated in their educational aspirations (most sought to study after completing secondary school) and their desire to pursue professional, high paying jobs. These high expectations had shifted very little between 1995 and 2015, except that today's youth were less likely to mention lower-paying jobs such as clerical work, as a career of choice, and slightly more likely to mention entrepreneurship as a career option. Their high expectations were not, however, matched by their realities. All noted that unemployment was a critical challenge for the country, and were very aware of young people in their communities struggling to find work. They also realised that their prospects for studying further were constrained by the costs of doing so; this was even the case among those from middle-class backgrounds. While they certainly acknowledged these challenges, they had perhaps not yet internalised how these realities would limit their ability to achieve their dreams. Most talked about the challenge of unemployment in the third person, not acknowledging that they were personally affected or likely to be affected. This was most noticeable in the discussions about the "gap year" in which older youth talked about their current situation (of unemployment) in terms of taking time out to decide what they wanted to do or saving to study further. They did not define themselves as being unemployed. The "gap year" seems to be a new development, which did not show up in the 1995 study. The mismatch between young people's aspirations and the realities that most face points to the failures of successive governments to address the needs of young people, particularly in terms of quality basic and further education, and pathways to employment.

Another popular dual-discourse that continues to shape how young people are viewed has to do with their political engagement or perceived lack thereof. Young people are viewed either as politically apathetic or as engaging in politically disruptive and violent protests. While there is evidence that young people are involved in community protests, sometimes in leadership positions (Alexander 2010)South Africa has experienced a movement of local protests amounting to a rebellion of the poor. This has been widespread and intense, reaching insurrectionary proportions in some cases. On the surface, the protests have been about service delivery and against uncaring, self-serving, and corrupt leaders of municipalities. A key feature has been mass participation by a new generation of fighters, especially unemployed youth but also school students. Many issues that underpinned the ascendency of Jacob Zuma also fuel the present action, including a sense of injustice arising from the realities of persistent inequality. While the inter-connections between the local protests, and between the local protests and militant action involving other elements of civil society, are limited, it is suggested that this is likely to change. The analysis presented here draws on rapid-response research conducted by the author and his colleagues in five of the so-called 'hot spots'. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]\nCopyright of Review of African Political Economy is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for

individual use. This abstract may be abridged. No warranty is given about the accuracy of the copy. Users should refer to the original published version of the material for the full abstract. (Copyright applies to all Abstracts., statistical data shows that they are no more likely than adults to be engaged in such activities (Mattes and Richmond 2015). Our research shows that over time, young people's attitudes about politics have shifted. In 1995 the youth participants were more likely to discuss democratic processes and institutions positively. For some youth in this cohort, the expectation was high that through participation in formal democratic processes such as voting in elections, the major challenges facing society such as unemployment, a deficient education system and poor service delivery; would be addressed and resolved because at last they would have political representatives that would respond to their needs and concerns. Nevertheless, even by the mid-1990s, a sense of impatience was beginning to be expressed by some youth. Some young people were beginning to be concerned that their needs and the needs of their communities were not being addressed rapidly enough. In 2015, the participants were more jaded about these processes and were critical of the role that elections play in bringing about real change. As such they were not particularly interested in voting – a point that is borne out by statistical data (Mattes 2012). However, this should not be read to mean that they were politically apathetic. On the contrary, the youth participants in 2015 were very well informed about critical economic and political challenges facing the country, vocal about poor leadership and corruption, and concerned about the challenges that their communities faced. They did not, however, see engagement in formal political processes as routes to making change; nor were they particularly interested in protest action, citing concerns about violence and damage to property. Rather, they preferred to discuss the situation among friends or discuss it on social media platforms. Their disengagement from formal political processes can thus be argued to be an active exercising of their political agency, rather than a process of political apathy.

Given high levels of income inequality and inequality of opportunity facing young people in South Africa (Frame, De Lannoy & Leibbrandt 2016), one might think that young people's perceptions about the country and their place within the country might differ across class lines. Although this was not a strictly comparative study, we did look at whether class played a role in explaining differences of opinion among the 2015 study participants. Interestingly we did not notice major differences in their views on the most pressing challenges facing their communities and the country. Most felt that crime, corruption, and unemployment were of serious concern for their communities. We also did not note any major differences in their views on political engagement, leaders, or their plans for the future. The limited differences across class might be surprising but could also be explained by the fact that these young people were aware of dominant national debates and agendas, which in turn influenced their own perceptions.

A critical question that we sought to answer in this study was whether young people's attitudes and perceptions have shifted as the country has transitioned. While we did note some differences in views on political engagement (discussed above) and minor differences in career aspirations, by and large the views of young people in the 2015 focus groups were similar to those that the 1995 study (Leggett et al. 1997) described. The 2015 group justifiably retained concerns about violence and crime affecting their neighbourhoods and themselves. They also reiterated concerns about unemployment. A new concern was corruption and scepticism about political leadership that contrasted the views of the 1995 youth, who were excited about leaders such as then President Mandela. The 1995 and 2015 youth groups shared having high expectations for the country and their own futures, as well as an awareness of the constraints they faced in achieving these aspirations. One critical difference lies in the fact that the 1995 cohort was buoyed by the promises of a new democratic era, offering the promise of free education. The 2015 cohort was understandably more jaded about the prospects of the current education system and labour market affording young people the opportunities they desired.

The above findings and discussion point to the fact that many of the popularly held ideas about youth and the state of youth in South Africa are unfounded. The young people who participated in this study were ordinary young people, engaged in positive activities, with high expectations for themselves. They had realistic concerns about their country and their communities, and they were cynical about the ability of ordinary people to shape the future of the country, given empty political promises and the lack of change over time. Despite a deep awareness of the issues that are likely to affect their futures, such as high rates of unemployment and costs of higher education, the participants of this study retained their dreams for a better future for themselves and their families. These findings refute the idea that South Africa's youth is a "ticking time bomb" but they do ask us to question how much longer we can sustain the current conditions, which continue to constrain the ability of young people to reach their goals and fulfil their potential. A generation later young people have the same concerns and constraints. When will we be able to offer young people a better future?

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