Negotiating otherness

Academics' experience of social identity

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EDITORS

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Introduction

This book responds to a pressing need in South African higher education: the need to recognise, critically reflect upon, and meaningfully engage with the deeply personal, complex, and historically situated experiences of identity and otherness. This book offers a deep and personal exploration of the life stories of nine academics and four alumni as they reflect on their unique journeys through South Africa's complex and ever-changing socio-political context. Spanning six decades, from the 1960s to 2024, this compilation of narratives provides a layered insight into how individuals from diverse racial, cultural, religious, linguistic, geographical, and generational backgrounds have experienced a sense of 'otherness' in academic settings. The book includes accounts from each author, across different disciplines and alumni, who studied at a newly established South African university, highlighting their personal encounters in a university environment where identity and belonging are often fluid. From the racially segregated classrooms of the apartheid era to the diverse yet sometimes still divided institutions in a democratic South Africa, these stories reflect the resilience, challenges, and advancements that have shaped their personal and professional lives.

Built on the premise that identity is neither fixed nor apolitical, this collection foregrounds the social construction of 'otherness' and its entwinement with systemic power. Drawing on *Social identity theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Harro's *Cycle of socialization* (2000a), and Love's *Developing a liberatory consciousness* (2010), the narratives unfold across six decades (1960s–2020s), illustrating how individuals are socialised into categories of privilege or exclusion, and how these identities are continually renegotiated through education, resistance, and self-reflection.

The authors share perceptive narratives about how factors such as race, culture, religion, language, and age influenced their lives as learners, students, and eventually academics. These accounts not only chronicle personal journeys through 'otherness' but also emphasise the broader academic and societal changes, providing readers with a closer examination of socio-political transformation in South Africa. Through these narratives

the authors highlight the complex facets of identity and navigate educational environments that were both freeing and alienating. *Negotiating otherness: Academics' experiences of social identity* invites readers to engage in conversations about the interplay of power, privilege, and resistance, encouraging consideration of the ongoing significance of social identity in academic and social spheres. Reading this book is beneficial for those seeking to understand the complexities of identity, belonging, and functioning within South African academia. The book challenges traditional views of 'otherness' and prompts thoughtful consideration on how race, culture, and social classifications have shaped and continue to shape higher education experiences.

Reading this book will be helpful, as it assists those individuals pursuing an academic career to comprehend the intricacies of identity, belonging, and functioning in South Africa's academic sphere. The book troubles conventional conceptions of 'otherness' and calls for innate reflection on the way race, culture, and social categories have formed and continue to form individuals' experiences of higher education.

A central argument of the book is that South Africa's higher education institutions remain both a mirror of national inequities and a potential catalyst for social justice. Despite political shifts, the narrators reveal the endurance of racialised privilege, linguistic gatekeeping, and gendered hierarchies, even in democratic settings. Yet, within these same spaces, they also uncover agency, resilience, and moments of profound transformation. Whether in navigating the trauma of exclusion, advocating for mother-tongue instruction, or reimagining pedagogy through Ubuntu, each story contributes to a living archive of change-in-process.

The stories also highlight how institutional transformation is inextricably linked to personal transformation. For academics and students alike, teaching and learning are not neutral activities but deeply affective, identity-laden engagements that require critical self-examination and ethical commitment. In this way, the book challenges conventional academic detachment and embraces a more humanising, narrative approach to scholarship.

Ultimately, the purpose of this book is not only to document identity struggles but to provoke meaningful dialogue about what it means to belong, to teach, and to learn in a still-unequal society. It offers a compelling argument – that understanding the complexities of 'otherness' in South African academia requires centring lived experience, engaging historical consciousness, and cultivating liberatory practices. These narratives remind us that transformation is not a destination but a lifelong process, and that education, at its best, can help us become more fully human, together.

Overview of the book

In the dynamic and constantly changing realm of South African higher education, the blend of social identity with academic experiences has emerged as a vital subject of study. *Negotiating otherness: Academics' experiences of social identity* examines the intricate and layered experiences of scholars within a system historically influenced by deeply rooted social, political, and cultural divisions. The book investigates how individuals from diverse racial, linguistic, cultural, political, gender, and age groups navigate the intricate landscape of higher education, managing their identities within both institutional and societal frameworks.

The pursuit of understanding social identity in academia involves not only the personal stories of those within the system but is also intrinsically linked to the broader historical and political influences that have moulded South Africa's educational environment. From the remnants of colonialism to the hurdles of post-colonial evolution, the book thoroughly explores the history of higher education in the nation, particularly its role in supporting or challenging racial and social hierarchies. The study begins with the broad historical background of South Africa's past, highlighting significant moments from before 1960 through the significant political shifts of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, and into the 2000s and beyond.

Central to this discourse is the idea of 'identity' itself – a concept that has long been shaped by an ongoing cycle of socialisation, colonialism, and post-colonialism. This book investigates how these processes have influenced the academic experiences of individuals, promoting a complex

interplay between inclusion, exclusion, and self-definition. Using detailed analysis and personal narratives, the text emphasises how the academic institution, as both a hub of knowledge creation and power dynamics, serves as a critical arena for negotiating personal identity. The narratives of nine academics from various backgrounds, alongside the stories of five alumni, create a rich mosaic of lived experiences.

These accounts not only express the diversity within the academic field but also illuminate the challenges and opportunities that arise as individuals engage with their social identities in the educational context. Each story provides insight into how racial, linguistic, cultural, political, gender, and generational elements manifest in the academic experience, offering valuable perspectives on the negotiation, contestation, and transformation of identities. By combining these personal stories with a historical overview of South Africa's higher education system, *Negotiating otherness: Academics' experiences of social identity* encourages readers to contemplate the continual efforts needed to convert academia into an inclusive and fair environment for everyone. It underscores the intricacies of social identity in the context of an institution significantly marked by both historical legacies and current challenges. The book urges us to reconsider what it means to belong, to be recognised, and to contribute within a higher education system that persists in reconciling with its past while aiming for a more equitable and inclusive future.

Negotiating otherness: Academics' experiences of social identity further addresses a critical and timely issue in South African higher education by exploring how deeply embedded social, political, and cultural legacies influence academic identity and experience. The rationale for the book lies in its commitment to unpacking the subtle and overt ways in which historical structures of exclusion still resonate in academic institutions today. By focusing on the personal narratives of scholars and alumni, the book provides a humanised and multifaceted understanding of identity negotiation within these contested spaces. This approach not only broadens the discourse around transformation in higher education but also highlights the emotional and intellectual labour required from marginalised individuals navigating these environments. Ultimately, the book seeks to foster deeper dialogue and meaningful change by confronting the way identity shapes and is shaped by the pursuit of knowledge in post-apartheid South Africa.

The issues discussed in this book are of the utmost importance because they directly confront the unfinished project of transformation in South African higher education, a space still shadowed by its apartheid and colonial past. Understanding how social identity affects academic engagement reveals the persistent inequalities and systemic barriers faced by those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. The book provides a lens through which to examine not only the institutional culture but also the implicit biases and power dynamics that shape knowledge production and access. These insights are crucial for fostering more inclusive academic environments, where diversity is genuinely valued rather than superficially celebrated. In doing so, the book contributes to a larger national and global conversation about equity, representation, and justice in education.

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Chapter 1

The history of higher education in South Africa

1.1 Introduction

A critical examination of South Africa's higher education system cannot be embarked on without a complete understanding of its historical development. The legacy of colonialism and apartheid has left deep structural and ideological imprints on educational institutions, access, and outcomes. Exploring this history is essential for understanding the persistent inequalities and systemic challenges that continue to shape the landscape of higher education today. This historical perspective forms the foundation of the broader argument – that genuine transformation in higher education requires not only policy reform but also an unflinching engagement with the historical injustices that have entrenched racial and economic disparities. By tracing the evolution of higher education through the colonial, apartheid, and democratic eras, we can better understand how past exclusions and discriminations continue to influence present dynamics and why meaningful change must address these foundational legacies. The following section outlines the historical trajectory of higher education in South Africa, highlighting the major shifts across three key periods: the colonial era, the apartheid regime, and the post-1994 democratic dispensation.

1.2 The colonial era

The origins of higher education in South Africa can be traced back to the colonial era, specifically before the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. During this period, the educational landscape was shaped largely by the interests of colonial powers – first the Dutch, and later the British – whose primary goal was to entrench their political and economic dominance. The British and Dutch authorities crafted an educational system that catered to the needs of European settlers, providing academic instruction to a small White elite while excluding the majority Black population from meaningful participation (Fafunwa & Aisiku, 2022). For indigenous African communities, education was either entirely inaccessible or confined to basic religious or vocational training aimed at preparing them for subservient roles within a racially stratified colonial society.

Higher education during this period was not intended to uplift or educate the broader population. Instead, it functioned as a tool of imperial administration, cultural assimilation, and racial segregation. The purpose was to develop a cadre of European-educated administrators, clergy, and professionals who could sustain colonial rule while simultaneously reinforcing ideologies of racial superiority. Institutions such as the South African College, founded in 1829, and now known as the University of Cape Town, served White settlers exclusively, and were modelled on British academic traditions (Phillips, 2003a). Though the institution later offered degrees in disciplines such as the arts and sciences, it remained racially exclusive and inaccessible to Black South Africans. Similarly, later institutions, such as the Stellenbosch University (established in 1866) and the University of the Witwatersrand (founded in 1922), were also designed to serve the settler elite, reinforcing a vision of higher education as a White, male preserve (Sehoole, 2006).

The educational logic behind this design was deeply rooted in colonial ideologies that viewed Africans as intellectually inferior and destined for menial labour. Education for Black South Africans, where it existed, was limited to missionary schools or vocational training that focused on basic literacy, agriculture, or domestic work. As King (2015b) notes, colonial education systems were constructed to maintain social hierarchies rather than to disrupt them. Higher education was perceived not as a right

but as a privilege reserved for Europeans, further embedding structural inequality.

A critical dimension of this period concerns the regional fragmentation of educational policy across the territories that would later become the Union of South Africa: the Cape Colony, Natal, the Transvaal, and the Orange Free State. Each colony operated with its own governance structures, shaped by distinct colonial influences and political ideologies. The Cape Colony, under British rule, was relatively liberal in comparison to the Boer republics, and permitted limited missionary efforts to provide Africans with basic education. However, this inclusivity was minimal and never extended meaningfully into higher education (Hofmeyr, 1982).

In contrast, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, both Afrikaner-controlled Boer republics, were more conservative and explicitly committed to racial segregation. These regions showed little interest in educating Africans beyond basic catechism or labour training. As such, developments in higher education across these regions did not intersect meaningfully. The absence of a centralised national education policy prior to 1910 meant that higher education institutions emerged sporadically and unevenly, each shaped by the colonial power that controlled the region. There was no coordinated effort to develop a national system of higher education, and the segregationist tendencies of each colony only deepened the disparities (Christie, 1991).

This disjointed colonial legacy had lasting effects. By the time the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, higher education was already entrenched as an exclusive, racially segregated system. The unionisation process did not aim to rectify these inequalities but instead laid the groundwork for their institutionalisation and expansion under apartheid.

In sum, the type of education offered during the colonial period in South Africa was deliberately exclusionary. Its purpose was to uphold colonial dominance, support the settler economy, and entrench racial hierarchies. The lack of intersection between developments in different colonies reflected their political fragmentation and differing colonial agendas. However, what united them was a shared commitment to White supremacy and a vision of higher education as the exclusive domain of the colonial elite.

1.3 The apartheid era (1948–1994)

The apartheid era, starting in 1948 with the National Party's introduction of racial segregation, profoundly influenced higher education in South Africa. The government's policies aimed to embed White dominance throughout society, including in education. A key feature of apartheid education was the creation of racially segregated institutions, ensuring that White individuals had access to high-quality education, while Black individuals were subjected to inferior systems (Beale, 1998). In 1959, the government introduced the Extension of University Education Act 45, which led to the establishment of racially segregated universities for Black South Africans (Tilky, 1994). This policy resulted in the establishment of historically Black universities, such as the University of the North, now the University of Limpopo, the University of Fort Hare, and the University of Zululand. These institutions were designed to provide a lower quality of education compared to White institutions, reinforcing apartheid's discriminatory policies. Black students faced a curriculum that limited their social mobility and confined them to low-skill, low-wage jobs in the economy (Ilorah, 2006). Meanwhile, White universities, such as the University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University, and the University of the Witwatersrand, continued to receive the majority of the country's educational resources, offering world-class education to the White population. Black South Africans were barred from attending these institutions unless they were enrolled in a few selected courses meant to uphold the apartheid structure. Such policies entrenched racial inequality, and the systemic denial of access to higher education for Black South Africans fuelled growing resistance against apartheid (Mawila, 2009). The fight for equal educational opportunities was a major aspect of the anti-apartheid movement (Seidman, 2009). Students played a crucial role in this resistance, with incidents such as the 1976 Soweto Uprising, where students protested against making Afrikaans the medium of instruction, marking a crucial point in the nation's educational and activist history (Ndlovu, 2017). Higher education became a primary battleground in the quest for freedom, with Black students and scholars pushing for better access, enhanced curricula, and a decolonised educational system to foster equality for all South Africans (Mawila, 2009; Seidman, 2009).

The apartheid government's approach to education was not merely exclusionary but strategically designed to perpetuate racial hierarchy and economic exploitation. The National Party's rise to power in 1948 marked the beginning of a systematic educational apartheid that would entrench racial segregation for nearly five decades. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 became the cornerstone of this discriminatory system, fundamentally restructuring education to serve apartheid's ideological and economic objectives.

The educational logic of apartheid operated on several interconnected principles. First, it was designed to produce a racially stratified workforce that would serve the needs of White-dominated industries and households. Black South Africans were to receive only enough education to perform manual labour and basic services, deliberately limiting their intellectual and professional development. Second, the system aimed to foster ethnic divisions among Black communities through the promotion of tribal identities and languages, undermining potential unity against White rule. Third, apartheid education sought to inculcate acceptance of racial hierarchy as natural and divinely ordained, using curriculum content to justify White supremacy and Black subordination.

The entrenchment of segregated education occurred through multiple mechanisms that became increasingly sophisticated over time. The Extension of University Education Act of 1959 prohibited Black students from attending White universities without special permits, while simultaneously establishing separate 'tribal universities' designed to produce compliant leaders for the Bantustans. These institutions, including the University of Zululand, the University of the Western Cape, and the University of Fort Hare (which was restructured under apartheid control), were deliberately under-resourced and offered limited academic programmes that channelled Black students away from fields like law, medicine, and engineering that might challenge White professional dominance.

The curriculum at these segregated institutions was carefully designed to advance the apartheid ideology. History courses emphasised tribal divisions and portrayed colonialism as a beneficial civilisation. Science and mathematics were often limited or poorly taught to prevent Black students from accessing technical fields. Language policies promoted Af-

rican languages for instruction while limiting English proficiency, thereby restricting access to international knowledge and opportunities. Religious instruction emphasised acceptance of earthly hierarchy and postponement of justice to the afterlife.

The wide-ranging implications of apartheid education extended far beyond the classroom, shaping every aspect of South African society. Economically, the system created a significant skills shortage among the Black majority while concentrating human capital among the White minority, leading to inefficient labour markets and constrained economic growth. Socially, educational apartheid reinforced racial stereotypes and prejudices, making it easier for White people to justify continued oppression. Politically, it limited the emergence of Black intellectual and professional classes who might challenge apartheid rule, while simultaneously creating grievances that would fuel resistance movements. Psychologically, the system inflicted profound damage on Black children's self-esteem and aspirations, with many internalising messages about their supposed intellectual inferiority.

Despite the Act's deliberate purpose - to fragment and control Black higher education - some universities became sites of political mobilisation and anti-apartheid resistance. At institutions like Fort Hare, the University of the North (Turfloop), and the University of the Western Cape, students and staff resisted their segregationist mandates through protests, the fostering of Black consciousness movements, and the generation-after-generation production of liberation activists who would eventually dismantle the system that birthed these institutions (Massey, 2010; Lalu & Murray, 2012).

1.4 The post-apartheid democratic period (1994–present)

Prior to 1994, higher education institutions in South Africa were marked by inequality and fragmentation. The apartheid system led to racially divided colleges and universities, where quality education and support were primarily available to White students, while Black, Coloured, and

Indian students faced disadvantages (Bitzer, 2009). The end of apartheid in 1994, following the country's first democratic elections, heralded a new era for higher education in South Africa. To address historical disparities, the first democratic government, headed by the African National Congress (ANC), immediately initiated efforts to restructure the educational landscape. A primary focus for the new administration was dismantling the racially segregated and unequal higher education framework inherited from apartheid. A new Department of Education was established by the government, with several initiatives aimed at enhancing access to higher education for historically marginalised groups, particularly Black South Africans. The Higher Education Act of 1997 set the stage for a unified and more inclusive higher education framework (Moja & Hayward, 2000). This Act aimed to advance university transformation concerning racial exclusion while ensuring educational quality and academic excellence. A significant reform was the creation of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) in 1999, which provides financial aid to underprivileged students unable to pay tuition fees (Sokhweba, 2022). This effort was essential in widening access to higher education for numerous young South Africans from disadvantaged backgrounds (Bronkhorst & Michael, 2017). Additionally, the democratic government initiated mergers of universities and the creation of new institutions to promote greater integration (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2013). Two new universities, Sol Plaatje University and the University of Mpumalanga, were established in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga, respectively. Historically Black universities, which had been previously underfunded and isolated, were either merged with White institutions or reorganised to enhance diversity and ensure equal resource allocation (Zharima, 2020). The aim of restructuring higher education institutions was to build a more racially integrated and equitable system, although challenges persisted in providing quality education for all (Tienda, 2013). Despite some notable progress, the remnants of apartheid's educational injustices continue to influence the system. Present-day issues in the post-apartheid era include funding disparities, insufficient student support services, and limited access to high-quality education. Many historically Black universities continue to grapple with financial constraints, poor infrastructure, and lower graduation rates compared to their historically White counterparts (Badat, 2010). Additionally, debates concerning curriculum decolonisation persist, with both students and academics calling for an education system represen-

tative of the country's varied history, culture, and experiences, rather than one primarily based on Western norms (Du Plessis, 2021; Senekel & Lenz, 2020).

The transition to democracy in 1994 brought hope for educational transformation but also revealed the enormous challenges of overcoming decades of systematic disadvantage. Bitzer's (2009) analysis of post-apartheid higher education highlights several critical disadvantages that have persisted despite policy reforms and increased access. These disadvantages include inadequate academic preparation as a result of inferior schooling under apartheid, language barriers for students whose home languages differ from the medium of instruction, financial constraints that limit access and completion rates, and cultural alienation within historically White institutions that were not designed for diverse student populations.

These disadvantages have had profound and varied effects on people's lives. Many Black students who gained access to higher education found themselves struggling with academic demands that their previous schooling had not prepared them for, leading to high dropout rates and extended completion times. The financial burden of higher education has forced many students into debt or prevented them from accessing university at all, perpetuating intergenerational poverty. Those who do complete degrees often face ongoing discrimination in the job market and workplace, limiting their ability to benefit fully from their education. The psychological impact of these struggles has been significant, with many students experiencing impostor syndrome, cultural alienation, and mental health challenges.

Furthermore, limited access to quality higher education has constrained opportunities for further education and professional development. Graduate programmes remain disproportionately White, limiting the development of Black academics and professionals who could serve as role models and mentors for future generations. This creates a vicious cycle where the lack of Black representation in higher education perpetuates itself, making transformation slower and more difficult to achieve.

The contemporary South African higher education landscape reflects both significant progress and persistent challenges. Enrolment figures show

dramatic increases in Black student participation, with several historically White universities now having Black majorities. However, critics argue that access without success is insufficient, pointing to high dropout rates, low throughput rates, and continued racial disparities in academic outcomes. The 2015–2016 #FeesMustFall movement highlighted ongoing inequalities, with students demanding not only financial accessibility but also curriculum transformation and the decolonisation of higher education.

Current critiques of the higher education system focus on several key areas. First, the persistence of racial and class inequalities despite increased access, with working-class Black students still facing significant barriers to success. Second, the slow pace of curriculum transformation, with many programmes still reflecting Eurocentric perspectives and methodologies that marginalise African knowledge systems. Third, the continued dominance of English and Afrikaans as languages of instruction disadvantages students whose home languages are indigenous African languages. Fourth, inadequate public funding of higher education has led to high student debt levels and ongoing financial exclusion.

Additionally, critics argue that the higher education system has not adequately addressed the broader social and economic inequalities that affect student success. Issues, such as poor basic education, inadequate housing, food insecurity, and limited internet access continue to hamper many students' ability to succeed in higher education. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed and exacerbated these digital and socioeconomic divides, raising questions about the sustainability of our current social and economic systems, particularly in terms of access to essential services, education, and employment opportunities in an increasingly digital world.

The history of higher education in South Africa reveals how educational systems can both reflect and reinforce broader social inequalities. From the colonial exclusion of Black South Africans to apartheid's systematic engineering of educational disadvantage, through to contemporary struggles with transformation and access, this history demonstrates the profound political nature of education. The legacy of apartheid continues to shape higher education today, creating challenges that require sustained attention and innovative solutions.

Understanding this historical trajectory is crucial for several reasons. It explains why simply opening university doors has been insufficient to achieve equality, revealing the need for more comprehensive support systems and structural changes. It highlights the importance of addressing not just access but also success, belonging, and the broader social conditions that affect educational outcomes. Most importantly, it demonstrates that educational transformation is not just about changing policies but about confronting deep-seated inequalities and reimagining what higher education can and should be in a democratic society.

As South Africa continues to grapple with these challenges, the lessons of history provide both warnings about the persistence of inequality and hope for the possibility of meaningful change. The ongoing debates about decolonisation, language policies, funding models, and curriculum transformation reflect a continued struggle to create a higher education system that serves all South Africans equitably and effectively. This historical analysis thus provides essential context for understanding contemporary challenges and opportunities in South African higher education, informing efforts to build a more just and inclusive system for future generations.

1.5 Conclusion

The history of higher education in South Africa is a story of exclusion, resistance, and the ongoing quest for transformation. From its colonial roots, where access to education was a tool of domination and segregation, to the apartheid era's deliberate design of inequality, higher education has long reflected the nation's broader systems of oppression. The democratic transition of 1994 marked a turning point but did not erase the deep scars of centuries of injustice. Instead, it initiated an ongoing and challenging restructuring of a profoundly unequal system. Despite numerous policy reforms, access to higher education remains deeply intertwined with race, class, geography, and historical legacy. While initiatives like the NSFAS, institutional mergers, and curriculum reviews have signalled a commitment to change, the pace and depth of transformation have often fallen short of the aspirations of a truly equitable system. Per-

sisting disparities in student success rates, infrastructure quality, funding levels, and academic representation show that the remnants of apartheid still haunt the system. Moreover, the #FeesMustFall and decolonisation movements have shown that today's students are not just seeking access, but also relevance, dignity, and representation in the educational experience. True transformation must go beyond numerical inclusion to include epistemic justice, where African knowledge systems, languages, and identities are affirmed. The legacy of exclusion cannot be overcome by policy alone; it requires cultural, institutional, and societal shifts that recognise all students' full humanity and potential. Higher education must become a vehicle for liberation, not merely certification. This calls for visionary leadership, sustained investment, and courageous engagement with brutal truths. It also demands that universities be held accountable to rankings and economic outputs, the communities they serve, and the democracy they help sustain. As we reflect on the past, we must recognise that the future of higher education in South Africa depends on how boldly we are willing to imagine new possibilities. Only by facing its history honestly can the country build an inclusive and just higher education system that truly serves the needs of all South Africans.

Chapter 2

Identity

2.1 The significance of identity to this study

Understanding the concept of identity is essential to this research, since it influences how people perceive their sense of belonging, exclusion, and validation in social environments. In the context of education and societal change, inquiries such as 'Who am I?' and 'Who are we?' become crucial to the way individuals navigate institutions, relationships, and their histories. This book aims to examine identity as a dynamic, situational, and complex construct influenced by various overlapping social markers and discourses.

2.2 The conceptual framework for this study

This section establishes a conceptual framework by examining significant literature on identity. It primarily relies on sociological and narrative viewpoints to set the stage for the subsequent discussion. The review incorporates both global frameworks and insights from South Africa, focusing on the ramifications of applying models developed in the Global

North. The aim is to place identity formation in context, not only through psychological or sociological lenses but also through locally rooted understandings, such as Ubuntu and post-apartheid narratives of becoming. This approach provides a more intricate perspective that embraces both universal structures and culturally specific experiences.

In post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa, the inquiry into identity transcends academic interest. The end of apartheid in 1994 presented what Singh (1997) refers to as a "historical opportunity" for South Africans to redefine their identities and values. However, this opportunity is marked by inequality and contention. In such a context, identity evolves into a battleground – navigating between the past and the present, between imposed labels and emerging self-concepts. Thus, tackling the issue of identity is crucial for any discourse on social inclusion, educational fairness, and narrative equity. We employ an intersectional and narrative sociological approach to delve into identity. This perspective is informed by significant scholars such as Bhabha (1994), Wenger (2000), and Somers (1994), while also incorporating the multiple dimensions of identity models by Jones and McEwen (2000) and Abes, Jones and McEwen (2007). These frameworks facilitate an examination of how identity is negotiated amid changing contexts and social indicators, including race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and culture. This work is significantly influenced by the convergence of global and local knowledge systems – Western sociological models are paired with concepts rooted in African humanism, like Ubuntu, to explore the relational and communal aspects of identity. This is essential because Western frameworks often prioritise individualised and sometimes conflicting notions of self versus others. In contrast, Ubuntu and similar perspectives highlight interdependence, accountability, and collective existence.

Just as a chameleon changes colour in a new environment, changing contexts also influence identity formation. Identity is not a fixed or static entity, but a reflective process (Brown, 2022). Identity is continually reshaped and rewritten over time as a result of changing contexts. A sociological approach to identity formation focuses on the influence of social context on identities, including factors such as class, gender, and ethnicity (Delmotte, 2022). New contexts and new relationships lead to new experiences that we reflect upon; thus, stories are constantly reshaped and rewritten. Since identity is fluid and variable as individuals

move between contexts and relationships, narrative identity will also be fluid and variable. Although identity is fluid and multiple, the degree to which individuals are able to reshape their identities depends on their access to the linguistic, social, and cultural resources that are valued within a specific discourse (Lewis, Enciso & Moje, 2020). Identities are formed within the sociocultural realities of daily practices and relationships, and consequently, "identity is never a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality" (Bhabha, 1994: 51).

Since identity is not a finished product, it is something that is continuously negotiated and navigated. On the one hand, we define ourselves by who we are within a familiar community context, as well as by who we are not, depending on communities to which we do not belong (De Fina, 2011). On the other hand, however, relationships change as we begin to move between contexts. In line with this, narrative identity formation assumes that multiple stories of history and culture are embedded in individuals (Somers, 1994). In this regard, Wenger (2000) refers to the interconnectivity and negotiated roles that individuals experience when bridging spaces and relationships. Socialisation strengthens the individual's sense of belonging and focuses on connectivity and community (Jaiswal, Magana & Ward, 2022). As individuals move between contexts, the negotiation and navigation of relationships and histories take place. However, the formation of meaning depends on the interaction between individuals' social competence (what is necessary to be recognised within a particular community) and their personal experience of the social world (Wenger, 2000).

Singh (1997) asserts that since the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africans have had a historical opportunity to reshape their identities by gaining a new understanding of who they are and what they value. Embedded in each individual are stories of their community, history, language, culture, and country. However, these stories change over time and are therefore continuously reshaped. Negotiation and navigation to adapt to or fit into a context also involve the mediation of multiple identity dimensions such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class, culture, and language.

Jones and McEwen's (2000) model of multiple dimensions of identity, as seen in Figure 2.1, illustrates the fluid and dynamic nature of identities.

The core is illustrated as a personal identity (intrapersonal) and integrates the personal characteristics of the individual. The circles represent the different dimensions of identity (interpersonal) such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, and social class. Individuals continuously attempt to position themselves in order to develop a sense of place. Social categories overlap around the core, indicating that "no one dimension may be understood singularly; it can only be understood in relation to other dimensions" (Jones & McEwen, 2000). These dimensions become more or less prominent as they integrate with contextual factors such as family background, sociocultural conditions, current life experiences, and career decisions.

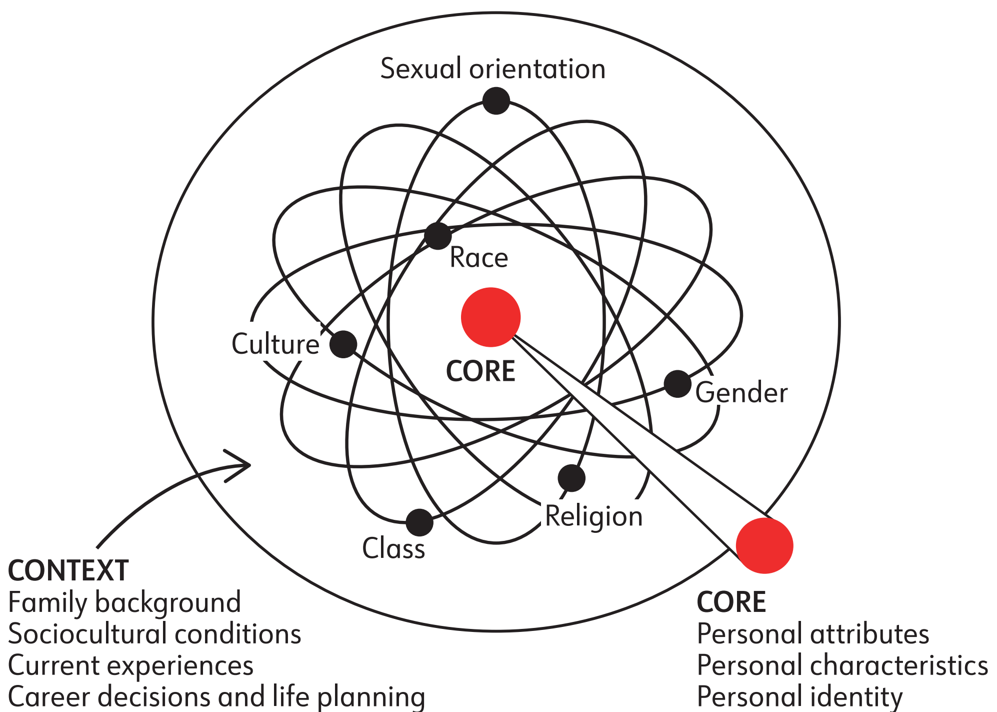

Figure 2.1 Model of multiple dimensions of identity

Source: Jones and McEwen (2000)

Jones and McEwen (2000) expanded their model in collaboration with Abes et al. (2007) (see Figure 2.2) to include meaning-making in the model, illustrating the interactive nature of the relationship between

context, meaning-making, and identity dimensions. Meaning-making serves as a filter to help people make sense of the contexts that influence them. Within a specific context, a particular category can acquire a unique meaning. Individuals' understanding of their identity dimensions is negotiated by the context in which they operate. Therefore, the stories people tell will capture the negotiation of identity dimensions within specific contexts, and reveal the multiple nature of identities and narrative identities.

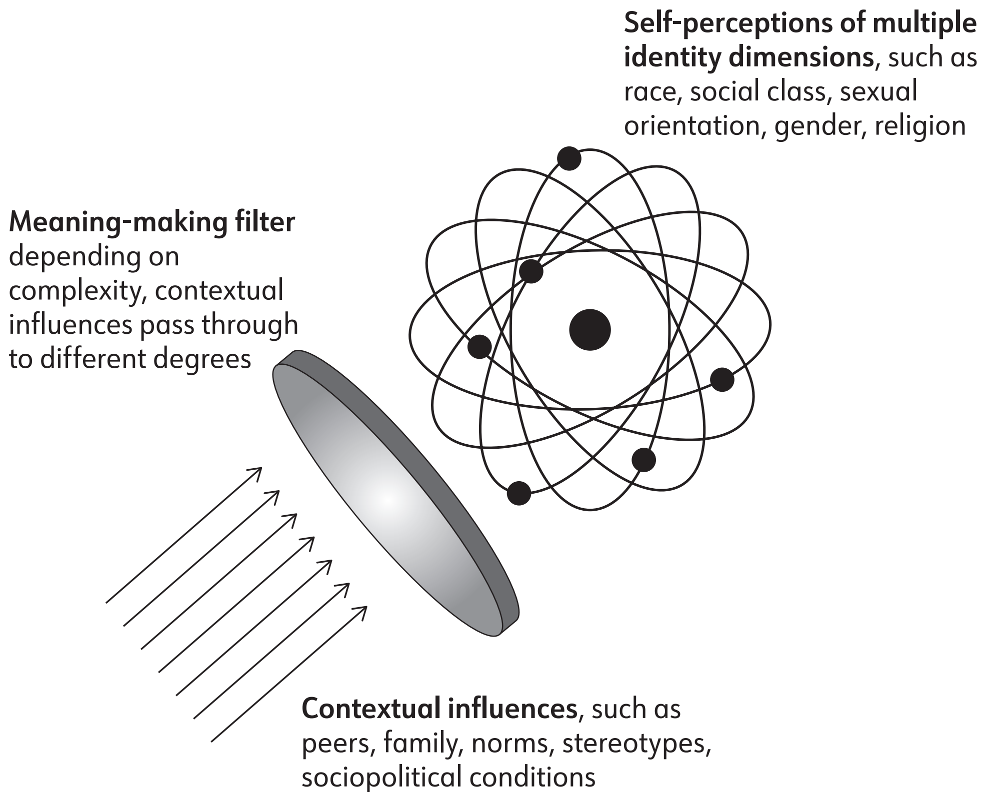

Figure 2.2 Reconceptualised model of multiple dimensions of identity

Source: Abes et al. (2007)

Since identities are fluid and variable as individuals move between contexts and relationships, stories are continuously reshaped and rewritten. Individuals' experiences of their interactions within the broader community are embedded in the stories they tell, thus contributing to the formation of their narrative identities.

2.3 Theoretical framework

2.3.1 Social identity theory

Social identity theory (SIT) is still a foundational and highly pertinent concept in modern social sciences. It serves as a key framework for understanding group interactions, the development of identity, and discrimination between groups – topics that are essential to the study of identity in academic settings. Although it was introduced in 1979, SIT has been progressively enhanced, refined, and utilised in various areas such as education, organisational behaviour, and relations between groups. Its lasting significance is rooted in its ability to explain how individuals find meaning and self-esteem through their group memberships and how these memberships influence their experiences of belonging and marginalisation.

The use of SIT is especially appropriate for the narratives in this book, as it clarifies the ways in which identity roles are formed in the academic environment – an environment shaped by both overt and covert group affiliations that influence acknowledgement, integration, and advancement in careers. Given that social identity is closely linked to professional identity, particularly for women in academia who are balancing caregiving responsibilities with institutional expectations, this theory provides a strong foundation for examining the marginalisation and resistance stemming from identity issues.

In this book, racism is defined as a system of oppression rooted in the social construction of race, which involves the distribution of power and resources favouring one racial group over others (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). It encompasses both personal biases and the institutional frameworks that perpetuate racial disparities. The concept of 'extreme othering', framed through SIT, highlights the act of dehumanising and marginalising those in an 'out-group' to reinforce the dominance of the 'in-group'. This dynamic intersects with racism, as racialised communities are frequently cast as the ultimate 'other', particularly in scenarios where race, gender, and class converge to influence access, mobility, and perceived worth. In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, these forces are exacerbated by a historical backdrop of racialised social engineering, which continues to influence who is included, who is marginalised, and who receives heightened visibility within academic institutions.

Figure 2.3 below presents a summary of SIT, as explained by Tajfel and Turner (1979).

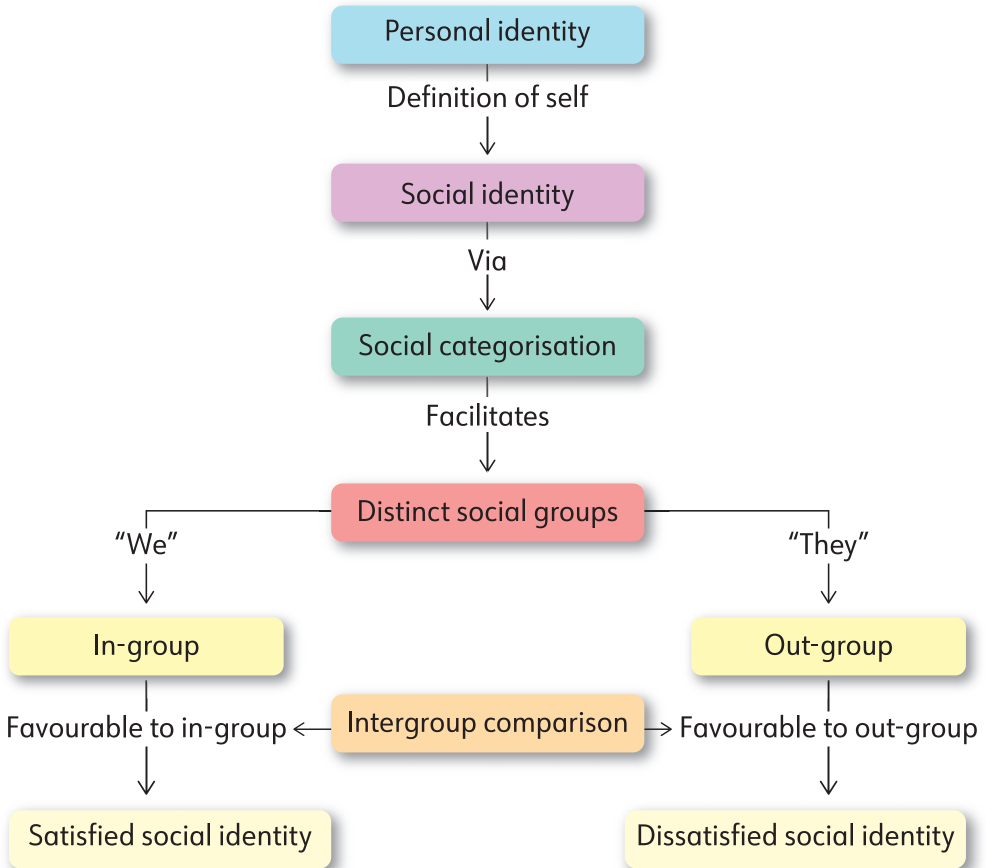

Figure 2.3 Social identity theory

Source: Age-of-the-Sage (n.d.)

Social identity is defined by an individual's perception of themselves based on their affiliations to certain groups. Tajfel and Turner (1979) suggest that these groups could encompass an individual's social class, family, religious community, sports team, among others, and are typically significant contributors to one's pride and self-esteem. For additional examples of groups, consult Figure 2.4. Consequently, groups furnish individuals with a sense of social identity – a feeling of belonging to the

societal sphere. To bolster our self-image, we often elevate the standing of the group we are part of. For instance, supporting the Springbok rugby team might induce the following statement: "The Springboks are the best globally." Moreover, in striving to elevate their self-image, groups might indulge in discrimination and espouse prejudiced attitudes against an external group, defined as a group to which they do not belong. An apt illustration of this is: "The All Blacks rugby team are a group of losers!" In this way, individuals classify the world into 'them' and 'us' via a mechanism of social categorisation, thereby assigning people to social groupings. This exemplifies what Tajfel and Turner (1979) designate as the in-group (us) and the out-group (them). A primary proposition of SIT is that members of an in-group will attempt to identify adverse characteristics in an out-group, thereby improving their self-image. The risk inherent in this behaviour is that when these prejudiced opinions are directed at specific cultures, it can foster racism. In its most extreme form, racism can culminate in severe actions of cruelty, such as the Holocaust in Germany against the Jews, or the ethnic cleansing in Rwanda between the Hutus and Tutsis. The apartheid policy under the National Party government is yet another instance of the way extreme racism can lead to inhumane behaviour (Suhanto & Zhouneil, 2021).

Tajfel and Turner (1979) posit that stereotyping, interpreted here as sorting individuals into various groups and classes, stems from a normal cognitive process. According to this perspective, individuals tend to cluster objects together and sort them to comprehend and derive meaning from situations, often leading to exaggeration. Consistent with this view, Tajfel and Turner (1979) suggested that assessing others as either "us" or "them" involves three psychological stages. The initial stage, termed social categorisation, involves people classifying objects to recognise and understand them. Similarly, they classify both others and themselves to grasp the social milieu. During this categorisation process, individuals utilise social categories such as Black, White, Christian, Muslim, student, or taxi driver, among others, because they perceive these categories as practical. The second stage, known as social identification, involves individuals embracing the identity of the group with which they have aligned themselves. For instance, if a person identifies as a student, it is likely they will assume a student identity and start displaying behaviours that align with typical student conduct. The third and final stage is called social

comparison. Once individuals have labelled themselves as members of a group and identified with it, they are likely to compare their group with others (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). To preserve their self-esteem or status, it is essential for their chosen group to be viewed favourably in comparison to other groups.

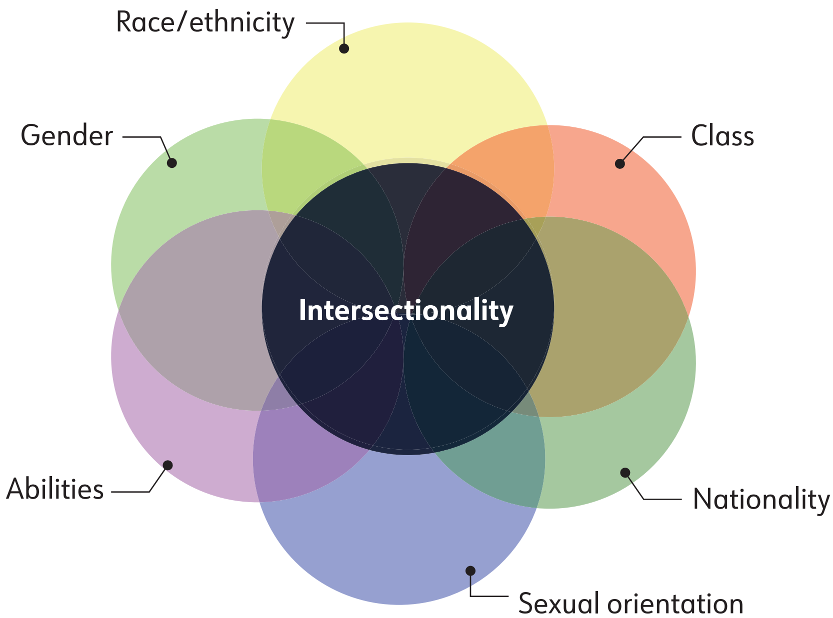

Figure 2.4 Intersectionality in the workplace

Source: Nybo and Genefke (2023)

2.3.2 Cycle of socialisation

The cycle of socialisation, as described by Harro (2000a), serves as a significant framework for comprehending how individuals are conditioned into systems of inequality from the moment they are born. It illustrates how oppressive norms and roles are learnt, ingrained, and maintained, often unconsciously, through family dynamics, educational systems, media influence, religion, and cultural institutions. In the context of South Africa, this cycle is especially pertinent. It provides insight into how the legacies of apartheid persist through deep-rooted societal norms, even with formal changes in legislation or policy. The cycle emphasises why change occurs at a slow pace, how individuals may inadvertently continue

oppressive practices, and what is required to disrupt these cycles through increased critical awareness and collective efforts. This framework closely relates to the conversation surrounding identity, othering, and intersectionality, demonstrating how identity categories are socially constructed and supported through ongoing systemic reinforcement.

Each person is born with a unique set of social identities, such as gender, ethnicity, skin colour, native language, age, ability, status, religion, sexual orientation, and economic class. These individuals are then influenced by powerful sources in their environments to assume roles imposed by an unfair social structure (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). It is essential to note that the socialisation process is widespread, consistent, self-supporting, self-sustaining, and often invisible (Bell, Adams & Griffin, 2007). People receive systematic guidance on how to inhabit each of their social identities throughout their lives. Figure 2.5 outlines the different stages of the socialisation cycle and illustrates how this process develops, its origins, its effects on individuals, and its self-sustaining nature.

The beginning

Harro (2000a) posits that human socialisation starts even before birth and individuals have no say in it. Social identities are bestowed at birth without the individuals having any influence or choice. Thus, it is unreasonable to hold others accountable or blame them for their identities. The initial stage of the socialisation process is beyond their control and they have no awareness of their identities. Additionally, humans enter a world where the mechanisms, assumptions, rules, roles, and oppressive structures are already established and operational. As a result, individuals unwittingly enter an old system. The characteristics of this system were formed long before people existed and are built on history, traditions, beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes, and myths. Harro identifies two groups – dominant and subordinate. Dominant groups are viewed as the 'norm' and are inherently privileged, with access to a range of opportunities, often unknowingly. Being born into these groups is considered 'lucky', including those who are able-bodied, middle-aged, heterosexual, and not Jewish. On the other hand, subordinate groups are those less studied or regarded as less important. They can be nearly invisible or defined by inadequate or incorrect information. Typically, these groups include marginalised sections of soci-

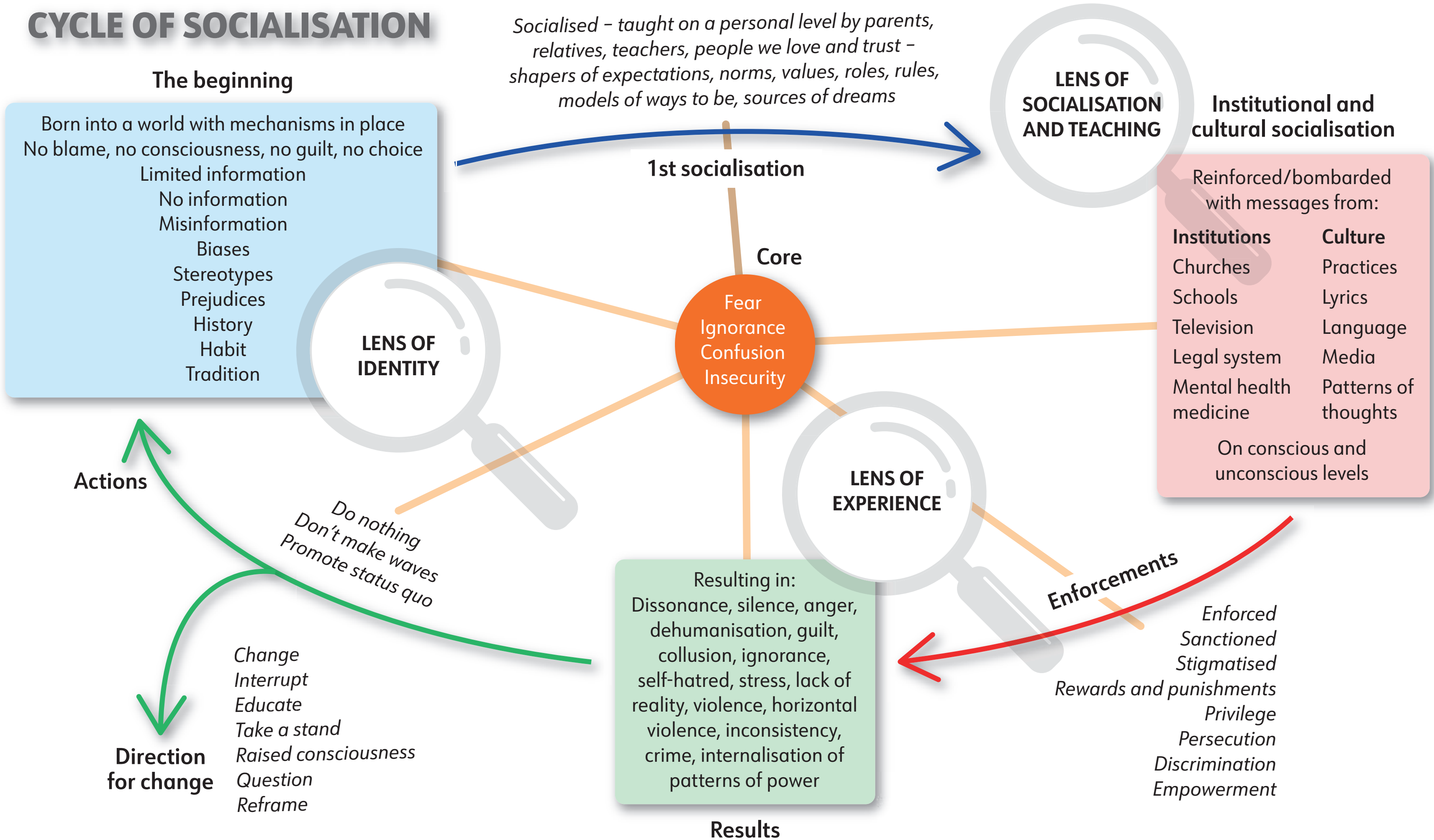

Figure 2.5 The cycle of socialisation

Source: Harro (1997)

ety – women, racially oppressed people, LGBTQ+ communities, disabled individuals, the elderly, youth, and those living in poverty. These people are 'unlucky' because of their birth into undervalued groups within society. The roles for both groups are imposed through socialisation without their awareness or consent, leading to dehumanisation.

First socialisation

From the moment we are born, we begin to be influenced by those we love and trust the most, typically our families who raise us. These are the people who shape our self-awareness, the principles and guidelines we are expected to adhere to, the roles we are assigned, our future aspirations, and our ambitions. They act as role models, teaching us how to behave. For instance, individuals might hear "Boys don't cry", "Girls should stay in their place", or "Christianity is the true religion". Importantly, these individuals often depend heavily on their parents or caregivers and lack the ability to think on their own, leading them to subconsciously adopt these perspectives. It is crucial to understand that they are not to be blamed. Parents and caregivers simply rely on their personal histories and may not have analysed what they are imparting, often unconsciously passing on what they were taught.

Institutional and cultural socialisation

As soon as people start attending school, visiting places of worship, going to medical facilities, playing on sports teams, and participating in similar activities, the sources of their social interactions increase rapidly. The majority of the messages they receive regarding how to behave, who they should admire or look down on, which rules to adhere to, the roles they should assume, the assumptions they should make, as well as their beliefs and thoughts, will likely either support or challenge what they have learnt at home. They might learn, for instance, about who gets special treatment or who is targeted negatively. Those who belong to groups that benefit from these rules may not realise the unfairness, while it is clear to those who are not part of these groups. People are bombarded with unchallenged and stereotypical messages that influence their thoughts and beliefs about themselves and others. Furthermore, this is intricately woven into every structural aspect of our culture, including media, language patterns, song lyrics, cultural practices, and more.

Enforcements

Individuals who challenge the 'norm' often face consequences for their independent thinking, while those who conform minimally benefit from being ignored for not causing disruption. At most, conformists gain rewards and privileges for upholding the status quo, such as access to higher positions, recognition, and acknowledgment for having 'succeeded', or being seen as exemplary members of their group, along with privileges that provide wealth, connections, or power. Those who oppose the conventional societal narratives are labelled agitators. If they belong to subordinate groups, they are used as proof of why this group is deemed inferior to the dominant group.

Results

The outcomes of this systematic education are harmful to everyone involved. Those with subordinate identities may feel anger, muted, low self-worth, high stress, hopelessness, and powerlessness. These emotions may lead to criminal behaviour and self-harm, frustration, mistrust, and dehumanisation. Through compliance with subordinate roles, they reinforce stereotypes, contribute to their own downfall, and maintain the oppressive system. This learnt powerlessness is often called internalised oppression because we have trained ourselves to be our own oppressors from within. Conversely, those with dominant identities may feel guilt from unearned advantages or oppressive actions, fear of retribution, pressure to support the system for self-preservation, and high stress levels. They may further have a lack of understanding of and separation from target groups, or a skewed perception of reality regarding how the world functions. By acting within their roles as agents and either being unaware or unwilling to disrupt the cycle, they sustain the oppressive system.

Actions

When people reach the outcomes of this cycle, they encounter the choice of their next action. It is easier to remain inactive and let the status quo continue.

The core at the centre of the cycle

Individuals are prevented from taking action owing to the fear and insecurity that have been instilled in them. They remain unaware and bewildered because of the myths and false information they have been subjected to. As a result, they are unable to confront a system that is so dominant and false information that is widespread. If their inner selves are filled with these negative influences, they will remain immobilised and continue to perpetuate the same cycle.

Direction for change

Some subordinates attempt to disrupt the cycle because their dissatisfaction has outweighed their comfort. If they do this individually or without coordination, they risk being pushed back into powerless roles. Should they embark on a new path, even with support from their allies who are part of the dominant group, they can foster their own optimism. Some members of the dominant group might choose to leverage their power and privilege to initiate change. When groups begin to empower themselves – by gaining deeper understanding about one another, shedding old myths and stereotypes, and challenging the established order – they undertake the challenging decision to break the cycle of socialisation.

2.4 Colonialism and post-colonialism

The concepts of 'colonialism' and 'post-colonialism' are discussed in this section to provide a framework for understanding the notion of 'identity'. In a post-colonial country such as South Africa, the influence of colonialism is still felt in the way people think and behave. Colonialism and post-colonialism may also be used as lenses to investigate how people's identities are shaped through history, power, and culture. As is the case with former settler colonies, South Africa, as a former colony of the Dutch and British, had to endure the imposition of language (i.e. Dutch and English), cultural and religious practices as well as social structures, which eventually led to the disruption and, to a large extent, the eradication of the heritage of colonised indigenous peoples. Efforts are now being made by indigenous peoples in a post-colonial South Africa to reclaim

what has been taken away or erased. This includes their identities, which they, under colonial rule, were forced to denounce.

What does 'identity' mean in a colonial and post-colonial context? The word 'identity' is a socially constructed concept that can be used in a personal as well as a social sense. Tatum (2000: 9) contends that the concept of identity "is a complex one, shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts".

Fearon (1999: n.p.) shares the same sentiment in this regard when he opines that the concept of "identity" is a "complicated and unclear concept". He therefore concludes that the concept is currently used in both a personal and a social sense (Fearon, 1999: 2):

> I argue that 'identity' is presently used in two linked senses, which may be termed 'social' and 'personal'. In the former sense, an 'identity' refers simply to a social category, a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes. In the second sense of personal identity, an identity is some distinguishing characteristic (or characteristics) that a person takes a special pride in or views as socially consequential but more-or-less unchangeable. Thus, 'identity' in its present incarnation has a double sense. It refers at the same time to social categories and to the sources of an individual's self-respect or dignity.

He further argues that there is no "necessary linkage" between the two references of the word (Fearon, 1999: 2):

> [T]here is no necessary linkage between these things. In ordinary language, at least, one can use 'identity' to refer to personal characteristics or attributes that cannot naturally be expressed in terms of a social category, and in some contexts certain categories can be described as 'identities' even though no one sees them as central to their personal identity. Nonetheless, 'identity' in its present incarnation reflects and evokes the idea that social categories are bound up

> with the bases (sic) of an individual's self-respect. Arguably much of the force and interest of the term derives its implicit linkage of these two things.

For the purpose of this chapter, both references to the concept of 'identity', namely social and personal, will be considered. Although the practice of colonialisation has ended, its consequences are, to a large extent and up until today, still felt in post-colonial countries, as is noted in the following statement of the Human Rights Council (2023: 3) at its 54th session:

> The ongoing legacies of colonialism has had a disproportionate impact on Indigenous peoples' rights, cultures, and languages, as well as on their economic opportunities and prosperity.

Ghosh, Abdi and Naseem (2008: 58) define colonialism as:

> [T]he temporal, systematic and opportunistic process of one country (usually a European country in the modern history of humanity) overtaking another country (in areas of what is now called the countries of the South or the 'Third World'). The colonising country, by using its superior technological and administrative efficiency, forced the conquered lands to fully adhere to the new rules of the exploitation of their natural and human resources.

A similar definition is that of Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012: 46), who view colonialism as "the direct and overall domination of one country by another on the basis of state power being in the hands of a foreign power". A more succinct definition is provided by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2025), outlining colonialism as the "control by one power over a dependent area or people". Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012: 46) also distinguish two objectives of colonialism, namely "political domination" and the creation of possibilities to exploit the colonised country. When one nation, through force, conquers another and subjugates and exploits it, the coloniser's language and cultural values are often forced upon the col-

onised people. This system of domination and exploitation, which has a long history extending back to antiquity, has a profound and lasting effect on the identities of those it subjugates. As such, the pervasive influence of colonial ideology is still noticeable in the post-colonial identities and cultural, political, economic, and social practices of the colonised people.

According to Marger (in Kortright, 2003: n.p.), the process of colonisation consists of the following phases: (i) colonisation begins with a forced, involuntary entry; (ii) the colonising power alters or destroys the indigenous culture; (iii) members of the colonised group tend to be governed by representatives of the dominate group; and (iv) a racist ideology buttresses the dominant–subordinate relationship.

The same process, as was the case with other colonised regions, unfolded in the South African context when the Europeans under the leadership of the Dutch navigator Jan (Johan Anthoniszoon) van Riebeeck (21 April 1619–18 January 1677) arrived at the southern tip of Africa on 6 April 1652. The British would later, in 1795, occupy the Cape, which officially became their colony in 1815. Van Riebeeck's sole mission was to establish a halfway station at the Cape to "supply VOC ships on their way to Asia with fresh fruits, vegetables, meat and to enable sailors wearied by the sea to recuperate" (South African History Online, 2013a: n.p.), and not necessarily to conquer southern Africa. He would, however, in later years introduce the slave trade in South Africa.

The Dutch settlers systematically and gradually took over the land of the Khoikhoi. This "gradual dispossession" of the local Khoikhoi also led to the opening of "the area for European Settlement" (South African History Online, 2013a: n.p.). It would be the British who, under the leadership of Vice-Admiral Sir George Elphinstone, invaded the Cape Colony in 1795. This invasion was prompted by the British Empire's desire to take control of the Cape in view of France's annexation of the Dutch Republic. By doing so, the British would use the Cape as a base against the French and also ensure that they had control over the sea route to the East (South African Government, 2025).

During a second invasion in 1806, the British would reoccupy the Cape during the Battle of Blaauwberg and subjugate its inhabitants to their rule of law. This occupation lasted until 1910 when South Africa was declared

the Union of South Africa. The British replaced Dutch as the language of administration with English, while also substituting the *rijksdaalder* (Dutch currency) with the pound sterling. They further waged wars against the African citizens and drove them beyond the Great Fish River, which they regarded as the eastern border of the Cape Colony. These actions of the British could therefore be seen as the imposition of their own cultural, political, and social systems on the South African people. As such, the indigenous languages, cultural practices, customs, and traditions were regarded as inferior to the British coloniser's culture and were therefore disregarded.

One could argue that such actions had a profound effect on the identities of the colonised people because they had to relinquish their languages, cultural practices, and customs. The inhabitants of South Africa were compelled to follow a novel and alien lifestyle imposed by the colonisers. Not only did colonialism impact the lives of South Africans, but it also led to "racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance" (Human Rights Council, 2023: 3). In their efforts to subjugate the colonised people, the colonisers also imposed a racial stratification system in which they claimed a position at the top of the strata and the colonised people settling at the bottom. Such a stratification system impacted the latter's self-esteem, self-worth, and self-perception, leading them to suffer an identity crisis. In his article, 'Identity in the Colonial Lands: A Critical Overview of the Post-colonial Studies', Serap Türkmen (2003: 189–190) provides the following apt analogy about identity in a colonial and post-colonial context:

> ... one of the indispensable components of colonialism if we consider colonialism as a body; identity constitutes its spirit while the economic exploitation is its corporal body. The coloniser coming to the virgin lands with the feeling of colonial desire and obsession to have cheap profit in his heart finds himself ready to defame the inhabitants, regard them as "the other".

These sentiments encapsulate the identity crisis the colonised people had to grapple with and it also links to the psychosocial effects of identity alteration and conformation that they had to endure – "the true identities

of the subjugated native populations were wilfully altered so the people who were exploited would conform to the imperial project that had been designed for them" (Ghosh et al., 2008: 58).

If it were not enough that the colonised people had to conform to alien imperialists' norms and standards, they also had to contend with derogatory labelling and stereotyping for specific purposes, which had an adverse effect on their identities, as explained by Ghosh et al. (2008: 58) in the following statement:

> [T]he falsity of the colonialism-constructed identities where all the derogatory labels (savages, uncivilized, lazy, irrational, uneducated, untrustworthy, unreliable, unpredictable, etc.) were fabricated by colonial powers, was primarily designed to achieve two important objectives in the overall project of colonisation. The first was to justify the conquest and subsequent exploitation of foreign lands, and the second was to induce in the native population a self-unworthiness so these become willing participants in their marginalization and attached mass deprivations.

Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012: 48) opine that the colonists used several strategies to achieve their imperial objectives, namely "forced labour, taxation, monetization of the economy, and payment of low wages". All these strategies were used to oppress and keep the colonised people dependent on and at the mercy of the colonisers. Not only did colonialism impact the identities of the colonised people, but it also led to "racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance" (Human Rights Council, 2023: 3), which is still felt in post-colonial societies.

The current post-colonial era, which followed colonial rule, is still characterised by the colonised people's struggle to construct their identities and to find themselves. Colonised South Africans have been engaged in a bitter struggle to achieve political freedom, which eventually happened in 1994 with the first democratic elections and the election of the first Black president. This freedom was only partially achieved since the majority of South Africans did not get economic freedom which would have uplifted them from poverty and suffering. They are still struggling

to rid themselves of the psychological scars of colonialism, as well as the legacy of an apartheid system that was in place pre-1994. A typical example is the preferential treatment of English in South Africa. This may be regarded as the legacy of the British colonisers who ensured that English was promoted among the colonised people. This anglicisation began in earnest a few months after the outbreak of the South African War, when Lord Alfred Milner was the High Commissioner of the Cape Colony. In his study, titled Lord Milner and South Africa: The failure of Anglicisation, 1900–1905', Frank J. Tascione (1977: ii) expresses this as follows:

> A few months after the start of the Boer War, England officially began an anglicization program aimed at establishing the English culture in a position of dominance in South Africa. Alfred Lord Milner was the prime mover of this effort which lasted until his departure from the South African political scene in 1905.

Although Milner's efforts were partially successful – they were met with great resistance after the war, especially from within the ranks of the Afrikaner people – they also failed because of the great depression in South Africa resulting from a labour shortage, as was noted by Tascione (1977: iii): "... an economic depression in South Africa caused by a labour shortage, and bitter anti-British sentiment by the Afrikaners, all led to the ultimate failure of anglicization." Language can be used as a powerful tool by colonisers to influence the mindsets of the colonised people, as was observed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (in Kgatla, 2018: 150) in the following statement: "[L]anguage is the most potent instrument in the hands of the colonisers to capture the mind of the colonised."

Given Milner's efforts, the British imperial machinery wanted to achieve just that, namely "to capture the mind of the colonised". English in South Africa is therefore still viewed as a language of intelligence and advancement; hence its official status as the language of use by the South African government. It is also regarded as the language of business. This state of affairs merely perpetuated colonialist thinking, where the colonised people's languages were disregarded and marginalised, as observed by De Swaan (2023: 2):

In South Africa, until the transition, Afrikaans and English continued to function as the languages of law, politics, business, and higher education, without much regard for the many indigenous languages that were spoken outside the corridors of power.

2.5 Conclusion

The issue of identity in colonial and post-colonial contexts is complex and is affected by several factors such as culture, history, and society. What can be said with certainty is that the colonial encounter has had a profound impact on the identity formation of those who suffered under colonialism, to such an extent that its ramifications are still felt by new generations of descendants. While steps have been taken since 1994 to promote and revitalise colonised cultures and traditions in South Africa, there is still a need for continued support and investment to ensure the preservation and growth of important cultural assets and practices. Since the dawn of the South African democratic dispensation in 1994, there has also been a resurgence in efforts among the affected people themselves to revitalise and rearticulate their identities. These efforts have also been boosted by the United Nations Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 1994.

Chapter 3

Methodology of this study

3.1 Introduction

This study seeks to explore how identity is constructed, contested, and narrated by academics and students in post-apartheid South Africa. Including the student component in this study was essential, as it allowed for a more holistic and layered understanding of how identity and otherness are experienced, not just by academics, but by individuals at a formative stage of their academic and personal development. Students, particularly alumni of newly established South African universities, offer critical insights into how evolving socio-political contexts shape emerging identities and a sense of belonging. Their voices help bridge the past and present, highlighting how structures of exclusion and inclusion persist or shift over time. Without student narratives, the study would risk presenting an incomplete picture of the academic space, missing the profound impact of institutional culture on those who are being shaped by it. Including students' voices enriches the dialogue on identity, power, and transformation, ensuring that the continuum from learner to academic is fully explored.

The central research question is:

How do South African academics and students narrate their identities in relation to the shifting landscapes of race, gender, and language in higher education?

3.2 Autoethnographic methodology

The study follows an autoethnographic methodology and a narrative approach. Autoethnography is a research method that uses personal experiences (*auto*) to describe and interpret practices, cultural texts, and experiences (*ethno*) (*graph*). Self-reflection is used to identify and explore the interconnection between the self and social life (Adams, Ellis & Jones, 2017). A retrospective perspective and memory are employed to reflect on lived experiences. The value of stories and personal experiences is affirmed by creating texts that are accessible to a wider audience (Adams et al., 2017). Through reflection and self-inquiry, participants were able to relive their teaching practices in rural schools. The narratives in this study capture their voices and lived experiences (Berry & Patti, 2015). The motivation for this inquiry stems from a recognition that identity, particularly academic identity, is not static but formed through complex negotiations across personal, institutional, historical, and socio-political terrains. The remnants of apartheid continue to echo through institutional cultures and personal narratives. This research explores how individuals position themselves within and against these lingering legacies.

3.3 Narrative approach

A narrative approach means that individuals have a direct understanding of the nature of their stories because they are in the best position to provide a description of their experiences within a specific timeframe (Jack-Malik & Kuhnke, 2020). Understanding one's own narratives involves three important aspects (Mahmoud & Tehseen, 2021). First, stories are embedded in the current circumstances of the narrator(s). These circumstances allow the narrator to speak about the past or future. Second, regardless of their length or scope, it is impossible for narratives to contain

all conceivable information because stories are the result of a conscious or unconscious choice of different options within individuals' life experiences. Third, narratives are situated in three sub-areas: the intersubjective relationships in which stories are created; the group-based field in which stories develop; and the cultural meta-narratives that provide greater meaning to any story (Mahmoud & Tehseen, 2021).

Given these aspects, individuals are not the exclusive creators of their own stories but can only be considered co-tellers. It is evident that narratives offer individuals an opportunity to present rich descriptions of their experiences and, at the same time, analyse their stories to derive specific meanings from them (Wang & Geale, 2015). By telling their own stories, participants can share their experiences with a wider audience. In this study, participants tell stories from their teaching experience in rural schools. Through their narratives, they invite the reader to become part of stories that reflect how they rethink and re-evaluate their experiences and interpret the lessons they have learnt from them. The knowledge gained through these narratives has broadened an understanding of participants' involvement in education and provided insight into the lessons they have learnt. By relating stories about themselves and their lives, people enable others to learn from their experiences (Byrne, 2017).

The essence of the narrative is three-dimensional: as a fundamental mental action, the narrative serves as the present-focused language of comprehension; as a personal account, the narrative represents the future-focused language of potential; and as a historical account of life, the narrative functions as the past-oriented language of societal existence (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Based on the nature of the narrative, a narrative methodology implies an approach to studying how people experience the world and make sense of their experiences.

As mentioned, this study seeks to understand how academics' narrative identities are shaped through navigation and negotiation. According to Connelly and Clandinin (2006), narrative research can be seen as a multi-layered and multi-stranded form of qualitative research that amounts to a fluid form of inquiry. It is precisely this fluidity of narrative inquiry that reflects the dynamic and fluid nature of identity as the latter is continuously constructed and reconstructed through interactions, experiences, and contexts. This dynamic process underscores the adapt-

ability of individuals as they navigate and negotiate their identities within varying social and cultural realities. As noted by Yuval-Davis (2006: 202), identity is

> ... always producing itself through the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong. The duality is often reflected in the narratives of identity

The principles of interaction and continuity are also fundamental in narrative inquiry. Pertaining to interaction, Connelly and Clandinin (2006: 46) mentions the following:

> [P]eople are individuals and need to be understood us such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in social context.

In terms of continuity, Connelly and Clandinin (2006: 46) suggests that our narratives arise from past experiences, and the narratives we create in the present will shape our future stories. Thus, narratives provide a means of establishing continuity and organisation concerning experiences (Riessman, 2008; Somers, 1994). A narrative inquiry can therefore be viewed as a method for comprehending individual experiences – the phenomenon is the story, and the inquiry is the narrative. 'Story' refers to how the participant describes their experiences, while 'narrative' denotes the researcher's interpretation and presentation of that story.

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) expand on the concept of narrative inquiry by explaining that a story serves as the gateway through which a person engages with the world, allowing their experiences to attain significance.

3.4 Motivation for autoethnography and a narrative approach

The motivation behind autoethnography and narrative inquiry stemmed from the aim to prioritise lived experiences. These approaches empower

the participants to express themselves authentically; contest prevailing knowledge frameworks; and highlight emotions, physical presence, and introspection in the process of meaning-making. As articulated by Adams et al. (2017), autoethnography allows the researcher to leverage personal experiences to explore cultural contexts, using storytelling as both a method and a result. In this research, autoethnography is not an isolated endeavour; it is collaborative, bringing together 13 narratives (nine contributed by academics and four by students) which, when combined, create a multifaceted representation of identity in the post-apartheid era.

A qualitative methodology was crucial for delving into the complexity and richness of identity narratives. Participants were intentionally chosen to represent a diversity of racial, linguistic, gender, and generational perspectives. Their characteristics are not incidental; rather, they are fundamental to comprehending how apartheid signifiers continue to influence identity in a supposedly non-racialised present. Race remains a significant factor in power dynamics and representation within South African universities. Even though apartheid-era racial classifications have been officially abolished, they still affect access, recognition, and visibility (Soudien, 2016).

3.5 Data collection and analysis

The participants in this study engaged in reflective writing tasks for each decade from the 1960s to the present, recalling and re-evaluating their past experiences. Each participant was invited to respond to prompts drawing from family, community, and institutional contexts that shaped their identity. The division into historical eras emerged both from the structure of the writing prompts and through later analysis, allowing for temporal reflection and intergenerational comparison. Participants were guided to reflect critically on their own experiences. They were not required to adopt a particular style, but rather encouraged to be honest, evocative, and self-reflexive. This open format enabled diverse narrative styles and content. The demographic details of participants are provided in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Demographic details of participants

Name (pseudonym)	Race	Gender	Home language	DOB
Gabriella	White	Female	Afrikaans	1959
Vince	Coloured	Male	Afrikaans	1961
Reatlegile	Black	Female	Setswana	1962
Morwamocha	Black	Male	Setswana	1964
Phoenix	Coloured	Male	English	1965
Christel	White	Female	Afrikaans	1966
Sonny	Black	Female	isiXhosa	1966
Star	Black	Female	Afrikaans	1969
Stephanie	Coloured	Female	English	1970
Joseph	Black	Male	Setswana	1992
Pieter	White	Male	Afrikaans	1995
Deolene	Coloured	Female	Afrikaans	1996
Sharlene	Black	Female	Afrikaans	1996

3.5.1 Reflective writing exercises

According to Moon (2007), reflective writing exercises offer various advantages: they help focus thoughts and cultivate ideas; they organise thoughts by investigating and clarifying complex situations; they develop conceptual and analytical skills; they promote deeper reflection, processing, and meaning-making of experiences; and they increase awareness of one's own actions and strategies. The ability of a reflective writing exercise to provide a calm opportunity for contemplating experiences and events is also present in the four levels of reflection. The study's reliability was maintained through the provision of accurate and detailed descriptions of the participants' narratives, thus providing sufficient information. The narrative quality of the research was further upheld by following specific ethical guidelines. The consent forms signed by participants not only prepared them for the study but also assured them that their partici-

pation was voluntary and that they could opt out of the study at any time. Pseudonyms and invented location names were utilised in the research to safeguard the participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality. Ethical approval was granted by the university.

3.5.2 Collective autoethnography

Although each narrative can be viewed independently, the aim was not to gather personal testimonies but to engage in collective autoethnography. As Adams et al. (2017) suggest, collective autoethnography enables individual stories to "speak to one another", leading to a shared dialogue that goes beyond separate accounts. Together, these narratives outline the progression of South African higher education and the evolving concept of identity within this context. The arrangement of the findings was not determined by hierarchy or timeline but developed organically based on thematic and emotional significance. Structuring the narratives by decades facilitated cross-narrative examination while respecting participants' sense of time. The analysis involved interpreting themes through careful reading of each story, pinpointing recurring elements such as belonging, disruption, silence, marginalisation, and voice.

3.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was maintained through transparency, detailed descriptions, triangulation of researcher reflexivity, and the inclusion of participant perspectives. The significance of direct voice in this research lies in its refusal to be transcribed into conventional formats. Voice is crucial, particularly in a study focused on identity, because it conveys tone, accent, rhythm, and resistance, countering erasure. Utilising participants' unaltered voices respects the emotional depth, contradictions, and unfinished aspects of identity formation. It challenges prevailing academic standards that favour objectivity over vulnerability and separation over personal connection. In the post-apartheid environment of South Africa, where transformation discourses can often be abstract, direct narrative voice emphasises the personal as political, the individual as systemic, and the narrative as theoretical.

4

Historical overview of South Africa before 1960

4.1 Introduction

Before 1960, South Africa's history was greatly intertwined with centuries of colonisation and racial inequality that laid the fertile soil and groundwork for the notorious systems of discrimination and apartheid. The colonisers, including the Dutch and the British, established a socio-political order that marginalised the indigenous African population and entrenched racial hierarchies. These early power imbalances evolved over time, culminating in an era of segregation laws that severely restricted the rights of non-White communities. This gradual buildup reached its peak in 1948 when the National Party confirmed the formalisation of apartheid and created the oppressive system that codified racial segregation and discrimination into law.

South African history spans many centuries with European colonial history beginning in the mid-17th century with the arrival of European settlers in the Cape. It was during this period that the Dutch East India Company established a colony at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. This colony was initially meant to be a refreshment station for ships travelling to Asia, but it quickly grew into a permanent settlement. As the Dutch settlers, known as Boers or Afrikaners, expanded into the interior of the Cape and its sur-

roundings, clashes between the Boers and indigenous Africans, known as the Khoikhoi and San, and later, the Zulu and Xhosa erupted. The Boers were more interested in the animals and the land than the people. Eventually, the British took control of the Cape in 1806.

As early as 1872, a municipal regulation compelled Bloemfontein's "native servants" to carry a "ticket" (*The Friend of the Free State* and *Bloemfontein Gazette*, 1872) as a form of identification. Subsequently, a control system by means of an identity card, referred to as a "*pas*" (*The expression*, 1876) in Dutch or "pass" (*The Friend of the Free State* and *Bloemfontein Gazette*) in English, was made compulsory for all people of colour older than 16 years. The pass system also applied to Black women (Wells, 2022) and Black visitors to a region. During the 20th century, pass laws were implemented in South Africa but they were met with fierce resistance which intensified in the 1950s and led to many protests. In 1950, protests were staged by the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL), with women at the forefront, who marched to the Union Buildings to inform the ruling party of their discontent with the carrying of passes. To date, this march is commemorated each year as Women's Day on 9 August.

The 19th century saw the consolidation of British colonial power, especially after the Anglo-Zulu War (1879) and the Anglo-Boer Wars (1880–1881 and 1899–1902). The latter conflicts between the British Empire and the Afrikaner republics (the South African Republic and the Orange Free State) were driven by the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886. These discoveries drew massive foreign interest and investment, increasing the economic stakes of colonial rule. The British eventually overpowered the Afrikaners and emerged victorious in the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902). That led to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. However, the Union was created to serve the interests of the White minority, and sidelined the rights of the Black, Indian, and Coloured peoples.

During the early 20th century, racial segregation policies and laws, such as the Natives Land Act of 1913, were enacted. Prior to the Natives Land Act and the dispossession of land owned by Black Africans was an era during which very few natives experienced poverty (Modise & Mtshisel-

wa, 2013). These laws prohibited Black South Africans from owning land in most parts of the country. Political organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC), founded in 1912, came into being with the aim of fighting these injustices, including the oppressive pass laws.

Apartheid is a transient doctrine, which is described by Patel (1992) as an era in South Africa that was undemocratic, authoritarian, unaccountable, and entrenching White dominance. Its promise of self-development in separate areas was illusory for the great mass of non-Whites and ignored the effect of two centuries of culture-contact with the social structure and did not allow for the accommodation of action (Legassick, 1974). Apartheid was simply a warmed-up version of segregation (Giliomee, 2003). During apartheid, many Black people were systematically deprived of political representation, economic opportunities, and social freedoms. This had a negative impact on Black people. The structures of South Africa were constructed in such a way that White people were the accumulators of wealth and capital, leaving most Black people unemployed, exploited, and poverty stricken (Legassick, 1974). In January 1944, D. F. Malan, speaking as Leader of the Opposition, became the first person to employ the term 'apartheid' in the South African parliament (Giliomee, 2003).

The year 1948 marked a new and harsher phase of racial segregation. The National Party won the election that year and instituted a system of institutionalised racial discrimination. Under apartheid, South Africans were classified into racial groups – White, Black, Indian, and Coloured – and their rights were determined by their racial classification. Black South Africans were stripped of citizenship and subjected to laws that controlled where they could live, work, and travel. They had no choice as they were governed by the then harsh laws of the country. There were many oppressive laws, such as the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950, the Group Areas Act 41 of 1950, and the Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953, restricting the rights of non-White citizens. Black South Africans were forced into 'Bantustans' or homelands, including Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, and Venda. Although they had limited autonomy, these were fragmented territories with poor infrastructure and limited access to quality education, healthcare, and employment. They were denied basic human rights and access to resources. Indian and Coloured people were also not allowed to live in certain areas.

By the 1950s, resistance to apartheid by Black people was growing from strength to strength, both from within South Africa and internationally. The ANC, along with other groups, organised protests, strikes, and defiance campaigns. One of the most notable events during this period was the Defiance Campaign of 1952, where thousands of South Africans deliberately broke apartheid laws in acts of civil disobedience. Unfortunately, the government responded to such acts of resistance with some form of repression, including mass arrests and the banning of opposition organisations.

This pre-1960 period set the stage for the intensification of anti-apartheid activism and the eventual global isolation of the South African government. Nevertheless, the apartheid system would continue to evolve, growing ever more rigid until the 1990s, when it was finally dismantled during the Nelson Mandela era.

This historical overview underscores how racialised ideologies became institutionalised in South Africa's political, economic, and educational systems. The logic of apartheid extended into every sector, including higher education, where access, curriculum, and representation were deeply shaped by systemic exclusion (Badat, 2010). The past is therefore not merely context – it is constitutive of the academic identities and inequalities that persist today.

Understanding this legacy is vital to explaining why a study on identity in academia matters. The apartheid state not only legislated who could learn and teach, but also who could belong. This section thus provides the necessary scaffolding for a book that interrogates how identity is formed, negotiated, and contested within academic spaces shaped by such a past.

Chapter 5

Historical overview and narratives of the 1960s

5.1 Historical overview of the 1960s

The decade began with escalating tensions and increasing resistance against the apartheid regime. Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd and his National Party remained unwavering in their dedication to apartheid policies, which enforced racial segregation and discrimination (Beinart & Dubow, 1995).

On 21 March 1960, police opened fire on a crowd protesting the pass laws in Sharpeville, resulting in 69 deaths and numerous injuries. As a result of the massacre, a state of emergency was declared, which led to the detention of thousands of activists (Worden, 2001). Following Sharpeville, the government banned prominent anti-apartheid organisations such as the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). This action pushed these movements underground or into exile, fundamentally changing their operational strategies. In response to violent repression against peaceful protests, the ANC decided to incorporate armed resistance into its strategy. Mandela played a pivotal role in founding Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the ANC, in 1961. MK launched a campaign of sabotage against government installations, aiming to minimise casualties while opposing apartheid.

Nelson Mandela operated clandestinely, using disguises and travelling throughout South Africa and abroad to mobilise support for the cause. He attended the Pan-African Freedom Movement for East, Central and Southern Africa (PAFMECSA) Conference in Addis Ababa and visited other African nations to seek international solidarity. Upon his return to South Africa, Mandela was arrested in 1962 and sentenced to five years in prison for inciting strikes and illegally leaving the country without a passport (Mandela, 2018).

On 31 May 1961, South Africa declared itself a republic, formally ending its affiliation with the British Commonwealth. This decision was in part a response to the growing international criticism of apartheid. The armed wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), was established in December 1961, signalling the commencement of armed resistance against apartheid.

In 1963, the police raided Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, a suburb of Johannesburg, capturing key members of the ANC and MK along with incriminating documents containing plans for sabotage against the apartheid regime. Mandela and other leaders faced charges of sabotage and conspiracy to overthrow the government. The Rivonia Trial (1963–1964) stands as a pivotal political event in South African history, where Nelson Mandela and other ANC leaders were prosecuted for their involvement in armed resistance against apartheid. The prosecution presented evidence of the ANC's plans for armed resistance, including documents and witness testimony. During the Rivonia trial, Mandela delivered his famous speech from the dock, reaffirming his dedication to the struggle for freedom and equality. In his address, he articulated the moral basis for resisting apartheid, stressing the ANC's commitment to a non-racial, democratic South Africa.

The trial took place at the Palace of Justice in Pretoria and involved defendants such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Govan Mbeki, among others, accused of sabotage and plotting to overthrow the government with violence. Led by Bram Fischer, the defence aimed to justify the actions of the accused as a necessary response to apartheid injustices.

In June 1964, Mandela and seven co-defendants received life sentences, while others were acquitted. The Rivonia Trial marked a crucial moment

in the anti-apartheid struggle, illustrating the apartheid regime's resolve to suppress dissent. The trial garnered global attention and solidarity, intensifying international pressure on South Africa to end apartheid. The imprisonment of key leaders compelled the ANC to adapt its tactics, with many members going into exile to continue the fight from abroad. The Rivonia Trial holds a significant place in South African history, symbolising the endurance of the anti-apartheid struggle and the oppressive nature of the apartheid system. It strengthened the moral stature of the ANC and its leaders, who would go on to play a pivotal role in the transition to a democratic South Africa.

Subsequently, Mandela and his co-defendants were sent to Robben Island. He recounted the harsh conditions on Robben Island, where he and other political prisoners endured hard labour, inadequate living conditions, and limited communication with the outside world. Despite these challenges, Mandela and his fellow prisoners remained firm, using their time to educate themselves and strengthen their political resolve.

Despite encountering international pressure and isolation, South Africa experienced economic growth during this period, which predominantly benefited the White minority. The apartheid government implemented policies that reinforced racial segregation in all aspects of life, including education, housing, and employment.

Premier Hendrik Verwoerd, widely considered the architect of apartheid, was assassinated in 1966. He was succeeded by B. J. Vorster, who maintained and rigorously enforced apartheid policies with equal determination.

Owing to its apartheid policies, South Africa faced increasing international isolation. The United Nations and other international organisations imposed sanctions and called for boycotts, although these measures initially had limited immediate effect. Cultural and sports boycotts intensified, further isolating South Africa globally. These boycotts aimed to exert pressure on the government to dismantle the apartheid system.

Throughout the 1960s, the apartheid regime responded to resistance with harsh repression, including arbitrary detentions, torture, and extrajudicial killings. Despite this repression, resistance movements persisted and expanded, setting the stage for future struggles.

5.2 Narratives of the 1960s

5.2.1 Narrative 1: Gabriella

I grew up in a small town as the oldest of four children, with hot red sand under my feet and a warm desert wind blowing through my hair. Even now, whenever I go back to that area, it feels like home. Seeing a picture of this place stirs something deep within me – I just want to be there. My upbringing was not unusual for White Afrikaans children at the time – conservative, grounded in the teachings of the Dutch Reformed Church (locally known as the *NG Kerk – Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*), with strict parents who did not tolerate any backchat.

That is why I let my imagination run wild, creating my own little world. I pretended to be a teacher with imaginary students, complete with test books and exams. Looking back, it was pretty clear that I was destined to be a teacher. Even when I was in Grade 1 (Sub A back then), I would go to the chicken coop and 'teach' the chickens, mimicking my actual teacher at school. Later, my siblings and the twin daughters of our neighbours became my 'students' – although my brother was always the troublemaker who got sent to the imaginary principal's office!

In those days, things were pretty segregated. White children went to the school in town, and the Black and Coloured children attended the schools in the township. At school, church and home, I was encouraged to embrace Afrikaner nationalism, which reinforced a group identity. Ashforth and Mael's (1989) theory of the organisation explains how we often favour our own group while distancing ourselves from others, which was evident in how I and many other White South Africans saw non-White communities as 'other' or distant. We did not compete or interact with each other at all. Honestly, we did not even know what the other schools were like or what they were learning. Our world was small and separated, even though we lived in the same town.

Growing up in apartheid-era South Africa, racial divisions in society can be analysed through the lens of Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory (SIT). According to this theory, we obtain part of our identity and self-esteem from the social groups to which we belong. As a White Afri-

kaner, I was part of a dominant in-group, which was reinforced through apartheid's policies.

As I reflect on my childhood in apartheid South Africa, I realise how my identity was shaped by the social environment in which I grew up – one that was rigidly structured by race, privilege, and power. Tatum's (2013) ideas on the "complexity of identity" resonate with me as I think about those years. Growing up as a White Afrikaner in the 1960s, my identity was unexamined, as I was part of the dominant group that had access to better education, healthcare, and security. Tatum's (2000) work highlights how those in dominant groups often take their identity for granted, unaware of how much it is intertwined with systemic privilege. In my case, my racial identity was a central but unquestioned part of who I was.

Social identity theory, as explained by Ashforth and Mael (1989), suggests that our sense of self is heavily influenced by the groups we identify with. For me, being part of the Afrikaner community meant adopting a strong collective identity rooted in nationalism, religion, and race.

There was also a deep fear of communism, and any media that challenged apartheid or sympathised with anti-apartheid movements was censored. Back then, I only had a vague idea that the world was condemning apartheid. The government kept a tight lid on that kind of information; therefore, we were oblivious to international criticism. Growing up in a White Afrikaner household meant that I was always aware of my racial identity and the significant differences between the races. My childhood was shaped by privilege, good schools, healthcare, and a comfortable life, and I never questioned the system that made it.

Our neighbourhoods were peaceful and safe, completely separate from Black or Coloured communities, so the unrest and poverty they faced felt like a distant problem. Our contact with non-White South Africans was limited to domestic workers, who were often seen as part of the household but not true equals. For example, our domestic worker would bring her daughter to work, and we would play together, but we never saw each other as friends, nor did we stay in touch. Growing up, we believed that racial segregation was ordained by the Bible and morally justified, and the apartheid system seemed like the natural order of things.

As children, we were excluded from discussions about apartheid, poverty, or injustice. The heavily censored media ensured that we remained unaware of the broader political situation. By the time I was a teenager, I started to notice the underlying fear in my community about the '*Swart Gevaar*' (Black Danger), and warnings about uprisings or communist revolutions threatening our way of life. It was an ever-present anxiety that grew stronger in the 1970s and 1980s. We grew up to see ourselves as the legitimate authority, both morally and politically. Social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) explains that when people feel their group is threatened or losing its power, they start to fear and distrust people from outside their group. This reaction is a natural mental response to protect the status or dominance of your group.

5.2.2 Narrative 2: Vince

As the eldest son, I was born during the early 1960s into a particular 'Coloured' family. The town where I was born is situated along the N1 national road to Cape Town. According to my parents, who were both regarded as Coloured (ironically, my father was classified as 'Cape Coloured' because of his light skin complexion and my mother was regarded as 'Other Coloured' since she had a darker complexion), I was delivered in the location (the name given to suburbs occupied by Black and Coloured people during the apartheid era) by the local White general practitioner. In my early formative years, I started to observe the subtle differences between myself and others, especially in terms of gender, race, age, and language. I was a Coloured boy and Afrikaans speaking. This social identification or definition of myself using identity markers such as race, gender, religion, and language, suggests that I belonged to a particular group or subgroup which is in line with theories of social identity as proposed by scholars such as Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Ashford and Mael (1989). According to Harro (2000a), we are born into the categorisations that are prevalent in and prescribed by society. Although I was born into these groups or subgroups ('we'), I would later learn that some of these social identities (Harro, 2000a), such as race, were social constructs that were assigned to us by others. In this regard, Tatum (2000: 10) states that the

> parts of our identity that do capture our attention are those that other people notice, and that reflect back to us. The aspect of identity that is the target of others' attention, and subsequently of our own, often is that which sets us apart as exceptional or 'other' in their eyes.

I would later also develop my own personal ('I') preferences for music, sport, books, and so forth, which is also congruent with what the literature about personal and social identity refers to, according to Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Ashforth and Mael (1989).

In those days of apartheid and racial segregation, Black and Coloured people used to live alongside each other in a location that was far from the town centre where the White people used to reside. This is once again a confirmation of my observation as a little child that there were different categories of people, as referred to by SIT.

My parents, who were both teachers, rented a two-roomed dwelling in the backyard of a Black family. This family was Sesotho speaking and from a different racial group; hence, in terms of SIT, they, as well as the White people, were all part of the 'other', as Tatum (2000: 10) describes, noting that "[p]eople are commonly defined as other on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, and physical or mental ability". The fact that my parents were both teachers meant that I had access to some privileges that my peers and classmates at school, who were the children of farmworkers, did not have. I was rather fortunate, and this meant that I was, in the context of the farm, part of the dominant group (Harro, 2000a).

I happened to meet my extended family in later years when I was of schoolgoing age and no longer staying in the town where I was born. I have very faint memories of them, especially the children who were much older than I was. I can recall that we would regularly visit the family when we lived on a farm where my parents used to teach – my father as the principal and my mother as his assistant.

The farm school, with close to 50 children and where my younger brother and I started our schooling, catered for the farmworkers' children. The medium of instruction was Afrikaans, our home language. My mother taught foundation phase (in those days referred to as Sub A and Sub B) learners while my father taught learners from Standard 1 up to Standard 5 (Grades 3–7). Since there were only two teachers and two classrooms, all the learners were crammed into those two classrooms. My parents had to carefully apply differentiation in their classrooms. They were also very strict, especially with us, their offspring. We were treated the same way as the other children, without any favour. In school, besides learning how to read and write and do arithmetic, we also learnt about respect for ourselves and for other people. We had to engage with older people respectfully by using the appropriate form of address such as 'Uncle', 'Aunt', 'Mister' and 'Mrs'. I guess that this can be regarded as my earliest form of socialisation, as stated in the cycle of socialisation of Harro (2000a: 16). These positive values and rules of behaviour, which were instilled and modelled by my parents and other older people, assisted in shaping me as a child, and it would, in later years, also be reinforced in my engagement with other people.

The racial composition of the learners in school could have been Coloured, Basotho, and Xhosa, but I would not know, because everybody spoke Afrikaans. The farm owner, being an Afrikaner, also spoke Afrikaans with his farmworkers who happened to be Coloureds, Basothos and Xhosas. Intermarriages between different racial groups were quite common during those years.

Since my parents were teachers, they were held in high esteem by the farmworkers who had little education, positioning them into the dominant 'other' group as explained by Tatum (2000: 10). They were educated and had access to many more privileges than the farmworkers, who were, in most cases, illiterate. Because of his education, my father acted as a commissioner to assist the farm community with their application forms for identity documents and pensions. Interestingly, although my father was in other instances not part of the dominant group because of his race, he was dominant among the farmworkers because of his education. He was the one who controlled their "outcomes" as social psychologist Fiske (in Tatum, 2000: 12) puts it:

> It is a simple principle: People pay attention to those who can control their outcomes. To predict and possibly influence what is going to happen to them, people gather information about those with power.

My father also provided pastoral and counselling services to the farm-workers. He also oversaw burials in the farming community. In terms of the latter, I can recall one incident where my father had to make the coffin for an infant who had passed away during birth. It was a white coffin laced with felt material that was used in school by needlework learners. He also officiated the burial, which was very sombre, heart-rending, and scary. As a child, I could not understand why this little infant in a wooden box was put into a hole in the ground. My mother later explained to me that the infant was taken away to heaven by Jesus, Son of God, whom we learnt about in Sunday school and during Bible period in school. I can also vaguely recall that the school choir sang the hymn "*As hy weer kom, as hy weer kom, kom haal hy sy pêrels, fraaie pêrels vir Jesus se kroon*". My mother was the conductor of the school choir, and she wore white gloves and used a white conductor baton. Later years, during the 70s, when we moved to another town, where my father accepted a position as a school principal, I would again be part of a school choir that was invited to sing at the funeral of a young White child who had drowned in a swimming pool. This occasion was also very sad, and if my memory serves me well, we sang the same hymn. This time I understood its meaning. But I still could not understand why we had to stand a few metres from the grave-side behind a fence. I doubt whether the mourners could hear us singing! It was at the height of apartheid and we were not allowed to be in the presence of White people – we had to keep our distance.

When we lived on the farm, my parents and three of my brothers, who were also born during the 1960s, used to go to a nearby town, a junction for trains that travelled to cities in the Eastern and Western Cape. This town was dusty and lively with several old-fashioned grocery stores where you could buy anything from mealie meal, coffee, condensed milk and tinned vegetables to clothing. These grocery stores also served as places where segregation was practised according to the apartheid rule of law introduced by the National Party government, which came into existence

in 1948, three years after World War II ended – they had separate entrances for White and Black people. The setup in the grocery stores was also different for different races. White customers could help themselves from the shelves and pay at the counter for their groceries. On the other hand, Coloured and Black people could only be served from behind a counter. You had to tell the shopkeeper what you wanted, and they would collect your groceries for you. This is a typical scenario where the dominant group regards the subordinate group as not being deserving enough to be present in their midst; as Tatum (2000: 11) states, "[t]he relationship of the dominants to the subordinates is often one in which the targeted group is labelled as defective or substandard in significant ways". As a small boy, I also became aware of the different forms of address between the shopkeeper and his customers. In some instances, the shopkeeper, without greeting his Coloured or Black customers, would rudely ask them what they wanted. It would be something along the lines of, "*Ja, wat wil jy hê*?" Upon which the Black or Coloured customer would respond, "*Goeiemore, (my) baas, ek wil graag 'n loaf brood en 'n pakkie lekkers koop*". With the White customers, the form of address was different. The conversation would be respectful, friendly, and jovial and the customers would be properly addressed. Peers would be addressed by their first names, while older people would be addressed as '*Oom*' and '*Tannie'.* Although my parents were in some instances older than the person standing behind the counter, they were addressed as 'Hendrik' or 'Anna'; never as '*Oom Hendrik*' or '*Tannie Anna*'. As a result of our upbringing and the values instilled in us from a very young age, we would never have dared to be so disrespectful towards older people; it did not matter to which racial group the older person belonged. These people working behind the shop counters would not show my parents the same respect that the parents of their students did, addressing them as '*Meester*' or '*Juffrou*'. As mentioned above, this is in line with the observation made by Tatum (2000: 11), that the dominant group tends to label the subordinate group as "being defective or substandard in significant ways".

The bottle stores did not have separate entrances during those years because Black and Coloured people were not allowed to buy alcohol. But my father and his friends found a way to sidestep this law. They would either ask a White friend, or they would send the spouse of one of their friends, who could easily pass as White because of her White features

(i.e. White skin colour, blue eyes, and straight shiny black hair) to buy the alcohol they wanted. During my years of early socialisation on the farm, I came to realise that people were different. The grocers and the station served as a gathering place for all types of people – old and young, male and female, and from different socioeconomic orientations, religions, and languages. This is in line with Harro's (2000a: 1) notion that people can be categorised into different sets of social identities because of the differences between them.

Attending church was also an eye-opening experience. As a child, I soon realised that, although there was a diverse mix of people (Black and White, women and men) in the town, there were no White congregants in the church. The realisation that I came to was that the White people probably had their own church. This was in line with the observation I made at the grocery store where there were separate entrances for White people and for Black people and Coloured people. As a child innocently born into a society with so many social categories, identities, and roles that one must assume, I would probably also have presumed that it is acceptable and that this is how life is supposed to be. It was not only the church that made me aware of the differences but also the suburbs and the schools for White learners, which were miles apart in terms of outward appearances. I would only later in life learn that as Coloured or Black people, we were not part of the dominant group (Harro, 2000a). The way my parents had been addressed by the White shopkeepers in the grocery stores somehow conscientised me into believing that because of our differences, we were not part of the dominant group, but rather belonged to a subordinate group of people who were frowned upon and on many occasions treated with disrespect. This is another confirmation of what Tatum (2000: 10) calls the "other", where people are put into different categories on the basis of "race or ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, and physical or mental ability".

In the latter part of the 60s, we relocated to another town where my father took up the position as school principal of a small primary school. This town was also the place where my father had been born; so, he went back to his roots. I started Standard 1 (Grade 3) at this particular primary school at the beginning of 1969. The setup of the school, as well as the building itself, was quite different from the farm school I had attended.

The school was bigger with more staff members and learners. I also was no longer taught by my parents but by other teachers.

5.2.3 Narrative 3: Reatlegile

I was born in 1962 to a loving, caring, God-fearing family comprising a strict father and a soft-spoken, beautiful mother; her name says it all – Beauty. In our family, I am the fourth child, with twin sisters who are the eldest, followed by my brother, me, and then two younger sisters. There is a two-year age gap between my siblings, which was typical among families and friends we knew. We are five girls and only one brother, who was the apple of my father's eye. My sisters helped me with my homework and learning to read. Our parents instilled in us a culture of respect, love, and care which was evident among us. My sisters were overprotective, as I was an introvert and could never talk back or even start an argument. They would warn people who were trying to bully me; they would tell me to stand up for myself, but I was not that kind of person. They would also reprimand me to stop laughing or smiling at everybody. I was loved by various people from my community because of my character – being respectful towards both the elderly and my peers, as well as helpful. In the early years, I observed the difference between myself and others, especially in terms of race, language, gender, and age. I was a Black girl who spoke Setswana. This social identification or definition of myself using identity markers such as race, language, gender, and age suggests that I belong to a particular group or subgroup, which is in line with SIT as proposed by scholars such as Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Ashford and Mael (1989). According to Harro (2000a), we are born into these segregations that are prevalent in and prescribed by society.

I would also develop my own personal ('I') preferences for Gospel music, Soul and Pop music, jazz, dancing, sport, and reading. This is also congruent with what the literature about personal and social identity refers to, according to Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Ashford and Mael (1989).

In those days of apartheid and racial segregation, different nationalities and people used to live in the same yard or alongside each other in a location that was not far from the town centre, where the White people used

to reside. This is once again a confirmation of my observation as a little girl that there were different categories of people, as referred to by SIT.

My dad mixed with different racial groups, even White people, such as 'Uncle' and his wife, who were part of the 'other', as Tatum (2000: 10) alludes to, namely that people are commonly defined as 'other' based on race or ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age and physical or mental ability. Since my father was the manager and overseer of the other workers, I never lacked anything at school like the other children did. I was fortunate, and this meant that I was, as the manager's child, part of the dominant group (Harro, 2000a). My father was very strict; education was important in his eyes, and he instilled that in me and my siblings. We also learnt about respect for ourselves and for other people. We had to engage respectfully with older people by using the appropriate form of address, such as 'uncle', 'aunt', 'grandpa' or 'grandma'. This can be regarded as my earliest form of socialisation according to the cycle of socialisation of Harro (2000a: 16). These positive values and rules of behaviour, which were instilled and modelled by my parents and other older people, assisted in shaping me as a child, and they would, in later years, also be reinforced in my engagement with other people.

We had a closely-knit community where every household had a father who worked and a mother who took care of the children. All these parents were like parents to us, because if you did something disgraceful in front of them, you would get a good hiding. You could not even complain at home that "Father so-and-so" has beaten you, as you would just get another hiding from your own parents. Our community was loving, caring, kind and respectful towards one another. If any child or parent was either robbed or stabbed in the street, the community would discipline the offender.

We were brought up by two parents (Dad and Mummy) who loved each other unconditionally and not only shared a vision for the future but also supported each other's dreams in the hope that they would both shine. Their love showed us how to show love to others; they were highly respected for the values they exemplified in the community. Our father was a family man who regarded education as important for both his own children and other children within the community. He was the one working, and he was very strict when it came to education. He spoke English, Afrikaans, Setswana, Sesotho, IsiXhosa and IsiZulu. His fluency in these

languages gave him favour with White men at the different companies he worked for. He would translate the White men's instructions for those who did not understand the English language. My father spoke Setswana, and in terms of SIT, he belonged to a different racial group based on language. Before his retirement, he was a driver at Yonder. When the schools closed, he would take the learners, who adored him, home.

The Afrikaner parents did not understand my father's relationship with their children. He would take the children to town, and if the street children attempted to rob them, my father would call them to order, and the children from Yonder would say, "If Uncle is going to fight, then we will also fight." He was a life-long chairperson of a football team, and the block leader of Block 7 at church. He owned a car, which he used to assist the community – taking them to the clinic, doctor, or hospital.

My mother was a stay-at-home mum who took care of us, making sure that our home was warm and comfortable. She was a good cook, and we ate healthy food. She also liked baking, which I was skilled at too. My mother taught us to love ourselves, respect each other (siblings) and respect other people. She also taught us to accept ourselves and accept correction. Our home, the corner house on the main street, was open to people who would come in at any time to ask for food or water, and they would never be turned away.

There was peace and harmony in our home. We attended the Catholic Church, and every Sunday, all of us would go to church. Sharing a meal together was very important. On Sundays, we enjoyed lunch together, and my father would not accept any excuse such as visiting a friend. On Good Friday, we also had to attend church at 15h00, and after church, we would only eat fish, vegetables, rice, and salads.

5.2.4 Narrative 4: Morwamocha

Negotiating otherness is a very significant process of traversing differences across cultural, social, as well as personal boundaries. Negotiating otherness involves a great deal of issues that include understanding and engaging with various perspectives, values, and identities that differ from one's own and that often require empathy, open-mindedness, as well as

effective communication. In a world increasingly defined by diversity and interconnectedness, negotiating otherness becomes crucial for fostering mutual respect and inclusion, while collaborating, bridging gaps and embracing differences not only challenge biases but also enrich our collective experiences.

I was born into a family of three sisters and three brothers. As a norm, my mother stayed home with us and took good care of us and other family responsibilities, while my father, as the provider, worked in Pretoria. Typically, my father would come home at the end of every second month. Although he was away, he would always send food home through mini trucks from our village that ferried people to work on a monthly or weekly basis. Life was tough for him too. In order to catch the train as the only reliable means of transport, he would walk through the thick forest from our homestead to the railway station located 20 km away. The train came from the far north and headed to the city.

The 1960s marked a very significant period in the struggle for civil rights, particularly for Black communities in countries such as the United States and South Africa. During this period, Black people were 'taught' to be inferior. They perceived a White person as a superior being. One of the factors that contributed to Black people being perceived as subordinate was history itself.

Furthermore, this era was characterised by systemic discrimination, segregation, and limited access to quality education. Black students faced substandard schools with fewer resources, outdated textbooks, and overcrowded classrooms compared to their White counterparts (Anderson, 1988). The conditions in which the Black learners lived were unbearable and further affected their performance at school. The problems that children experienced in their homes had an impact on their performance in the classroom (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004). No child will perform optimally if they are under-nourished and while other socioeconomic conditions serve as impediments for their lives. Education was a tough 'game' for many of us during this era. Similarly, in South Africa, apartheid laws institutionalised racial segregation, severely limiting educational opportunities for Black children through policies such as Bantu Education, which deliberately prepared them for menial labour (Christie & Collins, 1982).

Identity formation during this time was significantly shaped by systemic oppression that Black people endured. Although the fight for equality became the order of the day, achieving our goals was not easy. Many Black individuals often faced challenges in asserting their full identity as a result of pervasive racism and negative stereotyping that affected their daily lives. In South Africa, the Black Consciousness Movement was championed by people such as Steve Biko, who encouraged Black South Africans to reject internalised inferiority and embrace their identity. Movements such as these played a pivotal role in assisting Black communities to resist the identity-erasing impacts of systemic discrimination prevalent in South Africa.

The ruling party of the time used suppression of Black culture to spearhead oppression and maintain dominance over Black individuals. In other parts of the world, history showed how African American traditions, language, and customs were often ridiculed in educational and social settings. Similarly, in South Africa, Black culture and issues of language were never taken seriously by the ruling party. Despite these hardships, Black communities preserved and celebrated their cultural heritage through informal networks, art, and resistance movements.

Ultimately, the 1960s laid the foundation for significant progress in racial equality, though challenges persisted. The era demonstrated the resilience and urgency of the Black populace to preserve their culture, assert their identity, and demand educational and social equity. Through the sacrifices and struggles of activists and everyday individuals, the seeds of transformation were sown, challenging the oppressive structures that had defined the preceding centuries. These efforts underscore the importance of continued advocacy for justice and equality.

5.2.5 Narrative 5: Phoenix

I was born into a caring family in a small city during the mid-1960s – a period marked by apartheid in South Africa. I am the second-oldest child, with an older sister, two younger brothers, and a younger sister; there is a two- to three-year age difference between us. My father's parents were of mixed race – his mother was of Cape Malay origin, and his father

was African. My mother's background is Coloured. This aligns with Tajfel and Turner's (1979) SIT, which explains how cultural and historical backgrounds lead to multiple dynamic identifications owing to the clear social environment and one identity trait, which is race. Although my father held teaching qualifications, he chose to leave the profession early and pursued a career in sales at a local wholesale business. My mother dedicated herself to being a stay-at-home parent. We resided in a simple, yet comfortable home, where our lives mostly revolved around our parents, siblings, and, notably, the Anglican Church, where we practised our faith.

The Anglican Church was seen as more progressive and empathetic to the challenges faced by Black people, contrasting with the NG Kerk, which was viewed as supporting the apartheid system. My siblings and I were lucky to have diligent parents who valued good behaviour and education highly. This concept aligns with what Harro (2000a) describes as the initial socialisation. I warmly remember how, after his workday, my father would play with us, while my mother was busy preparing meals or folding the laundry. We were among the few families that owned a car. In this regard, based on Harro's (2000a) classification, I was part of the dominant group because I grew up with both a stay-at-home mother and a present father – a rarity within our immediate community then.

My father was playful and shared much of his free time with us, leaving serious topics such as rules and discipline to my mother. Having a stay-at-home mom was beneficial as she could assist with our schoolwork, ensure that we were rested well, and be attentive to our friends. My mother truly understood all her children. My older sister and I were more serious, introverted, and responsible, while one of my younger siblings was the opposite – outgoing, jovial, talkative, bold, and full of energy. Reflecting on it now, I suspect he had ADHD, though diagnostic resources were not accessible for people of colour during that era. The rest of my siblings were equally laid-back and carefree.

The community we lived in at that time included people from diverse racial (excluding White), cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Banks would not approve home loans for people of colour, nor did the government consider it necessary to construct decent homes for them. Consequently, families had no choice but to live in inadequate housing available for rent

from the local authorities. Often, a single house was divided into sections to accommodate three or four families. Our family was lucky to have our own rented home. Various African languages were spoken, with Afrikaans being the predominant language. Ours was one of the few families who spoke English at home. The community largely consisted of impoverished single-parent households, with fathers mostly being absent. It was marked by socioeconomic issues such as alcohol abuse, gender-based violence, and children dropping out of school early. Many community members worked as domestic workers and gardeners for White families in town. They frequently described to us how the 'other' group of people lived in grand and lovely houses owned by White families. Tatum (2013: 10) notes that "people are commonly defined as 'other' based on race or ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical appearance, and mental ability".

As I grew up, I rarely encountered White individuals, except when accompanying my parents to town, during police actions to maintain law and order, at church, or in magazines. As a child, I gradually noticed the preferential treatment given to White people. Adult Black men would show deference to White individuals, regardless of their age. Such respect was seldom reciprocated by White people toward my parents or other Black individuals. I found it odd that my father's employer's children interacted with him so informally, addressing him by his name without titles such as 'Uncle', 'Oom', or 'Meneer'. Such behaviour was unheard of in my community and considered disrespectful. This difference in the way Black and Coloured young people interacted with adults compared with their White counterparts reflects the concept of multiple identities, which are either "dominant (systematically advantaged by society because of group membership) or a subordinate or targeted group (systematically disadvantaged)", as Tatum (2013) argues.

I picked up on the superiority of White Christians at church too, because most senior positions such as bishop and dean were all occupied by White men, many of them from England. I came to understand that they were very proud of their English heritage as they constantly reminded congregants of how things were done back in England and that we should try to follow suit. As a little child, I became fascinated with England, because I perceived it as a place where everything was orderly and

perfect. I also realised how White people were allowed entry into establishments in town such as restaurants, while my parents and other Black people had to buy an ice cream through a window. The storybooks my parents and teacher read to us portrayed only White people and I often wondered in my small little mind why I never saw people that looked like me in these books. Sometimes, these experiences made me feel that being Black represented something that was defective and needed correction. Developing a liberatory consciousness necessitates constant critical cognitive engagement on self-perceptions, as well as on the perceptions of the other. Therefore, liberatory consciousness results in an awareness of oppressive practices in communities and institutions, while the perceptions and assumptions learnt through socialisation become secondary (Love, 2010).

5.2.6 Narrative 6: Christel

I was born in 1966, in a rural town in the north-eastern Free State in South Africa, as the youngest of four children, inheriting a complex colonial legacy that would shape my early understanding of identity and belonging. My paternal great-grandfather arrived in South Africa from Denmark, while my maternal great-grandfather arrived in South Africa from the Netherlands in the 1800s, both part of the broader European colonial project that fundamentally altered the social, political, and cultural landscape of southern Africa. This colonial heritage positioned my family within what would become the privileged White minority group.

On one side of the town, you could see the neat rugby and athletic fields of the Whites-only school in town with the hostel next to it. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), each category within a specific context and timeframe has a certain meaning. During the 1960s, the White population had privilege and power and were seen as the dominant racial group while Black, Coloured, and Indian groups were subordinate and marginalised through colonial and apartheid structures. The hospital was on the opposite side of the town, nestled on the lower hills of the highest point in town, Buffelskop. About 35 years ago, the hospital was converted into a nursing home. From Buffelskop, you can see the agricultural silo for maize and wheat, the main agricultural product of the region.

I took my first breath in a hospital exclusively for White people. It was a difficult birth for my mother. Someone had to rush to the neighbouring town, about 35 km away, to locate an instrument to assist with the birth. I had no idea of the advantages and privileges that my racial identity had in saving me. We were a middle-class family, and there were no luxury items in our home. Tajfel and Turner (1979) point out that social categorisation is a way for individuals to organise and define their social environment.

As a middle-class family, we operated within a colonial framework that had established the Afrikaner-speaking White population as a distinct cultural and political group. My father was a teacher and my mother occasionally worked as a secretary, professions that reflected the educational and administrative roles often occupied by White workers. At the time of my birth, my mother was a homemaker. My father set the rules and managed the finances, while my mother ran the household. She was the 'serving Martha', readily offering her services where needed. My parents were the product of the Anglo-Boer War and the severe depression of the 1930s – historical events that consolidated Afrikaner identity through shared suffering and resistance to British imperialism, while simultaneously reinforcing White supremacist ideologies. My great-grandmother lost four of her children owing to illness and starvation in the concentration camps.

I have two sisters and a brother. Gender roles in our household reflected both colonial and traditional patriarchal structures. While my brother usually played outside, my sisters and I were involved in some creative tasks in the home. Harro (2000b: 46) argues that through socialisation, we receive systemic training on how we should act, which includes learning how to conform to societal norms and expectations, such as what it means to be female. Similarly, Love (2000: 601) notes that socialisation prepares us for the roles we are expected to fulfil in society.

It was a caring community that supported one another. Our family was part of the NG Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church), which literally stood at the town's centre and held a central place in most households. The NG Kerk, established by Dutch settlers, developed a particular interpretation of Christianity that sanctified racial separation and White supremacy. I was baptised there, made my confession of faith in the mid-80s, got married in the early 90s, and both our children were also baptised in the same

church, representing continuity of religious tradition. Afrikaans is the language with which I grew up, the language in which I learnt, dreamed, and played, and the language of instruction in my primary school, high school, and later my tertiary education. Everyone in the community spoke Afrikaans, and if someone spoke English, they would be considered foreign. Even the workers spoke Afrikaans, reflecting linguistic assimilation across racial lines, though within hierarchical power structures that maintained White dominance. Tajfel and Turner (1979) note that categorisation is a cognitive process that helps individuals classify their environment, enabling them to understand both themselves and others. Afrikaans was not subjected to cultural eradication; instead; it became the medium of instruction throughout my education and the language of my social identity. The categorisation of myself as White, middle class, and Christian allowed me to evaluate people who were different from me.

We grew up in a Christian household where values, tradition, and respect were important. In line with Tajfel and Turner (1979), and the reference to individuals internalising their group membership as a form of self-referencing, I identified as a White Christian girl, which afforded me the privilege of in-group membership. This social categorisation was embedded in colonial power relations that attributed higher status and greater humanity to my identity categories.

In a God-fearing household, the Ten Commandments became the guiding anchor in our lives. From a young age, we feared our father and other adults, learning the adage "Children should be seen and not heard". During my childhood, we moved a couple of times. In the late 1960s, we relocated to a university town where my father completed his studies. At this stage, my mother also started to work again. During the day, a daycare provider cared for me. I feared her, as she would often shout if something was wrong.

5.2.7 Narrative 7: Sonny

I was born in the 1960s in the Eastern Cape. My family originated from a small town in the Eastern Cape. My grandfather and his five siblings were born on a farm in a small town as his parents were labourers there. Later, as a young man my grandfather then moved with his family to Port Eliz-

abeth. When they arrived in Port Elizabeth, they resided in a mixed area and that is where my father and aunt were born and raised. The family later moved to another area still where mixed races lived, and that is where my father spent most of his time as a young man, got married, and the first four of his six children were born. Later, due to forced removals, the family had to move to an area where only Black people lived near another popular township and that is where the last two children, being my brother and I, were born.

In the late 1850s the people in South Africa lived in harmony next to each other but at the same time respecting each other's cultures, religion and way of life. In order to further push the apartheid agenda, in 1950 the government declared that people of different races in South Africa could no longer live together and the Group Areas Act No. 14 of 1950 was passed. This Act was meant to restrict the different population groups such as Whites, Coloureds, Indians, and Blacks, and to confine them in particular spaces, as well as to restrict the movements of the Black people as far as occupying residences in particular spaces and to restrict their trade movements as well (Giliomee, Mbenga & Nasson, 2022). The passing of this Act would later see the different races in South Africa living in separate areas, away from each other, and attend schools and facilities set aside for its group. For the people in the area where my family lived, that was the most devastating event that permanently separated them from their community and forced them to live in the township. The aim of the Group Areas Act of 1950 was clearly spelt out by the National Party's Dr T. E. Donges, Minister of the Interior, who guided the Bill through parliament: "We do not believe that the future of South Africa will be that of a mixed population, and this is one of the major measures designed to preserve white South Africa" (Christopher, 1998: 7–8).

The Black people were thus removed under the guise to build better places for them, but the new townships were just a dumping ground that lacked proper infrastructure. The government had failed to develop any social or economic structures, and the Black people were placed far from their workplaces, without any provision of transport which was very devastating especially for the poor Black families. The dumping of people from different areas into this one space resulted in increased crime and further deterioration of social norms and values among the Black people.

My three older siblings at this time had started school, and the last three siblings were still at home as they were still too young attend school. Amid the growing crime rates and tensions in this new settlement, my father decided to move to another town three hours away from Port Elizabeth; this was in 1966. He had bought a plot of land and built a house in which he planned to raise his six children. He then asked his parents to move ahead of him so that they could keep watch over the building of this house while he was still looking for a teaching post to relocate to the new town. The family then moved to the new town in 1968, and I was two years old at that time. Both my parents got teaching and nursing posts respectively and the relocation to the new town was thus complete. Unfortunately, due to illness, my grandfather passed away in the same year and sadly he could not enjoy the fruits of his labour.

5.2.8 Narrative 8: Star

I was born in a small town. I am not sure whether it was in a hospital or at home. I was the third child of my parents, with two elder brothers and one younger sister. Although Setswana is my mother tongue (first language), I was fluent in Afrikaans from a young age and it became my primary language. While staying at a guesthouse to finalise my PhD, I met the nurse who assisted my mom during my birth. After making small talk, she said, "My goodness, I can recall what a beautiful baby was born that day as I assisted her during your birth! Now I know her name". This affirms that social interaction and personal awareness play a significant role in the formation of human identity, and the social interactions of an individual are equally informed by their past and present experiences (Bhandari, 2021). My cultural identity was formed as my grandfather was of Scottish descent, although he blended in with people from the village where he came to assist with missionary work. My father married a Setswana lady whose mother tongue was Setswana. My mother still has the Setswana accent.

Scholars believe that around 90% of a child's brain develops before the age of five (First Five Years Fund, 2020). The first five years are the formative years of a child, with the child's caregivers acting as the primary builders (First Five Years Fund, 2020). According to SIT, as proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), individuals derive a portion of their identity from their membership of social groups. My father was a priest, and Christiani-

ty was the foundation of our family. My parents were very strict in terms of the values they wished to instil in us. We had an 'auntie' from church who took care of the house and looked after us. I remember that she had to feed me as I did not enjoy food that much then. Since my mother was a nurse with a stable income and the wife of a priest, we were indeed more respected. However, my mom always taught us to respect our elders and other people. Spencer-Oatey (2005) defines identity as a person's self-image, consisting of multiple self-attributes, including negatively, neutrally, and positively evaluated characteristics, and it is deeply embedded in a social-cultural context. Our home became the home of extended family members. My father passed on when I turned six, and my mom stood strong. She was a nurse and sometimes worked night duty, but when she was not at home, the older siblings and our 'aunties' took care of us.

I was very reserved, but during family gatherings, I received a great deal of attention from everybody trying to spoil me. We had various family members growing up in our house who became my siblings. According to Harro (2000a), we are socialised by parents, adults or people who take care of us and, as such, influence our identities in terms of the norms and rules we should follow. I believe that my early socialisation did not occur in a vacuum, but was shaped by overlapping social identities such as the people from different races, genders, and languages who visited our home and raised me. For example, the way I was perceived and treated as 'reserved' may have been influenced by gendered expectations of how girls are expected to behave in the context where I was raised. The religious practices we followed at home, and the cultural identity of my family members (and the society) that constantly visited our home, have informed not only how I saw myself, but also how I was seen by others.

5.3 Conclusion

The 1960s in South Africa were defined by the consolidation of apartheid, the institutionalisation of racial segregation, and the socialisation of citizens into strict racial hierarchies. Across the eight narratives, this broader context is not merely historical, it permeates identity formation in direct and often unconscious ways.

A common thread across these stories is how identity was shaped through socialisation into racialised and segregated spaces. Participants narrate childhoods where racial boundaries were fixed and rarely questioned: White children lived in towns, Black and Coloured children in townships or on farms, and contact between racial groups was structured by inequality, servitude, or religious separation. SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) is frequently evoked to frame this early socialisation into 'in-groups' and 'out-groups', affirming that identity was often formed in relation to the perceived other.

Several participants (such as Gabriella and Christel) reflect on the unexamined privilege of being White and Afrikaner, while others (such as Vince, Reatlegile, and Morwamocha) articulate early experiences of being labelled and positioned as 'other' in subtle and overt ways. These positionalities were not static – race intersected with education, language, gender, religion, and class, creating complex layers of belonging and exclusion.

Despite being children, many narrators were acutely aware of their place in the apartheid hierarchy, even when they could not yet articulate it. The '*Swart Gevaar*', fear of communism, religious superiority, and enforcement of spatial segregation are not only structural mechanisms but ideological filters through which children absorbed their worth, potential, and sense of place. Even as some were raised in communities that promoted dignity, mutual care, and respect, these values often coexisted with external messages of inferiority or superiority, embedded in schools, churches, shops, and families.

One compelling insight is how privilege was context dependent. Some participants from Coloured or Black communities experienced a degree of dominance or esteem within micro contexts (e.g. Vince's father on the farm, Reatlegile's father's social status), yet were subordinated in the broader apartheid framework. This 'nested identity hierarchy' is a powerful reminder of how identity is both fluid and constrained by power structures.

Finally, the narratives show how early experiences of 'othering' planted the seeds of later critical reflection. For some, identity was largely taken for granted in childhood and only problematised in adulthood. For others, moments of contradiction, such as being kept at a distance during a White child's funeral (Vince), or feeling unseen in children's books (Phoenix), triggered early discomfort with the dominant order. These cracks in apartheid's narrative are where identity work begins.

Chapter 6

Historical overview and narratives of the 1970s

6.1 Historical overview

The 1970s were an important decade in South Africa in relation to the development of the struggle against apartheid as well as the rise of liberation movements such as the Black Consciousness Movement. Furthermore, the growth of independent trade unions signalled the growth of a new resistance. In contrast to the 1960s, which was a time in which any internal opposition efforts were crushed and appeared to be hopeless, the 1970s saw the rise of the youth against the apartheid government, which was a system of racial segregation and White supremacy in South Africa (Gurney, 2009). The youth, frustrated by their parents' apparent failure to challenge the apartheid system, decided to take the matter into their own hands and fight against it themselves.

To understand the South African context better, we shall look at social identity and social comparison theory. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), when social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will either attempt to leave their existing group and join a more positively distinct group, or attempt to make their existing group more positively distinct (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These scholars maintain that the basic hypothesis is that it pressures one group to evaluate its own group positively through in-group/out-group comparisons, leading social groups to attempt to differentiate themselves from each other (Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1975). There

are at least three classes of variables that should influence intergroup differentiation in concrete social situations. But in this instance, skin colour and language were the main variables of separate identity in South Africa. The main aim of differentiation is to maintain or achieve superiority over an out-group on some dimension. In this case, the White people, through the apartheid system, achieved superiority over the Black people, who were the out-group.

This revolution by the youth resulted in South Africa often being referred to as a police state, owing to the numerous security laws promulgated with the express intention to curb the movement of Black people within the country. An example was the introduction of the homelands, which Steve Biko referred to as the 'Bantustans' in an essay in which he opined that Bantustans were the greatest single fraud ever created by White politicians (Ally & Lissoni, 2012). Other attempts to restrict the movement of Black people included the introduction of the 'pass'. According to the Pass Laws Act, promulgated in 1952, Black South Africans were required to carry a passbook or *dompas* at all times.

For nearly three centuries, Black South Africans endured dispossession and exploitation by Dutch and British colonists. In 1948, the National Party, which was in government at the time, officially formalised the separation and discrimination of Black people into a tight legal system known as apartheid. Consequently, the 1976 youth revolution was an unexpected move that would undermine the apartheid policy (Giliomee et al., 2022).

In the 1960s, industries in South Africa were firmly established and thriving, with Black people as their labour force. As a result, South Africa dominated economically during this period and was considered the only developed country in Africa (Bunting, 2006), producing twice the amount of electricity and six times the amount of steel compared to the other African countries combined. This included mineral production, in which South Africa led with 43%, surpassing the combined output of all other African countries. During this time, White South Africans enjoyed a higher standard of living than their counterparts in Western countries, in spite of Black people being at the heart of this great economic dominance. The Black labour force was reinforced with migratory labour from neighbouring countries such as Malawi, Lesotho, and Mozambique.

However, the early 1970s were a turning point in the South African manufacturing industry, where poor working conditions and low wages would eventually destabilise the peaceful period experienced during the 1960s. Black labourers suddenly rose up against apartheid laws through strikes, especially in Durban in 1973 – workers in this area received less than R10.00 per week, which was less than the subsistence level of R80.00 per week at the time (Giliomee et al., 2022). Additionally, real wages for non-South African miners declined between the enactment of the Mines and Works Act in 1911 and 1971. This resulted in non-White workers in the manufacturing industry earning only 18% of the wages of their White counterparts (Clark & Worger, 2016).

This situation prevailed in the mines and on the farms. In the 1970s, the average farm wage, which excluded food and housing, was only a third of the wage earned by workers in the manufacturing industries. To make things worse, during this period, the government still pledged to reserve the better-paying jobs for White nationals, as another way to preserve White dominance.

Black labourers did not have an official platform where they could lobby their grievances and bargain for better salaries because Black unions were prohibited, and to strike was illegal, as "Blacks were not considered employees" according to the law. In other words, they were just there to serve the agenda of the White people – to enrich them. In a parliamentary address, Prime Minister Vorster commented on lessons learnt from the strikes, stating that "[t]he worker was somebody with a soul and normal needs and not a mere unit who had to labour so many hours per day" (Giliomee et al., 2022: 506).

Against this background, in May 1973, the first independent trade unions came into existence. The Metal and Allied Workers Union was the first one, followed by the National Union of Textile Workers and the Chemical Workers Union. This resulted in the formation of five independent unions by 1975, which had 11 000 members. These independent unions rapidly spread to other parts of South Africa.

In the meantime, the early 1960s saw the end of effective opposition from the ANC and the PAC in South Africa. The ANC had been banned, some members had been condemned to a lifetime in prison, and some were

in exile. In the 1970s, however, the Black resistance took on a new form, namely the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). The BCM had come to the forefront in the 1960s and remained an integral part of the rise of Black resistance. This movement was created by tertiary students who were influenced by the Black Power Movement in the United States. In 1969, the movement was led by Steve Biko who at the time was a medical student. The uniqueness of this movement lay in its incorporation of Black university students, its interaction with the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) as an anti-apartheid student group, and its response to the apartheid government (Giliomee et al., 2022). The BCM endorsed Black pride and African customs and tried to undo the feelings of inadequacy and inferiority instilled among Black people by the apartheid government. It also fuelled Black people's determination to not be dependent on White people. In essence, Steve Biko was trying to undo all the work that had gone into entrenching apartheid in the minds of Black people. In a paper delivered at a student conference in 1971, he declared: "The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (Biko, 1987). Black universities provided the perfect opportunity to spread the message and reignite pride and self-confidence in Black students.

The BCM certainly laid the foundation for the 1976 student protests, as well as challenges that were to arise against the South African apartheid government.

In the Black township schools, pupils had decided to fight against their own oppression and that of their parents. At this time, education was segregated by the Education Act of 1953, which meant a separate education system for Black South African children. This separate education system was designed to prepare Black children to work as labourers. The uprisings also signified the opposition to 'Bantu Education' in which Afrikaans was used as a medium of instruction in half of the secondary school subjects. To make matters worse, most of the teachers and the students did not have command of the Afrikaans language. This was another way to keep Black people out of the job market because, in 1972, most jobs in Johannesburg required a person to have a good command of the Afrikaans language. In 1976, Black students in Soweto refused to continue studying in Afrikaans, and this triggered the student uprisings, which

were to go down in history and in which students verbalised their distaste for the apartheid system. In addition, students protested the discrepancies which existed between the education system of White and Black students.

At the core of these uprisings was the lack of political rights and freedom. For instance, from 1975 to 1976, fifteen times more money was spent on a White child than on a Black child (Giliomee et al., 2022). In addition to this was influx control that restricted Black people's movements while other racial groups were allowed to move as they pleased. Politically, Black people had limited rights and financial resources. The Urban Bantu Councils that were instituted in 1961 had no political power. In 1972, the government introduced administration boards with White officials who took over the running of townships. Later, townships no longer received any subsidies from the White councils and, as a result, they were financed by rates and levies paid by residents, which were significantly low and insufficient.

On 16 June 1976, pupils took to the streets to protest against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools. The South African police opened fire on students who were protesting peacefully. At the start of the uprisings 23 people died, but as things spiralled out of control, the number grew to an estimated 700 deaths in the subsequent clashes between the protesters and the security forces (South African History Online, 2013a). In the years following the 1976 uprisings, several student bodies were formed to protest against apartheid.

In addition to the student uprising, labour unions started protests in 1973 and 1974. After 1976, both the student unions and the labour unions are thought to have played a major role in the struggle against apartheid, filling the gap left by the banning of political parties. This resulted in Black trade unions being legalised in 1979; they could engage in collective bargaining, although strikes were still illegal (Sowell, 2008).

The years 1976 to 1978 signified a fundamental crisis for the apartheid government in South Africa. This was also a time when South Africans had television. Visuals of the uprisings were seen beyond the South African borders and the whole world was shocked by the anger and hatred of the Black youth. Some countries sympathised with the Black people, and they

strongly rejected the apartheid system. The government tried to manage the situation and found a sympathetic newspaper. The Department of Information used secret state funds to launch *The Citizen*, the circulation figures of which were falsified. They also tried to buy – with no success – other newspapers so that they could push their agenda of narrating a false picture in overseas countries. These were desperate years for the apartheid government as they were trying to survive a seemingly 'total onslaught' from every angle of society. It was only in 1978, during the tenure of P.W. Botha, that there were administrative reforms in government. In 1979, P.W. Botha was reported to have uttered the following words: "We are moving into a changing world; we must adapt, otherwise we will die." After this, he toured Soweto and all the homelands with a "message of hope" (Giliomee et al., 2022).

6.2 Narratives of the 1970s

6.2.1 Narrative 1: Gabriella

As I neared the end of high school, the resistance to apartheid started gaining momentum, especially after the 1976 Soweto uprising, when students protested against Afrikaans being used as a medium of instruction in schools. For many of us, this was a turning point – a growing sense of fear of what was happening began to set in. But looking back, I can see how this fits into what Bobby Harro (2000b) describes as the "cycle of liberation". Initially, I was deeply rooted in the "unawareness" stage, oblivious to the reality of apartheid. Like many other White South Africans at the time, I lived a protected life. I did not fully understand or even think about the struggles of most South Africans. Growing up, we were taught not to question authority but to follow the ideals of Afrikaner nationalism, pushed heavily by the National Party. Everything from school to the media and even the church reinforced this belief system, creating a certain sense of identity and pride in the apartheid regime. My experiences fit well into what Harro (2000a) describes as the cycle of socialisation. According to Harro, the cycle begins at birth, when we are born into systems that have already established roles for us based on our race, class, and gender. In my case, a White Afrikaner girl, I was automatically placed in a position of

privilege, though I did not realise it at the time. I did not question these things because, as Harro points out, questioning the cycle is discouraged and often disciplined.

The first time I heard about the realities of apartheid was when I went to university in the late 1970s. It was not until I was exposed to new ideas at university and later in life that I began to realise how these social divisions had influenced how I viewed my own identity.

I can see parallels between my experiences and those described by Harro's (2000b) "cycle of liberation". I belonged to a society that maintained racial divisions, with my identity influenced by being a White Afrikaner. Harro's cycle begins with understanding one's identity, something I experienced through strict Afrikaner nationalism and my conservative upbringing. It emphasises the impact that our environment has on us – education, media, and social norms – which can influence us to ignore the struggles of others. Next in this cycle is education and raising awareness. For me, this was a gradual process. As I attended university and began to interact with peers who had different perspectives, I started to wonder about these matters. This aligns with Harro's notion that liberation involves actively pursuing knowledge and questioning current norms. It became evident that my upbringing had shielded me from the realities of apartheid, something that Harro's cycle criticises as a barrier to understanding and action.

At university, our group identity was reinforced through the curriculum and social expectations. This was especially true in the conservative Afrikaans institutions where I studied. There was not much activism or exposure to the international media. Ashforth and Mael (1989) show how these structures preserved a strong social identity within the Afrikaner community.

It felt as though we were still protected from the idea that apartheid was wrong, and most of us simply did not engage in it. Later, I learnt that my peers at more liberal universities were much more politically aware and even participated in anti-apartheid movements. They were entering the "awakening" phase of the cycle of liberation (Harro, 2000b), recognising what the apartheid system was about. This was a phase that, at that time, I had not yet fully reached.

At the time, the idea of opposing the system seemed unthinkable to me, and I found it strange that students would participate in strikes or criticise the authorities. That was not how we were raised. As Afrikaner women, we had access to education and opportunities, but there was still the expectation that we should become good wives and mothers. Most of us aspired to careers such as teaching or nursing, but the pressure to conform to traditional roles was always there.

The church played a significant role in shaping our beliefs. Growing up in the Dutch Reformed Church (NG Kerk), we were taught that apartheid was justified and that it protected our way of life. As Afrikaners, we were proud of our culture and heritage, and apartheid reinforced that sense of stability. However, as time went on, political tensions grew, especially after events such as the Soweto uprising, which made us feel uneasy about Afrikaans becoming a symbol of oppression.

University life was segregated, and we had no interaction with non-White students. They attended institutions meant for non-Whites. We were cut off from their experiences, and any information about the anti-apartheid movement was kept from us to 'protect' us from 'communists and terrorists'. The South African Defence Force required young men to serve two years of military service to defend the country from what we believed to be the '*Swart Gevaar*'. Many young men died in the war on the borders, reinforcing the idea that the regime was keeping us safe.

The cycle of socialisation (Harro, 2000a) explains systems of oppression by keeping individuals unaware of or indifferent to the realities of injustice. For us, apartheid was normal, and any challenge to it was seen as a threat to our way of life. Even as apartheid started to crumble and international pressures escalated, we were led to believe that these changes were dangerous, stirred up by communists and external enemies.

However, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, things started to change. The world was increasingly turning against South Africa: sanctions, boycotts, and protests were becoming more common. The government told us that we were under attack from the outside world, but more of us began to question the system. The realities of apartheid became clearer.

6.2.2 Narrative 2: Vince

The 70s saw me going into my teenage years. I had completed my primary schooling at a primary school in the town to which we relocated in 1973, and the following year, in 1974, I went to another school. I had to go to another town to further my schooling because the school where I completed my Standard 5 (Grade 7), at that stage, did not offer Standard 6 (Grade 8). It was the first time, at the tender age of 13, that I had been away from my family. This was both exciting and sad. It was exciting in the sense that I was going to a new school where I could meet new friends, but also sad since I was moving out of my comfort zone to an unfamiliar environment, away from my family and familiar surroundings. Thus, at a very young age, I was forced to be independent. I would later in life realise that being independent at a very young age served me well because I learnt to navigate my path through difficult circumstances. I had to learn to make decisions and take responsibility for the decisions I have made. Being independent also taught me to stand my ground.

The 70s were also the decade of the hippies who propagated love and peace, bell-bottom trousers, long hairstyles, Afro hairstyles, miniskirts, and platform shoes. My music appreciation also developed during the 70s. Radio, TV, reading, and sport in the form of soccer were great sources of entertainment and relaxation. Radio provided us with the latest in pop music (*SA Top 20* on Friday nights), radio dramas (Klein Teater), and news. When TV was first introduced in the latter part of the 1970s, people were glued to their TV screens. We were very fortunate to also be able to afford a small black-and-white TV. Since the township did not have electricity, my father managed to connect the TV set to a car battery. In this way, we could watch television shows such as *Pop Shop, The Dingleys, Ben Brand, Banacek, Beste Professor*, and others.

The only reading material came from the 'library' – a single cupboard in the principal's office. Because of the limited access to books, school children sometimes had to read and reread books. It should also be noted that there was a public library in the heart of the town, but it was inaccessible for people of colour. Other reading material consisted of Afrikaans magazines such as *Bollie, Die Brandwag, Huisgenoot, Keur,* and *Rooi Rose*. We were not allowed to read softcover photo-story booklets such as *Ruiter in Swart, Kid die Swerwer, Arend,* and others. Although these books were

taboo, we managed to read them anyway. Concerns raised by parents during that time were that these picture books were promoting violence, and they also did not stimulate the imagination of young people.

A favourite weekend pastime was to play soccer on a very hard ground surface. Our soccer teams comprised a mixture of young soccer players from all racial groups who resided in the township. Some of them were so talented that they were recruited by professional teams.

I was also introduced to movies as another form of entertainment. Being a small town, there were no movie theatres. One of the residents of our township managed to hire an 8 mm projector and films from a store in the capital city of the Free State province. We would then, on Saturdays, watch movies projected on a white bed sheet, draped against a wall. In retrospect, what I found humorous, was the reaction of some of the people at our make-shift movie house. They would duck and dive at film shots of fast-approaching motor cars or trains, shouting, "*Pasop, daar kom die kar!*" (translated: "Watch out, a car is approaching!") to warn the other moviegoers. If the protagonist (the 'good guy') was searching for the 'bad guy' or 'agent' who might be hiding somewhere in a room, some movie-goers would shout, "*Kyk, hy staan agter die kas!*" (translation: "Look, he is standing behind the closet!").

The 1970s were also a very turbulent decade of student unrest in schools and universities. There was the 1976 school unrest, which started in schools in Soweto, a township in Johannesburg, and spilt over to Black and Coloured schools in the rest of the country. The unrest came at a crucial phase in my life – my adolescence. I, on both a physical and mental level, began to undergo changes, which in the words of Tatum (2013: 9), meant that I experienced "the maturation of cognitive abilities, and changing societal expectations". Hence, I posed the question, 'Who am I?', as well as questioned the status quo. According to psychologists and psychoanalysts such as Erik Erikson (1959), this is part of identity formation, a process which is accompanied by "simultaneous reflection and observation" (Erikson in Tatum, 2010: 9). Asking a question such as 'Who am I?' was the result of many factors, among them societal unrest and racial oppression, which led to my experience of what Erikson (1959) termed an identity crisis.

One of the triggers of the Soweto Uprising, as it came to be known, was the forced introduction of Afrikaans in Black township schools as a medium of instruction. During that time, Afrikaans was regarded as the *taal van die onderdrukker* (translated: "the language of the oppressor") in some Black and Coloured communities. Love (2010: 129) opines that "[a]ll members of society play a role in keeping a 'dis-equal' system in place, whether the system works to their benefit or to their disadvantage" and that through socialisation "every member of society learns the attitudes, language, behaviours and skills that are necessary to function effectively in the existing society". This was the case in the community where I grew up. People of colour went about their business as if nothing was wrong with the oppressive circumstances in which they found themselves – it was their fate, and something to endure for the rest of their lives. They were therefore unperturbed by the unrest that was wreaking havoc in places such as Soweto, Johannesburg, Cape Town, and other big cities. I remember how angry my uncle, at the time a student at the University of the Western Cape, was with my parents when he found out that they were keeping an enlarged framed photo in our house of Hendrik Verwoerd – a former prime minister in apartheid South Africa. My parents did not consider this unusual, as they were, in the words of Love (2010: 129), assigned to play the role of "subordinate in the system of dis-equality based on race".

During the unrest, many students and community members were killed by the South African Police on the first day (16 June 1976) of the protest. Among those whose lives were brutally and abruptly cut short were Hastings Ndlovu (15 years old) and Hector Pieterson (12 years old). The latter became the face of the protest because of an iconic photo that was taken by prominent South African photographer, Sam Nzima. The photo depicts a dying Hector being carried by activist Mbuyisa Makhubu, with Hector's sister, Antoinette, alongside him. The brutality of the police shown in news bulletins on TV across the country was emotionally very disturbing and traumatic to us as young learners and filled us with resentment and rebellion.

Because of these police actions and the stance of the then government, many young people slipped out of the country to join underground organisations such as uMkhonto we Sizwe and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA). Some students who preferred to stay in South Africa

and fight the apartheid regime from within, in later years, became actively involved with the United Democratic Front (UDF), which was a broad-based body that strung together many anti-apartheid organisations. The 1976 uprising also served as a watershed moment in my socialisation. The underlying message was that Coloured people and Black people should stand together to fight an oppressive system that viewed them as inferior second-class citizens, unlike White people, who were regarded as superior first-class citizens. This message was also reinforced later when I became a student at the University of the Western Cape.

The uprising and student protests of the 1970s and 1980s and the responses of the authorities to these protests, in some instances very brutal, and even fatal, awakened in us a sense of rebellion and a deep hatred toward the oppressive system. As students, we, in the words of Harro (2000b: 618), understood the “nature of the oppression” and sought “new paths” for “creating social change” and taking ourselves “toward empowerment or liberation”.

My early socialisation, the one I was born into and over which I had no control, would later assist in the upkeeping of a “dis-equal” society, as Love (2010: 129) would refer to it. It taught me to be a “subordinate” (Love, 2010: 129) because of my status as part of a minority group in South Africa. Society and the system of oppression ensured that I “internalized the attitudes, understandings, and patterns of thought” that allowed me “to function and collaborate with these systems of oppression” (Love, 2010: 129).

As students, we were adamant that, through our actions, we would bring about the necessary changes to our circumstances. In this sense, we may be regarded as “liberation workers” (Love, 2010: 129) with a “liberatory consciousness” who were committed “to changing systems and institutions characterised by oppression to create greater equity and social justice” (Love, 2010: 129). Our social consciousness increased to such an extent that we would risk anything to achieve our objectives. It was no longer about us but for “the cause” – the liberation of all oppressed people. To illustrate our commitment to this “cause” we chanted slogans such as, “An injury to one, is an injury to all!” We were not interested in our own personal circumstances, but our interest lay in the betterment of

society. Although some left the country, others, like me, opted to erode the system from the inside by aligning ourselves with the objectives of broad-based organisations such as the UDF launched in Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town in 1983 as a non-racial organisation consisting of about 400 national, regional, and locally based organisations (South African History Online, 2013a). This organisation was influenced by the objectives and principles of the Freedom Charter of 1955.

Therefore, in terms of Harro's cycle of liberation (2000a: 620), the student uprising and protests served as a wake-up call to me to realise that the oppression we suffered was not right and that there was a need for transformation to improve things. There was a need to consciously transform the cycle of socialisation that taught us to "play our roles in oppression" (Harro, 2000a: 618).

After 1994, with the dawn of the democratic dispensation, and through the reconciliatory messages and actions of people such as Nelson Mandela, I was socialised to also embrace reconciliation. This is a message that I also teach my students.

In terms of our religious upbringing, we followed the Christian faith of Protestantism. The whole family, except for my mother, was baptised and confirmed according to the Lutheran Christian doctrine. My father and his forebears belonged to this church. Although my mother was baptised and confirmed in the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk* (established in 1881 for Coloured people – later to become the independent *Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk [VGK]*, a daughter church of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, meant for White people), she later attended the Lutheran Church. The Lutheran Church in Luckhoff catered to all racial groups in our township and, as such, it was not strange to have Black evangelists and pastors. Up until today my siblings and I, together with our families, are still members of the Lutheran Church.

6.2.3 Narrative 3: Reatlegile

In the 1970s, I was in my teenage years, when I finished my primary schooling and started my secondary schooling phase – Standard 6 (Grade 8). I was excited about attending high school because we wore pure

white shirts with blue skirts. Going to mass was joyful because this was the only time when we could see the boys. We used to go to the cinema as a form of entertainment. We also entertained ourselves by going to discos and attending tea parties on Sundays with our various ballroom club members. When TV was introduced in the 1970s, only one household in the area had a black-and-white television, connected to a car battery. We would pay five cents to watch *The Nutty Professor, The Dingleys*, or soccer, where the Pirates (soccer team) would play. The attire of the 1970s included bell-bottom trousers, miniskirts and platform shoes and Afro hairstyles. Music united people in love, brought hope to those who had lost hope, and cleared the heads of those who were frustrated. It would heal broken hearts and lift spirits.

The 1970s were also a very turbulent decade of student unrest in schools and universities. There was the 1976 school unrest, which started at schools in Soweto, a township in Johannesburg, and progressed to Black and Coloured schools in the rest of the country.

In 1976, the uprising struck our city, soldiers were deployed to our area, and I smelled tear gas for the first time. I was so young to experience this; we were given three minutes to clear the streets. Sometimes we would be far from home; so, we had to hide in houses on the main street. My father's nephew and his friends were raided by the police, and they hid at our house. While the nephew would be hiding in the bedroom, my father would confront the police, speaking in their language and saying that he had not seen those boys; the only people in his house were his children.

The schools were closed, and we had to stay at home. I enjoyed it for some months, but it became boring because I wanted to go back to school. Instead, we played traditional games in the street such as *Marandase, ntime, skop ankhoshi* and *morabaraba* – both girls and boys.

In 1977, my brother became sick and was taken to the hospital after three days of being ill. On Friday, 25 August, he passed on. He was only 16 years old. This was a bitter pill to swallow; the whole family was devastated, especially my father, who lost his only son. The following year, my brother's friends took his desk with them to the next standard, saying he could have passed Standard 8 to go to Standard 9.

A well-known activist, Phakamile Mabija, was arrested in 1977. He was taken to the Transvaal Road police station, where he fell from the 6th floor and died.

This brought confusion and unease to the township; the government offices and halls were burned, schools were destroyed, leading to a deep hatred for the oppressive system. As students, in the words of Harro (2000a: 618), we understood the "nature of the oppression" and sought "new paths" for "creating social change" and taking ourselves "towards empowerment or liberation". My early socialisation, the one I was born into and over which I had no control, would later assist in the maintenance of a dis-equal society, as Love (2010: 129) would refer to it. It taught me to be a "subordinate" (Love, 2010: 129) because of my status as part of a minority group in our country. Society and the system of oppression ensured that I "internalised the attitudes, understandings, and patterns of thought" that allowed me "to function and collaborate with these systems of oppression" (Love, 2010: 129).

6.2.4 Narrative 4: Morwamocha

I started school in 1973 at Patrick Mankolane in Skilpadfontein. Luckily, my parents prioritised education and did not want us to miss a single day of school. Not all Black parents chose education for their children. For instance, some parents preferred their children to drop out of school and to herd the cattle, goats, and sheep and assist with the household chores. The value of education was not clearly understood. Black South Africans were often confined to underdeveloped rural areas or overcrowded urban townships with inadequate infrastructure and social services. The rural place where I grew up lacked any services. Everything we had was of our parents' making. The economic disparities were stark, as Black workers were relegated to low-paying, menial jobs with little to no opportunity for advancement. Job opportunities were distant from our villages and chances of commuting were non-existent. Apartheid's oppressive laws and practices entrenched poverty, making it nearly impossible for Black families to break the cycle of deprivation.

In the 1970s South Africa, the social identities of many Black people in the country were greatly shaped by language, class, race, and religion within

the context of the apartheid regime. The apartheid system that was established by the former National Party government enforced racial segregation and discrimination that mainly affected Black people in South Africa. This apartheid regime categorised individuals into different racial groups. Black people knew they were not in any way allowed to get closer to the White citizens. They were made to be inferior, as White people were perceived as superior. In South Africa, apartheid institutionalised racial oppression, severely limiting the rights and freedoms of Black South Africans.

The uprisings that erupted in 1976 were not, after all, confined to the townships only but spread through the Black universities in the homelands of South Africa (Butterworth, 1978). The legal and social constraints of apartheid were central to Black people's identities, as race dictated nearly every aspect of Black people's lives. The system dictated where they could live and work, who they could marry and much more. Language played a significant role in maintaining these divisions, with Afrikaans and English being the official languages of the country, while indigenous languages were often marginalised, reinforcing cultural and social hierarchies. Thus, one can conclude that colonialism severely impacted the lives of Black people.

Furthermore, Black people were made to disregard their own languages and rapidly learn Afrikaans so that they could find employment. Their inability to speak Afrikaans excluded them from the workplace.

Class also influenced the experiences and identities of Black South Africans. The apartheid system entrenched economic disparities, confining Black people to low-wage, unskilled labour while denying them access to quality education and economic opportunities. This economic stratification further solidified the social identities of Black South Africans as an underclass, struggling against systemic exploitation and poverty.

Religion, particularly Christianity, was a double-edged sword. While the Dutch Reformed Church supported apartheid ideology, many Black South Africans found solace and strength in their churches, which became hubs for anti-apartheid activism and community solidarity. Additionally, African traditional religions and spiritual practices played crucial roles in sustaining cultural identities and resistance against colonial and apartheid op-

pression. Thus, race, language, class, and religion were deeply intertwined in shaping the complex social identities of Black South Africans during the 1970s, underpinning their struggle for liberation and equality.

I grew up in a poverty-stricken background where it was only my father who worked. There were instances where I would go to school on an empty stomach. There was barely enough money to cater for all of us. Luckily, the school fees were minimal. At the end of each month, my father had to take a train to his workplace in Pretoria. My mother stayed home with us and took good care of us. The economic situation was exacerbated by a lack of schooling opportunities, which were geared towards preparing Black people for a bleak future.

During the 1970s in South Africa, Black communities faced extreme poverty aggravated by the apartheid regime's policies. Poverty in South Africa continues to reflect the historical and contemporary racial divisions in the country (Francis & Webster, 2019). According to Francis and Webster (2019), half of all South Africans live in poverty. Also, economic growth has stagnated, and inflation and unemployment rates remain uncontrollably high, and continue to climb. It pains me that I was raised by parents who were so peaceful despite the plight in which they found themselves, where a White person was a master who needed to be respected all the time. The government enforced racial segregation, systematically marginalising non-White populations and denying them access to quality education, employment, and housing. The Bantustan policy, which aimed to create separate homelands for Black South Africans, further isolated and impoverished these communities by stripping them of resources and economic opportunities. Our area was demarcated to Bophuthatswana, led by Kgosi Mangope. The village itself had a chief whose role it was to guide and provide protection to his subjects.

In South Africa, a chief could play a crucial role as a community leader and advocate amid the harsh realities of apartheid. By leveraging their traditional authority and respect within the community, chiefs could work to uplift and support their people, providing guidance and fostering unity. They could serve as intermediaries between the oppressed communities and external organisations, including anti-apartheid groups, humanitarian organisations, and even sympathetic government officials, to

secure resources, education, and employment opportunities. Additionally, a chief could help preserve cultural identity and resilience, promoting social cohesion and encouraging collective action against the systemic injustices faced by their people. In my culture, the chief sees to it that the tradition and culture are preserved.

During the 1970s, initiation schools, integral to the fabric of indigenous South African communities, held profound cultural significance for Black communities in various parts of Africa, particularly in South Africa. These schools were not only a rite of passage but also a means of preserving cultural heritage and identity amid the socio-political upheavals of the time (Badugela, 2024). For many Black South Africans, initiation marked the transition from childhood to adulthood, instilling values such as responsibility, respect, and community solidarity. This was a form of informal education for the youth, playing a crucial role in transmitting knowledge about culture, values, and societal norms from one generation to the other. While these initiation schools were perceived as backward, anyone who had undergone this initiation was regarded as ready to look for a job or to find a marriage partner. Those who did not go through initiation processes were called derogatory names. Males were called '*mashoboro*' and females were called '*mathumacha*'. Despite the oppressive apartheid regime, these traditional practices provided a sense of continuity and resilience, reinforcing communal bonds and a shared cultural identity that stood in stark contrast to the systemic marginalisation they faced.

Moreover, initiation schools served as an educational cornerstone where young people learnt about their customs, history, and social responsibilities. Men were taught how to treat their wives during marriage and women were also prepared to treat their partners with respect and raise their children. In a period when formal education was often inaccessible or biased against Black people, these schools were crucial for imparting traditional knowledge and skills. Initiation schools reinforced a sense of pride and belonging and equipped the initiates with the confidence to navigate the challenges of a racially segregated society.

Child labour in Black communities during this era was a pervasive issue, deeply intertwined with the socioeconomic and political context of the

time. In many African countries, particularly under apartheid in South Africa, Black families faced severe economic hardships due to systemic discrimination, lack of access to quality education, and limited employment opportunities for adults. Consequently, children were often compelled to work from a young age to contribute to their families' incomes. Many Black children resorted to looking for job opportunities at the farms and were exposed to menial jobs that included looking after the cattle, goats and sheep, planting, harvesting and the like. Also, this labour took various forms, from agricultural work in rural areas to domestic work and informal trading in urban settings. Child labour was a direct response to the structural inequalities imposed by colonial and apartheid regimes that left Black families with few alternatives for survival.

The type of work children engaged in on the farms was frequently gruelling and hazardous, with long hours and meagre remuneration. Children who were locked into child labour on these farms ended up staying on the farms and even started families there. Their lives were doomed, with no future prospects. In urban environments, many children worked as street vendors, shoe shiners, or domestic workers. Child labour has been of national and international concern since as early as the 1860s (Visser, 2021). Some of the jobs exposed children to exploitation and abuse, which led to detrimental effects on their physical health, development, and education. Many children were forced to drop out of school or never had the opportunity to attend school, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and limited prospects.

My siblings and I fortunately never dropped out of school to engage in child labour. Our parents had a vision for all of us and saw education as the only way for us to escape the devastating effects of poverty.

In response to these harsh realities, movements and organisations within Black communities sought to address the issue of child labour and advocate for children's rights. Community leaders, activists, and grassroots organisations worked tirelessly to highlight the plight of working children and push for policy changes. Efforts were made to improve access to education, provide vocational training, and create economic opportunities for adults to reduce the reliance on child labour.

'Child labour' specifically refers to child work, child labour, legal and illegal child labour, hazardous forms of child labour, and trafficking for child labour (Visser, 2021). 'Children working' is regarded as positive if it does not affect children's health, personal development, or school attendance (International Labour Organization, 2019). The struggle against child labour in the 1970s in South Africa was thus part of a broader fight for social justice, equality, and the dismantling of oppressive systems that perpetuated poverty and exploitation.

Children who managed to complete their primary and secondary education and had the opportunity to go to university, encountered another harsh reality – first-year university initiation. Even after the first-year initiation period, physical punishment was prevalent in the student culture. If the management of the institution knew of the punishment, they never interfered. As a result, the majority of Black students turned to correspondence degrees through Unisa, which, despite its ideological slant, offered the flexibility of part-time study from home and a wider choice of subjects.

6.2.5 Narrative 5: Phoenix

The 1970s were an exciting period, as the world embraced bell-bottom pants, platform shoes, maxi dresses, disco music, and the iconic Afro hairstyle. However, in South Africa, the National Party remained in power, enforcing increasingly strict apartheid laws. This era also saw the death of Steve Biko. During this time, my younger brother and I attended a nursery school located in a predominantly White area, next to the new university education campus. The nursery school was exclusively for children classified as Coloured and Indian. The term 'Coloured', coined by the Nationalist Party, referred to South Africans of mixed-race descent. I found these years extremely enjoyable and did not realise then how fortunate I was to be attending that nursery school, since many other children could not access good educational resources. In my early years, I was not completely unaware of apartheid and its effects on our family. I often heard my parents whispering names such as Mandela and Biko. As I grew up, I became more conscious of the inequalities between myself and my White peers. White South Africans enjoyed more privileges, such as dining at restaurants, while my family and I had to make purchases through a window at the same premises. Although I noticed this was strange, I learnt to accept

that some people had more privileges than others. This realisation aligns with Harro's (2000a) analysis of institutional and cultural socialisation. It also echoes Love's (2010) description of socialisation, where "every member of society learns the attitudes, language, behaviours, and skills necessary to function effectively". I believe my parents worked hard to provide for us and shielded us from the harshest aspects of apartheid. During this time, we lived about six kilometres from the nursery school.

I then commenced my primary school education. The school was located within walking distance from our house and was also close to the township – then known as the 'location' designated for Black residents. As a result, numerous children from the township attended the school, drawn by its proximity and slightly better amenities compared to the township schools. The school offered separate classes for students who spoke English and Afrikaans. The parents of English-speaking students were seen as more involved in their children's education. Consequently, English classes were often given more privileges than the Afrikaans classes, sometimes subtly and at times openly. I was fortunate to be in the English class, which placed me in the predominant group, according to Harro's categorisation (2000a).

I disliked school from day one. I found it too formal, strict, and almost militaristic. I noticed that some teachers used offensive language, which was confusing and disappointing since swearing was prohibited in our home. I observed that teachers treated students in the Afrikaans classes more harshly. Our teachers would casually use the 'k' word while disciplining dark-skinned students or when giving examples in class. Such behaviour and disrespect deeply saddened me, as it contradicted my upbringing. Social categorisation is considered the depiction of an individual within a social context. Self-categorisation involves the individual evaluating themselves against their own reference framework (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Such discrimination led me to view school as a place of pain. My negative school experience aligns with what Harro (2000a) terms "first socialisation".

My home and family became my refuge, while the principal's deep voice, the school bell, bullies, and the smell of Jeyes Fluid and wax crayons evoked real fear in me. I even skipped school numerous times.

My father was a passionate athlete, and I recall how we used to listen to rugby or boxing matches on the radio very early in the morning. Our family cheered for any team that played against the Springboks. My family, along with most people in our communities, became enthusiastic supporters of the All Blacks rugby team. Many people of colour could not relate to the all-White Springbok team as they symbolised our oppressors. Even during boxing matches, most people of colour would support athletes such as Mohammed Ali, Leon Spinks, Big John Tate, and other Black fighters, rather than Gerrie Coetzee or Kallie Knoetze.

In 1976, the apartheid government designated our area a 'buffer zone', indicating it was too near to town. Consequently, we were forcibly relocated to a newly established township for Coloured people, 17 kilometres away from town. This township lacked shops, schools, churches, or clinics, resulting in a very sad period for our family. We had to dispose of some of our furniture, including our piano and numerous other belongings, as our new house was too small. This relocation imposed a significant financial strain on our family because we had to travel to school. We knew no one in the new area and felt quite isolated. The people who settled there were from regions towards the south of the city near the airport. My siblings and I had to discontinue our music lessons and other sports activities.

During this period, the All Blacks rugby team visited South Africa, a move opposed by many anti-apartheid supporters because they believed it indirectly endorsed South Africa's apartheid regime. The tour included five Māori players, Bill Bush, Sid Going, Kent Lambert, Bill Osborne, and Tane Norton, alongside Bryan Williams of Samoan descent, all of whom were granted honorary White status in South Africa.

In June 1976, at the age of ten, I encountered tear gas for the first time. A school nearby, governed by the Department of Education and Training under the apartheid legislation, joined the protest with Soweto students against being instructed in Afrikaans. In response, the police arrived with riot gear, employing rubber bullets, tear gas, and whips to break up the protest. The wind carried the tear gas towards our school during a break, and we were confused by the sudden stinging in our eyes. That evening, my father explained the national situation, urging us to focus on our education so that we could contribute meaningfully once the country

achieved freedom. Looking back, my father aimed to help us understand the true aim of the ongoing anti-apartheid protests. His efforts were pivotal in fostering a liberatory consciousness within us, opposing the socialisation tactics of apartheid. Developing such awareness requires ongoing, critical examination of one's own self-perceptions and views of others (Harro, 2000b).

6.2.6 Narrative 6: Christel

I had a strict childhood upbringing, but today I am grateful for the discipline and work ethic that I was taught from a young age. For my parents, it was very important that we received quality education. I was in a nursery school for two years before my first formal school year. I never liked the idea of being told to sleep on a mat at noon. I was also very scared of the teacher and was always elated when my mother picked me up from nursery school. I started my primary school education in 1973. My mother took me to school. I had to wait in the secretary's office until she had an opportunity to take me to my class. The secretary forgot that I was in Sub A (Grade 1 today) and left me with new Sub B (Grade 2) learners in the Sub B class. I was too scared to tell the teacher that I was supposed to be in Sub A. After some time, the teacher came to me and asked whether I should be in Sub B. I was glad to see my Sub A teacher, Aunt Susan. Aunt Susan and her father, Uncle Josef, were friends with my parents, and their daughter and I became friends.

I can remember a fellow pupil from my Sub B year – a very small and timid girl, who wet herself on the carpet where she was sitting while the teacher was reading a story. The little girl was reprimanded and from that day on she had to sit on the same spot. It was probably the first time in my life that I experienced a feeling of disgust and anger. In my young mind I knew the teacher was unfair and wrong, but I did not have the courage to stand up to her. During one of the art lessons in my Sub B year, one of my classmates pushed me while I was painting. I ended up leaving paint blotches all over the teacher's poster. She was very angry, and I had to redo all her posters in the afternoon.

Every evening my father would say, “Christel, fetch the big Bible”. My father usually chose a chapter from the Psalms to read to us before praying. My sister (two years older than I) would often play ‘hospital-hospital’, ‘school-school’, or ‘church-church’. We had vivid imaginations. We would dress our dolls and give them special names. Once a year, we would go to the South Coast on vacation. The only Black people I saw on the beach were the nannies who were taking care of children. It was mostly wealthy White people who brought their nannies on vacation. Parents could relax while the Black nanny had to look after the children.

My encounters with Black, Coloured, and Indian people were limited to our Black Sesotho-speaking domestic worker. I knew nothing about the township she lived in or the people who lived there, except from an outsider’s view when we passed a township on our way to another town. Tajfel and Turner (1979) point out that categories of social identity are linked to roles, characteristics, events, and ideologies, which are sometimes stereotypical in nature.

In Standard 3 (Grade 5), we moved to a farm. My father became a part-time farmer while teaching at the nearby school. I remember how scared I was when we had to drive on a slippery wet road to school. I would pray “God forgive me my sins” and hoped that my prayer would arrive in time to open the heavenly doors for me in case I did die in an accident. I enjoyed my primary school days, and I excelled at school. My mother was well-read and had a phenomenal knowledge of classical music. My father instilled integrity in us and I never stepped out of line.

6.2.7 Narrative 7: Sonny

Life at the mission was pleasant, and the place had a very relaxed atmosphere. Children attended the local primary and high school. In the afternoons, it was common to see children playing in the streets. Generally, there was peace and quiet. As in all small places, it was common to know and hear about everybody’s business, children from that era were very well behaved. In the evenings we would listen to folktales that my mother shared. We would also listen to the evening story that was aired on the radio every night at 20h00. On Saturdays, my older brother would give us

his own version of 'television' because he would cast pictures on the wall from a handmade box to show images of each of us and what we had been up to during the week. It was evident that he was quite observant and creative, and we really looked forward to Saturday evenings because we did not know what he had in store for us.

Growing up I had a sense of security, and we looked up to our parents as role models and aspired to be like them. Studying and pursuing a career was not just an option but compulsory for us. As a result, my siblings and I became professional people in different fields.

When I passed Standard 5 (Grade 7), we relocated to a nearby town to study further. This is where my parents built a house, and we lived there with my grandmother.

When television came to the country, we were the first house in our street to have a television set. Our house resembled a movie theatre; children would assemble at my house early on a Saturday evening so that they could secure a spot on the living-room floor. At some point it became difficult, as we could not get our dinner on time because the children would only leave just before the evening news was read. As with all grandmothers, mine was quite lenient with us and she allowed us to watch television until at least 20h00.

At this time, my twin brother and I had completed primary school and had started high school at the new township, which is about 45 minutes from where we grew up. For the first time, we were beyond the protective arms of our parents and the security of the mission. We were in a township where we encountered a world of people with different backgrounds, different personalities, a different way of life. There were too many people, which we were not used to. Life was fast there, and we had to adjust quickly.

We went to a high school that my father had personally decided on. The principal was a strong and academically orientated man. We had to walk a long distance to school, carrying heavy backpacks, which was also something we were not used to.

Life was nice and easy for the first year, but in the next year, we had our first experience of uprisings, police vans, and hippos, soldiers manning the schools while carrying rifles, and some entering our classrooms to teach. This was after Steve Biko had been killed by the South African police in 1977. In the country, and in the Eastern Cape especially, schools were plunged into chaos. For a 14-year-old child, it was just too difficult to understand what was going on. School children would come from other neighbouring high schools to dismiss our school. Then, automatically, as soon as we heard the 'song' approaching, we would collect our books and bags, and school would end.

I also remember one day, as the school children were singing outside, the big hippos arriving, and White soldiers with big arms jumped out, carrying batons. They would beat any schoolchild in sight. When this happened, children ran for their lives. My brother and I somehow found our way back home, not remembering how we had escaped and got back safely. In later years, my brother said that during one of these incidents, as the hippos arrived, he managed to escape by hiding under the apron of one of the women who sold *vetkoek* (fat cakes) and *frikadelle* (meatballs) outside the school yard. When the soldiers were out of sight, he escaped and ran back home. This occurred at the height of the uprisings of 1979–1980.

In one incident, some schoolboys died while escaping the police and soldiers. Our school was situated at the end of the township, and behind the school was a river. To escape the soldiers, apparently, the boys jumped into the river, and they drowned because they could not swim. In memory of those boys, to this day, there is a stone erected at our school. After this incident, my father decided to remove us from the school, and I went to a boarding school in another province to complete my high school education. My brother went to a different boarding school, but he remained in the same province because he could not study at my school, as it was an all-girls high school. It was one of the most terrifying periods in my schooling career, and to this day, all those memories are still vivid in my mind.

I also remember times when we accompanied our parents to town. Sometimes they would go to the bank, and a White person would be served

first by the teller, even if there was a long queue. White people would jump the queue and be served first, and Black people would wait patiently for them to finish. That was my first rude awakening to the reality of South Africa – that Black people were seemingly lesser than White people, no matter who you were or how educated you were. This highlights social identity and social categorisations that are conceived as cognitive tools that segment, classify, and order the social environment, and thus enable the individual to undertake many forms of social action. It is important to note that these do not merely systematise the social world; they also provide a system of orientation for self-reference. They create and define the individual's place in society. Social groups, understood in this sense, provide their members with an identification of themselves in social terms. These identifications are to a very large extent relational and comparative – they define the individual as like or different from, or as "better" or "worse" than members of other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, arising from these considerations, the terms 'social identity' and 'social categorisation' are used. That is how the Black people came to perceive themselves, and this perception is derived from the aspects of an individual's self-image shaped by the social categories they identify with (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

My older brother and sister, who attended one of the prestigious high schools in those days, had similar experiences. The uprisings had virtually taken over the entire province. Schools were closing, classrooms were burnt, and children had to stay home while those in boarding schools had to return home. That was how my sister returned home, and she had to find a school at home to complete her matric. In her school, classes had been burnt down, and students had to go home and find new schools to finish their high school education. My sister remembers how difficult that transition was. They had to walk a long distance to school, which they were not used to. The teachers were unwelcoming since they did not accept new students in the middle of the year and the new students appeared to be "clever and ahead of their students". She was also used to going to the dining hall directly for lunch after school, but now she had to go home to prepare her own food.

All this happened after the Black Consciousness leader, Steve Biko, died a very cruel death in police custody in 1977. Steve Biko was arrested as

a political prisoner and was not given proper medical care despite the serious injuries he sustained at the hands of White policemen. He was transported naked and shackled on the floor of a police van for 800 km to Pretoria and subsequently died. Following Biko's death, chaos, anger, and uprisings ensued across Black townships in South Africa. The government, in its attempts to bring law and order, banned all organisations led by Black people. My township is practically a next-door neighbour to where Steve Biko lived, and the two townships rallied together to fight the injustice that was meted out to one of their own. Black students, not only in my township but all across the country, took this stance as they realised that Black South Africans lacked political freedom and their human rights were undermined. In addition, Black people were rebelling against the homelands, which were used as dumping grounds where the government resettled Black nationals from White cities in South Africa to rural areas. My township was situated in one of these homelands. The homelands were an attempt by the government under P.W. Botha to stop the movement of Black people, especially to control their influx into the cities (Giliomee et al., 2022). Some areas were known as *Vergenoeg*, which would make it even more difficult for Black people to access towns and cities. Hence, the name is popular in many Black townships in South Africa. The name *Vergenoeg* originated from Dutch and means "satisfaction has been achieved", and in this case, the White government had achieved the segregation and relocation of the Black population to their own areas. For the government, the homelands were a "solution" to the "Black problem", even if it was for a very limited time. This move resulted in an increase of 57% in the population of these homelands, especially in the decade between 1970 and 1980 (Giliomee et al., 2022). Steve Biko puts this in perspective when he said, "[t]he concept of 'Bantustans' or independent/autonomous African 'homelands', is the cornerstone of the Nationalist Government's 'native' policy. The theory is that South Africa consists of many ethnic groups, and that the peaceful co-existence can only be attained by enabling each group to develop in its own way in its own area" (Biko in Stubbs, 1978: 88).

Thus, the leaders of the youth protests were mostly inspired by liberation movements of the 70s such as the BCM. The BCM played an important role in giving direction to the heroic but uncoordinated 1976 protests of the students. After 16 June, there were many such uprisings in the months

and years that followed. Consequently, the Soweto Students' Representative Council was formed, which coordinated student movements and action campaigns against the apartheid government. Amid this chaos, about 500 teachers resigned as they were also targeted by police, resulting in secondary education being brought literally to a screeching halt. I alluded earlier to the fact that some of the White soldiers who were teachers even took over some of our classes to teach.

The 1970s will go down in history as one of the most troublesome and violent decades in the history of South Africa. Those of us who grew up during this period were exposed to the harsh realities of living in South Africa during the apartheid era. However, we simultaneously became resilient because we were strengthened by the realisation that our experiences shaped us to be the people that we are today. In addition, we learnt to value education because we know people died for our freedom. We appreciate the South Africa we live in today since we can make informed decisions for our future and the future of our children.

6.2.8 Narrative 8: Star

In terms of my schooling, I attended a farm school for Grades 1 and 2, which were called Sub A and B then. The reason I could not be placed in a school in town was that I was too young, as I turned six early in the year. School is the primary context for formal education, but also for forming a cultural sense of self among peers from different cultural backgrounds (Motti-Stefanidi, Berry, Chryssochoou, Sam & Phinney, 2012). During the week, from Monday morning, I would stay with a family from our church congregation and go back by bus on Friday afternoons. The stay on the farm was good as I was spoiled a lot. I was a very tiny child, and my new 'Aunty's' children used to 'abba' (carry on the back) me to school, as we had to walk far to get to school.

SIT indicates that people categorise themselves and others into social groups to understand and identify them, and to simplify the social environment, which can also lead to stereotyping (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). I was regarded as more privileged on the farm, being the daughter of the priest. My farm family treated me with so much love and care. I am not sure why my father did not enrol me at school with my first name. The

people on the farm called me 'Pasella' which I later found out to mean 'an extra or unexpected gift or benefit'. My teachers were male, unqualified educators, except for the principal. I am still grateful for them, as they laid my educational foundation very well. I can remember there were only two classrooms and sometimes we would sit outside and draw on the rocks with white chalk to keep us busy. Sometimes I had afternoon classes as the timetable would rotate. When my father passed on at the end of my Grade 2 year, I returned to town and started my schooling at the primary school for Coloureds only. The primary school in the city was well organised and the teachers were very strict. Corporal punishment was implemented extensively. I was very scared and completed my work diligently. Some of my teachers attended my church and the worst part was when children missed Sunday school; they would be reprimanded in school for that misdemeanour.

Christianity was highly regarded in schools, and every morning we would pray and sing before classes commenced. Our timetable included a Bible study period, and teachers would teach us the importance of certain values. You were not allowed to backchat or argue with teachers. I was not aware of the different education systems in South Africa, but during school concerts in primary school, we had to perform '*volksdansies*' (folk dances) such as "Jan Pierewiet" and "My Sarie Marais". I enjoyed taking part in the school activities, although we would not always understand the hidden curriculum. According to Tafjel and Turner (1979), individuals categorise themselves as members of a particular group; they adopt the identity of that group and begin to see themselves in terms of group characteristics, adopting its norms, values, and behaviours. Identity is our understanding of who we are and how we relate to others, and it can therefore be viewed in terms of the unique set of characteristics associated with a particular individual relative to the perceptions and characteristics of others (Gao, Jia & Zhou, 2015). During the week, we had helpers to clean our homes, and over weekends, we had to assist with chores such as doing the dishes. The main rule at home was that before sunset, everyone should be at home when supper was served, and you should have your school shoes cleaned for the next day. Since we did not get homework, during the evenings, we would listen to stories on the radio with the elders, even if we did not understand. We shared our weekly experiences around the table during supper on Sundays.

During the December holidays, we were taken to the rural area where my grandparents and extended family resided. This was fun because we received new clothes and presents. The negative part of these visits was that we did not understand the language spoken (my mother's mother tongue). However, we were loved, and it was nice to be with the family. We chased goats and chickens and played with our cousins, but I mostly liked the sour mealie meal porridge that was served every morning. What I did not understand at that stage were the police roadblocks to the rural area that we visited. The police were always heavily armed, harsh, and unfriendly when they searched our car. But my mother always put us at ease because she could communicate in the language spoken. My mother's role was pivotal – to mediate a space of safety amid possible discrimination against her children. This was part of the apartheid police managing South African borders between rural and urban areas. We were unaware that politics, through the apartheid Acts, made these areas highly politicised. From these latter experiences with the extended family, our lack of proficiency in my mother's mother tongue, Tswana, positioned us as partial outsiders. Language, in this context, was not merely a communicative tool but a powerful determinant of social identity to express shared values and differences among groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to SIT, our identity is thus not merely derived from group membership but is dynamically shaped by the intersection of multiple social categories and historical forces. As such, I acknowledge that my childhood experiences are deeply entangled with broader socio-political structures and the histories of my community.

6.2.9 Narrative 9: Stephanie

I am the notorious middle child, born into the warmth and security of a loving family in 1970. My mother was a nurse, and my father was a woodwork teacher at a high school. My maternal grandfather was a sailor from England who jumped ship in Cape Town. My maternal grandmother was of Portuguese descent, whose journey to South Africa remains a mystery. My father's grandfather was from England, and his grandmother was from St Helena. I unfortunately have no knowledge of how they came to South Africa. A brown-skinned, curly-haired individual of mixed heritage was attributed the label 'Coloured' in the South African context. As Harro (2000b: 47) states, "[w]e are innocents falling into an already established

system". The racial and ethnic categorisation of the South African society was brought about by the apartheid government as early as 1910 and legislatively implemented from 1948 (Peters, 2004). Segregation resulted in a White "in-group" at the top of the abhorrently constructed social hierarchy, Indian and Coloured "out-groups" positioned as intermediary "out-groups" and the Black "out-group" positioned at the very bottom social category (Tajfel & Turner, 1979: 11). This categorisation, though an external imposition, profoundly shaped the social identities of individuals and groups.

I was fortunate to share my carefree childhood with a brother five years my senior and a sister six years my junior. I was a little tomboy who idolised her brother. I trailed along with him and his friends and was known as his shadow. I do not remember being treated differently by my brother and his friends because I was a girl, and if I was, I probably ignored it. I was exposed to examples of non-traditional gender roles from an early age. Non-traditional roles were not unusual to us. My mother's working hours often resulted in my father doing the cooking or attending to my baby sister when my mother was working. My mother provided us with a powerful model of an independent woman. Our parents instilled in us that one's abilities and aspirations were not bound by gender. This early exposure fostered an understanding of gender as fluid and roles as interchangeable, challenging the societal norms that often dictated rigid gender expectations.

Family holidays were synonymous with long, hot road trips. We devised games to stave off boredom and impatience in reaching our destination. One of the highlights of these trips was passing through other towns. Another was stopping at the roadside to enjoy the *padkos* (food for the journey) of *frikkadels* (meatballs), boiled eggs (with the accompanying smell), sandwiches and coffee. This pitstop doubled as a bathroom break, but in the absence of a bathroom. As children, we thought this was how everyone travelled on road trips. At a young age, I was not aware that there were cafes or little restaurants and toilets at petrol stations, as I had never used such facilities at petrol stations. The reality was that these facilities, in the words of a song, "The Law" in *District Six – The Musical* (Petersen & Kramer, 1986), were reserved for White citizens. This was indeed the law instituted by the 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, which pro-

hibited the use of the same facilities by White and Black nationals (Harvey, 2001). This deeply ingrained segregation, based on race, was an invisible barrier to our youthful eyes, yet it profoundly shaped our daily experiences and perceptions of the world. The 'in-group' of White individuals experienced a world of convenience and access that was denied to 'out-groups', reinforcing the privileged social identity of White South Africans.

The 1950 Group Areas Act saw South Africans designated to separate neighbourhoods created for the separate 'nations' of White, Black, Indian, and Coloured people under the apartheid ideology (Harvey, 2001: 53; Petrus & Isaacs-Martin, 2012: 93). The category of Coloured was engineered for people of mixed genealogy, who did not fit into the other categories. I thus grew up in a so-called 'Coloured' neighbourhood. Most families in our neighbourhood consisted of a mother, a father, and children. In most homes, both parents worked, or fathers worked, and mothers looked after the household. Single-parent families and extended families living in one house were not the norm. Families in the neighbourhood knew each other and looked out for each other. Children were in and out of each other's homes. Grown-ups were always referred to as 'Mr' and 'Mrs So-and-so'. Once homework was done, playtime involved games in the street such as Eggy, Umgoose, and Hide-and-Seek. Sunset signalled routines such as bathtime, family supper, and the much-anticipated story time as part of the bedtime routine.

My siblings and I had a supportive extended family network, too. My father was the youngest of ten children. We had many aunts and uncles who doted on us. My cousins varied greatly in age – I grew up referring to some of them as 'Aunt' and 'Uncle' because of the age difference. It would be extremely disrespectful to call them by their first name only! (This means that even now, as a fifty-three-year-old, I still refer to some of my cousins as Aunty or Uncle!). This extended family formed an additional safety net and a source of security throughout childhood and into adulthood. "These people act as role models to us and teach us how to behave" (Harro, 2000a: 48). This was indeed true for me. An important aspect of family life was the issue of respect, especially respecting one's elders. We were taught never to talk back to someone older than oneself. The notion was instilled that adults or those older than you were right. While encouraged to stand up for us, this was largely limited to con-

fronting peers, a limitation that would prove to be a drawback later in life when navigating hierarchical structures, especially in the workplace.

This 'ideal' childhood played out within the context of an apartheid South Africa. I was largely shielded from the realities of harsh inequalities, the negative impact of social injustice, and the infringement on human rights. I was, however, aware of the perceived differences according to the pigmentation of one's skin, with all White people seen as the enemy who ill-treated non-White people. Simultaneously, the internalisation that White was good and superior and non-White was bad and inferior developed without it being verbalised. The socialisation into the role of an inferior Coloured or non-White individual happened "unconsciously" and in a "consistent" manner as one engaged in daily activities (Harro, 2000a: 15; Love, 2010: 599). This internalisation demonstrates the power of social categorisation and the impact of out-group derogation, even when not explicitly verbalised.

My father and his siblings were avid sportsmen and women. Judging from the oral histories, some of them could have been international sensations in cricket, rugby, soccer, and hockey. The idea of how different their lives could have been, but for apartheid, haunted many and fuelled extreme bitterness. Discrimination infiltrated all spheres of life and dictated opportunities for people classified as Black, Indian, and Coloured (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The opportunities I refer to are further education opportunities, career choices and the prospect of future dreams. Discrimination obliterated sporting opportunities for my father and his siblings. This resulted in us never supporting a South African team (who would be exclusively White) from a very young age. Our family always supported the opposition to the South African team (Sikes, Rider & Llewellyn, 2019). This too, is an example of how my immediate and extended family shaped and influenced my thoughts and identity (Harro, 2000a).

The then South African flag and the Springbok emblem were symbols of the injustice, disparity, and inequality that robbed potential sport stars of a bright future (a bitterness that persists in some measure to this day). I could never understand the patriotism that various countries' citizens show during sporting events, for example. The sound of the apartheid South African anthem, *Die Stem*, was ended as quickly as possible when

heard on the radio and later on television. My brother and I always joked that we thought the first line of the old anthem was "*Uit die blou van onse hemel ….* Switch it off, switch it off, switch if off …".

The interactions with family throughout my childhood and adolescence shaped the beliefs and values related to equity, fair treatment of others, and standing up for the underdog (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). An example of the abandonment of future dreams, which still hurts me to this day, is my brother, who was extremely talented at piano playing and singing. The then choir master of the church we attended (who later became a choir master at the Drakensberg Boys Choir) recommended that my brother join the Drakensberg Boys Choir. He could not because of the discriminatory laws in place. The explicit exclusion based on racial categorisation deeply impacted his personal aspirations and reinforced the oppressive nature of the 'in-group' versus 'out-group' dynamic.

My primary school journey began in 1976. The primary school I attended was adjacent to the high school where my father taught. I vaguely remember my brother not going to school because of a boycott. There were also huge posters hanging on the fence that surrounded the high school. None of this made a significant impression on me at the time – I was oblivious to the political situation and the 1976 Soweto uprising taking place across the country (Twala, 2007). I was securely cocooned in my little world.

6.3 Conclusion

The narratives presented reflect the deeply complex and layered experiences of individuals who came of age during one of the most tumultuous decades in South African history. Together, these stories uncover how apartheid not only shaped daily life through segregation and systemic oppression but also profoundly influenced personal identities, collective consciousness, and intergenerational worldviews.

From Gabriella's protected life under Afrikaner nationalism to Vince's early confrontation with oppression and Reatlegile's sensory memory of tear gas, each narrative reveals a journey of awakening. The social identities of

these individuals were forged in unequal schooling systems, racially structured communities, and constrained social roles. Yet, through education, personal loss, resistance, and reflection, many transitioned from passive participants in the “cycle of socialisation” (Harro, 2000a) to conscious actors in the “cycle of liberation” (Harro, 2000b).

The narratives emphasise how identity formation was inseparable from the political climate. Erikson’s notion of the “identity crisis” and Tatum’s reflections on adolescent questioning resonate strongly across the stories, where music, fashion, spirituality, and sport became both escapes and acts of resistance. Despite different cultural contexts, rural and urban, privileged and marginalised, White and Black, what emerges is a shared sense of dislocation and the gradual unlearning of apartheid’s normalised ideologies.

Love’s (2010) concept of “liberatory consciousness” is evident in the choices made by these narrators. Some joined movements like the UDF, others challenged norms through family values, and many, in small yet powerful ways, resisted the roles assigned to them. Education, whether formal or traditional, served as a powerful site of transformation, enabling critical questioning of apartheid’s logic and igniting aspirations for justice, equity, and reconciliation.

These personal histories do more than recall a difficult past, they contribute to the living archive of resistance, resilience, and identity in South Africa. They demonstrate how storytelling can illuminate the links between systemic oppression and personal transformation, inviting new generations to reflect critically on the unfinished journey towards freedom, dignity, and collective healing.

Chapter 7

Historical overview and narratives of the 1980s

7.1 Historical overview

The 1980s were a pivotal era for South Africa, marked by intense political pressure, social unrest, and growing global opposition to apartheid. The National Party, responsible for implementing apartheid and its associated discriminatory legislation, maintained control over the nation with authoritarian measures, despite increasing domestic and international resistance. The political climate in South Africa was defined by the consolidation of the apartheid system, designed to uphold White supremacy while oppressing Black people, those of mixed race, and individuals of Indian descent (Hunsaker, 1992). Under the leadership of Prime Minister P.W. Botha, the government employed a tactic known as the "total strategy", which aimed to suppress any governmental opposition using military force and repressive laws. During Botha's leadership, the apartheid government established a tricameral (three-chamber) Parliament that offered limited representation to South Africans identified as Coloured and Indian while excluding Black people (Cameron, 2022). Black people were considered to have political rights only in the 'homelands' or 'Independent Bantustans' and in local township councils. Although Coloured and Indian people were afforded a greater level of involvement in the South African political framework, they effectively had no real power. True political authority largely resided in the House of Assembly, which represented the White minority of South Africa (Steytler, 2024).

During this period, the UDF emerged, becoming a prominent symbol and driving force in the anti-apartheid movement. The UDF served as a coalition for various aligned groups, such as trade unions and student organisations. Groups, including progressive religious entities, coordinated widespread opposition to apartheid measures (Houston, 2019). The UDF initiated a significant nationwide effort to discourage Coloured and Indian electorates from participating in elections for the Houses of Representatives and Delegates. Protests from civil society against the tricameral Parliament showed that the majority of South Africans opposed the tricameral system. Despite very low Coloured and Indian voter participation, the new Parliament was nonetheless inaugurated in early 1985 (Frankel, Pines & Swilling, 2022). Those involved in the tricameral system were branded as 'sell-outs' and 'puppets'. The UDF highlighted the growing discontent among various segments of the South African population and their determined stance to unite against the oppressive administration.

The 1980s were marked by escalating civil unrest as the populace became more vocal against apartheid and the harshness of the National Party government (Ottaway, 2010). Many South Africans had grown tired of the economic strife, racial injustice, and political oppression, leading to frequent protests and rebellions (Seekings, 2022). The homes of sell-outs, along with government buildings and beer halls, also faced attacks. The apartheid regime labelled activists as terrorists and communists. Reacting to these political changes, mass action campaigns spread across South Africa, manifesting in strikes, mass protests, and school, rent, and consumer boycotts. Violence often accompanied these protest actions, prompting the government to declare a State of Emergency that persisted for most of that decade (Ottaway, 2010). This declaration allowed the government to detain thousands of activists without trial, further bolstering the anti-apartheid movement.

The anti-apartheid movement gained momentum through grassroots activism, with significant campaigns such as the consumer boycotts led by the expanding UDF. At that time, the townships resembled war zones as the military reacted to protests with brutal force, causing many deaths and injuries (Kynoch, 2005; Rueedi, 2021). During this period, the BCM also gained prominence, aiming primarily to free Black South Africans psychologically. These initiatives reflected a growing sense of agency

among the oppressed, promoting a shared identity crucial for potential political groups. Internationally, support for the anti-apartheid struggle intensified, with protests in cities such as New York and London becoming common. These demonstrations demanded disinvestment and economic sanctions against South Africa (Blumenfeld, 2022). The United Nations enforced various sanctions, and countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom were increasingly pressured to oppose the apartheid regime (Bethlehem & Zalmanovich, 2020). In Britain, the anti-apartheid movement gained increasing traction, becoming the largest-ever mass movement in Britain on an international issue. It rallied thousands across Britain in support of sanctions against South Africa and the release of Nelson Mandela (Graham & Fevre, 2024). The movement built a broad coalition of students, trade unionists, churches, political parties, and community organisations to persuade Britain to end all British collaboration with the South African government. Globally, divestment campaigns targeting companies in South Africa received widespread backing, underscoring the potential impact of economic pressure in fighting oppression. Despite growing international isolation due to the inequalities of apartheid, the National Party government persisted in portraying itself as stable and legitimate.

In the realm of sport, as noted by Booth (2003), activists and adversaries of the South African government adopted various approaches and strategies, including a sports boycott. From the beginning, activists aimed to eliminate racial divisions in South African sport. The sports boycott was one of many resistance strategies intended to pressure the South African government to dismantle apartheid. The influence of sports boycott activists was indeed noticeable. For example, when Zola Budd, a 17-year-old Afrikaner athlete, left her home in Bloemfontein to seize the opportunity to compete in the Olympic Games for Great Britain, Afrikaners did not view her relocation to Britain and her acquisition of British citizenship as an act of betrayal. Instead, they celebrated her as a proud Afrikaner compelled to leave her country to challenge an unjust and harmful international sports boycott (Llewellyn & Rider, 2018). By the end of that decade, activists and supporters of the cause pushed for the creation of non-racial democratic sports organisations that would aid in transitioning to a post-apartheid society (Booth, 2003).

7.2 Narratives of the 1980s

7.2.1 Narrative 1: Gabriella

I was married in the early 1980s, graduated, and completed my honours degree. My two children were born in the mid-80s, and my career as a university lecturer at a historically Black university started soon after. For me, this was a great transformation and adjustment, since I had never before worked closely with Black colleagues or students. It was not difficult, but it took me a while to wrap my head around the way other people think – those from another culture but on the same academic level. Only later, as a working adult, did I move further through the cycle, into what Harro (2000b) calls the "reaching out" stage. I started seeing apartheid for what it was. It made me wonder about my own life and my country. Where did these people come from, where did they study, how did they manage to get these qualifications? I always thought university was only for White people. It sounds naive, but I had never really thought about it before. But then I realised that Black and Coloured people were not complacent. Life went on for them too, and they were also pursuing their studies and careers.

Although the university where I started my academic career was a historically Black university, it was still governed by White management, since Black or Coloured people were either not qualified or not yet given a chance to be placed in leadership roles. Some Black and Coloured lecturers studied overseas because of discrimination and apartheid but returned to their families and to find jobs here.

Afrikaner nationalism remained strong throughout the 1980s, and a sense of Afrikaner and White superiority remained for many years to come.

It was only much later, when I began to question the system and interact with people outside of my group, that I realised that there was, in fact, another 'world' out there. Tajfel and Turner's integrative theory of intergroup conflict (1979) helps explain why it was so difficult to break free from this worldview – our entire sense of identity and self-worth was entwined in belonging to this dominant group.

While the 1980s were a turbulent time in South Africa, with rising protests, strikes, and violent clashes between the apartheid regime and anti-apartheid movements, including the ANC and other liberation groups, I tried to build a career and started a family at the same time. I may have been shielded from much of this turmoil by my family and the government, but I was still experiencing an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. I, like many White South Africans, especially Afrikaners, feared Black uprisings, which the apartheid government amplified through propaganda.

During the 1980s, the government declared multiple states of emergency to try to control growing unrest. Although my family was not as directly affected by these measures, the militarised presence of police, the censorship of the media, and the increasing violence on the streets affected the sense of stability in my family. As parents, we have experienced anxiety about the future, fearing both internal and external threats (including sanctions and international isolation).

I, like many Afrikaans children, did not question apartheid's morality until we encountered alternative viewpoints later in life. Owing to censorship by the apartheid government, which controlled the media, we had limited exposure to anti-apartheid messages. We learnt about political unrest across the country through news that was controlled by the government, which framed these occurrences as communist-led threats to national stability.

We began to question apartheid more openly. Some of my colleagues and friends who had attended university or mixed with more politically aware communities began to see the cracks in the apartheid system.

Suddenly a divide emerged among Afrikaners. Although some remained unwavering supporters of apartheid, there was a growing number who began to question the system, particularly those exposed to different ideas at universities or in urban areas. However, in many Afrikaans homes, attitudes toward apartheid remained conservative and resistant to change.

Despite international sanctions and disinvestment, White Afrikaans families still enjoyed economic growth and a high standard of living compared to the rest of the population, although cracks in the economic and social systems became more apparent as the decade progressed.

7.2.2 Narrative 2: Vince

The 80s were extremely turbulent. The student uprising of 1976 was partly defused when student leaders were identified and incarcerated. Some of these leaders opted to flee the country and joined underground movements such as uMkhonto we Sizwe and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA). Fresh from school, I started my tertiary education at a radical university, namely the University of the Western Cape (UWC). This university, established as a university for 'Coloured' people, was well-known for its defiant stance against apartheid and the then government's segregation policies. Influenced mainly by the BCM and socialist ideologies, UWC became the "home of the intellectual left" (Pretorius, 2021).

Although the university was strongly anti-apartheid, the language of instruction was Afrikaans. This seemed strange because the very cause of the student uprising during the 70s was the apartheid government's insistence that Black students be taught in Afrikaans, a language that was regarded as the language of the oppressor. In the Afrikaans literature classes, we were introduced to the works of '*Sestiger*' Afrikaans authors such as André P Brink (*'n Oomblik in die wind*, *Kennis van die aand*, *Die Ambassadeur,* and *'n Droë wit seisoen*), Etienne Leroux (*Sewe dae by die Silbersteins* and *Magersfontein, O Magersfontein!*) and Breyten Breytenbach (*Voetskrif* and *Lewendood*). These works changed my attitude towards Afrikaners. Reading some of their socially committed, anti-establishment works, I felt that they were one of us and that not all Afrikaners were the same.

We, as students, held many mass meetings under the leadership of student leaders who later became actively involved in South African politics. These mass meetings were also ironically held in Afrikaans; they served to conscientise us and made us aware of the injustices of a segregated South African society. After such meetings, some student leaders would be detained by the South African Security Police. We later learnt that some lecturers (among them professors who were members of the then Broederbond, a clandestine Afrikaner organisation) leaked the names of those prominent student leaders to the police. These students were taken away by the security police in the early hours of the morning to undisclosed locations for interrogation. As a result of the actions of the security police, student protests on campus would flare up, leading to disruptions

to the teaching programme. Students demanded the release of those student leaders who had been detained.

In some instances, the disruptions would last for weeks. It was during such a disruption – I was in my second year, majoring in Afrikaans, Linguistics, and Geography – that my two fellow students and I decided to hitchhike along the N2 highway to Plettenberg Bay, the hometown of one of the students. Although South Africa was marred by protests and upheavals during the 80s, hitchhiking was relatively safe. We managed to make it to Plettenberg Bay and back unscathed, receiving lifts on removal trucks and smaller pickup vans. We were young and carefree; as students, we had nothing to worry about. The only worries we had were getting back to university to face the realities of tests and exams.

Kranshoek, the Coloured residential area in Plettenberg Bay, was wonderful! Our friend's family received us with open arms, although they were not so happy about our hitchhiking endeavours. "You should be careful, because life in South Africa is not safe, you know!" But we were students and students like to challenge things and take risks!

When we returned to Cape Town over a weekend, we read in the Sunday newspaper headlines about the bombing of a power station by freedom fighters (called 'terrorists' then) who infiltrated South Africa from one of the neighbouring countries.

The student protest had its casualties – students who failed their tests and exams, myself included. I was a very good Geography student. In fact, I planned to major in the subject, together with Afrikaans. But fate had other plans. As part of the Geography module, we had a climatology test scheduled shortly after things normalised on campus. We were ill-prepared for the test and the climatology lecturer, an Afrikaner, was not prepared to reschedule the test. I suppose he wanted to teach us a lesson because of our participation in protest action on campus. I failed the test dismally and decided not to take Geography in my third year.

The university had a system called 'the prom' (short for promotion system) where students were allowed to automatically go on to the next year without writing an end-of-year examination, provided that the student

obtained an average year mark of 60% and above. My low test mark for climatology caused my average year mark to drop below this required mark, and this meant that I was not eligible to be automatically promoted.

I took the Geography exam at the end of the year and passed. Since I managed to pass Geography, I could have taken it in my third year, but then I would have had three major subjects. I had already received an automatic promotion for my other major subjects, namely, Linguistics and Afrikaans. My marks for Afrikaans were actually 1 or 2% short of the 60%, which meant that I was supposed to write the exam. However, if my recollection is accurate, I had to ask the Head of the Department to consider me for automatic promotion since one of my other exams were scheduled to be written on the same day. The Head of Department carefully considered my case, after acquainting himself with my performance over the years, and I was exempted from writing the end-of-year exam in Afrikaans.

In my final year, I obtained C grades for both majors, which gave me admission to an honours degree. I chose to do my honours in Afrikaans rather than Linguistics, but only after I had completed my Higher Education Diploma. I graduated and went back to teach at the school where I matriculated, to plough back into the community.

What I regret today is the fact that I received my first degree as well as my Higher Education Diploma *in absentia*. As a way of voicing dissatisfaction against the apartheid regime, most Black students boycotted their graduation ceremonies. This action was against the wishes of my parents who felt that they had sacrificed so much to see me graduate. They would have been so proud to be present to observe how I received my degree and diploma amidst all the cheering at such a memorable occasion. But that was never to happen! After my graduation (*in absentia*) I went back to the school where I had matriculated and started my career as a high school teacher. The influence of my politicised UWC experiences could not be forgotten.

During the 80s, the UDF, a non-racial mass democratic movement consisting of people from all walks of life, cultures, races, genders, and religious orientations, was established. This movement was seen by many as the internal wing of the ANC, which was still a banned organisation. Its leadership consisted of prominent South African clergy such as Archbishop

Desmond Tutu, Dr Allan Boesak, Dr Beyers Naudé, as well as unionists such as Cyril Ramaphosa and Trevor Manuel, to name but a few. People were mobilised in masses against the apartheid regime through rallies, workshops, meetings, and so forth.

The UDF's establishment was seen as an act of defiance against the formation of the '*driekamer-parlementstelsel*' (tricameral parliamentary system consisting of only White, Coloured, and Indian people), which allowed Coloured and Indian people to form part of the government. This system was viewed with suspicion and seen as one of the 'divide and rule' tactics of the White National Party because Black South Africans were excluded. The government's reason for excluding Black people was that they had homelands or the so-called Bantustans where they could live and govern themselves. These homelands included Transkei (for the Xhosa people) and Bophuthatswana (for the Tswana people), to name some. Because of my radical political UWC experiences, I joined the UDF, together with other teachers, unionists, and activists from the broader Bloemfontein area. Together with unionists and activists, we attended rallies in the Free State and the Northern Cape (in the 80s, the Northern Cape was part of the Cape Province). It was at these rallies that we were introduced to prominent activists. These activists would later become prominent politicians in the post-apartheid democratic government of President Nelson Mandela.

It was also during one of these rallies in Kimberley that we were introduced to Albertina Sisulu, the wife of ANC stalwart Walter Sisulu, who was then still imprisoned on Robben Island. Our actions were closely monitored by the security police in Bloemfontein. They were aware of our every movement! I suppose we shared the same common ideals – we were adamant about bringing about change in South Africa, a change that would be for the betterment of marginalised societies. We worked frantically together towards achieving that ideal. In Harro's "cycle of socialisation" (2010a: 620) discussed earlier, it may be regarded as a manner of "building community" and "coalescing" since we all questioned the assumptions and principles underlying the apartheid system.

We were engaged in numerous activities to achieve our goals, such as planning, organising, and lobbying. Viewed in retrospect, we were

lucky not to be 'accidentally' killed by the security police as happened to so many political activists who 'accidentally' fell to their deaths from multi-level buildings. Being aware of the dangers of active involvement in the struggle, I decided to leave the teaching profession to further my studies (an honours degree) in Afrikaans at my alma mater, the UWC.

I think the wonderful lecturers swayed me to pursue my studies in Afrikaans literature. For them, Afrikaans was not the language of the oppressor but a vehicle to continue the struggle against apartheid. They were young, energetic, and highly intellectual, and the Afrikaans students were mesmerised! I recall that UWC's Afrikaans Department at one stage was the second biggest, if not the biggest, department of all the universities in the country.

As part of an assignment for one of my Afrikaans modules for my honours degree, presented by a young and brilliant lecturer who later became a professor and departmental chair at the University of Pretoria, I visited the '*Sestiger*' Afrikaans author, Etienne Leroux, on his farm *Ja-Nee*, not far from Koffiefontein in the Free State. I spent a day with him and his wife, having dinner and talking about his work. He showed me his typewriter, a Hermes, if I am not mistaken, and the manuscript for the book *Die suiwerste Hugenoot*, by Jan Schoeman and which he was working on at that stage but never completed. Leroux died on 30 December 1989 at the age of 67, three years after I visited him on his farm. The book was posthumously published by Human & Rousseau in facsimile format in January 1990. My visit to Leroux left an indelible impression on me – here I was in the presence of a great Afrikaans author whose work I was introduced to by literary scholars at UWC. Yes, Afrikaners were not all the same! This visit also instilled in me a strong urge to study towards a master's and doctoral degree focusing on Leroux's work.

I completed my honours degree in Afrikaans and once again returned to my previous school in Bloemfontein.

But the 80s were also a sad time for our family. We lost our paternal grandmother as well as my second-eldest brother, who went missing. Up to this day, my brother has not been found.

7.2.3 Narrative 3: Reatlegile

1980 is when social identity became significant and the struggle became a significant and complex endeavour influenced by the decade's political, social, and cultural transformations. During this period, there were people in society and children in schools who were uneasy about their identity and how to come out and explain where they belonged. Erikson (1959) termed this an identity crisis. As a teacher, I had to protect the learners in my class who would be mocked by others because of their identity. I would let the students know that they must respect all genders and marginalised groups, such as racial minorities and LGBTQ+ communities. The school community would work together with society to promote inclusivity in all circles.

Uprisings started again, especially in our township, in 1980. Learners were not happy to be taught in a language they did not understand, or to be taught by soldiers who spoke this language and knew nothing about the subjects they were allocated to teach. Our Catholic school was again closed, and we were frustrated by the closure of this school. We were accepted into a government high school. Some of the student leaders in high schools were identified and marked during the student uprising and protests. Four of them were arrested, and put on trial. In 1982, they were each sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment and taken to Robben Island. They served the full 10 years; some of them finding parents, siblings, and family having passed on in their absence.

Some of these leaders opted to flee the country and joined underground movements in neighbouring countries. The student uprising and protests served as a wake-up call to me that the oppression we suffered was not right and that there was a need for transformation. In solidarity with those who were arrested, we used to chant slogans such as "An injury to one is an injury to all". We were not interested in our own personal circumstances, but our interest lay in the betterment of our society. This caused so many young people to go abroad and join underground movements. As students, we were adamant that we would, through our actions, bring about the necessary changes to our circumstances. In this sense, we may be regarded as "liberation workers" (Love, 2010: 129) with a "liberatory consciousness" who were committed "to changing systems and institutions characterised by oppression to create greater equity and social justice" (Love, 2010: 129).

Some initiation schools played an important role in our society, where young people, both boys and girls, learnt about their culture, customs, language, and social responsibility. Boys were taught how to respect and take care of their families when they grew up. They were taught what is meant to act as the head of the family, being providers and protectors of their families. Girls were prepared to take care of their partners (husbands) when married, respecting and serving them; and raising children. During these years, fashion changed – men wore bell-bottoms and double-top shoes – and the music was great. The producers reflected what was happening in the country, staging productions in various halls, including ours. We learnt a lot from these stage shows, particularly how Black people should stand up for their rights when subjected to physical, emotional, and social injustice. The language used was provocative.

From 1984 to 1986, I went to a teachers' college to study to become a teacher. I majored in Setswana and biology. It was interesting to see how all the Setswana lecturers were dedicated to the subject, and this made me love and admire their discipline and diligence towards furthering the education of African languages, particularly Setswana. I continued to further my studies, by enrolling for and obtaining a BA and honours degree in African languages (Setswana) at Unisa (University of South Africa). In 1987, I started teaching Grades 11 and 12 at a local high school. I taught for 19 years at this local high school, promoting the teaching of mother tongue and instilling pride in the learners regarding their language. I showcased the skills taught to me at the college with the aim of instilling a love for learning Setswana and a pride in speaking the language. In 1988, I got married to a loving and caring husband, and we became one, and together we are strong. Our families became united, and we were blessed with three children.

7.2.4 Narrative 4: Morwamocha

In the 1980s, negotiating otherness and social identity became a significant and complex endeavour influenced by the decade's social, political, and cultural transformations. The era was marked by the rise of multiculturalism, which emphasised the recognition and celebration of diverse cultural identities. This period saw an increased awareness of the importance of inclusivity and representation, particularly for marginal-

ised groups such as racial minorities, LGBTQ+ communities, and women. However, this burgeoning recognition often clashed with entrenched social norms and prejudices, making the negotiation of otherness a challenging process. The struggle for civil rights and equality continued, with various movements pushing back against systemic discrimination and advocating for a more inclusive society. These efforts were pivotal in shaping a more nuanced understanding of social identity, where individuals could embrace their unique cultural backgrounds while seeking acceptance within the broader societal framework.

The 1980s also witnessed significant changes in the media landscape, which played a crucial role in shaping and reflecting social identities. Television, music, and film began to explore and portray more diverse stories, though often through a lens that still catered to mainstream sensibilities. However, not all families could afford a television set. We relied on the radio for news.

These cultural products offered new ways for individuals to see themselves and others, fostering a sense of belonging and validation for those who had previously been marginalised. At the same time, the rise of conservative politics, exemplified by the Reagan administration in the United States, often pushed back against these progressive shifts, advocating for a return to traditional values. This tension between progressive and conservative forces highlighted the complexities of negotiating otherness and social identity during the 1980s, as individuals and groups navigated a rapidly changing social landscape.

Moreover, the decade's economic transformations, marked by the rise of neoliberal policies and global capitalism, impacted social identities and notions of otherness. The increasing emphasis on individualism and market-driven success often marginalised those who did not fit into the dominant economic paradigms. The widening gap between the rich and the poor, alongside the decline in industrial jobs and the rise in the service economy, affected how people perceived their place in society. For many, this economic shift meant renegotiating their identities in the context of new social and economic realities. The intersection of race, class, and gender became more pronounced as these factors influenced one's access to opportunities and resources. Thus, the 1980s were a time of

significant social negotiation, where individuals and groups continuously redefined their identities amid the dynamic interplay of cultural recognition, media representation, political ideologies, and economic changes.

The schooling landscape for Black people during the 1980s was shaped by a complex interplay of progress and persistent challenges. Black students in the 1980s still attended underfunded and predominantly Black schools. This was often owing to the persistence of residential segregation, which was influenced by historical and socioeconomic factors. Consequently, Black students frequently faced disparities in educational resources, facilities, and opportunities compared to their White counterparts. During this time, I was still in high school. The choice of subjects at this school was not as wide as that of matric students (Grade 12s) who were forced to take only those subjects the school was prepared to offer. For instance, the subjects offered at that level were biblical studies, history, geography, biology and agricultural science. Mathematics and physical science were introduced in later years. However, many learners like me chose other subjects such as geography and history instead of mathematics and science as the latter were perceived as too difficult.

In response to these harsh inequities and discrimination, there was a growing movement within the Black community to advocate for educational reform and greater investment in predominantly Black schools. Parents, educators, and activists from these disadvantaged racial groups pushed for better funding, improved school facilities, and more culturally relevant curricula that reflected the history and experiences of Black people.

The 1980s also saw an increase in the number of Black educators and administrators, who brought new perspectives and approaches to the schooling system. Their presence helped to address some of the cultural disconnects that Black students often experienced in predominantly White educational settings. Furthermore, various educational programmes and initiatives were introduced to support Black students, including mentorship programmes, scholarships, and after-school activities designed to enhance academic achievement and personal development. Mathematics and physical science began to be introduced in many schools. However, mathematics was still foreign to many of us, so

even when it was taught by good teachers, many of us found it difficult to grasp. I already struggled with numbers on the whole, so the inclusion of alphabet letters such as ‘y’, ‘x’, and ‘z’ in maths only made things worse. I scored very low marks in Standard 8 (Grade 10) because mathematics was introduced at that level, and there had been no foundation during my teenage years at school. Despite these positive developments, the schooling landscape for Black people in the 1980s remained fraught with challenges, as systemic racism and socioeconomic disparities continued to impact educational outcomes.

Overall, the schooling landscape for Black people during the 1980s reflected broader societal dynamics. While there were significant strides toward greater equity and representation, the enduring legacy of segregation and inequality posed ongoing challenges. The efforts to create a more inclusive and effective educational system for Black students highlighted the resilience and determination of the Black community to overcome adversity and advocate for better opportunities for future generations. This was a time when many people were still fuelled with emotions from the 1976 uprisings.

Gender dynamics added another layer of complexity to my experiences. Societal expectations for Black boys often confined them to narrow definitions of masculinity. They were frequently expected to display toughness and emotional restraint, which could hinder their emotional development and limit their self-expression. When corporal punishment was administered to us, we as boys would bend and get a hiding on our buttocks, while girls received lighter slaps on their hands. These gender norms intersected with racial stereotypes that portrayed Black males as inherently aggressive, strong, or threatening.

I started high school in 1982, and matriculated at Khamane High School, in Marapyane, which is now in Mpumalanga, in 1984. My high school years were not very pleasant as corporal punishment was still being meted out to school children. I got *sjamboked* (whipped) several times a week for being late, for not reciting poems well, for making a noise, for failing to do homework, for failing a test or even classwork, and for fighting with other boys. Literally, I would be whipped for anything. Teachers used it to correct the misbehaviour of school children. On arrival at home,

I had to keep it from Mum and not disclose that I received a beating at school. If I mentioned this, my parents would add more lashes to reprimand me and to 'encourage' me not to do such mischief again.

Language presented additional challenges, especially for Black boys growing up in communities where boys started a certain *lingua franca* that could be understood by them only and they became very verbose. I was not used to this. People who were streetwise were those who would be seen hanging around at the shops or on certain streets. I never had time for that. The discipline meted out to us by parents at home deterred us from hanging around and doing nothing.

We reared cattle and goats at home. It was expected of me to drive goats to the veld every day after school and return with them in the evening. This kept me away from the streets, where I missed out on much of what my peers knew about boys' language. Street boys of my age referred to a girl ready to be courted as a 'cherry' or '*meddy*'. Unique vocabulary around money developed – *zaka/nnyoko* (money), *Clipa* (R100), ten *arries* (R10), five jacket (R50), and so forth. Other words related to work (*spane*). When they greeted one another, they would say '*Eita*' and the other person would respond with '*Hola*!' They would further say, 'Go *joang*?' The response would be 'Go Dolly'. Dolly Rathebe was one of the beautiful Black ladies, and when they said, 'Go Dolly', they meant 'It is nice. All is beautiful, all is well'.

Overall, the interplay of gender, ethnicity, and language issues during the 1980s created a challenging environment for a Black boy. These factors influenced his sense of self, his interactions with others, and his ability to access opportunities for personal and professional growth.

In 1985, I enrolled at a college in Thaba Nchu, in the Free State, where I was trained as a teacher. On arrival at the college, there were no old students; it was only us, the newcomers. When the old ones arrived after a week or so, the initiation started. The senior students at Strydom College of Education greeted newcomers with a blend of tradition and friendship. Initiation rituals included a variety of activities meant to break the ice. They were typically light-hearted and intended to promote a sense of belonging. First-year students could be involved in team-building activities, oddball tasks, or conversations about college legends. The old ones

would chant songs, some of which were derogatory and meant to make us feel that we were nothing and that the college belonged to them.

As newcomers, we would feel bad and tell ourselves that when this period comes to an end, we would fight all the bullies, only to find that we became friends with them afterwards. Even though the initiation occasionally included light-hearted jokes, it was closely monitored to ensure it remained welcoming and inclusive. The main objective was to help new students become part of the Strydom family right away by assisting to form relationships and integrating them into the college community. During this time, there were few educational opportunities for Black people. A child would either become a teacher, a clerk, or a policeman.

In the 1980s, a Black boy growing up in South Africa faced a uniquely oppressive and challenging environment shaped by the brutal realities of apartheid. This system of institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination governed every aspect of life, from where he could live and go to school to the types of jobs he could aspire to. Ethnically, he was part of a majority population that was politically and economically marginalised by a White minority government. This racial stratification meant limited access to quality education, healthcare, and other essential services, entrenching cycles of poverty and disadvantage.

Gender roles within the context of apartheid added further complexity to his experiences. As a young Black male, he was often subjected to harsh policing and surveillance. The apartheid regime's security forces were notorious for their brutality, particularly towards Black men, who were frequently perceived as threats to the state. This constant state of scrutiny and potential violence fostered an environment of fear and resistance. The boy would have grown up witnessing and perhaps participating in acts of defiance against apartheid, shaping his understanding of masculinity in terms of resilience and resistance.

Language also played a significant role in his life. South Africa's linguistic landscape is diverse, with numerous indigenous languages spoken alongside Afrikaans and English, the latter two being the languages of power and administration. In the context of apartheid, the use of indigenous languages was often suppressed or devalued, further marginalising Black communities. For a Black boy, navigating this multilingual envi-

ronment meant balancing the preservation of his cultural and linguistic heritage with the pragmatic need to learn Afrikaans or English to access broader opportunities. The educational system, often segregated and inferior in quality, typically emphasised these colonial languages, creating an additional barrier to academic and professional success.

The combined impact of these ethnic, gender, and linguistic factors created a formidable set of challenges for a Black boy in 1980s South Africa. There appears to be a persistent distress that many South Africans continue to carry (Segalo, 2013; 2015), making it difficult to imagine cohesiveness when people exist in a state of pain (either imagined or real). Despite these obstacles, many young Black South Africans found ways to resist and survive, drawing on their cultural strengths and community solidarity. The resilience and ingenuity of these young individuals contributed significantly to the eventual dismantling of apartheid and the ongoing struggle for equality and justice in South Africa. During the 1980s in South Africa, the interplay of class, language, and race under the apartheid regime profoundly influenced the lives of Black boys and the broader society. Each of these factors reinforced the systemic inequalities and shaped individual and collective experiences.

Race was the primary determinant of one's social, economic, and political status under apartheid. The apartheid system legally enforced racial segregation, categorising the population into racial groups – White, Black, Coloured, and Indian, with White people at the top of the hierarchy. Black South Africans, who made up the majority, were subjected to the most severe restrictions and discrimination. They were forced to live in separate, often impoverished areas known as townships or homelands, were denied the right to vote, and had limited access to quality education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. For a Black boy, this meant growing up in a society where he was systematically marginalised and disenfranchised based solely on his race.

Class was intricately linked to race, with the vast majority of Black South Africans living in poverty owing to systemic economic disenfranchisement. The apartheid regime's policies ensured that wealth and resources were concentrated in the hands of the White minority. Black South Africans were often relegated to low-paying, unskilled labour, while skilled and

professional jobs were reserved for White people. This economic stratification perpetuated cycles of poverty within Black communities. A Black boy in the 1980s would have faced significant economic barriers, limiting his access to resources and opportunities necessary for upward mobility.

Language played a crucial role in maintaining the apartheid system and perpetuating inequality. Afrikaans and English were the official languages of government, education, and business, reinforcing the dominance of the White minority. Indigenous languages spoken by Black South Africans were often devalued and marginalised. English and Afrikaans were the languages of the country's White minority, and the Afrikaans language in particular was associated with the apartheid government and its nationalist agenda (Kulik, 2024). The new nation would be based on the erasure of borders between languages and language users who were historically separated under the practices of apartheid. English and Afrikaans, privileged and protected languages in the apartheid era, would no longer be prioritised over the array of languages spoken by Black South Africans (Gilmartin, 2004). For a Black boy, this meant navigating an educational system that often undermined his cultural and linguistic identity while trying to master languages that were not his mother tongue to succeed academically and professionally.

The combination of racial discrimination, economic disenfranchisement, and linguistic marginalisation created a complex web of oppression that profoundly affected Black boys. They were part of a marginalised racial group, grew up in poor conditions, and had to contend with a language barrier in accessing quality education and job opportunities. Despite these challenges, many Black South Africans resisted and fought against the oppressive system, with youth playing a significant role in the struggle for freedom and equality.

Understanding the roles of race, class, and language during the 1980s in South Africa is essential to grasp the full impact of apartheid on the lives of Black boys and the broader society. The legacies of these intersecting forms of oppression continue to influence South Africa today, making the struggle for equality and justice an ongoing journey. If we continue to swim in the sea of unemployment, challenging healthcare and schooling systems that are geared to producing market-ready individuals and not

independent thinkers, then we will continue to produce individuals who perpetuate that which is already in place, and thus we cannot expect a transformed society. South Africa comes from a past of division, and the remnants of this can still be felt (Segalo, 2015). The complexities and challenges faced by South African society cannot be divorced from gender politics. Issues that pertain to gender politics involve the interweaving of individual, family, and societal understanding of how men and women construct their roles daily (Segalo, 2015).

Motsemme (2004: 5) asserts that "making efforts to link our stories to the everyday practices and fractured meanings of existence of individuals and communities is indeed a challenge, but also part of the unavoidable search of telling free and democratic stories". Therefore, if we are to imagine 'true cohesion', we need to create the spaces for multiple converging and diverging stories to be told. It is at these often-uncomfortable intersections that true healing and reconciliation may be initiated.

Social cohesion remains an epistemological dilemma that requires constant interrogation. When millions continue to live below the poverty line, how can cohesion be possible? When many stomachs continue to growl with hunger, while others swim in abundance, we cannot begin to claim a socially cohesive society (Segalo, 2015).

Since the advent of democracy, women can now own property and are allowed to vote, thereby rendering them full citizens. However, this democratic freedom does not necessarily lend itself to automatic access to the power and resources from which they were previously excluded. With this challenge in mind, I proffer an assertion that the past cannot be divorced from the present in that our history has direct implications for the current situation.

Currently, women do get some recognition in the community and political spaces. Females are increasingly occupying the political sphere (in government/parliament), and their presence is undeniable; however, the challenges pertaining to women's lived realities continue to confront them on a regular basis. Many women continue to experience what Michelle Fine (Fine, Burns & Torre, 2002: 26) calls "the presence of an absence", where previously shut doors (e.g. workplaces and educational attainment) are now open – as mentioned earlier, many are now in the workforce. However, for them, this "presence" may remain somewhat of a

facade as they continue to face challenges that are directly linked to the fact that they are women.

7.2.5 Narrative 5: Phoenix

In 1980, I attended high school and discovered that school could actually be enjoyable. This is possibly the reason I am still engaged in education, despite my difficult beginnings. Teachers were stern, yet more approachable; the girls were attractive, and I met many kind individuals with whom I am still in touch. The less intimidating school environment led me to develop a strong interest in my studies, and the newfound autonomy that high school provided was very liberating. I formed friendships with other students who came from various primary schools in Coloured townships around our city. This was a period where acceptance by one's peers, particularly by those of the opposite gender, was crucial in our lives. Psychologists call this the adolescent phase. During this time, as a teenager, I also explored my independence and worked hard to cultivate a sense of self-identity (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010). I, along with many of my peers, became aware of the current social scene. While many of us were still fascinated by American artists such as Michael Jackson and others, local musicians such as Harari, Cheek To Cheek, Brenda Fassie, and The Big Dudes began to dominate the local music scene.

The political tension in the country escalated again. My parents were deeply concerned about the circumstances, and if they had the resources at the time, I am sure they would have sent us to schools in nearby countries such as Eswatini, Botswana, or Zambia, as some families did. Additionally, it was a period when we were introduced to political movements such as the UDF and passionate leaders such as Dr Allan Boesak. The 1980s also marked a time when the National Party government faced increasing pressure both internally and internationally. Economic sanctions were imposed on South Africa owing to its apartheid policies. In reaction, the National Party attempted to manage the situation by introducing a tricameral Parliament. Officially known as the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, the tricameral Parliament served as the country's legislature from 1984 to 1994, as established by the South African Constitution of 1983, which provided a limited political voice to the Coloured and Indian population groups (Umoh, 2023).

In response to this and the continued oppressive laws, protests once again erupted in the nation. Students in Coloured and Black schools across our city and other regions went on a month-long school strike, while White students continued with their education without disruption. Tatum (2013) refers to the concept of "otherness" and suggests that the dominant group enjoys certain privileges, whereas the subdominant group experiences disadvantages. We, as teenagers, found that month to be an enjoyable period filled with various mischievous activities. Children were out on the streets; some made unwise choices or lost interest in education, leading to their permanent absence from school after the boycotts. Some female students ended their education prematurely owing to unplanned pregnancies. Classes slowly resumed, with intermittent student protests continuing throughout my high school years. I eventually graduated in 1983 and given the limited career prospects for people of colour back then, I decided to become a teacher. Because of apartheid laws, my options for pursuing studies were restricted to universities set aside for Coloured people in Cape Town, about 1000 kilometres from home, or at one of the teachers' colleges designated for Coloured individuals throughout the country. This segregated higher education setup once again illustrates the power the dominant group wields over the subdominant groups in society. Consequently, this same power determines how authority might be exercised to the detriment of subordinate groups (Harro, 2010a). I enrolled as a student teacher at the local Teachers' College of Education. Career options for people of colour were scarce, and scholarships were primarily allocated for professions such as teaching, nursing, social work, and the like. This situation further exemplifies how socialisation prepares individuals for either dominant or subdominant roles within society (Harro, 2010a).

In 1985, protests once again dominated the scene, and I recall the South African Police force unleashing their violence on students at the college. We were protesting shortly before the final examinations. The police arrived at the college in armoured vehicles and vans, fully equipped with weapons. They announced via loudspeakers that all students, including those in dormitories, had 15 minutes to leave and clear out the residences. Afterwards, they moved in, released tear gas, and began assaulting students. I attempted to help some students in the dormitories pack their belongings into my car, but by then the police had already taken over the area surrounding the college grounds.

Along with other students, I had to escape on foot, leaving my car behind. Many students suffered injuries, some were detained, and others lost their possessions. The college announced that examinations would proceed as planned, which led to significant tension among students. Some chose to take their examinations, while others aimed to disrupt them. Those who chose to sit for examinations were viewed as the "out-group" by students who considered themselves the "in-group" (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The student representative council (SRC) struggled to manage the student body during this period. Rumours circulated that SRC members were police informants. Some believed these rumours, while others accused the police of spreading them to create division. Some students were arrested, imprisoned, and tortured. It was a deeply sad time, and there was a great deal of mistrust among students. Longstanding friendships and relationships suffered, and some students even quit their studies.

Even though my parents were politically aware and supportive of the freedom struggle, they were worried that I might not finish my education. During that period, for my parents and many others, education was seen as the sole path out of the working-class conditions imposed by apartheid. I ultimately graduated as a teacher, obtaining my Higher Diploma in Secondary Education, and in 1989, I began working as a teacher at a high school in my community. Transitioning from being a student to becoming a teacher was challenging. Spending a few weeks annually in schools as a student teacher barely equipped me for the stark realities of actual classroom settings. This perspective is shared by Mpisi, Groenewald and Barnett (2020) and Shulman (2005), who contend that teaching is a complex and demanding profession. The country's unstable political climate at the time also affected student behaviour, as they were no longer willing to accept information and directives passively from teachers. Students became more outspoken and raised issues of social justice and equity within school environments (Cho, 2017). The teacher education I received scarcely prepared me for such classroom situations. Furthermore, being in a position of authority was difficult. There was also generally a five-year age difference between most Grade 12 students and me, and in some instances, some students were the same age as me. This is why Shay (2013) argues that teacher education programmes should emphasise imparting both theoretical and professional expertise.

Unexpectedly, after a few days at the school, the principal at that time summoned me to his office and informed me that the school management team (SMT) had decided to allocate all Grade 12 Geography teaching to me. He also highlighted the significance of the task and explained that the school's reputation typically relied on its Grade 12 results. I felt extremely anxious about the responsibility given to me and was determined not to let anyone down. I took immense pride in my profession and appreciated the faith the principal had placed in me, striving to fulfil my duties diligently. I quickly realised that not only was the transition to becoming a teacher challenging, but teaching itself was demanding. Like many new teachers, I began my teaching career with an interpretative perspective, attempting to understand the dynamics occurring in the classroom. According to Haritos (2004), this perspective is often shaped by the teachers' own biases, stereotypes, and life experiences. Much of my time was devoted to lesson planning, grading, extracurricular activities, and administrative tasks. My duties were further complicated by the fact that the school I was educating at was solely Afrikaans-medium. Having completed all my schooling and teacher training in English, I spent most of my time after school learning Afrikaans subject terminology and translating content from my English sources to Afrikaans. My efforts were rewarded when I was soon invited to serve as the Head of the Geography Department. However, owing to the regulations of that period, I could not be appointed permanently to the Head of Department position because I did not hold an academic degree. At the time, the SMT was predominantly male, and I did not find this unusual since most senior positions in schools and industry were male dominated. This view is supported by Love's (2010) argument that human beings have the capacity to internalise attitudes, understandings, and thought patterns that allow them to operate within and engage with systems of oppression.

7.2.6 Narrative 6: Christel

In 1980, I started high school. My father got a job at the high school in the town where I was born. It was also the first time I had my father as a teacher. From Grade 8 to matric, I studied mathematics with my father, which was certainly not my favourite subject. I got to know a different side of my father – he joked with the learners, and he really was a good teacher. The school was a combined high and primary school. My father's role as both parent

and teacher created unique dynamics around authority and academic performance. I was privileged – there were just over 100 children in the entire school, and only 11 learners in my class. If you did well in mathematics, physical science, and accounting, you were considered intelligent. It was only later that I realised that I lacked a natural inclination for these subjects.

I remember reflecting in my matric class on the overcrowded classes at the Black school in the township. However, my path never crossed with those of these learners. When I was sent to the bank or post office, I saw the separate entrances for Black people. We were raised not to challenge adults and not to ask unnecessary questions. We drove nearly 20 km to town every day. During some afternoons we played sports, and my mother would pack a basket with food which we ate in my father's classroom. On days when we drove straight home, I would loosen my dress belt even before we passed the last gate, and my shoes were already off.

On the farm, my imagination could run wild. Sometimes I had to herd cattle, and I would take a book with me, often times one written by Langenhoven. I also mowed the lawn. We had a large lawn, and my father bought a ride-on mower.

While we were at school, my mother managed the dairy. In the mornings, she read Bible scriptures to the workers. Our domestic worker, Pauline, could not have children, and my mother took her to a hospital for fertility treatment.

We regularly attended church and in my Grade 11 year I made my profession of faith. I had to recite the confessions from memory, and I had great respect for the elders and the minister. My parents had a few close friends, but we as children would never dare to sit in the company of adults because "children are seen and not heard".

In 1985, I went to university. I pursued a teaching degree and quickly realised that teaching was in my blood. The medium of instruction was Afrikaans, the same as during my primary and secondary schooling. Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue that social identity consists of three components: a cognitive component, which involves knowledge of the group; an evaluative component, which includes positive or negative group evaluations; and an emotional component, which involves positive or negative asso-

ciations. My positive association with Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in primary school, high school, and university has contributed to a positive social identity.

My university comprised mainly White students. I remember the minibus with Black students that arrived early in the mornings and left again in the afternoons. I was not friends with any of these students, and I do not know how far they had to travel or where they lived. Black students never dared go to the student cafeteria, revealing how institutional racism operated through informal exclusion even when formal barriers were supposedly removed. These experiences and observations of exclusion align with Harro's (2000a) view that dominant groups are often unaware of the privileges they enjoy, while subordinate groups constantly experience discomfort. As a result, dominant groups, through various means, oppress subordinate groups.

At university, girls rarely voiced their concerns. I remember how male students studying agriculture would sit on a wall in front of their faculty and award points (and make comments) to girls walking by. I did not want to be noticed – I preferred not getting points or comments. My preference to avoid attention, rather than challenge these boys' behaviour, reflects the socialisation that taught White women to accept subordination within patriarchal structures while maintaining racial privilege over women of colour. Although the negative reactions of male students towards females may not be indicative of who they are, it can simultaneously bring a sense of belonging within their own gender group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It was during this time that I realised that I was good at my preferred subjects. I enjoyed the classes and received good grades.

After obtaining my teaching degree, I started teaching in Johannesburg. I had a Transvaal teaching bursary and was placed at a school on the Gold Reef. I was used to the countryside, and I viewed the city as Sodom and Gomorrah.

My first year of teaching was in the late 1980s, where I was able to share my passion for teaching and learning. In my second year of teaching, there were also Black students in the school. However, the staff were mainly White.

7.2.7 Narrative 7: Sonny

In 1982, I went to a boarding school to complete my high school education in another province, as the situation in my hometown was too volatile owing to the unrest and uprisings in the schools at the time. It was very important to my parents for us to complete our education; hence, both my brother and I were sent to boarding schools. For the first time in a long time, I experienced normality as I could go to school and complete a school day without an incident of disruption. That was quite refreshing and calming, and we could finally focus on our schoolwork and be children. The boarding school I attended was managed by the principal – a very strict lady. It was an all-girls high school. I made friends with several girls from other provinces. Boarding school was a learning curve for me. For the first time, I had to look after myself. There was no more hot water in the mornings, but only cold water to wash ourselves, whether it was summer or winter. In winter, you would take a small bucket and fill it with water the night before to wash the following morning because the water was ice cold and sometimes even frozen. Every morning after breakfast in the dining hall, we would go to the chapel for devotions. We spent an hour there as it was a significant part of imparting values and important life lessons to the girls. I think we were also being groomed to be responsible young women who would one day be married and become mothers. It was a typical gender stereotype in those days. People fall into social groups or categories, and their membership is associated with positive or negative value connotations. Hence, social identity may be positive or negative according to the evaluations (which tend to be socially consensual, either within or across groups) of those groups that contribute to an individual's social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thereafter, we would go to our classes for the academic work for which the school was well known.

Our school had a rich history; even by looking at the buildings you could tell that a great deal of pride went into its existence, and we were always reminded of that. As a result, we were encouraged to reach even greater heights than our predecessors. My school was good academically, and we had excellent teachers. We had a few sporting codes such as netball, softball, tennis, and chess. We held our own social events, such as concerts and beauty pageants, in which I also took part. Every Sunday, the girls attended church in the morning; thereafter, we could do whatever we liked. We had

separate dining halls for seniors and juniors. The same applied to the hostels. The seniors had a nice hostel with two-bedroomed dormitories. This encouraged us to work hard so that we could also reach that level of privilege. I believe most of the girls who went to the school made something of their lives, and I know of some who became medical doctors, lawyers, teachers, and other professionals. We enjoyed sports days – we had athletics and field events, and each girl belonged to a particular 'house'.

We enjoyed the protective environment because the school was located just outside the nearest township, but it was far from any town or village. During short holidays, such as Easter, I would visit my late aunt who stayed in a township nearby. By then, my older sister was also at one of the universities in that province, where she obtained her first degree. During those short holidays, we would meet up at my aunt's place for a short reunion. I would be very excited to meet up with my aunt and big sister – it was the best time for me.

Life at my high school was not without incident. One day, a group of girls were expelled because they slipped through the fence and went to a party in the nearby township. We were all shocked because we never imagined anything like that could happen in our school. Also, one learner sadly passed away, and we were informed that it was due to meningitis. That incident left us shaking with fear, as we imagined the worst would also happen to us. But we received counselling since we had a professional nurse who was permanently employed at the school. As if that was not enough, my grandmother also passed away during that year. That was the saddest news I had ever received because I was very close to her. Life was empty without her around the house. Her passing left a huge void in my heart.

I passed matric, and due to my parents' opinions, I was then faced with the dilemma of choosing nursing or teaching. Eventually, I settled on teaching, and I went to a college of education to obtain my primary teachers' diploma. For the first time, I could attend school without wearing a uniform, which was strange and problematic as well. My father was a great disciplinarian, and he was totally against fashion trends. In my family, children were only given clothes at Christmas. Therefore, as you can imagine, I was under a great deal of pressure. I then came up with a plan. I ordered a dress through one of the leading fashion catalogues in

those days. When the post arrived, I pressured my older brother, who was already working as a teacher at that time, to pay for the dress. After he agreed, I asked the same of my other brother, who was also teaching, and ordered a beautiful white jersey with a collar. He agreed. As a result, I was not worried about having enough clothes to wear – I had two items from a leading fashion catalogue. Life was good! Life at the college was busy as we attended classes and did practical teaching training. Three years went by quickly, and I graduated and started my teaching career.

Teaching was good, and I worked in a wonderful school where they treated me as the 'last born', since I was the youngest member of staff. It was a combined school, from Sub A to Standard 5, and I taught in the senior primary phase. I also helped coach learners in sports.

I remember when I got my first cheque I did not know what to do with it, and I gave it to my parents. I suppose that was my way of showing gratitude. The following day, we went to town to cash the cheque. They helped me open a bank account, and we put some money away. Then we bought some groceries, and I opened my first clothing account. But in the second month, I was wiser. I conducted my own business, and my parents were not concerned because they had shown me how to manage my money. I taught for two years, and then at the end of 1989, my father insisted I was too young to be working, so I resigned to study full time. In 1990, I registered for a Bachelor of Arts degree, which I successfully completed in 1991. I was able to complete my degree in two years because in the two years that I was working, I had registered and studied part time towards my degree, completing four courses already.

For me, the 1980s were a much easier decade than the 1970s. Although the country was still in turmoil as democracy was not yet achieved, I was at least able to study without any disruptions. For me, those were the 'wonder years' as I grew academically, emotionally, and socially, and I finally had direction and experienced a growth trajectory in my career.

7.2.8 Narrative 8: Star

Adolescence is a time of physical, cognitive, and social change, and during this period the sense of 'self' changes and the major developmen-

tal task is the expansion of the self-concept which includes self-awareness and self-identity (Neinstein, Katzman, Callahan, Gordon, Joffe & Rickert, 2016). My high school experience was an exciting time for me. I performed very well and was regarded as very clever. I took part in all activities in school, such as netball, choir, athletics, and even modelling shows. However, some of our teachers were very strict, and my classmates were very undisciplined at times. They would tease learners who were different and call them names, but nothing would happen to them. Most of the time, teachers would just administer corporal punishment to the whole class when there was a noise in the class. Since Bible study was compulsory, we even got beaten up for not carrying our Bibles to school and not knowing some Bible verses.

Thinking back now, some of the teachers were not always qualified, but they presented valuable lessons and encouraged us to perform well. However, the government also employed soldiers in our school to teach some subjects, such as mathematics. They were mostly White males, and the boys in our classes made it difficult for them to teach us properly. These teachers wore their military uniforms. I was not even aware that this could have been part of a political project – during this period, the political situation was very fragile. I did not perform very well in mathematics and was thus forced to do home economics and needlework as part of my majors from Grades 10 to 12. Mathematics was mostly limited to the clever boys.

My mother was, of course, very strict when it came to our schoolwork, studying, and performing well. All schoolwork was supposed to be completed before sunset, and studying was only allowed at night. It was strange that she never checked our books, but only the reports at the end of each quarter. The reports were not supposed to be opened until she came from work to discuss our performance. She never attended the school functions (as far as I can remember), but she was aware of what was happening regarding our conduct and performance at school. Everybody knew my mother as the strict nurse and '*Juffrou*' (the priest's wife) in the community.

Our involvement in church was also very prominent in our household and determined how we were supposed to carry ourselves. The individ-

ual, who is a member of a certain social category, shapes their attitudes and behaviours according to the social identity obtained from this membership. As such, the individual defines themselves as a member of the group, not just as an individual (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005: 442–448). Furthermore, Harro (2000a) indicates that members of a group that benefit from rules may not notice that these are not always fair, as they are inundated with unquestioned and stereotypical messages that shape our thinking. The girls were supposed to behave and dress in a particular way so that they would not expose themselves to males, as women were regarded as holy people. For example, I was taught how to do the washing, how to hang it on the washing line and fold it in a particular way. We were always reminded that women must know how to do certain things and do them properly, without any reason being provided. In our household, all the children performed the household chores during the weekend. Saturdays were the best days as we listened to music and had friends over. My elder brothers had long-playing records (LPs), and we would sing along while cleaning the house. Bob Marley's music was also played, but we never thought his freedom songs were also part of the freedom concerning our country. We never listened to gospel music, but we would sing hymns and choruses without a hymn book. Also, when we gathered as a family, we would sing hymns as an important part of our family culture. Individuals derive a sense of self from the social groups to which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). I only learnt later on, when I was much older, that some of my family members were involved in politics and had encounters with the police. We never spoke about politics in our home, and I was never aware of politics in South Africa, although there was a general dislike of the police. We were always fearful when we saw police vans and large police trucks, as whispers would quickly spread that a war was looming in South Africa. In the meantime, I completed my matric and applied to university with the aim of becoming a needlework and home economics teacher, as that is what I knew best.

According to Hogg and Vaughan (2011: 442–448), an individual begins to evaluate themselves and the external world with the values and norms of the internal group, the membership of which leads to the formation of stereotypes about individuals' egos. The resulting stereotypes strengthen the behaviour of individuals to act as internal group members. The university socialised and exposed me to a different meaning of the South

African context. The education modules focused on the development history of South African education. The oppression aspect and the negative effects of apartheid were emphasised. Although I was aware that we were different, I never knew that the quality of our education differed.

The university was one of the forerunners in the liberation of South Africa. Harro (2000b) states that people who go against societal messages are regarded as troublemakers. Our lecturers trained us to perform to the best of our abilities and influenced us to see how people in South Africa were marginalised and treated differently according to racial groups. My first few months at the university in 1987 were traumatic. The classes were frequently suspended, and police and tear gas were part of our lives. We could sometimes not move freely on campus because we supported the fight for liberation. I was unsettled and realised what was happening at home, where our people were not allowed some privileges in society and at schools. Only then did I understand why we had different locations and different schools.

Many classes were disrupted, and we joined mass meetings. Owing to the unrest on campus, we were sent home a month before the examination. We had to study independently and were only allowed to return when we were supposed to sit for the examination. This was very difficult for me as I had to do mathematics and science (which I was deprived of at school) as part of my training as a home economics teacher, although at school it was only regarded as a 'cookie-baking subject'.

My first two years at university were disruptive, and the liberation struggle continued to be waged. Despite these disruptions, the four years at university gave me a different perspective on the country at large. Strong commitments refer to aspects of identity to which an individual is highly dedicated, and the strength of an individual's commitment is a pivotal part of their identity. Firstly, the strength of one's commitment can indicate (together with the amount of past explorative behaviour) into which identity status they are categorised (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Secondly, the identity commitments that are characterised as being strong are often related to beneficial outcomes, such as well-being and academic success (Meeus, 2011). I qualified as a teacher after four years and went back home a changed person. I thoroughly enjoyed the practical side

of the needlework and home economics subjects, as I could be creative at home when preparing meals. However, I over-emphasised how dishes ought to be cooked and prepared, which caused some laughter and fun in our household. SIT suggests that individuals define themselves in relation to the social groups to which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). My identity as a woman thus became more complex as I navigated the expectations of home life and professional life. Teaching needlework and home economics allowed me to express creativity, especially when preparing meals, which aligned with traditionally feminine roles in my community. My formal training at the university gave me a sense of authority about how things could be done differently, subtly challenging the norms of my home. For me, this is a reflection of the tension between inherited practices and the professional identity I had acquired. Social categorisations are not experienced in isolation but intersect to shape one's sense of self and belonging (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

7.2.9 Narrative 9: Stephanie

A decade old and entering the double digits! I was in Standard 3 (Grade 5) at the primary school adjacent to the high school at which my father taught. A typical school year started off with the athletics season, or school sport as it was referred to. No athletic track in sight, but athletic practice took place on a sand track created by inventive teachers. Four teams (usually colour coded as Red House, Blue House, Yellow House, and Green House) competed against each other. The winners formed the school team that would compete against other schools. There was great excitement as we, all dressed up in our school colours, walked to another school for the inter-school competition where 'Coloured' schools competed against other 'Coloured' schools. Our athletes were led onto the track by drum majorettes. All very exciting!

Looking back, I realise how dedicated our teachers were. The teachers made all this happen in the absence of facilities for these activities. A track was created for the school sports day. We walked to the stadium as school buses were non-existent. The athletes were exposed to an actual track for the first time. The drum majorette uniforms were homemade – their 'boots' created from white cardboard stapled around the lower leg. Our teachers

improvised to give us as normal an experience as possible amid abnormal conditions. Through the examples of my teachers, I learnt to seek solutions to problems and to make the most of what I had. This resilience, born out of necessity, became a core part of my identity.

In 1983, I started high school. This was also the year in which I was confirmed in the Anglican church we attended. A close friend and I who had attended Sunday School, probably since the age of five or six, became Sunday School teachers. We started off as assistants to the teachers of the youngest group. We both remained Sunday School teachers for the next six years. Church and Sunday School provided rare contexts where children from different racial backgrounds could interact across the 'colour line', subtly challenging the enforced segregation outside those walls.

Attending the high school where my father taught was a nightmare! A teenager under the watchful eye of her father and all his colleagues! The first few weeks of school I was without my own identity as I was referred to as 'Mr Walter's daughter'! In Standard 6 (Grade 8) we had to select a practical subject. If art or dancing were offered as subjects, I would have been happy. Unfortunately, art as a subject was only offered at some of the White schools. Dancing, ballet in particular, as far as I knew, was not offered as a subject at any of the schools in the city. The high school I attended offered practical subjects such as woodwork, technical drawing, metalwork, domestic science (home economics and needlework). From a young age, I would closely watch my dad at work and enjoyed sawing, sanding, and planning whenever given the chance. I would have loved to have done woodwork and technical drawing, but alas, these were only for boys! I was forced to choose between needlework and home economics, opting for the latter as I hated it slightly less. This experience was a stark intersection of gender and race, as my identity as a 'Coloured' female limited my choices, pushing me towards traditionally feminine subjects despite my interests. The 'in-group' of male students had access to subjects that were perceived as more vocational or skilled, reflecting gendered stereotypes within the broader societal structure.

In Standard 8 (Grade 10), another subject choice loomed, determining our path until Standard 10 (Grade 12). Choices were limited to two streams – practical or academic. The practical stream offered needlework or home economics (females only), woodwork, metal work (males only), and accounting. The academic stream allowed for mathematics, biology, and physics. There was a stigma attached to selecting the practical stream, as learners who were deemed by teachers as 'academically weak' were forced to enrol for the practical stream. Subject choices were, thus, not necessarily based on one's interests. While subject choices influenced future careers, they were also dictated by the schools one was permitted to attend. This, however, was not the sole factor in career choice. The 1980s were marked by significant political unrest, particularly at institutions of higher education, where students actively rebelled against apartheid. Television news reports frequently highlighted this campus unrest. My protective parents, concerned for my safety, pointed to the local teachers' training college as a safer, more convenient, and economical alternative, offering the huge advantage of a student loan. This effectively ended my dreams of studying physiotherapy at a university. Coloured students studying at a Coloured college of education could receive a study loan. A further advantage was that the loan would not have to be paid back in monetary terms, but by working for the number of years of study plus one extra year. Also, the regularly cited advantage of this career path was that teachers would always be needed, so one would never be short of a job. A job and money to survive independently are what one strives for. The common-sense option was to become a teacher. This decision was a direct consequence of the intersecting pressures of race, socioeconomic status, and the political climate, forcing me to conform to available opportunities rather than pursue my aspirations.

In 1988, I started a three-year teaching diploma at the local college of education, choosing to specialise in teaching 9- to 12-year-olds. My plan was to complete the three-year diploma, teach for four years to fulfil the study-loan agreement and then pursue studies in another field. That change in direction, however, never materialised!

7.3 Conclusion

The personal narratives of the 1980s, as shared by Christel, Phoenix, Reatlegile, Vince, Gabriella, Morwamocha, Sonny, Star, and Stephanie, reveal a decade marked by both disruption and deep personal transformation. These voices, diverse in background yet unified in their experiences of apartheid's systemic oppression, shed light on how individuals navigated the intersections of race, class, gender, and identity in a rapidly changing and volatile South African society.

Christel's account, shaped by a rural, predominantly White upbringing, underscores how social identity was constructed within dominant Afrikaner institutions that normalised racial exclusion. Her reflections on never questioning apartheid, even as Black students were bussed into her university, illustrate Harro's (2000a) insight that dominant groups are often unaware of their privilege until later in life.

In contrast, Phoenix's experience as a Coloured student during the school boycotts reflects the simultaneous thrill of adolescent rebellion and the tragic consequences of disrupted education. While he found joy and mischief in the student protests, he also witnessed how these events derailed many peers' futures, especially young women who became pregnant or dropped out. His eventual journey into teaching, shaped by constrained career options, speaks to how apartheid's socialisation system steered individuals towards subdominant roles.

Reatlegile and Morwamocha both highlight the politicisation of education and the painful realities of being Black teachers and learners during this time. Reatlegile's account of student arrests, underground movements, and his own commitment to promoting Setswana as a means of empowerment reflects the emergence of a "liberatory consciousness" (Love, 2010). Morwamocha's narrative further illustrates how race, gender, and language intertwine to shape identity, with subject choices and access to education serving as key markers of inequality.

Vince's story is steeped in political activism. His time at UWC, "home of the intellectual left", reveals how even within oppressive systems, ideological resistance thrived. His rejection of Afrikaans as solely the language of the

oppressor and his later admiration for Afrikaans authors like Etienne Leroux show how identity can be redefined through education and critical engagement.

Gabriella's transformation, from a White lecturer initially puzzled by her Black colleagues' qualifications to someone who questioned her own worldview, embodies Harro's "reaching out" stage. Her growing awareness of intergroup dynamics, shaped by Tajfel and Turner's theories of in-group bias, demonstrates how dominant identities can shift through sustained interaction and reflection.

For Sonny and Star, boarding school and home life became key sites for the performance and negotiation of gender roles. Sonny's anecdote of having to order clothes secretly through a catalogue shows how rigid expectations constrained female expression. Star's home life, marked by strict religious and gender norms, offers a vivid example of how internalised patriarchal expectations shaped young women's identities, only to be later challenged during her university years.

Stephanie's journey encapsulates many of the decade's contradictions. Limited subject choices based on gender, institutional barriers to university access, and political unrest that shaped educational pathways all reveal how structural forces determined life trajectories. Yet her resilience and determination to teach, despite these barriers, echo the spirit of resistance that runs through each narrative.

Together, these stories form a powerful tapestry of lived experience, rooted in struggle but also in perseverance, community, and transformation. The 1980s were a time of upheaval, but also of awakening, where personal and collective identities were reshaped by the realities of oppression and the hopes of liberation. These narratives remind us that history is not only made by political leaders and laws, but also by ordinary people whose everyday choices and reflections lay the groundwork for social change.

Chapter 8

Historical overview and narratives of the 1990s

8.1 Historical overview of the 1990s

The 1990s were a pivotal decade in South African history, characterised by rapid political change, social upheaval, and the dismantling of the apartheid regime. Years of international sanctions and internal resistance had eroded the legitimacy and stability of the apartheid state, forcing its leaders to enter negotiations with liberation movements. Key apartheid laws were repealed, banned political organisations were unbanned, and the country began a painful but necessary transition toward democracy. Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1990 symbolised both a moral victory and the start of a complex negotiation process fraught with violence and political tension. Despite severe clashes, particularly between ANC and Inkatha supporters, and the involvement of state-aligned forces, dialogue ultimately prevailed. These negotiations culminated in the landmark 1994 democratic elections, where millions voted for the first time, ushering in a new era under President Mandela. Nation-building efforts followed, with initiatives like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission aimed at healing the wounds of apartheid and fostering social cohesion. Cultural and symbolic gestures, such as renaming public spaces and transforming national sports symbols, played an important role in redefin-

ing South African identity. Economically, the post-apartheid government faced enormous challenges and responded with ambitious policy reforms aimed at reducing poverty and promoting inclusive growth. While the decade ended with continued inequality and the daunting task of transformation ahead, the foundations of a democratic South Africa had been firmly laid.

The 1990s marked a transformative period in South Africa's history, catalysed by the economic and political fallout of the 1980s. Mounting international sanctions and widespread internal resistance created significant pressure on the apartheid government to negotiate with the ANC (Pampallis & Bailey, 2021). Financial instability, worsened by restricted access to foreign loans, contributed to a deepening economic crisis that prompted covert and public meetings between apartheid authorities and liberation leaders (Harvey, 2001). These discussions led to the unbanning of the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP), and the PAC, as well as the repeal of apartheid-era laws such as the Separate Amenities Act, the Population Registration Act, and the Group Areas Act (Hirson, 1995a; Marshall, 2010; Ross, 2008a). No longer could rights be granted or denied based on racial classification (Ross, 2008b).

Nelson Mandela's release on 11 February 1990, after 27 years in prison, was a momentous event televised globally, signalling hope for a democratic South Africa (Pampallis & Bailey, 2021). However, violence persisted, particularly between ANC and Inkatha supporters in KwaZulu-Natal. A so-called 'third force' composed of security operatives aligned with right-wing interests orchestrated much of this violence (Pampallis & Bailey, 2021). Despite this turmoil, political negotiations progressed with the launch of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) in late 1991, where 19 political parties, excluding the PAC, the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), the Conservative Party, and the Afrikaner Weerstandbeweging (AWB) [Afrikaner Resistance Movement], participated (Simpson, 2021).

CODESA eventually stalled in May 1992 over disagreements about an interim government and minority veto powers (Ross, 2008a; Worden, 2001). Tensions escalated with the Boipatong massacre, in which 45 township residents were brutally murdered by hostel dwellers aligned with the

Inkatha Freedom Party (Rueedi, 2022). The ANC's withdrawal from negotiations and mass-action campaign prompted renewed urgency. Following further violence, including the September 1992 Bisho massacre, Mandela and De Klerk signed the Record of Understanding, restarting negotiations (Ross, 2008b). This resulted in the formation of the Multi-Party Negotiating Process (MPNP) and the Transitional Executive Council (TEC), which was mandated to oversee the country's transition and ensure conditions for free and fair elections (Murray, 2001; Paruk, 2008; Southall, 1994).

The first democratic election took place from 26 to 28 April 1994, managed by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) (Mhlongo, 2020). Voter turnout was extraordinary, with peaceful queues of citizens across the country. The ANC won 62.6% of the vote, followed by the National Party with 20% and Inkatha with 10% (Lodge, 1995). Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as president on 10 May 1994, alongside deputies Thabo Mbeki and F.W. de Klerk, forming a Government of National Unity (GNU) (Jansen van Rensburg, 2001).

The GNU was tasked with leading South Africa through transition, drafting a new constitution, and promoting nation-building and reconciliation. One of its major achievements was the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) under the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act (Pradier, Rubin & Van der Merwe, 2018). The TRC aimed to address gross human rights violations and foster healing through truth-telling and amnesty for full disclosure.

Social cohesion, defined as solidarity among diverse citizens (Chipkin & Ngqulunga, 2008), was essential after decades of segregation and injustice. Nation-building required addressing inherited inequalities and reconciling a fractured society (Abrahams, 2016). This included symbolic measures such as renaming towns, cities, and streets previously honouring apartheid figures. These changes sought to redress historical narratives and recognise previously oppressed communities (Guyot & Seethal, 2007; Swart, 2008).

Sport played a powerful role in reconciliation. During apartheid, non-White South Africans were excluded from national teams, and many supported opposing teams in protest (Lapchick, 1979). The Springbok emblem, once a symbol of White supremacy, was embraced by Mandela in a

landmark moment when he wore the jersey at the 1995 Rugby World Cup final. His gesture signalled the transformation of a divisive symbol into one of unity (Desai, 2010; Sikes et al., 2019). While some still feel alienated, increased diversity – initially enforced through quotas – has slowly shifted perceptions (Coetzee, Pelser, Ngwenya & Prinsloo, 2021).

Economically, the ANC-led government inherited a crisis. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was launched in 1994 to address poverty, improve living conditions, and stimulate the economy (Mosala, Venter & Bain, 2017). Although it made progress in areas such as healthcare and welfare, it was soon replaced by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy in 1996. GEAR aimed to boost growth and reduce inequality but ultimately failed to deliver the desired results (Streak, 2004). Nevertheless, economic growth reached 3% in the decade following apartheid, buoyed by reintegration into the global market (Du Plessis & Smit, 2006).

In 1999, South Africa held its second democratic election. Sixteen parties contested, with 13 gaining representation. The ANC again emerged victorious, and Thabo Mbeki succeeded Mandela as president (Bauer, 2001). His administration would go on to focus on the African Renaissance and deepening the transformation process. The 1990s, while turbulent, were foundational in dismantling apartheid, establishing democracy, and setting South Africa on a new, though challenging, path forward.

The 1990s represented a watershed decade in South Africa's history, marked by both profound challenges and transformative progress. The collapse of apartheid was neither swift nor bloodless, but the decade's hard-won gains laid the groundwork for a democratic society. Key moments, such as the unbanning of political movements, the release of Nelson Mandela, and the first democratic elections, reflected the country's shift from oppression to inclusion. The political transition, though fraught with violence and negotiation deadlocks, ultimately demonstrated the power of compromise and leadership. Reconciliation was pursued not only through formal mechanisms like the TRC but also through cultural symbols and national gestures that aimed to build a shared identity. Social cohesion became a central, if difficult, goal, requiring more than legal reform; it demanded recognition of past injustices and meaningful

transformation. Economically, the government faced the mammoth task of reversing decades of inequality with limited resources and high expectations. Although policies like GEAR fell short of their targets, the period saw a return to international legitimacy and modest growth. As the decade ended with a peaceful transition to Mbeki's presidency, the democratic project remained incomplete but firmly underway. Ultimately, the 1990s were a defining chapter that closed the door on institutionalised racism and opened the possibilities of a more just and unified South Africa.

8.2 Narratives of the 1990s

8.2.1 Narrative 1: Gabriella

Raising a family and building a career during the 1990s were marked by significant social, political, and economic changes as the country transitioned from apartheid to democracy. This brought both uncertainty and new opportunities, and we experienced a mix of privilege, anxiety, and adjustment. Owing to the Apartheid Group Areas Act, the university was situated in a Black area and we also stayed there for a few years. But in the early 1990s, politics started to change rapidly and the dismantling of apartheid brought a great deal of uncertainty and fear. Things became very unsettling in this area, and we moved to a nearby town. The first democratic elections in 1994 took place and Nelson Mandela became president. After decades of living under a system that provided us with social, economic, and political advantages, the shift to majority rule left us anxious about our future in a new, non-racial South Africa.

Previously, schools had been either Black or White, but more schools were becoming integrated. By the time my children went to nursery school, most of the schools where we lived already had children of all races. They very quickly became part of this new system and had several Black friends throughout their school career. For many, this was a difficult adjustment, while we saw it as an opportunity for our children to grow up in a more inclusive society.

Although Afrikaans-language education was a priority for us, we were unsure about the future and decided to place our children in English-medium schools. However, we always spoke Afrikaans at home. My chil-

dren grew up bilingual, but their English remained strong academically. Whether this was the right or wrong decision, I would never know, and I have often wondered about it. This arrangement may not have worked for everyone, but it seemed to have worked for us. Some parents were concerned that Afrikaans would lose its prominence as English became the dominant language of business, government, and higher education in post-apartheid South Africa. My children's Afrikaner culture was not diminished by this, and they are still very much Afrikaans.

Since my children grew up in the 1990s, they matured in a society that was more diverse and less strictly segregated than the one we had known. As a result, they have different views on race and identity. Many older people struggled with these changes as their children developed more liberal attitudes toward race, democracy, and integration.

Many White people also faced uncertainty about their economic future. The end of apartheid meant empowering the previously disadvantaged majority. For many White professionals, it meant the possibility of losing their jobs owing to affirmative action policies. This led to job insecurity and the need to adapt to a more competitive labour market. This caused many White people, like my husband, to shift toward the private sector, where he felt he had more control over his career and could avoid some of the pressures of affirmative action policies. He was able to navigate this change successfully.

Although many White people left for countries such as Australia, Canada, or England because of insecurity and to seek greater economic stability and security, we were still determined to stay. It was only much later that we aspired to emigrate, but during the 90s and early 2000s, we remained and adapted to the new political situation. This new reality also brought fear of crime and lack of safety, which led White people to equip their homes with burglar bars and alarm systems.

The whole new political arena created many different points of view. Many White people embraced the new South Africa, while others tried to hold onto the old. This also created opportunities for various new political parties to form – some liberal, some conservative, and a few in between. This also caused more division in Afrikaner communities and families.

Despite these political changes, many Afrikaans families were determined to preserve their cultural identity, language, and traditions. Afrikaans cultural festivals, traditional Afrikaner holidays, such as the Day of the Vow (*Geloftedag*), and other traditional activities remained. Friends and family often had quite different points of view. We started to redefine what it meant to be an Afrikaner in a non-racial democracy. As young parents, we began to see our identity as more fluid, incorporating a sense of South African-'ness' alongside our Afrikaner heritage. Some embraced a more inclusive multicultural identity, while others remained attached to the idea of preserving Afrikaner culture in its more conservative form.

The political and social changes of the 1990s often created tension between parents and their children. While older generations of Afrikaners had grown up under apartheid and often held conservative views, younger generations, especially those raised in the latter part of the 1990s, were more open to diversity, integration, and democratic values. These changes between generations resulted in family conflicts about race, politics, and the future direction of South Africa. As young parents, we wanted to make it easier for our children to adapt to the new South Africa, but our parents did not always agree.

Despite the challenges, many Afrikaners found new opportunities in post-apartheid South Africa, especially for those in business or with specialised skills. Working at the university during this time personally gave me many opportunities, such as further studies, research, and travelling locally and overseas for conferences and collaborations. I completed my PhD, and new opportunities presented themselves. I received a significant grant that allowed me to assist a few honours and master's students (Black and White) to complete their studies.

8.2.2 Narrative 2: Vince

The political landscape in South Africa changed dramatically after the dawn of democracy in 1994. I felt that we were eventually free after the student struggles of the 70s and the 80s. Our efforts as activists in the UDF struggle against apartheid had paid off. It was through the relentless, selfless, and unwavering efforts of community members, students, and student leaders during the 50s, 60s, 70s, and 80s that the South Afri-

can landscape was politically transformed, and I was part of it! In 1992, already, in the face of the political changes that were going to come, I enrolled for a master's degree in Afrikaans literature at the University of the Free State. This was also an experience that would change my view towards the Afrikaner. My supervisor, an expert on the work of Leroux, was exceptional and a great literary scholar. And he was also very strict, I must add. In my relationship with my supervisor who also later became my promoter for my PhD studies, I never felt that I was treated differently from the other students who happened to be White. It must also be noted that I was the first student in the department who was not classified as White.

While still teaching at the high school, some of the local Black UDF activists with whom I rubbed shoulders during the struggle against apartheid made huge strides in politics. Some of them would become high-ranking officials in local and provincial government. I lost contact with them, and that finally signalled the end of the struggle.

The 90s also saw me transitioning from a high school teacher to a lecturer at one of the higher education institutions in the Free State, the then Technikon Free State. I applied for a lectureship in language practice teaching Afrikaans and Communication in Afrikaans, but in the end, I also taught English Communication. Teaching English Communication was a totally new experience for me. Through meticulous planning of my lectures and the confidence I had gained as a teacher for so many years, I pulled through. I remained at the Technikon Free State for 13 years, during which time I saw it transition into a university of technology, namely the Central University of Technology (CUT), Free State, during the tenure of Mr Kader Asmal, the then Minister of Higher Education. I also became a senior lecturer and the Programme Head for Language Practice at the CUT. I forged wonderful friendships with the mainly White staff in my department. My students were from diverse backgrounds – Black, White, Coloured, male, female, and non-binary. They were students in the true sense of the word. They were eager to learn, curious, and respectful. I guess it was because of the respect I had for them. I still maintain that it was because of the value of respect for other people, which was instilled by my parents, that I could have such wonderful relationships with my students. To me, colour, cultural background, or language did not matter. After so many years of teaching, I still instil in my students the value of respect!

In terms of language, my students at the CUT came from various linguistic backgrounds, namely Sesotho, Setswana, isiXhosa, English, and Afrikaans. As a result, I initially planned my lectures for a subject such as Language Dynamics in English and Afrikaans since the university's language policies catered for that. But because of the dwindling number of Afrikaans students, the language of instruction gradually became English in my Language Dynamics class. The confidence that I acquired using English as a medium of instruction assisted me later in doing the same in the School of Higher Education Studies (SHES) at the University of the Free State, where I was appointed in later years. It also assisted me in doing presentations at local conferences and abroad and supervising and promoting students in higher education studies from countries such as Pakistan and Zambia. But this did not influence my love for Afrikaans as my mother tongue. My Afrikaans teachers at high school, the brilliant lecturers at UWC, as well as my supervisor and promoter at the UFS and their influence in my life through Afrikaans lingered with me all those years. My circle of friends was Afrikaans, the church I attended with my family was Afrikaans, and my whole worldview was shaped through and by Afrikaans, as well as my cultural background. The same can therefore be said about my social identity.

This decade was concluded, on a personal front, by the accidental death of my father on 9 December 1999.

8.2.3 Narrative 3: Reatlegile

In 1999, I was seconded to teach mother tongue language at a college of education in our city because of the passion I had for teaching mother tongue as a language. The students I taught at this college loved what I did with the language. They also started to show the ability to express themselves clearly through language. There are excellent teachers throughout the various provinces teaching at different schools. Some have been promoted to be HODs of Setswana in high schools, others have been promoted to be subject advisers of the subject of Setswana. These Setswana subject advisers would visit Setswana teachers at various schools, sharing experiences on how to teach the language and to promote the love of language, linking it to our culture. It is necessary to understand the importance of language and to know that it cannot be

separated from culture; language is culture, and culture is language – they are inseparable.

8.2.4 Narrative 4: Morwamocha

The era around 1990 is characterised by a transformative period in South African history, marked by profound political, social, and economic changes. This decade witnessed the dismantling of the apartheid system in 1994. This apartheid system wielded racially discriminatory policies that were used to govern the country for almost half a century. Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990, and the subsequent negotiations between the ANC and the ruling National Party led to the first multiracial elections in 1994. The present president of the country, Cyril Ramaphosa, was instrumental in leading the negotiation processes. This period of transition not only redefined South Africa's national identity but also had significant implications for its position on the global stage.

During this time, I was already a teacher as I had started teaching in 1989 under the Bophuthatswana regime at a high school in Mpumalanga Province. Learners at this school accorded me the respect that I deserved as a teacher. I belonged to the Bophuthatswana Teachers Union (BTA), which was not in any way against the Bophuthatswana government. This union was never involved in salary negotiations, never represented any teacher in hearings, and never bargained for the improvement of working conditions for the teachers. The political landscape in South Africa was starting to transform. Much was being said about the new government. As an apolitical person, I did not follow anything that dealt with politics. I had a vision of equipping myself with education, hence the nine qualifications I acquired from more than seven institutions of higher learning.

Chief Lucas Manyane Mangope was ousted as the leader of Bophuthatswana, and a new ANC-led government was ushered in. Many of us were jittery about the instability in Bophuthatswana as we were not used to the turmoil we saw on television. When the looting happened in Bophuthatswana, I was a teacher at a high school in Mahikeng in the former Bophuthatswana. The ousting of Lucas Manyane Mangope from Bophuthatswana occurred in March 1994, just before people

could prepare themselves for South Africa's first democratic elections. Lucas Manyane Mangope, the leader of the then Bophuthatswana Bantustan, refused to participate in the upcoming elections and declared that Bophuthatswana would remain independent. Some of us who did not understand the politics and all the strategising thought the same. This stance led to widespread unrest in areas such as Mahikeng, Itsoseng, Zeerust, Rustenburg, Brits, and the Moretele 1 and 2 areas. All the Bophuthatswana districts were up in arms. As protests and violence escalated, Mangope called for assistance from far-right groups such as the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB). However, their intervention was disastrous and further inflamed the situation. Lawlessness erupted among the people of Bophuthatswana. As a result, looting started in various malls and big shopping complexes of Bophuthatswana where people were seen stealing from the shops. The South African Defence Force intervened, and Mangope was ultimately deposed. Mangope made several remarks about the new government. His removal marked the end of Bophuthatswana as a pseudo-independent state and its reintegration into South Africa, facilitating the country's transition to democracy. The fall of President Lucas Manyane Mangope came as a blow to some people. I also, like many other people who enjoyed the comfort of Bophuthatswana independence, thought Mangope would join the new government because he was an effective leader – there was law and order during Mangope's rule and people had jobs.

8.2.5 Narrative 5: Phoenix

In 1990, Nelson Mandela was freed, and the ANC, along with additional political parties, was declared legal. The nation experienced a time of excitement mixed with uncertainty. That same decade saw Nelson Mandela become South Africa's first democratically elected president. The peaceful transition was lauded by the international community. Many first-world nations were eager to make investments in South Africa. For those previously politically oppressed, this period represented a time of hope and possibility, while privileged groups viewed the shifting political scene as a potential threat. Progressive legislative changes enabled people of colour to gain entry to institutions that had been exclusively for White people. One example was a historically White university situated about 180 km from where I lived. At that time, my town lacked a university, and it was

required for secondary school teachers to have both a teaching diploma and a degree to advance their careers. Since I only possessed a teaching diploma, I decided to pursue a BA degree, focusing on geography and psychology at the mentioned historically White university. My experience as a part-time student was demanding. Everything from the buildings, ethos, staff, to students reflected the White Afrikaner culture. The teaching language was solely Afrikaans. Though I could speak Afrikaans, my entire education had been in English, and the academic Afrikaans used at the university was beyond my comprehension. All the lectures and reading materials were in Afrikaans. My social identity, which encompassed my background in a working-class, Coloured township and my difficulty with academic Afrikaans, placed me at a disadvantage within a powerful system of oppression. This connects to Tajfel and Turner's SIT (1979), revealing how my cultural and historical background resulted in various dynamic positions owing to the particular social context and one specific facet of my identity, namely race (Mpisi et al., 2020).

Facing unkind treatment from lecturers, administrative personnel, and peers, I soon understood that people of colour were not embraced in their surroundings. I remember an event in an elevator at the university. When the elevator doors opened on the next level, two White female students tried to enter. Upon seeing me, one of them exclaimed, "Sies, K..." and moved back. On another occasion during a field trip, I took a seat on a bus with two vacant seats next to me. As students boarded, two White students observed the empty spaces beside me but chose to sit on the laps of other White students in the seats in front of me instead. Harro's cycle of socialisation (2010a) describes how people develop attitudes or acquire skills to operate effectively in a specific context. The way identities are experienced by individuals depends on and is influenced by their social group or category membership, such as race, class, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, or physical ability (Francis, 2006). On another occasion, my friend and I had to take makeup tests soon after the first democratic elections in 1994. We were instructed to complete three one-hour tests. The lecturer escorted us to a dusty storeroom, told us to sit on the two available chairs, and handed us the three tests, instructing that we only had one hour to finish them instead of the usual three hours. After an hour, he switched off the lights, leaving the room completely dark, and collected our test papers. These scenarios illustrate Tatum's

(2013) concept of the categories of otherness, where the dominant group enjoys privilege, while the subordinate group experiences disadvantage.

This treatment left me feeling profoundly saddened, unaccepted, dehumanised, and utterly alienated. I felt the university only accepted students of colour out of obligation, but tried to make our lives difficult, hoping we would either fail or give up. Nonetheless, I did not give in. I persevered, earned distinctions in several subjects, and even graduated *cum laude* in one of my degrees. In 1990, I also encountered a beautiful young lady who was also a teacher. She lived in a different neighbourhood than I did, which was known for a few notorious individuals feared by many. The fact that I lived in a different neighbourhood presented an obvious territorial challenge. There was an unwritten rule in our communities that prohibited individuals from visiting neighbourhoods other than their own, especially in matters of courtship. According to Pinkster, Ferier and Hoekstra (2020), the creation of such socio-spatial fictional boundaries is common in neighbourhoods inhabited by people of colour and is often used in the process of othering. Since I was captivated by this lady and wanted to get to know her better, I broke this unwritten rule and faced the consequences for doing so. One evening, after visiting her, I discovered that three tyres of my newly acquired vehicle had been slashed. On another occasion, my side window was broken, and the car radio was stolen. As time passed, there were no further incidents, and I presumed that I had endured enough punishment for crossing imaginary boundaries. Eventually, young men in the neighbourhood started greeting me politely, which I took as a sign of acceptance.

We were in a relationship for half a decade before marrying in 1994, just a few months following the initial democratic elections. The changed political climate allowed us to buy a house in what was historically a White suburb. It was quite fascinating how most estate agents, who were White, engaged with us while showcasing properties available for sale. They all presumed they knew what type of property we desired. Multiple agents showed us homes in dilapidated White neighbourhoods. During these interactions, they would eagerly highlight where other Black people resided or the property's vicinity to a taxi route, assuming we did not own a car and would rely on public transportation. The demeanour of these estate agents might have stemmed from their cultural and institutional sociali-

sation, as Harro (2010a) discusses, as well as Tatum's (2013) ideas about otherness, where those in the dominant group tend to make choices for those they view as inferior.

We eventually settled on a house in a serene suburb. The property was owned by an elderly Afrikaner widow who did not permit my wife and I to view it, though she had no issue with the estate agent entering, but was hesitant about us. After purchasing the home, we let her continue to live there, not charging her any rent for occupancy. On one occasion, when my wife visited to measure the windows for curtains, the widow denied us entry. Upon finally moving in, one of our Afrikaner neighbours visited to welcome us into the community. They were incredibly friendly, supportive, and made us feel quite at home. As I am terrible at handyman work, this gentleman was very helpful, assisting with various tasks required around the house. When they invited us over for tea, they made significant effort to show that they had adopted the spirit of the new South Africa, offering us tea in mugs adorned with the *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* emblem. Harro's cycle of liberation (2010b) explores how awareness of oppression and discriminatory behaviours can lead to transformation through intrapersonal, interpersonal, and institutional changes.

Our neighbours on the opposite side were not as amiable and frequently complained when our dog barked. On one occasion, we hired a construction company to build a carport in our driveway, and upon returning home from work, we found that the neighbour had told the workers to cease their work and demanded to see the building plans. She often reported us to the health authorities, accusing us of having an unkempt garden, even though ours was one of the most attractive gardens on the street. These experiences with White people illustrate how challenging it is for individuals to shift from their ingrained stereotypes and biases. It seems that the journey to becoming a change-maker is far from being a single event. Instead, it is ongoing and persistent. This demanding process often involves observation, contemplation, self-examination, questioning, self-dialogue, making mistakes, acknowledging those mistakes, correcting them, and continuing this demanding, yet essential, journey (Mpisi et al., 2020).

Hosting the Rugby World Cup in 1995 symbolised another pivotal moment in the country. The World Cup was the first large sporting event in South Africa, following the fall of apartheid. It was also the first World Cup in which South Africa was allowed to participate; the International Rugby Football Board had only readmitted South Africa to international rugby in 1992 after negotiations to end apartheid. Nelson Mandela, who was the president at the time, actively showed his support for the Springbok rugby team. This was a significant occasion as the Springbok rugby team had historically been viewed with animosity by Black South Africans. This act by the president was a means to encourage other Black people to support the rugby team and promote social and racial harmony. The South African team won the Rugby World Cup that year, resulting in considerable celebrations across racial divisions, showcasing the Rainbow Nation to the global community.

It appears fate favoured South Africa, as in February 1996, the South African soccer team, fondly known by fans as Bafana-Bafana, emerged victorious in the African Cup of Nations. During that crucial match, I had to urgently take my wife to the hospital because she was in labour. The next morning, we welcomed our first child, a healthy baby boy, whom many began calling Bafana. The subsequent year, we were fortunate again with the arrival of a beautiful daughter. My wife and I intentionally chose not to let our own apartheid-era prejudices influence our children. We avoid discussing racial issues around them and encourage friendships across racial, cultural, religious, and linguistic barriers. This decision aligns with Sleeter's (2013) perspective, which supports the recognition of diverse historical, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, as well as my aspiration for change (Freire, 1990; Parker, 2010). Managing our roles as educators and parents of two young children demanded strategic planning, especially since both of us simultaneously became deputy principals at different schools in 1998. This period also marked the unification of previously segregated educational departments. It was a particularly demanding period in the field of education. I was also chosen as a provincial Geography examiner in my region. Our responsibilities included drawing up the final Grade 12 exam paper, overseeing the marking process at year end, and submitting a comprehensive report. The task was substantial, as learners across the province were to take a standardised exam for the first time. My marking team comprised teachers from diverse racial backgrounds.

Several White teachers were reluctant to follow my guidance and preferred to validate it with my White colleague, who was an examiner in another section. Even in school sports integration, we faced considerable disagreement. Being involved in athletics, I was a skilled timekeeper for track events. My White colleagues consistently questioned the accuracy of my timing, which I found quite frustrating and patronising. Upon reflecting on the behaviour of my White colleagues towards me, I reached a critical awareness of the persisting inequalities within society and the education system. I concluded that these disparities were largely due to longstanding social constructs, biases, and stereotypical views concerning the 'other' (Groenewald & Mpisi, 2022).

8.2.6 Narrative 6: Christel

In the early 1990s, I joined a hiking club. On the second weekend of February, I went hiking. On Sunday, 11 February 1990, as we were returning, I read the newspaper headlines: "Nelson Mandela has been released." I knew South Africa would never be the same again, but I also realised that it was high time. This moment represents what Harro (2000a) describes as the beginning of an awakening phase in the cycle of liberation.

In 1991, I participated in the referendum in which only White South Africans participated. I voted 'Yes' to end the apartheid system, as did 60% of White South Africans. After this, I closely followed the news during the negotiations of CODESA I and II. A new chapter began in South Africa, one that had to be built on in terms of multicultural relations. On a personal level, this was also a period during which I fell in love, became engaged, and got married.

At the end of 1993, we left Johannesburg for the countryside. During the first democratic election, my firstborn was two months old. I remember the long queues at the voting booths. My firstborn was in a pram, and many farm workers queued with the farmers to cast their vote. Many White South Africans were afraid of the new regime. There were people who hoarded canned food in fear of the outbreak of a civil war. We all watched as Nelson Mandela was sworn in as the first Black president in South Africa. I had hope and I looked forward to the new chapter for South Africa. The 90s was also the only time that I was not working. For

four years I was a homemaker. I took care of the children, cooked, baked, and worked in the garden, and found creative ways to keep myself busy. I was a member of a Bible study group, was an active member in church and joined a creative club for women. My emotional response of peace rather than fear during this transition period reflected both religious faith and growing recognition that apartheid was morally unsustainable. The trust in God that sustained me during this period was later complemented by a deeper understanding of social justice.

After 1997, I started teaching again, this time in a neighbouring school 40 km away. The secondary school had a hostel and accommodated several Lesotho learners. Most of the learners were Black Sesotho speakers, with a few White Afrikaans-speaking learners. The parents of the Black learners were all employed and sent their children to the school in town for a better education. Low-income parents or those who were unemployed would send their children to the schools in the township. Parents of White learners in the school, on the other hand, could not afford to send their children to larger neighbouring schools with more White learners, better resources, but higher school fees. These patterns reveal how class and race intersect to create complex hierarchies of educational access and quality.

8.2.7 Narrative 7: Sonny

In January 1992, I resumed my teaching career. I was appointed to a teaching post at a high school in my hometown. I was going to teach at a high school for the first time, and I was terrified, to say the least. Fortunately for me, I was one of five teachers – three female and two male – who had been placed at this high school to teach for the very first time. The two male teachers have sadly since passed on. We were all very excited about starting our teaching careers and passionate about teaching. We were young and had big ideas for our students and our school. Discipline in our school was a bit difficult since our school was in the heart of the township. But as young professionals, we were determined to familiarise our learners with the culture of choral music, sport, and academics. We revived these activities and soon our school began to excel in all three. The school competed in choral music festivals and excelled at the district, provincial and national levels. The same was true for debating.

We started a debating society, and its success transcended all boundaries. The school even went on to compete in a United Nations international debating competition. Likewise, in sports, soon enough our school became known for producing strong results, especially in soccer, rugby, and cricket. The former model C schools in town would come to our school to scout for talented learners and then offer them scholarships to study at their schools because of their talent in sports.

Academically, our school excelled and people took notes. At one point, a journalist from a local newspaper visited our school to conduct interviews because the school had ranked top in the district, producing good results in mathematics, English Home Language and First Additional Language. It was also the first time that the school had learners writing English Home Language during matric examinations. It was difficult for some White teachers to accept that Black students could learn and produce good results in English Home Language. During the last term of each year, teachers had to gather at a venue for peer assessment of their students' portfolios. I had two learners who had registered for English Home Language, and I had to travel to town for these two portfolios to be assessed, since there were no schools offering English Home Language in the township. When I arrived at the designated venue where the peer assessments were held, the surprise on their faces was obvious, as was the question in their eyes, as if they were saying, "And you, what on earth are you doing here?" It was even a struggle to find a peer to assess my two portfolios. When analysing the attitude of White colleagues towards me, I realise that I have developed a critical understanding of the inequalities still prevalent in society and the schooling system. I therefore resolved that these inequalities were primarily the result of unopposed, time-honoured social constructs, bias, and stereotypical perceptions in relation to the 'other' (Groenewald & Mpisi, 2022). Hence, as you can imagine, I was overjoyed when the local newspaper visited our school to do interviews and take pictures of us – I guess my critics ate humble pie.

In addition, my White colleagues represented the dominant group, which sets the parameters within which the subordinates operate. The dominant group holds the power and authority in society relative to the subordinates and determines how that power and authority may be acceptably used – whether by determining who gets the best jobs, whose history

is taught in school, or by determining the structure of society (Miller, 1976). The relationship of the dominants to the subordinates is often one in which the target group is labelled as defective or substandard in significant ways. For example, Black people have historically been characterised as less intelligent than White people. The dominant group assigns roles to the subordinate that reflect the latter's devalued status, reserving the most highly valued roles in society for themselves. Subordinates are usually said to be incapable of performing the preferred roles. To the extent that those in the target group internalise the images that the dominant group reflects to them, they may find it difficult to believe in their own ability. When a subordinate demonstrates positive qualities believed to be more characteristic of dominants, the individual is defined as an anomaly (Miller, 1976). Hence, Tajfel and Turner (1979) also assert that social groups or categories and their membership are associated with positive or negative value connotations. Hence, social identity may be positive or negative according to the evaluation (which tends to be socially consensual, either within or across groups) of those groups that contribute to an individual's social identity.

Teaching in the township situated in a homeland also had its own challenges. There were many disturbances as learners were still fighting for independence from the homeland system of the apartheid government. It was during this time when we experienced a massacre in one of the homelands. Our school lost one of its young teachers during this massacre. The young teacher had recently graduated with a BSc degree and was just starting out in his teaching career. He came from a very disadvantaged background, and he carried the hopes and dreams of his family to lift them out of poverty. On that fateful day, almost all the schools, especially the high schools, closed as teachers, learners, the clergy, and everyone who was opposed to the homeland system under the military government, joined the march. What started out as a peaceful demonstration ended up being one of the deadliest massacres in the history of South Africa. A total of 80 000 protesters tried to cross the border defence lines and force their way into the capital town. The soldiers opened fire into the crowd and fired indiscriminately into fleeing protesters using machine guns and rifle grenades. As a result, most protesters were shot in the back as they fled. The protest was led by senior ANC leaders, and according to ANC officials, no warning shots were fired, and no attempts were made to

use non-lethal means to disperse protesters. Soldiers simply opened fire on unarmed protesters.

The aftermath of the massacre left 29 people dead, and it would go down in history as one of the deadliest massacres of the homeland governments under the apartheid regime (South African History Online, 2011a).

One of the homelands was where some of the Xhosa people had resettled, and next to it was the Transkei (across the Kei), where the remaining Xhosa people were resettled. Consequently, after South Africa had gained independence, all homelands were incorporated back into the Republic of South Africa on 27 April 1994. Ciskei and Transkei became part of the new Eastern Cape province under the new South African government (South African History Online, 2022).

Thinking about that incident now, as one of the new teachers, I also could have been part of those statistics, but since I had got married and was expecting a baby, I was not able to join, and thus literally dodged a bullet. Every time the massacre is mentioned, I think of all those fallen heroes, including my colleague. Today, we are grateful to be alive because we grew up in the apartheid era, with its history of violence in schools. As young teachers, we were starkly aware of the historical upheavals and unequal education to which Black people were subjected. For instance, at White schools, 96% of the teachers had proper qualifications, while at Black schools, only 15% of the teachers were qualified. In addition, Black schools lacked any sports fields for extracurricular activities, just to mention a few disparities. During the apartheid era some laws were passed such as the 1953 Act which separated the financing of education for Africans from the general state spending and linked it to direct tax that was paid by African people, leaving schools unfunded and lacking in resources (South African History Online, 2011b). For example, at the school I was teaching, we did not have any rugby or soccer fields, and we had to walk 20 minutes to another school with sports fields. For a netball court, our learners would make use of the quad between the four teaching blocks. This was very strenuous on the players as the quad surface was uneven. But I must commend the learners because they always enjoyed playing in the quad, and they never complained, which goes to show that hardship can go a long way in shaping a person's character. To share in

the learners' joy and to encourage them to participate in sport no matter the conditions, as teachers, we also had netball matches with the learners, and even today, I look at those photographs with pride. As colleagues, we formed a strong bond by instilling a culture of study and being personally responsible for your own success in our students, despite the educational and social challenges they faced.

In 1994, South Africa gained independence. It was a great achievement for our people who had suffered so much under apartheid. Slowly, we began to see a change in the behaviour of learners in our school. It was as if with democracy came a realisation that they had a voice, as well as some defiance that had crept in. Learners suddenly became insolent and aggressive towards teachers. It was common to see learners fighting with each other as well as talking back and fighting with teachers. They claimed that they had rights, and as soon as corporal punishment was abolished after 1994, we saw an emergence of a new kind of learner. In addition, Rossouw and De Waal's (2013, in Smit, 2013) study found that many students exaggerate their rights, yet they neglect their concomitant obligations, causing conflict and discipline problems in schools. Prior to 1994, South African schools had relied heavily on corporal punishment to ensure discipline in the classroom. Corporal punishment was acknowledged as an essential part of the schooling system and was part of the broader culture of violence and oppression in South African schools.

The new democracy ushered in a plethora of new legislation regarding schools, which the learners were not shy to use against the authorities. Among these laws was the abolishment of corporal punishment in South African schools. During apartheid, many teachers abused the use of corporal punishment in schools. The set guidelines on how to administer corporal punishment were ignored and disregarded by some teachers. Educators would beat learners in any way, and no records were kept of incidents of violence or the excessive use of corporal punishment in schools. Against this background, learners had found something with which to fight the school system. This was a terrifying time for teachers as they were not used to such behaviour and outright disrespect. As in any place that lacks discipline, learners' school results slowly dropped because it was easy for learners not to do their work, since they knew that there was nothing teachers could do to them. During that time, teachers

did not know much about alternative ways to discipline learners. That led to low morale among teachers as they saw themselves slowly becoming powerless in the classroom.

1995 was the year I lost my mother, and life was never the same again. My mom had been sick since the day she retired from work, and she passed away at the age of 68. My home was very empty without her, and then I began to understand what it means to be without that person you had come to know as your friend and confidant. My dad was also retired at this time, and he was in his early seventies. He did his best to keep our home a warm and welcoming place until he passed away at the age of 91.

For me, the 1990s were a period of finding my feet as a young teacher and immersing myself in learning more about this profession. During this time, I also studied part time and obtained a master's and a postgraduate diploma while I was teaching.

8.2.8 Narrative 8: Star

McLean, Syed, Yoder and Greenhoot (2016) indicate that interpersonal, ideological, and occupational domains might be the most prominent content of identity narratives. I got my first job in the early 90s. I went back to the school which I had attended but in a different capacity. I was now a teacher. Most of my teachers were still at the school. I was embraced and started teaching home economics and needlework, which was meant for both girls and boys. The school now had more subjects from which the girls and boys could choose, such as business economics and physical sciences. After 1994, the high schools in the area, the former 'Coloured' and the 'Black' schools, merged. We, as teachers, had to speak English in the staff room, although Afrikaans was allowed. Since there were too many teachers at the school, some had to leave. The Department gave schools the option to scrap all practical subjects; in our case, they did. Secondly, there was the option to have those teachers declared 'in excess' using the 'last-in, first-out' principle.

It was a blow for me as I felt I was treated unfairly. However, my plight fell on deaf ears. Therefore, I applied for and was appointed to a home

economics (HE) position at a Black school. This was my best experience of teaching, although the language of teaching and learning – English – was problematic. I could not code-switch to the mother tongue of the learners, as this was normal practice in the school at that stage. Sometimes I would allow the learners to speak in their mother tongue and ask another learner to interpret. Over time, the learners became more and more used to the language of teaching and learning (LOLT) in the class. However, I tried to make my lessons as interesting as possible, even preparing recipes that reminded them of home. I came to understand what an overcrowded classroom with insufficient resources meant. There were not enough desks or textbooks. However, the learners were eager to learn, and that motivated me every day, so that even the boys were opting to do HE. I encouraged learners to do HE in the higher grades to improve their university exemption results when leaving school.

Social group membership constitutes an important input for the individual to define themself and makes an important contribution to the individual's understanding of who they are and directs their behaviours according to the social identity (Smit, 2013). During my time teaching at the school, I realised how the different races were treated differently in the education system. As I attended workshops at various schools, I could see and experience the differences. The schools' cultures were different and would thus influence the performance of the learners differently. However, in my class, I encouraged the girls not to feel inferior because they were doing HE, as it was a subject imposed on learners who were not performing well at school. The learners began to perform satisfactorily. I was also appointed as one of two women to become HOD – management only consisted of males at that stage. Women's input was now acknowledged in discussions. My ideas in terms of teaching HE were sometimes not taken kindly, as I was perceived as more privileged without an understanding of the culture of the school. However, I continued to hope that the quality of HE as a subject could be improved, as I could see what other schools were doing with the subject. This caused much conflict, but learners' performance proved that HE was just as important as other subjects in school.

The first democratic elections made people aware that everybody may voice their opinions and be allowed to do so. This was challenging as

we would be regarded as disrespectful in our homes and the working environment.

8.2.9 Narrative 9: Stephanie

'Transformation' comes to mind when thinking about the political front in South Africa in the 1990s. The same word comes to mind when I consider my life in the 1990s. To my surprise, the racial terms 'White, Black, Coloured' continued to be officially used after the 1994 democratic elections. I was under the impression that these terms would no longer be used to classify people. My naive and probably idealistic view led me to assume that if people were not classified as a particular colour, all would be treated the same! I erroneously supposed that not referring to people in terms of colour would result in fair treatment of all and the acceptance of each other's differences (Harro, 2010a). This continuation of racial labels, despite the dismantling of apartheid legislation, highlighted the deeply embedded nature of social categorisation and the difficulty of dismantling pre-existing 'in-groups' and 'out-groups'.

The 1990s were a period of dramatic personal and societal transformation. My first teaching appointment and becoming engaged in 1991, marriage, a home purchase in 1993 and becoming a parent in 1996 were significant life-altering events.

I started teaching at a local primary school in 1991. What a horrid experience! Interacting with the learners was not the problem; the principal was! He was a self-centred individual who appeared to thrive on the authority and power to which he believed his position entitled him. He looked down on the younger teachers and was clearly annoyed when younger staff members made suggestions. He often boasted about his Bachelor of Arts degree, viewing it and his principalship as status symbols. He spoke in a derogatory manner to and of the learners and their parents who lived in the poverty-stricken community where the school was situated. He spoke to staff members as if we were children, and the worst part was that we allowed it. Growing up, I was encouraged to stand up for myself and not allow myself to be bullied, but I was also taught never to speak back to my elders. Voicing my opinions and attempting to challenge his unfair authority created high levels of anxiety and eventually

depression. I quickly learnt that expressing concerns earned one the label of 'troublemaker' and made one a target for more unfair treatment. There were collective complaints in the passages, but standing up in a meeting to do so meant one stood alone. The frustration, anger, and dread of dragging myself to work are indescribable; it has to be experienced to be understood. My Christian upbringing had instilled a belief that leaders should guide and serve, but my first workplace showed leaders who expected to be served by those they deemed inferior. This experience developed in me an intense disdain for the perceived status associated with titles and workplace hierarchies. This dynamic showcases how positions of perceived power, even among people perceived to be of the same out-group in the South African context, could perpetuate feelings of inferiority and powerlessness.

The year 1990 saw the release of Nelson Mandela (Maharaj & Jordan, 2021). It also saw the end of the Group Areas Act of 1950. This legislation had ensured that people who were classified as White, Black, Coloured, or Indian lived in suburbs designated to their classification. The repeal of the Group Areas Act of 1950 resulted in the freedom to purchase a home in a residential area of our choosing. The repeal of this Act was one step in the systemic change towards the demise of oppression in South Africa (Harro, 2010b).

The fear that accompanies uncertainty and change, however, prompted us to purchase our first home in a previously 'White' area in 1993. My husband and I had looked at numerous houses. One house that we really liked was just beyond our financial reach. On viewing the home a second time, however, the seller's granddaughter told us that her grandfather was desperate to sell and move to a coastal town before the April 1994 elections. Her grandfather, a White male, likely feared the changes that a democratic government could wreak on a privileged life (Harro, 2010b). Armed with the information that the seller was desperate to sell, we made a cheeky offer that was accepted! This move highlighted the anxieties felt by members of the former 'in-group' as their privileged status was challenged, while for us, it was a step towards a more inclusive society.

Moving from a neighbourhood where neighbours knew, greeted, and visited each other to one where we received strange looks and barely a nod

was a stark contrast. We even received a telephone call from a neighbour who had apparently been looking into our backyard, offering unsolicited advice on how to raise our two poodles and German Shepherd. There was also one morning when we found eggs smashed at our front gate. We turned a blind eye to these acts as we believed we had every right to live there. More 'For Sale' signs appeared, and the suburb became more multicultural. This period represented a steady shift in neighbourhood demographics, challenging the established 'in-group' dynamics and fostering a more diverse community.

Our son was born in 1996 – 'born-free'! We endeavoured to bring our son up with minimal indoctrination. We ensured that he attended schools where he could associate with diverse children. We made a conscious effort not to refer to people in terms of colour.

8.3 Conclusion

Gabriella's experience as a White Afrikaner woman navigating the dismantling of apartheid reflects the ambivalence many White families felt. Her commitment to bilingualism, cultural continuity, and the gradual embrace of a more inclusive identity illustrates how Afrikaner heritage was both preserved and reimagined in a non-racial democracy. The tension between holding on and letting go between Afrikaans cultural pride and openness to change pervades her story.

Vince's journey from UDF activism to senior academia captures the arc of liberation: a story rooted in struggle, culminating in opportunities within a transformed educational landscape. His respect for all students and his grounding in Afrikaans culture, despite the painful associations with the language during apartheid, shows a nuanced identity that holds complexity rather than contradiction.

Reatlegile's passion for teaching Setswana illuminates the power of language as a vessel for culture and identity. His students' success in the field of language education affirms the long-term impact of investing in indigenous languages, linking education with cultural pride and transformation.

Morwamocha's perspective on the collapse of Bophuthatswana exposes the uncertainty, disillusionment, and reorientation that accompanied the fall of homeland governments. Her detachment from political processes and intense focus on personal academic growth highlight how some navigated the decade through self-development, despite wider socio-political instability.

Phoenix's story of racial alienation at a historically White university exposes the deep residues of apartheid that persisted even after its formal end. Yet his perseverance, academic excellence, and quiet defiance stand as acts of resistance. His experiences with exclusion and eventual home ownership in a previously White suburb trace the contours of change and resistance within social structures that were slow to shift.

Christel's peaceful response to Mandela's release, shaped by her religious convictions and moral clarity, reveals a growing awareness of injustice and a trust in social transformation. Her reflections on race, rural life, and later professional encounters with racialised educational access reveal how positionalities shift across time and place.

Sonny's vivid account of teaching in a township school and navigating the post-1994 educational reforms expose both the triumphs and tensions of transformation. From peer disbelief at Black students excelling in English to the trauma of massacres and the struggle for recognition, Sonny's narrative reminds us that liberation was uneven, painful, and hard-won.

Star's journey from being declared 'in excess' in a merging school system to becoming an HOD in a new school demonstrates how race, gender, and professional status collided in post-apartheid institutions. Her success in teaching home economics under resource-constrained conditions is a testament to creativity, cultural sensitivity, and resilience.

Stephanie's experience brings together the personal and political in sharp relief. Her disillusionment with racial labels post-1994, her battle against hierarchical workplace oppression, and her resolve to raise her son free from the prejudices of the past show how transformation also required personal courage and emotional labour. Her journey speaks to the dissonance between legislative change and everyday social realities.

Across these narratives, the 1990s emerge as a decade of unfinished change, where dreams of equality clashed with persistent inequities, and where identity was continuously reshaped in response to new political and cultural conditions. These storytellers show us that the road to transformation is not only structural and systemic but also deeply intimate, marked by small acts of hope, resistance, reflection, and reimagining.

Chapter 9

Historical overview and narratives of the 2000s

9.1 Historical overview of the 2000s

The decade from 2000 to 2010 was characterised by significant political transitions in South Africa. The ANC remained the dominant political party. Thabo Mbeki was the president until 2008, and during his presidency, he continued with the policies that had been initiated in the late 1990s (Bond, 2005). He became known for promoting the African Renaissance, collaborating across the continent, and attending to South Africa's economy (Butler, 2009). However, his administration did not escape criticism, especially his position on HIV/AIDS (Mbali, 2013; Mbeki, 2009; Southall, 2009).

Mbeki resigned in 2008, after a dramatic period of political infighting within the ANC and was succeeded by Jacob Zuma in 2009. This period was marked by an increase in corruption, most of which was connected to Zuma himself (Booysen, 2011; Butler, 2009; Southall, 2009). Ashford and Mael's (1989) SIT suggests that circumstances like this can highlight the instability of relationships within groups in a nation already handling deep-seated social differences (Gumede, 2007).

There was steady growth in the South African economy during the early 2000s, which was advanced by global environments and economic reforms. However, in 2008, a global financial crisis hit the country, resulting in a recession in 2009 (Gelb, 2010; Kantor, 2008). Nevertheless, South Africa still developed its infrastructure, especially with the 2010 FIFA World Cup, which promised to be a great source of pride and investment (Fine & Rustomjee, 2008; Gelb, 2010; Parnell & Robinson, 2012).

Despite the positives, the country still faced many challenges, including high levels of inequality and unemployment, particularly among Black South Africans (Statistics South Africa, 2009). Although the informal sector was crucial to the economy, it was marked by substantial inequality, with the biggest wealth in the hands of a minority (Kantor, 2008; Seekings & Nattrass, 2011).

The post-apartheid developments did not occur as expected or hoped. Nelson Mandela brought hope for change and transition to democracy, but, according to Seekings and Nattrass (2011), the post-apartheid period has been characterised by ongoing challenges. Many South Africans still experience misery and disadvantages in their lives, specifically related to education, employment, and housing (Parnell & Pieterse, 2010).

In South Africa, chaos caused by racial differences, poverty, and social unrest continued (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). These issues and current crime rates, including violent crime, which remained high, contributed to a sense of insecurity in many communities (Alexander, 2010). Circumstances resulted in increased competition for scarce jobs and resources, and what made it worse was the eruption of xenophobic violence in 2008, which created hostility toward African immigrants (Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux, 2007; Hassim, Kupe & Worby, 2008), which relates to the integrative theory of intergroup conflict of Tajfel and Turner (1979).

During this time, many civil society organisations, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that focused on human rights, environmental sustainability, and community development were established. Initiatives such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and land reform were introduced to address racial differences in wealth and land ownership. However, they have not yet succeeded in uplifting the majority of the population and have benefitted only the elite. According to Harro (2000a), individuals are

born into systems where inequity is maintained by social norms, institutions, and policies, which could explain why BEE and land reform have failed to uplift the majority of Black South Africans (Marais, 2011). Tatum (2000) illustrates how the intersection of race, class, and social status can shape the lives of people, reinforcing inequality in education, housing, and employment. At this stage, the road to full equality and prosperity for all citizens is still paved with challenges, economic instability, social unrest, and political divisions.

The years between 2000 and 2010 marked a period of significant musical transformation in South Africa characterised by great diversity, reflecting the complex cultural landscape of the country. The music scene represented both continuity and change, with genres such as Kwaito, House, and Hip Hop taking centre stage and giving voice to the many social and political changes (Muller, 2011). House music, with its roots in Chicago and Europe, became popular and new producers emerged during this time. Resistance to social norms and systemic change was reflected in the music of this period as part of cultural and collective forms of expression by oppressed groups, as explained by Harro's (2000b) cycle of liberation.

More traditional forms of music, such as gospel, Afropop, and jazz, retained their importance, and new artists became household names and brought contemporary elements to traditional styles.

Among young people, South African Hip-Hop, influenced by American rap, became very popular with distinct local flavours. South African jazz remained a vital and respected genre, both locally and internationally, with new icons and many others who continued to perform and influence younger musicians.

Afrikaans and local English music also played a significant role in shaping the country's musical landscape. Its variety reflected the diversity and evolving identity of a nation, and became a platform for expression, social commentary, and the celebration of cultural identity. In addition, Afrikaans and English artists rose to prominence during this decade. According to Harro (2000b), cultural expression plays a role in breaking down social and racial differences, and this is reflected in the diversity of South African music.

Local fashion designers in the 2000s followed a blend of traditional African styles with global influences. The fashion scene was characterised by Afrocentric designs and patterns, street fashion, and Kwaito culture, with bright colours, sporty clothing, and unique accessories. Tomaselli (2009) discusses how local culture, including music and fashion, was reflected in social and political changes during the 2000s.

As far as South African cuisine was concerned, it remained a mixture of indigenous, colonial, and global influences. It has a diverse culinary tradition, from braai (barbecue) culture to dishes such as *bobotie* and *bunny chow*. Unfortunately, global influences of fast food and western-style diets, which caused health problems such as obesity and diabetes, were increasing. At the same time, organic and sustainable food movements started to emerge, which brought some relief to the food scene.

Some relief was brought about during the 2000s when the government started building low-cost housing for millions of people. Despite this, many South Africans continued to live in substandard conditions. Urbanisation, driven by rural-to-urban migration, also started to take place.

Education continued to change after apartheid, focusing on making education more equitable and accessible. Unfortunately, the quality of education in rural and township schools remained poor. Although some progress has been made in expanding access to primary and secondary education, higher education is still beyond the reach of many.

During this period, the HIV/AIDS epidemic created many challenges for the South African health system. In the early 2000s, an estimated five million people lived with HIV, making it one of the most severe health crises in the world. The situation worsened by Mbeki's controversial views on HIV and AIDS and his refusal to provide antiretroviral treatment. However, the government under Zuma began to address the epidemic more effectively. Other health challenges included tuberculosis, malnutrition in the poorer areas, and increased non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension.

The unemployment rate remained high, especially among Black South Africans (Statistics South Africa, 2009). The global economic crisis in 2008 exacerbated the situation, leading to job losses, especially in mining,

manufacturing, and agriculture. As a result, the informal sector grew as a source of income for many.

In the area of technology, significant innovations occurred during this decade. The use of mobile phones, smartphones, and the internet grew rapidly, although access remained limited in rural areas. At the end of the decade, South Africa was moving towards broadband expansion, which became crucial for the country's economic and social development. Tatum (2000) discusses how access to education, technology, and economic resources shapes individual and collective identities and can play a critical role in supporting or challenging systemic inequalities.

Despite economic growth in the early 2000s, South Africa remained one of the most unequal societies in the world. The growth of the middle class, particularly among Black South Africans, was one of the key socio-economic changes of the decade. However, for those in rural and informal areas, unemployment, poverty, and lack of access to quality services remained a great concern.

Religion has always played an important role in South Africa. Although Christianity remained the dominant faith, traditional African religious practices coexisted with Christianity, often merging into a syncretic belief system. Other religions, such as Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism, also have established communities. Many religious organisations play a significant role in providing social services and many churches have become centres of community life, providing care and support for the poor and homeless. This is supported by Harro (2000a), who highlights the fact that marginalised communities often find support through collective action.

South Africa has always excelled in various types of sport. Between 2000 and 2010, the sports scene was especially vibrant and diverse, with football, rugby, and cricket at the forefront. We successfully hosted the 2010 FIFA World Cup, although the national team, Bafana Bafana, struggled internationally. The Springboks won the Rugby World Cup in 2007, and in cricket, the Proteas reached a top global ranking. In athletics, many stars emerged, while swimming brought Olympic glory to South Africa. Golfers starred internationally, while boxing and tennis saw somewhat limited success. Our Paralympic athletes also became international stars during this period.

Crime remained significant, and the increase in violent crime, carjackings, and home invasions created a sense of insecurity. Numerous deaths and displacements were caused by tensions related to immigration in 2008 and xenophobic violence. Environmental issues, such as water scarcity, pollution, and land degradation, became more pressing. This is in line with Tajfel and Turner's (1979) intergroup theory, namely that competition over resources, combined with social tensions, is likely to contribute to various outbursts.

The decade between 2000 and 2010 in South Africa saw major political, economic, and social changes. Although there was progress in some areas, such as infrastructure expansion and efforts to address inequality, many challenges persisted, particularly poverty, unemployment, and public health issues. While South Africa's resilience and potential were highlighted, the need to address social and economic inequalities remained (Tatum, 2000).

9.2 Narratives of the 2000s

9.2.1 Narrative 1: Gabriella

Over the next ten years, our lives were a combination of adjusting to the new post-apartheid system and managing our own personal, professional, and social changes. The new democratic South Africa was six years old, and Thabo Mbeki became president. Although many Afrikaner women experienced privileges during apartheid, I did not feel underprivileged in the new regime. In fact, it treated me and my family well. We were still adjusting to a non-racial, equal society, and in general, it was not a problem for us. What affected us most was a sense of uncertainty about our future and that of our children. But I have learnt that it was not only a concern among White people, and that Black and Coloured people had the same fears.

After the new democratic system came into place, there were quite a few changes in higher education. Satellite campuses merged with larger institutions, and teacher colleges merged with university education faculties. The result was that many positions became redundant, and many lecturers were left with tough choices. I was one of them. My health was

not great at the time, so I decided to take a severance package instead of joining another university. It was a tough decision and the whole process felt overwhelming, but looking back, it was the best thing that could have happened because new opportunities presented themselves.

For a while, I tried to keep busy with various activities. I even started painting again, which was an old hobby of mine. But after a few years, I felt the urge to do something more meaningful. So, I went to New Zealand to visit my family and took a TESOL course. At that point, my children were nearing the end of their school years, and we seriously considered emigrating. But we were not all on the same page, so we decided to put that plan on hold.

During that time, I also started writing children's stories, which turned out to be a new passion of mine – something I still enjoy to this day. Then, after being away from academia for about six years, the principal of a special school approached me about teaching deaf and blind students. That offer completely changed my life. I learnt sign language and braille and went on to complete my Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and an honours degree in Deaf Education. Working with those children was such a special time in my life and it is something I will always cherish.

Transformation policies aimed at addressing racial imbalances in the workforce impacted many women in their professional careers. Although I was not directly affected by these policies, I felt the increase in competition at work. For example, when I applied for a head of department position, I was unsuccessful. I had no problems with my Black colleagues but I could feel a certain tension in the air. However, I understood the reasons behind it and, fortunately, it never turned into any personal conflicts.

Looking back, I feel truly fortunate. Unlike many families that faced financial struggles after apartheid, we were spared that kind of uncertainty. Our main concern was always the future of our children. We often wrestled with the idea of emigrating to give them the best possible opportunities. But we also realised that leaving South Africa might mean losing touch with our language and culture. Over time, I came to see that my faith was more important to me than preserving language and culture, and that is what helped us stay grounded and push through those challenging times.

Although many Afrikaner women of my generation followed traditional gender roles, preferring motherhood and homemaking over a career, I managed to balance the two. My career played a key role in creating financial stability, which became even more important as my children were growing up and starting their university studies. That added an extra financial burden, but we managed.

Reflecting on the years from 2000 to 2010, it was the time of greatest transformation in my life. I switched careers, we moved to a different town, and then eventually we moved back again. My husband's business also went through some transformation during that time. I kept on improving my qualifications, the children finished school and went to university, and at one point we seriously considered emigrating but decided to stay. It was a whirlwind of a decade, full of transitions, but it all seemed to work out in the end.

9.2.2 Narrative 2: Vince

The year 2000 came with its own challenges. Towards the end of the twentieth century, widespread hype was created about a potential computer meltdown that could occur when the world moved into the 2000s. The term Y2K was used to refer to the fact that computer programs would be compromised when the year 1999 rolled over to 2000. Computer programs were apparently not programmed to deal with dates and calendars beyond 2000. This Y2K problem was, however, proactively solved by many computer programming companies, resulting in minimal damage to computer systems. As early as 21 February of the year 2000, the world observed the first celebration of the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) International Mother Language Day. From 2000, this event has been celebrated worldwide annually on the same day. The International Mother Language Day has as its objective the promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity as well as multilingualism.

On a personal front, I was avidly starting to collect data for my PhD about textual criticism, a branch of literature. My focus would be on proposing a strategy for the compilation of a historical-critical text of Etienne Leroux, a prominent *Sestiger* author (translated: author in the 60s) in Afrikaans liter-

ary circles. As Afrikaans literary scholars, especially those interested in his work, are well aware, Leroux's work was heavily criticised because of his linguistic style. The purpose of my doctoral study would therefore specifically be to investigate his publication *Die Eerste Siklus* to establish how, over the years, the works contained in this triptych underwent numerous changes and emendations. A proposal for the compilation of a historical-critical edition, a type of edition within Dutch and German editorial practice circles, would be an ideal way to document all those changes and emendations.

As a senior lecturer at a university of technology, my tenure came to an end in February 2010. I applied for a vacant position as a lecturer-researcher at the Centre for Higher Education Studies and Development (CHESD) in the Faculty of Humanities at another university and my application was successful. A new chapter in my academic career was about to start. I was now moving out of the language sphere into higher education studies. As an incumbent in higher education studies, I had the opportunity to gain supervision experience. I was also provided with the opportunity to pursue some modules in higher education in a master's programme offered by the centre. Not long after I joined the CHESD, we were told that our unit, which was responsible for education programmes, was to be moved to the relatively new education faculty. The unit was to be housed in the building of the education faculty.

In my new post, I was privileged to be part of a diverse group of colleagues from different sociocultural backgrounds. Two years before my arrival, in February 2008, a very disturbing video about an infamous racial incident at one of the student residences surfaced. This incident, which in a sense still haunts the university, was still fresh in the memories of staff and students when I arrived there in 2010. It caused a national and international uproar. To mitigate the negative impact of the incident on the university's reputation, the university subsequently decided in May 2008 to close that residence in July of the same year. Several interventions were initiated by the university management to remedy the situation, such as the establishment of an Institute for Diversity, which would serve as a centre of academic excellence for studying transformation and diversity in society. It would be a living laboratory for combating discrimination and enabling and enhancing reconciliation in societies grappling

with the issues of racism, sexism, and xenophobia (University of the Free State, 2025). The Institute was launched on 27 January 2011 by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and a message of support was presented by Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe. In his message at the launch, Archbishop Tutu had the following reconciliatory words to say:

> We have it in us to become one of the most wonderful countries in the world. We have it in us to be a caring and compassionate land where everyone matters and where everyone counts. We look to you here in UFS, starting this Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice, to lead the way.

In July 2010, the institute was renamed to become the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice (IRSJ). Another event that helped the university to restore its tarnished image following the previously mentioned incident was the conferment of an honorary doctoral degree on Ms Oprah Winfrey, the American media magnate and host of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. This event, which took place in a packed university hall, created huge national and international interest and added to the university's international standing. I was in the audience on that day, 24 June 2011, when the honorary degree was conferred. It was really a very special moment in the history of the university, and I felt proud to be part of such an event. The world-class proceedings were fit for a king! During her acceptance speech, Ms Winfrey called the five workers affected by the racial incident "heroes" and called them onto the stage. In her speech, she also mentioned that the incident had given rise to a miracle (Independent Online, 2011):

> What has happened here in terms of racial reconciliation, of peace, of harmony, of one heart understanding and opening itself to another heart is nothing short of a miracle. It is truly what the new South Africa is all about.

As a staff member attached to the School of Higher Education Studies (SHES) in the Faculty of Education, I experienced that, after Ms Winfrey's

visit to the university, there was increased interest from students globally to do a master's and doctoral degree at the university. The SHES received applications from places such as Grenada, America, Saudi Arabia, and Zambia. I supervised and delivered students from Saudi Arabia (PhD) and Zambia (master's). The student from a university in America completed his PhD under the supervision of a colleague of mine in SHES, while the student from Grenada never completed his master's studies.

9.2.3 Narrative 3: Reatlegile

The students I taught at college loved what I did with the language; they also started to show the ability to express themselves clearly through the language. They are excellent teachers throughout the various provinces, teaching at different schools. Some have been promoted to HODs of Setswana in high schools, others have been promoted to subject advisers of the subject of Setswana. They will be moving around the schools sharing experiences on how to teach the language and to promote the love of language, linking it to our culture. Understanding the importance of language to know that it cannot be separated from culture, language is culture and culture is language; they are inseparable.

9.2.4 Narrative 4: Morwamocha

The year 2000 was a pivotal time for Black communities in South Africa as the nation continued to navigate the complexities of the post-apartheid era. Mbeki's administration focused on addressing and redressing the economic disparities and social injustices of the past that persisted despite the end of apartheid. Efforts to promote BEE and reduce poverty were central themes of his government's policies. The nation grappled with the challenges of transforming a society still deeply affected by decades of racial segregation and inequality.

It was during this time that I was promoted to the position of principal and later to that of circuit manager. My elevation started in 1999 as I moved from Barolong High School and assumed duties as a principal at another high school. Opportunities abounded as I registered for both an MBA in Human Resources and a Master's degree in Development at a university for Christian higher education. The culture changed dramatical-

ly. Teachers in certain parts of the North West started having a voice. They would form cliques and rebel against management's instructions and orders under the influence of the unions, particularly SADTU. The culture of militancy did not stop here. It cascaded down to the school children.

The behaviour of Black children in the early 2000s also started to change gradually. As a way of maintaining good discipline in schools, I encouraged all the schools in my circuit to enforce the school rules and always apply them without fail. This arose from grave, intolerable cases of learners' misconduct who, from time to time, gave teachers a headache. Education was changing. On the other hand, teachers also became problematic. They tended to neglect their work and spent their efforts on issues other than teaching and learning. It is not surprising that the districts of education are awash with disciplinary actions such as suspensions and expulsions.

This era was characterised by significant changes and opportunities across various industries. Also, the technology boom continued into this era, where everybody equipped themselves with knowledge about technology. The healthcare industry expanded owing to an ageing population and advancements in medical technology. This led to increased demand for healthcare professionals such as nurses, physicians, medical technicians, and healthcare administrators. In the schools that I was managing, we faced a shortage of mathematics and science teachers and had to recruit many from Zimbabwe. Teachers with these skills were essential in supporting the development and maintenance of critical infrastructure and innovation in various fields.

This came into being because the curriculum was changed, and it became mandatory for every secondary school to offer mathematics and science, thereby depleting the pool of educators in this space. The number of graduates in STEM also skyrocketed, which suggested that Black students also have potential to excel in science subjects. In my view, the introduction of STEM subjects improved the lives of people to a greater extent. Furthermore, the proliferation of digital content and media channels created new platforms and opportunities for creative professionals.

In the realm of sport, South Africa's successful bid to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup marked a historic moment, as it was the first time the country would host such a prestigious tournament on the African continent. Like

many other South Africans, I was particularly happy that the economy of the country would receive a boost that could last indefinitely. The successful bid further highlighted South Africa's readiness to host an international event of such magnitude.

Many changes came into being. The country invested significantly in infrastructure, including the construction and renovation of stadiums, the improvement of transportation networks, and the enhancement of security measures. This event was seen as an opportunity to boost the nation's global image, promote tourism, and stimulate economic growth. The successful hosting of the tournament showcased South Africa's capabilities and left a legacy for both the country and the continent. South Africa's athletes continued to make their indelible marks on the global stage. The country celebrated the achievements of its sportsmen and sportswomen who excelled in various disciplines. For instance, the South African national football team, Bafana Bafana, participated in international competitions, showcasing the talent and determination of Black athletes. Sports served as a unifying force, bringing together people from different backgrounds and promoting a sense of national pride.

However, South Africa also faced significant social challenges, particularly concerning health and education. The HIV/AIDS epidemic was a major crisis, with Black communities being disproportionately affected. Government and NGOs worked tirelessly to combat the epidemic through awareness campaigns, treatment programmes, and support services. Education initiatives aimed at improving access to quality education for Black children were also a priority as the country sought to break the cycle of poverty and provide better opportunities for future generations.

Overall, the year 2000 was a time of both progress and continued struggle for Black South Africans. The efforts to rebuild and transform the nation were evident across various sectors, reflecting a commitment to overcoming the legacy of apartheid and fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

In 2010, South Africa's political landscape was greatly shaped by President Jacob Zuma's administration, which faced a great deal of scrutiny over many thorny issues that included poor governance and corruption (Gumede, 2013). Zuma was a good leader but ruined his management

by his alleged greed (Butler, 2011). There were also internal tensions within the ruling party of the time. The party continued to dominate the political sphere, but internal divisions eventually tore it apart, allowing the opposition to capitalise on growing dissatisfaction with the government's handling of service delivery and economic inequality. These tensions intensified factional battles within the party, weakening its cohesion and providing the opposition with an opportunity to highlight growing public dissatisfaction with governance, service delivery, and economic inequality (Southall, 2011). Many people were not satisfied with the then government. Dissatisfaction stemmed from poor service delivery.

During this period, I was already working at the Department of Education as a circuit manager. Many schools in our district were well managed. However, there were traces of dysfunctional schools here and there. A notable concern was that the behaviour of teachers and learners had changed drastically. The professional appearance of teachers declined and the lack of discipline among learners became evident (Jansen, 2011). It was not easy for one to differentiate a secondary school learner from a teacher. Reports of violence against teachers by students highlighted the urgent need for improved school safety measures (Morrell, 2001). The way teachers dressed left much to be desired. The view that a teacher should be presentable because they are seen as role models appeared to be outdated. On the other hand, learners also got out of hand. They did not respect their teachers. Every now and then, there would be rumours about teachers who had been punched and hit at school by their learners, which showed that the safety of teachers and other learners on the premises was an issue to be viewed in a serious light and addressed with speed. Discipline issues were particularly severe in village and township schools, where resource shortages and socioeconomic challenges compounded the problem (Chisholm, 2004).

Furthermore, 2010 was marked by ongoing challenges, particularly regarding the quality of education and resource allocation provided in public schools. The year saw continued debates on the effectiveness of the outcomes-based education (OBE) system, which had been introduced in the late 1990s but was widely criticised for failing to improve literacy and numeracy skills among learners (Jansen & Taylor, 2003). The education sector experienced significant transitions, with the phasing out of OBE in

July 2010 and the introduction of a *National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (*CAPS), addressing longstanding concerns about teaching and learning quality (Taylor, 2019). CAPS also came with its challenges. All teachers in the country had been exposed to never-ending workshops and clinics to equip them with the new method of teaching and learning. OBE had never been widely welcomed. When CAPS was introduced, people were positive about the move. This decision was widely welcomed by educators and stakeholders who had long argued that OBE had contributed to declining education standards, particularly in underprivileged communities.

Higher education also experienced significant developments, with ongoing efforts to transform and integrate institutions following the mergers of universities and technikons in the early 2000s. In some instances, two or three universities were merged. Some of these merges were not successful. Some institutions struggled to integrate, and in some cases, merged universities retained different provincial identities, causing initial confusion (Cloete, Fehnel, Moja, Perold & Gibbon, 2002). The merge took place when I was enrolled for a master's degree, and it was strange to receive a totally different certificate that bore the colours of three universities on its emblem. We got used to this change. In other instances, one university would be called by a provincial name while being situated in a different province altogether. Concerns regarding student funding, particularly through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), remained a pressing issue, as many students from disadvantaged backgrounds struggled to access tertiary education (Wangenge-Ouma, 2012). Worryingly, the bursary scheme did not cater for all the students. Many students did not qualify because they were said to be from affluent families. Furthermore, student protests at various universities highlighted dissatisfaction with financial aid policies and institutional governance. Despite these challenges, South Africa's education sector received a boost in 2010 through increased international collaboration and government investment in skills development, particularly in the fields of science and technology.

9.2.5 Narrative 5: Phoenix

The early 2000s were notable globally with significant events such as the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001 and Barack Obama being inaugurated as the 44th president of the USA in 2009. In South Africa, the introduction of democracy in 1994 initiated social and political transformation driven by crucial issues, such as dismantling apartheid and building a socially just society and education system (Sensory & DiAngelo, 2012). Educational changes were largely marked by the shift of non-White students to historically White schools. This shift was primarily motivated by economic reasons due to the superior facilities and resources these schools offered. The apartheid system had been designed to maintain separate educational systems for White nationals and non-White nationals. Conversely, there was not much movement of White students to non-White schools. The apartheid structure had established a system of White dominance with Black people as the subordinate group. Admitting non-White students to these schools came with challenges. Many institutions, having primarily served students from monocultural and Eurocentric backgrounds, responded by adopting an assimilationist approach to address the varied needs of non-White students. As a result, numerous parents felt overwhelmed and marginalised once again because these schools did not accommodate their native languages and cultures (Ndimande, 2013b). This situation connects to Tatum's (2013) idea of "otherness", which suggests that the aspect of identity that captures others' focus, and thus our own, often distinguishes us as unique or 'other' in their perception.

When our children reached school-going age, we decided to enrol them in a historically White school with a multiracial student body. This choice was intentional because we wanted our children to be socialised and educated in a multiracial educational setting, allowing them to appreciate the country's progress on transformation. We intended for our children to develop in an inclusive environment where judgements based on skin colour, race, religion, or language would be absent. Our motivation stemmed from the desire for our children to be immersed in an educational environment that would provide them with the skills, language, behaviours, and attitudes necessary to effectively navigate (Love, 2010) both the so-called South African Rainbow nation and the broader cosmopolitan world beyond South African borders.

Witnessing their ability to form friendships across racial, language, and religious divides was heartwarming for us. They were also able to articulate the names of children from other races eloquently and confidently, reinforcing our belief that enrolling them in a multiracial school was a prudent decision. My parents volunteered to pick up our children from school once a week, viewing it as an opportunity to be part of their grandchildren's lives. Each time they waited in their car for the children, they would mention how incredible it was to see children of all races at the same school. Having been born in the 1930s, my parents had experienced the harshness of apartheid, and witnessing this transformation filled them with immense joy. My father often proudly stated, "This is the South Africa we fought for – a South Africa where my grandchildren would be free." Their sentiments reflect the development of a liberatory consciousness, where efforts are made to reform systems and institutions characterised by oppression, thus creating an environment where equity and social justice are realised (Love, 2010).

The emergence of the new South Africa opened fresh career paths. At this point, in addition to completing my Higher Diploma in Education, I had obtained BA, BEd (*cum laude*), and MEd degrees. I had already spent ten years teaching, achieved excellent Grade 12 results, and contributed to the development of novice Grade 12 Geography teachers before dedicated units were formed. With this background, I felt prepared to contribute to education on a higher level. I applied for several senior roles in the Education Department, for which I was qualified, but I was never called for interviews. The selections for the advertised positions often left me puzzled. Some might interpret the situation as being part of the 'out group' (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), since I did not mingle with influential people at the time. The thrill of the Rainbow Nation began to feel like an illusion. Feeling quite disheartened and seeking a new challenge, I applied for a teacher-exchange programme in North America. I advanced to the final interview stage and became part of a four-member delegation to represent young professional South Africans in both the United States and Canada.

The team included a White English male farmer, a Coloured female lawyer, a White Afrikaner male police officer, and me, a teacher, led by our team leader, an English male entomologist. The team was diverse in

terms of race, gender, language, culture, political beliefs, upbringing, and lived experiences in a previously divided South Africa. These differences occasionally emerged during our time abroad and sometimes led to intense debates. All three male team members had served as conscripts in the South African army, while the only female member and I had been student activists. The army's role was to uphold suppressive laws, whereas the student activists aimed to challenge and topple the apartheid government. One of the team members repeatedly tried to impose his cultural norms and social manners on the rest of us. He stubbornly believed that his Anglo-Saxon upbringing was superior to ours and expected us to adopt his ways. This cultural imperialism particularly affected me at times. Cultural imperialism, as described by Sparks (2012), "is a process by which a society is integrated into the modern world system and how its ruling class is lured, coerced, or even bribed into shaping social institutions that align with, or promote, the values and structures of the dominant centre of the system".

Another team member was very firmly rooted in his routines and grew quite anxious when the team strayed from the initial plan. He attributed this to his background in the military and police force. In contrast, I was also somewhat entrenched in my own ways as a former student activist and had to apply a significant amount of emotional intelligence. I needed to learn to collaborate with former soldiers who had once been opposed to any form of political activism during apartheid. The female member of our team was well-informed, spirited, and vocal, frequently questioning our sexist attitudes. The previously mentioned experiences illustrate the complexity of identity, which is influenced by personal traits, family background, historical influences, and social and political environments (Tatum, 2013).

We dedicated many weeks to preparing for this trip, refining our presentations on our respective fields. This marked my first trip abroad, and while I was excited, I was also nervous. We spent three weeks in British Columbia, Canada, followed by another three weeks in the state of Washington, USA. I had the opportunity to conduct classes in schools and deliver presentations about the South African school system to a wider audience in both the American and Canadian communities. It was incredibly inspiring to witness the education and culture of developed countries.

The schools were highly equipped, with much of the education budget allocated to creating the most accommodating school environments. Educational administrators did not have lavish offices; instead, their workspaces were what we would describe as portable units. Although I was fascinated by their schools, I found the teaching approach to be overly casual, with students' handwriting being difficult to read and classroom interactions being relaxed and informal. Nonetheless, I was impressed with how inclusive education was effectively implemented in all classrooms. I observed that North American classrooms were much more diverse than ours. Classrooms were significantly more varied than ours in terms of language, learners with learning challenges, race, culture, and religion. I embarked on numerous excursions, visiting landmarks such as the Space Needle in Seattle and the San Juan Islands in northwestern Washington, and I attempted snowboarding at the Mount Whistler ski resort north of Vancouver. I also visited First Nations reserves in Canada and Native American communities in the United States.

The cultural exchange between South Africa and North America was both enriching and enlightening. We had the opportunity to share plenty about South Africa, and in return, we learnt a great deal about North American culture and its people. The teacher exchange programme was indeed enlightening and pushed me beyond my comfort zone. Though being challenged frequently led to feelings of anxiety, frustration, and anger, as noted by Van Gelderen (2023), I came to realise the extent of my personal growth over the six weeks. The programme gave me the platform to examine and navigate my own prejudices, biases, and worldview. I developed greater acceptance and accommodation of diversity, thereby enhancing my social identity. My growth in terms of race, language, gender, religion, and cultural issues was further bolstered by the sense of unity and patriotism fostered in South Africa because of the 2010 World Cup. Opening oneself to new experiences and different viewpoints sharpens awareness of one's own biases and stereotypes, demonstrating how personal socialisation moulds individual perceptions (Mpisi et al., 2020). Upon returning from North America, I embarked on a new journey in higher education as a Manager for Research, Development, and Strategic Planning. I enjoyed my new role immensely, as well as the extensive travelling within the province, forging partnerships and exploring prospective training opportunities for the institution. This tran-

sition was a significant shift for my family, as the children were unaccustomed to my absence, leaving most parenting responsibilities to my wife. I missed being at home with my family as well as teaching. I subsequently taught postgraduate courses to in-service teachers on a part-time basis. Teaching these courses and interacting with students revitalised me and affirmed that teaching truly is my passion.

In 2005, I reached the age of 40, and soon afterwards, my father passed away unexpectedly. It was the first time I had experienced the loss of someone so dear to me. The event was a major shock to the family, especially affecting my mom deeply since they were very close. As the eldest son, I attempted to take on his responsibilities but quickly understood that it was unachievable. It was the first time I found myself without a guiding and supportive figure. In 2007, I decided to pursue a PhD degree and dedicated all my efforts to it. I obtained the PhD degree in 2010, marking a significant milestone as it was a first in our family. My mom was incredibly proud, and I deeply wished my dad were there to witness this success. I then embarked on my academic journey, presenting papers at conferences, publishing articles, and evaluating postgraduate theses. By this time, the initiative to develop the province's first university was under way, and the project was managed from my office. It was a hectic period filled with numerous meetings with consultants and visiting prospective locations.

9.2.6 Narrative 6: Christel

The 2000s were a decade of learning from and about other racial groups. This period marked the beginning of my most profound transformation in understanding identity, belonging, and human interconnectedness. My husband was relocated to a West Coast town at the beginning of the 2000s. For me, it was initially difficult to adjust to the community and the semi-desert environment. Everything seemed dull at first glance – houses, people, and surroundings, reflecting my biases and assumptions I carried from my previous experiences. Later, I realised that one must become part of the environment before one can appreciate the richness of the region, the colourful people, and the extremes of natural beauty. Here, I learnt the greatest lesson of my life: that you need to be quiet and calm

if you want to see the beauty around you. Appreciating human qualities that transcend racial categories, I later described the people as salt of the earth. I have developed an environmental awareness while also realising the contemplative stance necessary to recognise the humanity and dignity of others across racial and cultural boundaries. According to Tajfel and Turner's (1979) view that social identity is formed through the membership of an individual's group and the value and emotional meaning derived from it, my interactions with other cultural groups have facilitated my socialisation within the community.

I started teaching at a high school in the West Coast town. Most learners were Coloured with a few Black and White learners. The medium of instruction was Afrikaans. The Coloured learners regarded me as an outsider and it took some time to win their trust. In the close-knit community, we were also seen as outsiders, and we first had to prove ourselves before we were accepted.

I enrolled for an honours degree in School Management, then decided to do a master's degree. What intrigued me was the diversity of the learners. I decided to explore the nature of subjectivity of the youths in a school in a diverse rural mining environment. The participants in the study were six learners with diverse racial and ethnic identities – White, Xhosa, Nama, Ovambo, Damara, and Coloured. For data collection, I used semi-structured interviews conducted over two years. The study illustrated how these young learners were situated within their environments to develop their sense of self. Using their own resources, networks, and interactions, they navigated their interconnected spaces and lived meaningful lives.

The discipline in the school was not good, and I used many strategies to create a positive classroom environment. With a positive teaching approach and good lesson preparation, I tried to get the learners involved. I taught for 13 years at this West Coast high school, a multicultural school. The largest percentage of learners were Afrikaans-speaking and Coloured, while White Afrikaans-speaking students made up the smallest group. Several Black Ovambo and Damara students (the second largest group) from Ariamsmund (a pseudonym) in Namibia also attended the school. Most students had to commute daily by bus to school – 15 km from Ariamsmund, 60 km from Bessiesdrift (a pseudonym), 75 km from

Koedoefontein, and 90 km from Vergenoeg (a pseudonym). This high school was the only high school in this semi-desert region. At the school, the students were forced to adapt to the long distances and the desert climate. I was responsible for teaching geography and the Afrikaans Home Language to Grades 10–12. It took me a while to get to know the students and for them to trust me.

Gradually, students' backgrounds, home languages, habits, and cultures became part of the classroom, and students were able to experience a sense of belonging (meaning) there (Seligman, 2018). This pedagogical shift toward cultural responsiveness reflects growing Ubuntu consciousness, recognising that effective education must honour and build upon cultural wealth that learners bring rather than requiring them to abandon their identities. I employed various topics to get to know and understand my learners. In the geography class, I comfortably addressed geographical and climatic phenomena that are part of the region. On days with easterly winds, I called the learners to the chalkboard to explain this mountain wind condition. I came to realise that the strong southerly wind and fog (locally known as *malmokkie*) were part of students' everyday lives. Once a year, the learners went on a field trip to the nearby mine. There, a geologist would give a presentation to the students, after which they would be taken to a plant under security supervision. This economic activity, unique to the region, allowed the students to look at their environment with renewed appreciation and even led one learner to study geology after school. I also took the students to the river mouth, where the interaction between river and sea processes was explained in practical terms. Incorporating regional geographical phenomena, local dialects in oral presentations, and personal narrative essays created opportunities for learners to see their lived experiences valued within formal education.

In the Afrikaans Home Language class, I experienced and understood the students' lives through narrative and descriptive essays. I designed the topics of the essays in such a way that the learners had the opportunity to write about their own lives. The oral component was a listening experience in which learners shared stories and experiences in the regional dialect. Through these authentic learning activities, in which students' lives and identities were incorporated into the classroom, a sense of belonging was further created (Seligman, 2018).

I wanted to establish a learning culture but had to consider several contextual factors. The long distances to school meant that many students only got home late. Some learners had household chores that they needed to complete before they could start with schoolwork. I realised that a positive learning environment could positively impact the overall well-being of the students. Once a week, learners could write positive sayings on a whiteboard in the classroom. This fostered positive energy (joy and creativity) (Seligman, 2018) in the Afrikaans classroom as students were able to creatively express themselves and sign their names to their contributions. The trailers, advertisements, and music videos that I occasionally showed to the class broadened students' horizons while lifting their spirits.

The town was remote. We had to travel 250 km to do our shopping. The strong southerly wind tested one's spirit. However, river, sea, and countryside made up for challenging weather conditions. Here, I could find peace and spend hours talking to my Creator. I learnt to appreciate people for who they are; race was no longer a dividing factor. The older cleaning lady at school was the 'Auntie' to whom many people went for advice. In the afternoons, Coloured and White friends would come over to play with my children. I also taught the children that any older person, regardless of race, should be addressed as '*Tannie*' or '*Oom*' (aunt or uncle).

At one point, members of the Coloured congregation in the town came to our church since they did not have a minister. All the children in the town, both Coloured and White, also attended Sunday School together. Later, I became an elder, and the minister reminded us that we were responsible for the children. When children sat in church without parents, it was the duty of the elders to take care of them. Some Coloured children came straight from Sunday School to church, presenting Ubuntu in action, children experiencing their shared humanity through spiritual community. The same Coloured boy would regularly sit next to me in church. Harro (2010b) described the awakening phase as the initial step in the progress toward becoming an agent of change.

At the end of the year, I travelled to the provincial capital to mark the matriculation exam papers, undertaking the 1000 km journey with two colleagues. The highlight was always the drive back to our West Coast town.

The West Coast provided profound lessons in how belonging and marginalisation operate in complex ways. My initial status as an outsider in the community created empathy for experiences of exclusion. The recognition that race was no longer a dividing factor represents growth toward Ubuntu consciousness – seeing people as individuals with inherent dignity rather than as representatives of racial categories. The practice of teaching my children to address any older person as '*Oom*' or '*Tannie*' regardless of race demonstrates a practical commitment to respectful relationships across racial boundaries.

9.2.7 Narrative 7: Sonny

This decade was marked by my efforts to grow in my profession as a teacher, as well as improving my educational knowledge. I continued my part-time studies while working. By then, the kind of student we had in our classes was a restless and impatient one. We saw there was a new pressure on young learners socially and in school as well. The learners were also aggressive towards their teachers. I think with democracy came another kind of understanding – that democracy somehow meant disrespect of elders, that learners were somehow free to do just as they pleased, without any consequences. One of the traditional measures to maintain order and discipline, namely corporal punishment, had been abolished, which left educators feeling disempowered (Smit, 2013).

Learners started to become obsessed with matters that did not matter or add value to their education. For instance, there was a sudden urge to wear brand names, especially on days set aside for fundraising. Also, learners were putting unnecessary pressure on their parents to take them to initiation schools even though some had not yet reached the acceptable age of 18 years. Suicide was suddenly on the rise among high school students. In my school alone, we had three suicide cases in one year, mostly committed by boys between the ages of 14 and 18 years. It was a very trying time for teachers and learners alike. We were not sure how to deal with this sudden change and onslaught of aggressive behaviour in our learners. This is echoed by several scholars who state that over the past fifteen to twenty years, some of the effects of the abolishment of corporal punishment in schools have become increasingly

evident (Smit, 2013). Generally, learner discipline has become a serious problem in South African schools, resulting in many teachers putting the blame on the state for the ill-discipline found in many schools. In addition, teachers no longer had an effective deterrent as a form of punishment (Smit, 2013).

Additionally, we were faced with lawlessness in our classrooms. We had learners who would go out and buy liquor and come back to class drunk, which included boys and girls. Senior boys who would go out to buy and smoke dagga before returning to class after the long break. We had to appeal to parents for assistance. Parents were suddenly demanding the return of corporal punishment and even stipulated that we give learners three lashes each. We did not agree to this as the law did not allow it. Also, teenage pregnancy was suddenly on the rise. It was such a bad time, and teachers were suddenly feeling overwhelmed by the situation. At the height of this was an incident where a learner brought a firearm to school with the intention of shooting a teacher. This happened in the morning, just after classes had begun, after the morning devotions. The teacher narrowly escaped death, but the learner then turned the firearm on himself, fatally wounding himself.

At that time, on television, there were many shows such as the popular *Yizo Yizo*, which displayed violence in schools. I believe learners, in a way, identified with this. Even though the narrative was set in a fictional school, students imitated the characters in the show and acted out these acts of violence in schools. Set in a turbulent environment of a fictional high school, this show delved into the lives of teachers, learners, and school administrators, exposing the realities faced by many South African schools in the post-apartheid era. This show was revolutionary in its graphic portrayal of gang violence in schools, poverty, substance abuse, and unequal education in South Africa. Although the aim of this show was to bring all the social ills to light, I think instead, learners were all too eager to identify with the fictional characters to be able to separate reality from fiction. The show intended to spark conversations among South Africans and to force the government and the Department of Education to do something about the prevailing conditions which were present in most South African schools. I think somehow the learners were caught up in an identity crisis and, in the process, put their lives and futures in jeopardy as well. An identity crisis is

commonly experienced during the period of adolescence. It is triggered by the biological changes associated with puberty, the maturation of cognitive abilities, changing societal expectations, also encompassing a process of simultaneous reflection and observation and the self-creation of one's identity (Tatum, 2013). The concept of identity is a complex one, shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts. The question of "Who am I?" depends largely on what the world around says I am. This includes one's parents, one's peers, and what message is reflected back to me in the faces and voices of one's teachers, one's neighbours. In addition, what do I learn from the media about myself, and how am I represented in the cultural images around me? Or is one missing from these pictures altogether? Thus, the question, "Who am I" is a product of these and many other factors. Eric Erikson, the psychoanalytic theorist who coined the term 'identity crisis', introduced the notion that the social, cultural, and historical context is the ground in which the individual identity is embedded (Tatum, 2013).

In addition, given the number of groups to which an individual might belong, their social identity is likely to consist of an amalgam of identities, identities that could impose inconsistent demands upon that person. Further, these demands may also conflict with those of the individual's personal identity. It is important to note that it is not the identities that conflict but the values, beliefs, norms, and demands inherent in the identities (Cheek & Briggs, 1982; Leary, Wheeler & Jenkins, 1986).

This was during the time when teachers were dealing with the OBE system. At the time, both teachers and learners experienced frustration regarding the new changes in the education system. Teachers were not properly trained and experienced challenges in implementing this new education system in schools. Teachers and learners were accustomed to the traditional way of teaching and now suddenly, they had to adapt to the new system. I remember teachers commenting on how this new education system was supposed to be implemented; no one knew how. I believe learners sensed the uncertainty and they became restless as well.

It was a period of uncertainty as the Department of Education was trying to find the most suitable education system for learners in the country. I think the OBE system did not help much to improve things in schools be-

cause in 2012 there was a call to administer a national examination called the Annual National Assessments (ANA) to all learners from Grades 1 to 9 across the country. The Department had seen a drop in learner performance, and this was a way in which standardised assessments could identify problem areas in a deeply troubled education system. In my school, I was sent to a workshop to learn how this examination was to be rolled out in Grade 9. It was a challenging time for teachers as some saw it as an added burden to their already full workloads.

Amid all these changes, teacher morale was low, and we began to see many teachers resigning. Learners were losing valuable teachers who had stood the test of time. At the same time, my own life was taking a turn while all these changes were happening. I was also charting a new path for myself – one that would finally lead me away from teaching at high school level and eventually towards an institution of higher learning.

9.2.8 Narrative 8: Star

Tafel and Turner (1979: 16) state that "when social identity seems unsatisfactory individuals leave an existing group and join a positively distinct group or make their existing group more positively distinct". It was during this time that I decided to change my field of study to Policy and Governance in Education. This gave me a deeper understanding of how schools are supposed to be managed, especially with the change of our Constitution and the several new policies in education. Kaya and Dikilitaş (2019) explored teacher identity formation through three phases – pre-existing, developing, and liberating identities – and found that classroom practice plays a pivotal role in identity development. I became very intentional in my conversations with people in terms of quality and equal educational opportunities. I was much more aware now of oppressive activities and would express my opinion more often if I had such experiences. My training in policy and governance also made me aware of what should be in place for quality and equity which became very important to me.

In terms of my personal life, I understood that I neither had to be submissive nor undervalue myself. Owing to my interactions with different organisations and platforms, I understood that we are all equal, even if we are from different races and cultures. A well-developed identity impacts

on an individual's sense of well-being and functioning (Adler, Lodi-Smith, Philippe & Houle, 2016; Meeus, 2011). I would voice my opinion and make decisions if I was convinced that I was on the right track and I was not scared of what society would think of me. During this time, religion became more important for me as I believed that my children should base their values on Christianity in the way I had been brought up. As an adult who had experienced many trials, my faith was an important aspect of my survival. My faith guided me to make decisions. I also became aware that all other religions and practices should be respected, not only Christianity. The individual who develops a religious identity adapts to the religious culture of the society at hand and in this stage of religious identity, there is also the support of other group members along with the individual's preference. Arguably, religious identity and development are not static but dynamic and can change in the process. Although I previously thought that having different churches from the ones I had been exposed to was unacceptable, I learnt to respect other people's choices. I came to realise that Christianity was not the only path that matters and that one has the freedom to choose.

Caring for my family was important to me. I also took care of different family members' children and emphasised the role of education, as I had been brought up this way. Both boys and girls in the household performed the same duties, and I tried to instil the values I received from home in them. I think I was a strict parent. Rules at home had to be adhered to, and respect for all was important, irrespective of who they were. It was important that children show respect to their elders and not treat others with disrespect even if they appeared to have less. The interesting part is that the girls were indeed taught different skills that I would not force on the boys, for example how to dress and behave in public, as well as how to prepare food. Individuals who identify with the society in which they live perceive themselves as having similar characteristics to other members of the society. They place themselves in the same category as the members of the group and evaluate the outside world within the framework of the values and norms of these groups (Arkonaç, 2005: 340–343). Group membership tends to foster a sense of belonging and a connection to the group and encourages individuals to act in line with the group's common goals. The sense of belonging to any society is one of the main channels for fulfilling the responsibilities of that society.

English as a spoken language was now more widely used and encouraged in our communities. At work, we were also made aware that all languages should be used at public meetings to accommodate people who did not understand English. This reminded me of how people would interpret in church, not even being aware that we were also showing respect for other people's languages. Since my mom's mother tongue is Setswana, I at least wanted to greet people in their language. I started greeting colleagues in Setswana and even tried to learn various words. This gave me a sense of belonging. My race was a sensitive issue. I identified as a Black South African, as I considered my mother and extended family to be Black, although I do not speak an African language. I was often rejected for my stance, especially for presenting documents to prove this, because I neither spoke an African language nor looked like a 'Black person'. At this stage of my life, I was very proud of who I was, being more aware of my cultural background and more mature.

I also travelled extensively in the province during this period, experiencing different people and cultures. Through stories of values and cultures, I gained so much understanding of our differences in terms of race, gender, and religion. The differences in educational opportunities were evidence of the inequality in our country. While conducting my research on the implementation of the education poverty alleviation policies in South Africa, my eyes were opened to the ways that some learners had to survive through their educational journeys. I also learnt how schools are grappling with poverty-stricken communities and providing education in some broken communities. The unequal aspect of society in South Africa was a reality for me and a very painful one as I realised how privileged I was. Completing my PhD allowed me to understand the education system better and was a personal, enriching experience.

9.2.9 Narrative 9: Stephanie

In 2003, our son started primary school. The demise of apartheid made it possible for him to attend a school previously reserved for those classified as White. These schools, referred to as model C schools, had always been much better equipped with facilities than schools in suburbs set apart for people classified as Black and Coloured. The learner popu-

lation at the school was diverse in terms of religion, culture, and home language. We wanted to expose our son to the diversity. We wanted him to grow up interacting with and respecting people and seeing himself as equal to any other human. This was a deliberate effort to counter the historical effects of social categorisation and promote an inclusive social identity. It was wonderful to see the interaction among children of different races and cultures when his friends came over for birthday parties or to play!

In 2004, I was appointed as a learning support teacher at a special school. It was the first time I would be working in a multicultural setting outside of the church context. In the previous regime, this school had catered only for White learners who experienced physical impairments as a barrier to learning. The school now accommodates learners with various barriers to learning, not only learners experiencing physical impairments. I remember my trepidation at having to work with learners with physical, learning and/or health impairments for the first time. Thinking back, I cannot explain why! I can only think that it was because I had never interacted with differently abled learners before. It was the first time I would be working with learners who used wheelchairs, learners with missing limbs, or learners experiencing chronic illnesses such as severe arthritis. I realised the importance of inclusion and the significance of implementing inclusive education. It became clear that prejudice and discrimination were not solely about skin colour; people experiencing any form of difference were at risk of discrimination. This broadened my understanding of intersectionality, recognising that disability, like race and gender, can be a basis for societal 'othering' and exclusion.

I taught at this special school for 12 years, and it was the most rewarding experience of my teaching career. Despite the transition to a socioecological model of education, teaching practices at the school still largely adhered to the medical deficit model. Class teachers relied heavily on physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and hearing therapists, and learning support teachers for additional support. A 'pull-out' system was used, where learners left their classes for scheduled therapy or support sessions. Incorporating practices based on the socioecological model was often not deemed worthwhile by long-serving teachers.

I had to prove myself as a competent teacher. Conversations sometimes included phrases like, "Do you know So-and-so? She's also a Coloured". This would be followed by, "But she's actually quite 'oulik'!" – insinuating competence. These comments caused unease for three reasons – first, the assumption that all 'Coloured' people should know each other; second, the surprise that 'Coloured' people could be competent; and third, the comment highlighted my 'Coloured' identity rather than my role as a learning support teacher. My colleagues' focus on racial difference made me extremely uncomfortable (Tatum, 2013). This illustrates the persistent salience of racial categorisation, even in a changing society, and the subtle ways in which negative stereotypes associated with an 'out-group' can manifest.

9.3 Conclusion

A variety of significant themes arise from these varied perspectives. The education sector emerged as a crucial area for change, where integration led to both opportunities and challenges. The narratives highlight education as a place filled with both hope and worry, from Phoenix's children thriving in diverse schools to Sonny's difficulties with student discipline and evolving curricula. The professional landscape also transformed, where policies, job prospects, and workplace dynamics interacted in intricate ways that influenced individuals' feelings of belonging and professional identity. The concept of belonging, who fits in where and under what conditions, permeates many of these stories. Christel's newfound appreciation for the diversity of her West Coast community, Star's struggles with issues of racial identity and classification, and Vince's observations of institutional responses to racial incidents all illustrate how belonging was a subject of contention and negotiation during this time. The experiences of integration differed widely, shaped by specific contexts, individual personalities, and unique circumstances. Importantly, these stories highlight the ongoing process of transformation. Viewing the post-apartheid transition as something that was completed by 2000 is misleading; these accounts reveal that the endeavour to create a non-racial, democratic society persisted throughout the decade and beyond. The challenges described, including confusion surrounding curricula,

workplace tensions, crime-related issues, and questions of identity, underscore that social transformation is a multigenerational project demanding continuous effort and goodwill from all involved. The resilience reflected in these narratives is particularly remarkable. Despite facing challenges, disappointment, and at times discrimination, the narrators consistently exhibit adaptability and optimism.

From Gabriella's professional reinvention and Phoenix's dedication to multicultural education to Morwamocha's commitment to enhancing education and Stephanie's development in inclusive teaching, these examples demonstrate how individuals can drive positive change even in challenging circumstances. The stories remind us that change emerges not only from policies and legislative measures but also through numerous individual choices, interactions, and adaptations. The accounts illustrate that progress is frequently uneven and disputed, necessitating patience, dialogue, and mutual respect across differences. Above all, these narratives affirm the shared humanity that links South Africans across various divides of race, culture, and class. As the narrators navigate issues related to career transitions, family choices, educational hurdles, and community relations, they highlight universal themes that extend beyond demographic distinctions. Their readiness to honestly share their experiences, including their challenges, biases, and growth, provides hope that South Africa's democratic journey, despite its imperfections, has fostered a space for genuine dialogue and mutual understanding. As South Africa continues to confront issues of inequality, corruption, and social fragmentation, these accounts from the 2000s serve as both sobering reminders of ongoing challenges and motivating illustrations of individual agency and resilience. They imply that while institutional transformation is crucial, the bedrock of a just society ultimately relies on the everyday decisions of ordinary citizens to engage constructively with differences, question their own preconceptions, and contribute to the collective good. In this context, these nine voices from the 2000s remain relevant to present-day South Africa, offering both wisdom and inspiration for the ongoing journey of transformation.

Chapter 10

Historical overview and narratives: 2011–2023

10.1 Historical overview: 2011 onwards

The period from 2011 to 2023 was marked by profound global and local events that shaped the consciousness of South Africans and influenced the country's social, political, and economic landscape. While the world reeled from crises such as the Arab Spring, the Haiti earthquake, and the global COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa simultaneously experienced its own defining moments. The hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup had just concluded, leaving behind both infrastructural legacies and economic debate. Amid this optimism, however, the decade quickly revealed growing challenges for South Africa, including continued xenophobia, human rights concerns, and the deepening of social inequality. International human rights organisations, such as Human Rights Watch, highlighted inconsistencies in South Africa's domestic and foreign policy, particularly in matters of civil liberties and its stance on global human rights issues. The controversial denial of a visa to the Dalai Lama and the tragic Marikana massacre exposed tensions between state power and public expectations. Protest movements like #FeesMustFall further underlined growing frustration with the state's failure to address longstanding structural inequalities, especially in education. Meanwhile, global movements such as #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo demonstrated the power of digital plat-

forms in shaping discourse and activism, resonating with local struggles. The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in 2020, brought these pressures into sharper focus, testing public health systems and exacerbating economic distress. Collectively, these years revealed a nation grappling with its democratic promises while navigating a rapidly shifting global order.

In 2010, South Africa hosted its first FIFA World Cup soccer tournament. This event, with a global viewership of about 3.2 billion people, had a noticeable impact on the South African economy. Although "not the salvation of the economy that might have been hoped for", Jory and Boojihawon (2011: 7) argue "that the World Cup provided South Africa with accelerated direct and indirect economic benefits such as expanding the country's international profile, adding to the country's GDP, upgrading its infrastructures, and increasing international exposure for its business community, the scale and scope of which would have been inconceivable without the game". In his IOL (Independent Online) news article "How did hosting the 2010 World Cup benefit South Africa?" Mlamla (2022: n.p.) notes that "the massive infusion of cash and capital inflows into South Africa increased gross domestic product and tax revenue. Also, there were gains in foreign direct investment and a boost in tourism".

The beginning of the decade also marks the start of what is commonly known as the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring, which began on 7 December 2010 and ended in December 2012, was a wave of anti-government and pro-democracy protests that took place mainly in the Arab world, namely the Middle East and parts of North Africa. Pro-democratic protests, which sought a transition from autocratic regimes, mainly affected countries such as Tunisia, where it began, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain, and were prompted by social evils such as governmental corruption, unemployment, autocracy, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, and economic stunting.

How did South Africa fare in terms of human rights at the start of the decade? The World Report 2011: South Africa, Events of 2010 (Human Rights Watch, 2011) reflects on South Africa in terms of expression of freedom, refugees and migrants, socioeconomic rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, and its international role during 2010. It is reported

that government efforts to uphold human rights have been "inconsistent". The report further states that 2010 trends "suggest possible constriction of civil and political rights. In addition, inadequate policies and poor implementation of good ones have slowed the realisation of social and economic rights for many South Africans" (Human Rights Watch, 2011: n.p.). This inconsistency in terms of human rights was to continue throughout the decade. In its 2016 report (which reflects on events of 2015) about South Africa, Human Rights Watch notes that there was a continuation of human rights challenges "as the government struggled to stop attacks on businesses and homes of refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants, denying they were motivated by xenophobia or other forms of intolerance". As an intervention strategy to address racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals, the South African government launched a National Action Plan (NAP) in 2019. Despite the launch of the NAP, xenophobic attacks on and discrimination against non-South Africans continued, even up until 2020 and to a lesser extent up until today. In its 2021 report on South Africa, covering events from 2020, Human Rights Watch (2021: n.p.) noted that the NAP (2019) "has not ensured accountability for xenophobic crimes."

In the subsequent years, the African continent and the Middle East experienced an intensification of the Arab Spring, the Egyptian Revolution, and the execution of two of the world's most notorious leaders. Because of the Arab Spring, the regime of Hosni Mubarak (1928–2020), the fourth president of Egypt from 1981 to 2011, was overthrown and replaced by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. The start of the decade further saw the execution of leaders such as Osama bin Laden (1957–2011), founder and leader of Al-Qaeda, a militant Islamist organisation, and Muammar Gaddafi (1942–2011), Libyan president.

On the South African front, South Africans had to contend with the refusal of the South African government to grant, for the third consecutive time, a visa to the 14th Tibetan Dalai Lama to attend the 80th birthday of Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu. In a journal article, Van der Westhuizen and Van Wyk (2016: 94) called this refusal by the South African government an illustration of "the contradictions in the country's human rights foreign policy" even though "South Africa has declared human rights a cornerstone of its foreign policy".

Also, during the decade, South Africa saw the passing of political activists such as Henry Gordon Makgothi (1928–2011) and Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu (1918–2011), the widow of treason trialist and former deputy president of the ANC, Walter Max Ulyate Sisulu (1912–2003), as well as Andries Tatane (1978–2011). Tatane was shot and killed by the South African Police on 13 April 2011 during a service delivery protest in Ficksburg, South Africa.

In its World Report 2012: South Africa, Events of 2011 Report, Human Rights Watch (2012) noted that, during 2011, South Africa was still grappling with issues such as "corruption, growing social and economic inequalities, and the weakening of state institutions by partisan appointments and one-party dominance". Human Rights Watch also observed in its report that the Foreign Policy White Paper that was published during the same year failed "to clarify the thrust of South Africa's international agenda, dashing hopes that a country with strong constitutional protections of rights at home is ready to assume a leadership position on the realization of rights worldwide" (2012: n.p.).

Other major events on both the international and the South African front were the first democratic elections in Egypt (23–24 May 2012 and again on 16–17 June 2012); the shooting on 9 October 2012 of the 14-year-old Pakistani schoolgirl, Malala Yousafzai, who campaigned for the education of girls in Pakistan; and the Marikana shooting of 34 Lonmin miners in the North West province of South Africa. On 16 August 2012, South Africans were shocked and horrified by the brutality of police, which resulted in the killing of these miners at the Lonmin platinum mine in Marikana in the North West province. This incident happened while the Andries Tatane incident was still fresh in the memories of South Africans.

During the latter half of the decade, there was also an intensification of social media campaigns such as #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo. These campaigns illustrated how social media could be used to spread news and influence people. In South Africa, we encountered the #FeesMustFall campaign, which began late in 2015 and was driven by students in higher education. Greeff, Mostert, Kahl and Jonke (2021: 79) opine that these protests "affected various stakeholders, especially Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and students themselves". These protests were caused

by numerous factors such as "high tuition fees, university leadership, and the lack of monetary aid ... access to free tertiary education ... dissatisfaction with accommodation ... inadequate registration processes, the required registration fees, and universities' language policies" (Greeff et al., 2021: 79).

Another global event, which was not limited to South Africa, was the outbreak of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic influenced every aspect of global society, including education, and led to the deaths of more than seven million people worldwide.

The years between 2011 and 2023 were a defining chapter in South Africa's post-apartheid journey, marked by both significant progress and persistent challenges. Against the backdrop of global events such as the Arab Spring, the rise of social justice movements, and the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa was forced to confront its own social, political, and economic contradictions. The excitement of the 2010 FIFA World Cup soon gave way to a decade of growing disillusionment, driven by service delivery failures, police brutality, and unresolved socioeconomic inequalities. Incidents like the Marikana massacre and the killing of Andries Tatane exposed the deep fractures in state–society relations and highlighted the enduring struggle for justice. Although the government introduced policies like the NAP to address racism and xenophobia, these efforts were often undermined by weak implementation and limited accountability. Social movements such as #FeesMustFall demonstrated the growing activism of a new generation unwilling to accept the status quo. Meanwhile, South Africa's foreign policy inconsistencies, such as the repeated denial of a visa to the Dalai Lama, raised questions about its global human rights commitments. The COVID-19 pandemic further revealed the country's vulnerabilities, disrupting lives and deepening existing inequalities. Yet, amid these trials, South Africans continued to show resilience, mobilising through protest, dialogue, and advocacy. Ultimately, this period reflected a nation still in transition, striving to realise the promises of its democracy while navigating the pressures of an increasingly interconnected world.

10.2 Narratives between 2010 and 2023

10.2.1 Narrative 1: Gabriella

With the ongoing political changes, the idea of emigrating re-emerged. I made the decision to study sign language in Australia for what I initially thought would be two years, hoping to secure a job there afterwards. Therefore, I resigned from the school and we left the country. At that time, the children were busy studying at university and starting their careers.

However, things did not go as planned when the Australian government withdrew funding for my college, cutting my two-year programme down to just one. After several attempts to find a job, we decided to abandon our plans and return to South Africa. By then, my age was also becoming a concern owing to strict immigration regulations.

Once again, fortune smiled upon me when I received a job offer as a contract lecturer at my previous university. A year later, a permanent position became vacant and for the next three years, I focused on building and maintaining a unit at the teaching and learning centre. Those three years allowed me to re-enter the academic world and catch up on what I had missed during my decade away. I was amazed at how much the academic landscape had changed in such a short time, and I had to learn quickly to keep up.

This period also renewed my passion for teaching. Although I had always tried to incorporate research into my teaching, this role provided me with the opportunity to focus on researching my own teaching methods, which also gave me a break to start publishing again.

At this point, South Africa had enjoyed almost two decades of democracy. The ANC was still the ruling party, but there was growing concern among the population about issues such as corruption, poor service delivery, and a declining economy. Under Jacob Zuma's presidency, many South Africans felt increasingly alienated from the political scene owing to concerns about governance and corruption.

After spending three years in my previous role, in 2017 I decided to apply for a teaching position at another university. I was lucky enough to secure the job, which meant yet another move for us. Thankfully, this change turned out to be positive for my family.

This position opened new avenues for academic citizenship, such as research, publication, and postgraduate supervision. It also allowed me to explore various areas of sociolinguistics, particularly the different varieties of Afrikaans. The curriculum emphasises these varieties, which are tied into the broader conversation about decolonisation. Additionally, my background and knowledge of South African Sign Language (SASL) resurfaced, providing new opportunities in both research and teaching.

My passion for SASL inspired me to develop new courses for the university. My dream is to see SASL gain the recognition and rightful place it deserves in our institution.

Although affirmative action policies such as BEE have created challenges for White South Africans to climb the corporate ladder or find new job opportunities, I have managed to find a space in the academic world. I have been lucky to live my passion while being able to support my students and contribute to my community.

However, I cannot help but notice the struggles around me. Rising living costs, stagnant salaries, and slow economic growth make it difficult for many people to live comfortably in the new South Africa.

My Afrikaner cultural identity has changed significantly from a dominant position during apartheid to a more marginal role in the current South African society. Although Afrikaans remains a prominent language in my area, something I truly appreciate, English has become the dominant language in higher education.

One encouraging aspect of Afrikaans is that it is not only spoken by White Afrikaners but is also the home language of many Coloured communities. The diversity among Afrikaans speakers contributes to the richness of the language, making it one of the most vibrant local languages in South Africa. This gives me hope for its future.

Despite the negative perceptions about Afrikaans during and after apartheid, it is experiencing a revival. Many people once predicted its decline, but we are seeing increased opportunities for Afrikaans speakers from various cultural backgrounds. Many new and emerging writers are publishing in different varieties of Afrikaans. This has opened new avenues and there are even discussions about changing the Afrikaans school curriculum to embrace these local variations.

The period from 2011 onward has been one of enormous change, both politically and personally. South Africa, like my own life, has continued to transform. In the political sphere, when Cyril Ramaphosa assumed the presidency in 2018, people were cautiously hopeful. Many of us thought that his leadership would bring stability to the government and the economy, but unfortunately, political instability, corruption scandals, and a poor economy have created negativity. On the personal front, I have also been dealing with the realities of ageing, career changes, and approaching retirement.

During the 2010s and into the 2020s, Afrikaners such as I have had to adapt to the multicultural nature of South Africa. Although some communities remain conservative, many of us have embraced it in a positive way. We have seen more cross-racial interactions, relationships, and friendships, particularly in urban areas, which reflects a growing sense of unity.

The beginning of the new decade in 2020 marked the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a great impact on all our lives. The government put strict lockdowns in place to stop the virus, but these lockdowns exacerbated unemployment and poverty, especially for those already struggling. The hospitals were under great pressure, and vaccination became available in 2021, but there were mixed feelings about it. For schools and universities, the lockdown period created opportunities to introduce new technology into teaching and learning, moving to online teaching, and eventually resulted in a 'new normal', called blended or hybrid teaching.

Despite ongoing concerns about safety, job security, and healthcare costs, especially for the elderly, my family has been fortunate. We have managed to maintain a stable income and have been able to plan. How-

ever, there is always uncertainty, particularly as retirement approaches. While many South Africans of all racial backgrounds have opted to emigrate to other countries, others have chosen semigration, moving to safer regions within South Africa. Although I have not yet had to face the emotional challenges of having my children leave the country, I recognise that this may be a reality for many.

After apartheid ended in 1994, South Africa's social and economic challenges continued to increase, including rising crime rates. Despite the transition that brought freedom and democracy, inequalities were exposed, and poverty and unemployment increased. This again contributed to high levels of crime and corruption. These crimes are not just petty crimes but are sometimes violent, such as murders, robberies, and assaults, throughout the country.

One particularly controversial aspect of post-apartheid crime has been the issue of farm murders and attacks, mostly on White farmers, and these have been highly politicised. While the government and human rights organisations have investigated these attacks and murders, farm murders are seen as part of the broader violent crime epidemic, rather than a racially motivated genocide. This remains a controversial issue.

The broader crime crisis affects all South Africans, with gang violence, car hijackings, and home invasions. The government has been criticised for not addressing the root causes such as inequality and unemployment.

So far, there does not seem to be a solution to crime and it continues to be a pressing issue. Security remains a major concern for most families in all areas. We have taken the usual precautions, installing fences, alarms, and burglar bars, and have become used to this way of life. These concerns are shared by people of all races in South Africa, uniting us in our daily struggles. In many ways, we are moving towards becoming a more unified nation, bound by common challenges and hopes for the future.

On a personal level, looking ahead, as I approach retirement, I hope to have more time for myself, to rekindle my hobbies such as writing and painting. Camping has always been a family favourite, and I imagine sitting in my caravan, enjoying the quiet life, while working on creative

projects. Technology has become a big part of how I work, from digital painting on my iPad to doing research and writing. Although I appreciate traditional ways of doing things, these modern tools are very practical.

I remain concerned for the future of South Africa. On the one hand, I am optimistic about the potential and resilience of the country. On the other hand, I am deeply concerned about issues such as corruption, inequality, and crime. Although I no longer feel the urge to leave the country, I dream of living in a safe place. Sometimes I think about moving to more remote areas with fewer people, but I am still deeply rooted in my community, my culture, and my land.

Looking back, I have witnessed remarkable changes, from political changes to technological advancements. I remember seeing a television for the first time at the age of 17 and using a computer for the first time in 1984. In a relatively short period of time, South Africa has undergone changes that many people in other parts of the world would find hard to believe. Our lives have been shaped by different political systems – first apartheid and then the transformation to democracy – but also by our own personal journeys through education, careers, family life, and the challenges of maintaining security and stability. It was not easy to preserve one's cultural identity in an ever-changing society, but we have learnt to adapt to whatever life throws at us. The secret is to create a delicate balance between embracing new realities and holding on to what matters most.

10.2.2 Narrative 2: Vince

While at the SHES, the urge to teach Afrikaans literature as a subject to undergraduate students became stronger. I was a language person – finish and *klaar*! I applied for several Afrikaans positions at various universities such as Stellenbosch, Free State, and Rhodes but without any success. One day, I was approached by a former university colleague who, at that stage, had been seconded to a newly established university in the Northern Cape to start the School of Education. I accepted the former colleague's invitation and applied for the Afrikaans position. I was appointed and commenced my new role on 1 February 2016. I was sad to leave SHES and the Education Faculty where I had met such wonderful

colleagues but also excited about a new chapter in my life. I learnt a great deal from those colleagues about higher education studies and supervision, and I will forever be indebted to them for the many opportunities and camaraderie. I also ended up being the acting Head of Department for the SHES.

In February 2016, I started my tenure in the faculty of Humanities at the newly established university in the Northern Cape. The university was one of two universities established at the same time. The other university was the University of Mpumalanga.

Although the university was still in a rudimentary state, it began to take shape as a promising higher education institution. As staff members, from diverse backgrounds and from all over the world, we were obliged to work together and create our own pathways. We learnt a great deal from each other and our diverse experiences led us to build something totally different from established traditional universities. Although we benchmarked with other institutions in our country as well as abroad, we developed something special. We had the liberty to determine the direction in which we wanted the university to grow.

The university, although small, was not spared student uprisings and protests. These protests took place annually and could be regarded as an aftermath of the countrywide #FeesMustFall student uprising, which started in late 2015 and continued into 2016. According to Greeff et al. (2021: 79), these protests "affected various stakeholders, especially Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and students themselves".

Numerous factors contributed to the #FeesMustFall student protests which, according to Greeff et al. (2021: 79), started to accumulate in February 2009. These factors included, but are not limited to, "high tuition fees, university leadership, and the lack of monetary aid ... access to free tertiary education ... dissatisfaction with accommodation ... inadequate registration processes, the required registration fees and universities' language policies".

The face of higher education changed completely after the #FeesMustFall student protests. It was not only higher education institutions that were affected but also the students themselves. Researchers such as Mapha-

sa (2017), for instance, recorded the "trauma, anxiety and depression" (Greeff et al., 2021: 79) students experienced as a result of the violent nature of the protests. At our university, we had to take note of the students' voices, their frustrations and needs, and be very sensitive about and accommodative to their aspirations. I, like many of the academics, was also a young student once upon a time and I also had dreams and aspirations; therefore, I need to listen to the current generation and try to understand them. All these issues contribute to my growth and the shaping of my social identity and make me understand that, although the current generation of students may be facing different challenges from our generation, their dreams and aspirations are the same as ours, namely, to change their circumstances for the betterment of themselves, their families, and society.

This decade was also characterised by the outbreak of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic which brought the whole world to a standstill. Every sphere of society was affected by the spreading of the COVID-19 virus, lives were disrupted, as well as teaching and learning activities in higher education institutions such as our university. But the show had to go on! As academics, we had to adapt our teaching delivery and transitioned from a face-to-face teaching delivery mode to an online teaching mode supported by digital technologies. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching and learning at our university and universities elsewhere will never be the same again.

10.2.3 Narrative 3: Reatlegile

The college changed to the National Institute for Higher Education (NIHE) and we continued to teach, phasing out students using the modules of a university suited to the North West province. During 2016, I was approached by the then vice-chancellor of the university in our city who asked me to lecture Setswana at the university. I accepted the offer as the NIHE was closing at the end of 2016. I lost my mum in January 2016. Our home was not the same without her, but we held onto her teachings to respect and love ourselves as well as others. At that stage, my dad was ill and bedridden and we took care of him. Unfortunately, he also passed on in 2017. In February 2017, I was seconded to the university in our city, and

I still continue to lecture Setswana to date. It is a great pleasure to see our language growing in the same way as other languages. I meet staff members from diverse backgrounds and from all over the world; we learn a lot from each other, and our diverse experiences lead us to build something totally different from established traditional universities. Our university is one of two new universities established at the same time, the other being the University of Mpumalanga.

During 2020, COVID-19 disrupted teaching and learning at our university; we were unable to present face-to-face classes. We had to quickly learn how to use Teams to teach online. It was not easy but both academics and students used the teaching mode supported by digital technologies. Examinations were also written online despite some students being dishonest. COVID-19 also impacted families where both parents died, and students had to be parents to their siblings. I lost a true friend during the pandemic – a caring, loving and very respectful person. How she was buried will always remain in my memory – the coffin was covered with plastic and men in white overalls buried her unceremoniously, having previously sanitised the soil. It was very painful because we were not able to say our goodbyes properly.

Despite these challenges, our university excelled in all sporting codes. We saw our language students participate in the Funda Mzansi competition ("Developing Creative Minds") in George in 2021. Their two book clubs earned them a second place for an Afrikaans book review. In addition, they came first in a Setswana spelling bee and third in Setswana debating. In 2021, I received a Service Recognition Award from the Northern Cape Department of Education, in recognition of thirty meritorious years of valuable dedication, and exemplary and professional long service.

In 2022, the university book club came first in the English book review category, we came second in English debate, and the Kgomotso Thomas book club came second in the Xitsonga book review category, as well as second in Sesotho reading. These students have put our university on the map by holding their own against other universities. It pleases me to see these students' love for their language as well as their acknowledgement of its importance.

In June 2023, we lost my husband's younger sister who was a teacher in China – roughly 11 700 km away from South Africa. It took two months to transfer her remains from China, placing a great deal of pressure on the family. We explained to parents whose children are working abroad that bringing a body back home from overseas is extremely difficult and expensive.

I was also part of a book club launch at a local high school in our city. Before the book launch, there were activities such as poetry writing and recitation competitions. The learners wrote their poems in their mother tongue and they recited what they had written. A Grade 8 learner won the overall prize for recitation in Sesotho.

10.2.4 Narrative 4: Morwamocha

As a Black South African, I experienced profound challenges and aspirations characteristic of the period between 2011 and 2013. I was raised during the waning years of apartheid and that has made me grow up with the memories of systemic racial discrimination and economic exclusion. In 2011, I was a circuit manager in the North West province. Because there was no salary parity with our counterparts in other provinces of South Africa, I resigned and joined the taxi industry in 2012. Unfortunately, I did not remain in the industry for long as it is a hostile environment. The beginning of 2014 saw me joining a university of technology as a part-time lecturer in the Humanities Faculty. As time went on, I registered for a doctoral degree in Public Management which was conferred on me in 2019.

From 2011 to 2013, there were many challenges that South Africa faced. Many workers lost their lives during the Marikana turmoil at the Lonmin platinum mine. They had gathered due to the problems they had with the mine management. During these protests, police opened fire on the striking mine workers who were demanding higher salaries, resulting in the deaths of 34 workers and injuries to many more. Many people were shocked by this and there was much debate about the relationship between the state and economic inequality. The tragedy was viewed by many as brutality meted out by the state to its people.

The social and political dynamics in South Africa remained contentious as the country continued to address the previous legacies of apartheid and strived for equality, reconstruction, and development. There has been an interplay of progress and challenges for Black South Africans, who can still not access equal education despite all the countrywide calls for free education. Also, there were still remnants of inequality in the country as many South Africans, particularly Black people, faced systemic oppression. One of the most prominent events during this period was the growth of socioeconomic movements, reflecting growing frustration over inequality and unemployment. In 2011, despite nearly two decades of democracy, many Black South Africans were still suffering intolerable economic hardships. The legacy of apartheid's spatial and economic segregation was still the order of the day, giving rise to limited access to quality education, healthcare, and job opportunities for residents of this country. It is not surprising that incessant notable protests and labour strikes were staged in various parts of the country with employees demanding living wages, better working conditions, and improved public services.

In the political arena, discussions on land reform and economic redistribution continued to be central to the discourse. The ANC, under President Jacob Zuma's leadership, faced growing criticism for perceived corruption and insufficient progress in improving the living standards of the Black population. This period saw increasing support for new and alternative voices in South African politics by some groups of youth in the country, including the rise of new political movements such as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), which was formalised in 2013. This organisation was characterised by its militant stance. Their leader, Julius Malema, would be seen in confrontations with the police, even at parliamentary level. During this era, South Africa's political landscape was marked by both stability and significant shifts, reflecting the tensions inherent in a young democracy grappling with serious socioeconomic disparities. President Jacob Zuma's leadership and the ANC dominated on one hand but faced growing scrutiny on the other. Many corruption allegations surrounding Zuma's Nkandla homestead erupted. The scandals related to public funds being used for upgrades to Zuma's private residence. When this was revealed to the public, trust in the "Zuma government" eroded (Lodge, 2014). This period highlighted an increasing disconnect between the ruling party and its traditional support base. Many Black followers

were disillusioned about the situation and felt that the ANC government was failing to address their needs. Lengthy talks ensued about land issues relating to land expropriation without compensation, resonating strongly with a segment of the population that felt neglected by mainstream political discourse (Paret, 2016). Although the government initiated various land redistribution programmes, progress was slow and unequal, with much of the country's arable land still under White ownership. This stagnation fuelled discontent and amplified calls for more assertive policy changes (Walker, 2012).

10.2.5 Narrative 5: Phoenix

The #BlackLivesMatter movement emerged in the wake of George Zimmerman's acquittal after he fatally shot 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, a Black teenager, in the United States (McCoy, 2020). This incident led to the inception of #BlackLivesMatter, which sought to foster local backing and address instances of violence against Black communities, whether by the state or vigilante forces (McCoy, 2020; Mpisi & Alexander, 2024). The year 2013 was also a sad one for South Africa and globally, owing to the passing of the renowned leader, Nelson Mandela. On a personal level, 2013 was a year of loss for my family and me following the unexpected death of my wife, leaving me to care for our two children, aged 16 and 17. This upheaval devastated our once-secure family unit. The portrait of our previously joyful family was shattered. It was necessary for me to transition from solely being a father to taking on the roles of both a father and mother, and sometimes even primarily a mother. Despite my active involvement as a father, my upbringing had not equipped me for this new challenge. Social feedback indicated society's scepticism about a father being capable of single parenting. Such attitudes likely arise from societal gender norms, which assign caregiving roles predominantly to women (Harro, 2010a). Initially, I questioned my ability to fulfil these responsibilities effectively. I had to become more attuned to the emotional requirements of my teenage children. Although I stumbled often, I was determined to learn from my errors. For instance, I realised the importance of noticing and appreciating gestures such as when my daughter styled her hair or had her eyebrows shaped. Helping with household duties was no longer something you did as a favour, expecting praise. In my upbringing, attending to softer issues, such as buying gifts for a friend's birthday or

participating in fundraising events, were responsibilities typically attributed to females (Harro, 2010a).

In 2014, a new university was founded in our province, a result of years of planning and advocacy for its creation. Witnessing its growth was both exciting and motivating. The first student intake consisted of merely a core group of staff. Every staff member, including the first vice-chancellor, was integral to every facet of the university's evolution. Tasks included managing registration and orientation, setting up lecture venues, providing student counselling, organising a small collection of university books in a public library corner, transporting students to hospitals when needed, and unlocking classrooms on chilly winter mornings. I was honoured to be among the academic staff who inaugurated the Education Faculty, playing a vital role in establishing the Teaching Practice office. We laboured relentlessly to promote the new university and establish collaborative ties with the provincial education department and local schools. In its first year, the Education Faculty had only six academic staff members and 43 students. We took on administrative roles, created course modules, taught classes, transported students to schools for classroom observations, and endured the dust and noise from the construction of the new buildings. Today, the university comprises four faculties, with over 200 academic and administrative staff and about 5000 students.

Who can forget the year 2020, when most countries globally faced lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic? As I look back on my journey, I realise the distance I have travelled, from a carefree child playing in the dusty roads of an apartheid township to a successful academic in a democratic South Africa. During this journey, I have learnt a lot. I have made countless mistakes trying to comprehend and navigate this inclusive, multicultural post-democratic society. I still struggle to understand what it means to be African in this era, as racial terminology still remains. Terms such as 'Coloured', which we, as political activists, resisted, are still used in official government settings. Furthermore, new racial identifiers such as 'Black-African' have surfaced and are being used to perpetuate discrimination. The divide between the poor and the rich has only expanded. Similarly, Zembylas (2023) underscores the detrimental impacts that unfulfilled post-democratic aspirations can have on people. The leaders we elected to represent us display their wealth amid widespread poverty.

At government events, a distinction is made between the poor and the wealthy, with the latter being placed in exclusive areas adorned in excessive luxury, marked with signs reading 'VIPs Only' (The chosen few). I am certain that many people ask themselves, "Is this what we have struggled for?" or "Was Verwoerd right all along in his belief in dividing people?". This time, however, the division is not along racial lines, but rather based on class, social, and economic status.

One might always question one's own parenting abilities and the approaches one chooses to raise children (Brooks, 2023). I have often wondered whether raising our children in a multicultural and all-embracing manner was the correct choice. I also contemplate whether deliberately trying to protect them from the racial burdens we carry owing to our upbringing under apartheid was wise. As our children grow up and I see them navigating post-apartheid South Africa with assurance and confidence, I am certain we made the right call. They have formed friendships across racial, religious, gender, language, age, and political barriers. Thanks to their inclusive educational and societal backgrounds, they can communicate with friends, colleagues, and clients in several African languages. I admire how they are enthusiastic Springbok rugby fans. To me, this indicates that they do not carry the scars and burdens of apartheid-era South Africa, as they are "born-frees" (Metcalfe, 2022). I notice a similar level of cultural and inclusive adaptability in some of my students, too. Reflecting on these positive societal changes fills me with optimism for our nation. It is during these reflections that I become convinced that the 'struggle' was worthwhile and that the future of the country is promising. I am not yet a supporter of the Springbok rugby team and am working hard to switch from supporting the All Blacks. Logically, I have no reason not to back our national team, as it reflects the racial diversity of our Rainbow Nation. Yet, I face challenges, because change is hard, and changing oneself is even more daunting. It is a continuous and laborious journey that demands ongoing reflection and introspection (Brookfield, 2005). It requires adopting new approaches and dismantling previously held views and stereotypes (Ferguson, 2003; Groenewald & Mpisi, 2024; Wacquant & Bourdieu, 1992).

Unfortunately, the reverse is also true. I often feel saddened when I visit the neighbourhood where I grew up. People there are unemployed,

impoverished, despondent, and seem to be forgotten (Fisher, Scanlon, Deojee, Hutton & Sisko, 2020). Young people wander the streets without purpose, openly drinking beer. On nearly every corner, one finds teenagers, some as young as ten, smoking hookah pipes, often with their parents present. The yards that used to be swept clean up to the pavements in my time are now overgrown with weeds and littered with dirt. This perception aligns with Zembylas's (2023) view that negative emotions and influences are linked to democratic disenchantment. I cannot help but notice the two starkly different worlds in which South Africans are living, reminiscent of apartheid – only now it is the divide between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. I struggle to reconcile my middle-class existence with that of my childhood friends left behind in the 'hood', where nothing seems to change. This aligns with Francis, Valodia and Webster's (2020) highlighting of the inequalities in our South African society. I teach and research equality, inclusivity, and social justice; yet, my family and I enjoy privilege. We work, live, and socialise with middle-class individuals from various racial, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, fully immersing ourselves in the illusion of the Rainbow Nation, while for 'the other half' (my friends and family back in the 'hood') little has changed. It is unsurprising that some refer to the Rainbow Nation as a myth (Yende & Yende, 2021). All these complexities, contrasts, and the negotiation of one's own identity make navigating post-democratic South Africa so challenging.

10.2.6 Narrative 6: Christel

My husband became ill and I realised that we needed to move closer to a hospital. I went for a few interviews but later decided I still had work to do in the town on the West Coast. I remember how I used to walk to school and say out loud, "Today is a lovely day!" The children must have heard me, because later, when they walked into my classroom, they would say, "Miss, isn't it a lovely day?" This illustrates how positive energy and appreciation for life became central to my teaching practice and community presence.

In November 2014, after being a high school teacher for more than 20 years, I was appointed as a lecturer at the newly established university in the province. The higher education context exposed me to various challenges and opportunities. The past ten years in the higher education en-

vironment have empowered and enriched my life. Both the university and my department have contributed to my professional growth and development. The workshops, seminars, and conferences I was able to attend enabled me to evaluate and align my practices with the higher education vision for transformation.

In 2015, I enrolled for a PhD. My study focused on the development of the narrative identity of students on a diverse campus. I selected eight participants with different language and cultural backgrounds (Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Coloured, and White). The stories of the students inspired me and taught me to listen carefully to the stories of others. The study highlighted that narrative identities are navigated and negotiated through re-creation, adaptation, reformation, and withdrawal. Positive negotiation and navigation promote agency and community, while positive identities are created to benefit transformation.

I was fortunate to receive six-month sabbaticals in 2021 and 2022. I managed to write articles, but it was also a time to spend quality time with my late husband. During that time, I recorded all his stories. My husband passed away at the end of 2022. Although his health was not good, nothing prepares you for the loss of a loved one. My colleagues became my second family, for comfort, motivation, and guidance.

A first-year module, "The Individual in the Learning Context", deepened my understanding of others even further. The module challenges students to step out of their comfort zones of only interacting with familiar groups (race, class, language, religion, and ethnicity) and instead open themselves up to differences. The preconceived assumptions and stereotypes we have learnt through socialisation can only be corrected when we begin to listen to the lived experiences of others. Within the context of a transformed curriculum, the module aims to make students and teachers critically aware of the society in which they live, to identify the discrimination and marginalisation of people due to their differences, and to develop a deeper understanding of these issues (Tatum, 2013). The module also relates to understanding how marginalised oppression is structured and maintained at individual, institutional, and social levels. As teacher educators, we explored the module's potential to raise first-year student teachers' awareness of different forms of oppression. As facilitators of the

module, we believe that effective facilitation can only take place when we subject ourselves to a process of reflection, re-evaluation, and reconstruction of our perceptions of 'otherness', demonstrating an understanding of how transformation enables institutional change. Harro (2010a) points out that the getting-ready phase in the cycle of liberation marks the start of addressing and dismantling our discriminatory beliefs and behaviours.

The opportunities I received within my department and from the university sharpened my reflective skills. My teaching approach has changed over the years. Today, my focus in teaching is not on the product or the result, but rather on the teaching journey. I respect and acknowledge the background of our diverse student population and recognise the importance of a human-centred pedagogy. Today, I am more sensitive to the voices of marginalised groups and strive to create a sense of community and belonging in the classroom.

In my faculty, my professional knowledge has expanded and deepened within a community of practice. The regular brownbag sessions and workshops equipped me and taught me to think critically. All the sessions helped us to avoid working in silos and instead function as a group within the School of Education (McLoughlin, Patel, O'Callaghan & Reeves, 2018). As we learnt more about each other, we were able to appreciate the differences between us in terms of language, culture, religion, age, and social background. Among my colleagues, I made friends who supported me with advice and challenged my way of thinking.

At the university, third- and fourth-year education students must choose a conversational language module – either Afrikaans, isiXhosa, or Setswana. The purpose of these modules is to teach students basic language skills that they can use in a multicultural classroom. I have seen how the tension between language groups disappears when students begin these conversational language classes.

In the context of higher education, my thoughts and feelings were constantly challenged. As a high school teacher, the Department of Education (DoE) required me to set only 10% of the questions on a test or examination at a higher cognitive level. In the new university environment, I had to review my test questions continually to ensure that they were at the correct cognitive level. As a result, I became familiar with both Bloom's and Anderson's taxonomies. Today, I am aware of the different

levels of thinking, and I always strive to challenge students to higher levels of cognitive thinking.

I had to learn the skills of reflection and metacognitive thinking. I began to reflect on my own thoughts and constantly questioned and evaluated my teaching (Perkowska-Klejman & Odrawaz-Coates, 2019). Today, I encourage my students to be critical thinkers by being purposeful and reasoned in their thoughts. I create opportunities for students to become reflective practitioners – a learning process through and from experience to gain new insights about themselves and from practice (Ferguson, 2003).

My academic identity represents commitment to using education as a tool for individual development and social transformation, embodying Ubuntu's recognition that "I am because we are" through pedagogical practices that honour the full humanity and cultural wealth of all students.

10.2.7 Narrative 7: Sonny

2011 to 2014 would be my last years teaching high school students. In 2012, I graduated with a master's degree, studying part time while teaching. In 2014, I received a scholarship to pursue my PhD. I never hesitated, and grabbed the opportunity with both hands because opportunities like that come once in a lifetime. It was a bittersweet moment because I was very sad to leave my school which I had served for 22 years, but at the same time I was very excited to start this new chapter in my life. My colleagues organised a small farewell event in the staff room for me and I left with beautiful memories of the school that had shaped the person I am today.

I was once again a student pursuing my studies at university. At first it was strange being on campus with my former students that I had taught in high school. I think they were more shocked than I was to see their teacher hustling and bustling in the university corridors, but they were still very respectful. Studying was a very humbling experience in the sense that it made me realise that I still had much to learn. We were a small group of students that were pursuing our studies and the camaraderie evident in that study room was amazing. Also, I was not entirely lost because we were more or less of the same age group. It was an amazing experience

because even though we were from different parts of South Africa and some from abroad, language, culture, and gender did not pose a barrier for us because we were bound by one goal, and that was to succeed in our studies. We had left our careers; failure was not an option. There was such strong support among us that we would even stage a mock presentation if one of us was expected to defend their proposal before a panel. It was a great time for me.

I finally graduated and started working at a higher institution. Making the transition was exciting because I was looking forward to learning how to navigate this new space. This new space came with its own demands, but I enjoyed these challenges. I stayed at my first institution for four and a half years, then I was fortunate to be appointed permanently by the second institution. Moving to another province was scary because I had never worked so far away from home before. It was particularly difficult since I was moving with my family, and my youngest daughter would have to learn Afrikaans as a second additional language in Grade 6. She was not at all happy about this move. I managed to find a school that was willing to accept her just before the June examinations were about to start. Nevertheless, she wrote and passed every other subject well except for Afrikaans! As you can imagine, I was never going to hear the end of it. I had to sit her down and explain that she was never going to survive alone without her parents at such a young age. We then decided to enrol for extra Afrikaans classes and our problems slowly diminished as the time progressed. To cut a long story short, she is now a thriving Grade 10 learner and enjoying high school. Lesson learnt – in my life everything takes time.

What scared my daughter most was that she could not relate to other learners in the classroom and on the playground since most learners' home language was Afrikaans. If language is a barrier, it is difficult to make friends, connect and socialise with other children. Tajfel and Turner (1979) succinctly assert that language seems to be an especially salient dimension of separate identity in countries like France, Canada, Wales, and Belgium. I think, given my daughter's experiences, this can be generalised to the South African context as well. To be perceived as having a separate identity from the rest can isolate a person, and it can be difficult to make friends. Hence, it was important for me to make sure that she received extra lessons in Afrikaans to be able to break those barriers and

move on with her studies. As a parent, I had difficult questions to ask myself: Did I do the right thing, moving my child to another province? I was beginning to worry about her mental state. However, as time passed, everything was settling into place and I was happy with my decision. Today she is a happy person and coming into her own as a young lady. She is doing very well academically, taking part in various extramural activities, and looking forward to the next phase of her life – focusing on the subjects she has chosen for Grade 10 up to matric.

2020 was the year that COVID-19 hit the world, and in 2021, my job had forced me to change provinces. It was the worst time to change jobs and provinces because there was a nationwide lockdown, and everyone remained indoors. I must admit I was very scared, and rightfully so because people were dying. Back in the province where I had lived, in my street alone, six people died, and that was a very trying time for everyone. Our gates were tightly secured because we were afraid someone might come in and infect us all. It was such a crazy time. As soon as it was announced that people could take the COVID-19 injection, I jumped at the opportunity. I even went as far as taking the boosters. In my family, we lost a young man and that experience left us all shaken, and for that reason, I did not want to leave anything to chance.

In 2022, everything slowly returned to normal. People went back to their jobs and children went back to school. That was a welcome relief for me as a parent, as children were tired of staying home and having parents as their teachers. But I think all parents globally came to understand and appreciate the hard work teachers do, as they were faced with the task of educating their own children. COVID-19 taught me important lessons, namely that life is fragile and short, and that it can be taken away from you in an instant. Secondly, when everything and everyone is gone, family is the only thing that remains – so take time to appreciate your family and take good care of each other.

This decade, I aim to grow steadily in my academic journey to see where the road takes me.

10.2.8 Narrative 8: Star

Joining academia had not been a dream; however, my PhD motivated me to apply for a position at a university. Being at a new university and giving back to my community is a great honour. I am offering foundational modules in education which include philosophy of education, policy, leadership, and management in education. These modules are underpinned by the principles of social justice and transformation. First, because of my experiences in the basic education field, I was able to share practical examples with students during our engagements. Teacher identity plays a pivotal role in preparing teachers to teach and for addressing social justice, and educators can explore and reimagine possible ways that the content and course projects help them shape the related ideologies (Quan, Bracho, Wilkerson & Clark, 2019). In the academic space, cultural diversity was embraced, and I openly shared my experiences and stories to show that I understand and have experienced the South African schooling system. The aim was to encourage others to become change agents through the modules offered. The social justice principles were discussed to make all of us aware of oppressive practices in schools and the community.

I also became aware of my biases and prejudices, indicated by Harro's (2000a) cycle of liberation, through our engagement with the content and continual reflection, especially as listening to and sharing different opinions were encouraged. Conscientisation became an integral part of my life. I became more critical of issues relating to oppressive practices and making students aware of such matters. As my maturity level increased, my human self-consciousness increased. I started to make social group preferences compatible with my characteristics, values, and identity. However, it is important to mention that the individual's self and personality will be shaped by the influence of the social structure in which they live. In this respect, while identity carries out social interaction by providing information to individuals about themselves and others, interactive and social structures give identity to people (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011: 138).

10.2.9 Narrative 9: Stephanie

In 2010, our son started high school. This was also the year in which South Africa hosted the Soccer World Cup (Chingamuka, 2010). My son and I were fortunate to be at the O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg a few days before the World Cup commenced. It was a thrilling, goose-bump-inducing experience to witness the camaraderie among singing, vuvuzela-blowing South Africans welcoming arriving teams. This initiated a personal transformation for me, as I moved away from the ingrained belief of always supporting the opposition to the South African team. In 2015, my husband, son, and I proudly attended a leg of the Rugby Sevens tournament in South Africa, cheering for the South African Blitzbok team. "In South Africa sport provides a good test of the successes and failures of transformation and development and serves as something of a barometer for South African society" (Catsam, 2018: 250). My shift in allegiance possibly reflects a broader national healing and the emergence of a more inclusive national identity, where sport acts as a powerful unifying force, transcending old racial divides and fostering a new 'in-group' of proud South Africans.

As mentioned previously, the term 'Coloured' brings discomfort, as it was long viewed as derogatory and I had experienced derogatory treatment as a 'Coloured'. My son, however, has a different view of the term 'Coloured'. He refers to 'Coloured' as a culture. His socialisation had been different to mine, and fortunately he does not view himself as inferior to anyone else because of his skin colour. As a result of democracy in South Africa, my son was able to grow up without the psychological chains of inferiority and various nuances of oppression attached to the label 'Coloured' (Hammett, 2010). The view regarding 'Coloured as a culture' is to me a more liberating view of looking at a term that for many years was used to classify and degrade myself and my family. I find my son's perspective helpful in disrupting the negative thoughts that the classification as Coloured stood for in the apartheid era. This sparked a change towards more liberating thinking through which I can work towards dismantling and disrupting the process of "internalized oppression" (Harro, 2010a: 50). Disrupting a form of self-oppression could mark the initiation of my own "cycle of liberation" (Harro, 2010b: 465).

Another experience helped me further distance myself from the negative stereotypes associated with the label 'Coloured'. Our son moved to Cape Town to further his studies in 2015. When visiting, we particularly enjoyed attending the Fugard Theatre, now sadly closed (Ramsay, 2021). The musicals by the late Taliep Petersen and David Kramer, vividly portraying life in District Six, became a poignant highlight. *District Six – The Musical* brought to life the devastating reality of the forced removals (Jaffer, 1998) that stemmed from the 1950 Group Areas Act. This legislation forced people to relocate to government-designated areas (Hallett, 1984), profoundly disrupting daily life and destroying the future plans of those classified as other than White.

The forced removals echoed the devastation that apartheid wrought across South Africa – how apartheid laws upended everyday living and destroyed the future plans of those classified as non-White. This musical made the stories told by my parents, aunts, and uncles about their own forced removals from areas reserved for White people more tangible. Through drama, dance, music, and abundant wit, the theatre production illustrated the past. Yet, amid the sadness, the outstanding performances ignited a renewed sense of pride in my identity as a Coloured person. The performers, and the broader creative community they represented, were and are outstanding and highly talented artists. Their resilience in the face of such heinous treatment deeply resonated, reinforcing a positive dimension of my social identity that had been systematically undermined by apartheid. This was a powerful example of positive distinctiveness within my group, a collective sense of worth derived from shared experiences and cultural contributions, directly challenging the negative stereotypes imposed by the dominant 'White' in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The intersection of race and culture here was profound, as the artistic expression served to both remember and resist.

My son's perspective that 'Coloured is a culture' and the recognition of the immense talent among people with whom I can identify – accomplished performers, sports figures, and individuals now holding positions previously reserved for White people – have been instrumental in disrupting my own deep-seated notions of inferiority (Harro, 2010a). This speaks to the fluidity of identity, which, as Petrus and Isaacs-Martin (2012) state, changes through various interactions and experiences throughout life.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu's coinage of the term 'Rainbow Nation' after the 1994 democratic elections (Sall, 2018) evokes a fairytale image of our first democratic election, but it also underscores the vital importance of embracing South Africa's multiple cultures. Bearing the prefix 'multi' in mind, it is clear to me that even within a broadly defined cultural group or categorisation, numerous sub-groups and nuanced identities can exist.

An individual's identity is indeed complex, fluid, and a lifelong journey (Tatum, 2013). South Africa's democracy has begun to unravel the once-lawful "racial hierarchy", presenting opportunities for "varied and creative responses to questions about the nature of Coloured identity and its role in South African society" (Adhikari, 2004: 167). I now understand that identity can be shaped and transformed through continual self-reflection and our interactions with others. Ultimately, I want to identify as a caring individual who, through everyday interactions, can contribute in a small way to the well-being of others. Additionally, I maintain a profound sense of pride in the perseverance, determination, strength of character, creativity, integrity, and resilience my forebears displayed in navigating the challenges life dealt them. This pride is not rooted in a rigid racial category but in the enduring spirit and achievements of a group that transcended adversity.

This journey of shifting perspectives, from entrenched pain and imposed labels to a celebration of culture and resilience, reflects the profound possibilities of personal and collective transformation. Through my son's eyes, I have come to embrace 'Coloured' not as a mark of inferiority but as a vibrant culture rich with history, creativity, and strength. South Africa's democratic promise has begun to dismantle the walls of racial hierarchy, allowing space for fluid identities that honour complexity and shared humanity. Sport, art, and everyday interactions have become powerful vehicles for healing, unity, and pride, fostering a new narrative that transcends division. Ultimately, identity is not a fixed category but a living, evolving story shaped by memory, courage, and hope. It is in this evolving self-understanding that I find liberation, purpose, and the drive to contribute to a more inclusive and compassionate society.

10.3 Conclusion

Chapter 10 illuminates the complex tapestry of South Africa's ongoing transformation from 2011 to 2023, revealing how individual narratives interweave with broader societal struggles to create a nuanced portrait of a nation still negotiating its post-apartheid identity. Through the lens of personal experiences, the chapter demonstrates that the journey towards understanding and embracing otherness is neither linear nor complete, but rather an evolving process that requires continuous reflection, courage, and commitment.

The personal stories presented – spanning education, language, culture, and social activism – reveal that negotiating otherness in contemporary South Africa occurs at multiple levels: within individuals grappling with inherited identities, within communities seeking to bridge historical divides, and within institutions attempting to transform themselves in meaningful ways. These narratives underscore that whilst the formal apparatus of apartheid may have been dismantled, the deeper work of psychological, cultural, and social transformation remains an ongoing project requiring active participation from all sectors of society.

Ultimately, Chapter 10 demonstrates that negotiating otherness is not a problem to be solved but a dynamic process to be embraced—one that requires ongoing dialogue, institutional support, and individual courage. The stories shared remind us that transformation occurs not only through policy changes and structural reforms, but through the daily choices individuals make to see beyond stereotypes, to listen across difference, and to recognise the fundamental humanity that connects all South Africans. In this light, the chapter offers a cautiously optimistic vision of a society that, whilst still grappling with its past, possesses the narrative resources and human capital necessary to build a more inclusive and equitable future.

The journey of negotiating otherness in South Africa continues, carried forward by individuals who refuse to accept inherited divisions as permanent and who understand that true transformation requires both personal reflection and collective action. Through their stories, we glimpse the possibility of a South Africa where difference is not merely tolerated but celebrated as essential to the nation's strength and character.

Chapter 11

Students' narratives

11.1 Student narrative 1: Pieter

I was born in 1995, the year after South Africa became a democracy. This momentous occasion in our country's history heralded a new era in which freedom and equality for all were guaranteed. I was raised in a family of four in a small city. Our family comprised my parents, my younger brother, and me, the eldest. My brother and I were brought up by our parents on the principle that colour should not matter and that all people should be treated equally, regardless of their ethnicity or origin. We spoke Afrikaans in our home, and Christianity, traditional values, and a strong sense of cultural identity moulded much of my early years. This way of upbringing resonates with Harro's (2010a) first phase of socialisation.

As a White Afrikaans male, my identity was influenced by both the privileges and challenges that come with such a background in a post-apartheid South Africa. The privilege of being male and White alludes to belonging to the dominant group, according to the categorisation of Harro (2010a). However, being born after the demise of apartheid also meant I grew up in a more diverse and integrated environment than the generations before me. I came to cherish having close friends from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. My closest friends were isiXhosa and Coloured, and it was because of them that I was able to learn about and appreciate cultures other than my own.

Growing up with Black and Coloured friends gave me a broader perspective on race and identity. While my home life was shaped by the Afrikaans traditions of my family, my social life exposed me to different languages, customs, and experiences. These friendships also made me more aware of the ongoing racial inequalities in our society. While we played together as equals, I could not ignore the fact that the lives of my friends were often affected by challenges that I did not face as a White South African. This exposure to different races instilled the beginning stages of the development of a liberatory consciousness (Love, 2010).

At school, race and class divisions were still visible, even though apartheid had officially ended. I attended an Afrikaans-medium school where most of the learners were White, but outside of school I spent much of my time with my Black and Coloured friends. Through them, I could experience the disparities in living conditions and lack of access to opportunities, as well as the subtle but persistent barriers that continued to separate South Africans based on race. This realisation concurs with the argument of Tatum (2013) regarding the differences between the dominant, who are systematically advantaged by society because of group membership, and the subordinate who are systematically disadvantaged.

Despite these challenges, my friendships were a source of joy and enrichment. They allowed me to move beyond the narrow confines of my own experience and to question the racial and cultural divides that still lingered in our country. While my identity as a White Afrikaans-speaking male carried certain privileges, my relationships with friends from different backgrounds taught me that identity is complex (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and that the new South Africa was still a work in progress.

Religion also played a central role in my upbringing. As a Christian family, we attended church regularly, and my faith has always been an important part of my life. Christianity taught me the values of compassion, kindness, and equality, and these values shaped how I approached my relationships with others. This reflects on the way I was socialised by my parents (Harro, 2010a). However, I also became aware of how religion, much like race and culture, had been used in the past to reinforce division rather than promote unity.

As I reflect on my upbringing, I see how growing up in a democratic South Africa has shaped me. My friendships with people from different races and cultures have taught me to value diversity and to challenge the systems that still perpetuate inequality.

I am proud of the progress our country has made, but I am also aware of the work that remains. My identity, formed at the intersection of race, class, gender, and culture, continues to evolve as I navigate the complexities of life in South Africa. It is only when one becomes mindful of the social context in which you find yourself and if you are prepared to open up yourself to change that real transformation occurs (Mpisi et al., 2020)

My journey as a university student has been a unique and formative experience. I was the only White student at the time I enrolled, which, in a way, placed me in a minority position that was new to me. Being the only White student aligns with the concept of 'otherness', based on race (Tatum, 2013). As mentioned previously, I had friends from various cultural backgrounds, including Coloured and isiXhosa friends as I grew up in a small town, so I was no stranger to diversity. However, being the only White student in a university setting was a different experience, one that challenged my sense of identity and belonging in new ways. This challenge ties in with Tajfel and Turner's (1979) SIT that explains how one's cultural and historical circumstances may lead to having multiple dynamic positioning, because of the specific social context in which one finds oneself.

While my Afrikaner background initially set me apart, my friendships with people from diverse cultural backgrounds helped me adapt to the university environment. Because I had grown up with Black and Coloured friends, it was not difficult for me to integrate socially, and I found that I could connect with my peers on a personal level despite our differences in race and background. These friendships provided me with a sense of familiarity and comfort in what could have otherwise been an isolating situation.

However, language presented a significant challenge for me. My home language is Afrikaans, and although I am proficient in English, the first two weeks at Sol Plaatje University (SPU) were particularly difficult as I tried

to adapt to an English-dominant environment. Most of the lectures and social interactions were in English, and I had to adjust quickly to thinking, writing, and expressing myself in a language other than my mother tongue. It felt as though I had to re-learn how to navigate academic life, and there were moments when I felt out of place or misunderstood. This concurs with the view of Van Gelderen (2023), namely that leaving your comfort zone results in learning and growth.

Despite these initial challenges, I gradually found my footing. Being exposed to a multilingual and multicultural environment helped me become more adaptable and open-minded. I started to appreciate the diversity of perspectives around me and the richness in engaging with different cultures and languages. While Afrikaans will always be an important part of my identity, learning to operate in English at university expanded my worldview and my ability to connect with others.

As the only White student, I also became more aware of how race shapes experiences of belonging and exclusion. While I had grown up with certain privileges as a White South African, being in the minority at university gave me a new perspective on what it means to feel different or out of place. This experience made me reflect on how Black and Coloured South Africans must have felt for decades in environments dominated by White privilege. It was a humbling realisation, and it pushed me to be more empathetic and understanding of the challenges that come with navigating spaces where you are not part of the dominant group. It is an unrelenting and tiring process that necessitates persistent reflection and self-talk (Brookfield, 2005).

Religion provided another anchor for me during my time at university. As a Christian, my faith continued to guide me, and I found comfort in the community of fellow believers. At the same time, being exposed to different religious beliefs and practices at SPU broadened my understanding of faith. I came to appreciate the diversity of religious expression and the ways in which religion shapes identity and culture in South Africa.

Looking back, my time as a student was a period of significant growth. While there were moments of discomfort and challenges, particularly in terms of language and adapting to being the only White student, I ultimately found a sense of belonging. My friendships across racial and

cultural lines, my ability to adapt to a new linguistic environment, and my reflections on race, class, and gender all contributed to my personal and academic development. The university, with its diversity and inclusivity, became a space where I could explore and redefine my identity within the broader context of a changing South Africa. I was privileged to have had this experience as the only White student in the programme because it made me realise that genuine integration and non-racialism is only possible if there is a realisation from both White and Black people to respond to matters of race and discrimination in an open and direct manner (Biko, in Stubbs, 1987; Mpisi & Alexander, 2024).

11.2 Student narrative 2: Joseph

I was born in Hopeville location in the Northern Cape province, where I pursued my primary schooling, secondary schooling, and my tertiary education at University X. I have two younger siblings, and I was raised by a Black single parent. My mother worked as a domestic worker for most of her life to provide us with a decent living. She valued Nelson Mandela's words on education, namely that education is the key to success. All her hustling was to ensure that we (my siblings and I) had the basic needs for school.

I was born into a Black and poor family. Furthermore, my hometown, Hopeville, still reflects the apartheid design of segregation. Black people remain segmented in a predominantly Black township, just as the Coloured community lives in their designated area, while White and Indian areas remain among the most affluent in the province. However, unlike in other provinces, the segregated areas in this province were often only walking distance apart. Consequently, people of different races, especially Black and Coloured, could occasionally cross the racial divide. In these exchanges, the supposedly pure Setswana language I boast of is often blended with Afrikaans, a language spoken by the Coloured people closer to me. Today, some of my Coloured friends and acquaintances do not only speak Setswana or Afrikaans but they are able to construct a sentence using both languages. Translanguaging strategies enable individuals to navigate and dismantle perceived language obstacles, positioning themselves in a "bilingual in-between space" (García & Leiva, 2014).

In essence, as Batswana people living in Hopeville, we were conversant in many languages. The racial integration progress has led to the dilution of not only my language but also my culture and its practices. Because the communities were not diversified, there were differences in what constitutes a culture and what does not. We eventually ended up creating our own form of culture that centralises humanistic values over and above other personal interests. People not only have their distinct narratives shaped by their culture and history, but they also embody the connections among various racial, language, gender, and cultural groups, which offer new opportunities for constructing identity (Groenewald, 2018).

I am a Christian man who believes in Jesus Christ. As I was growing up, I was used to Setswana sermons in church. However, nowadays the church pastors preach their sermons in English and, where necessary, use translators. This is because the audience is no longer as homogeneous as it used to be some years ago, or at least in the 1990s, when my generation was born. The racial integration effects faced by Hopeville location have far-reaching implications for culture, language, religion, and even the quality of life.

My life journey has been marked by resilience and second chances. Before enrolling for my Bachelor of Education qualification at University X, I was enrolled at another university. In 2011, I unfortunately had to drop out because of funding challenges and failing some courses. It is then that I was granted the second chance to study at the current university.

In retrospect, I am glad to have failed at my first attempt, as that experience taught me the following life lessons:

- Everything in life happens for me, not against me.
- Failure is the greatest teacher.
- Nothing worthwhile is easy.
- Leadership is built on grit – the ability to bounce back from failure.
- Most importantly, one should have empathy and sympathy for other human beings.

Coming from one of the poorest provinces in South Africa, and sadly where education is not as highly regarded by the youth, I resolved to

change the status quo by embracing education for its power to emancipate – not only the mind but also the body – from the shackles of poverty. Moreover, in a country where we sadly still note considerable high failure rates in mathematics and physical sciences, especially in schools serving learners from poor economic backgrounds, I felt compelled to further my studies in mathematics and science education so that I could arm myself with recent pedagogical skills that are deeply grounded in research.

It was on a hot and sunny September day in 2014 when I, a young and intelligent male, arrived at the campus. I did the best I could. I made the relevant noises so that those in a position to avail opportunities should notice me and offer possible opportunities for growth.

Upon submitting my Grade 12 results, the university staff was shocked that a person with such good results should be roaming around the streets of town and not be enrolled, since study spaces and funds were readily available. Without any further hesitation or delay, I was offered a university application form and submitted it the following day. In December 2014, I was offered an opportunity to register for a BEd degree and I could pursue my dream of teaching mathematics, physical science, and life sciences – the three major subjects in which I had performed exceptionally well in Grade 12. In 2015, I was registered and geared to start a career in education. What will forever remain in my heart is the warm welcome of the then university staff, mainly women from various racial backgrounds, both Coloured and White. I come from a family that is homogenously Black, derived from the Batswana tribe and who speaks Setswana. This background embedded in me various perceptions that created certain wrong impressions about people. When I met the diversified staff of the university, I expected a cold welcome. However, to my surprise, it was a warm welcome from the staff who were excited to have me as one of their students. This was the beginning of everlasting friendships.

In 2015, University X had fewer than 700 students across the four schools (Education, Natural and Applied Sciences, Humanities, and Economic Sciences). The university, though small then, was able to attract students from various racial backgrounds.

Most of the education classes consisted of students from diverse racial groups, namely Black, Coloured, and White. This diversity was not in any

way a challenge as students were able to work together and learn more about each other. One of the lecturers at the university often made use of interactive sessions so that students could get to know each other better. The lecturers would often discourage same-grouping, and always advised that when students form groups, they should do so while taking others into consideration, as well as factors such as gender and language.

The university was deliberate in breaking down the walls of differences that could impede the progress of co-existence among people of different backgrounds. One of the most important lessons to foreground was the university's efforts to inspire students to get out of their comfort zones.

I was very open to the direction taken by the university and was able to interact with various people from different backgrounds. There were no feelings or observations of prejudice from the university and from fellow classmates. Through these interactions, I was able to create a good reputation as a leader and I was eventually elected as Student Representative Council (SRC) president.

Moreover, I was somewhat older than some of my classmates as many had only matriculated the previous year. I had a mature outlook on issues that affect society. Instead of allowing others to bring me down, I became an asset, as many students respected me as a mature person who could offer worthwhile perspectives on issues. The students did not experience marginalisation or prejudice but, instead, experienced a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging arises from individual engagement with an organisation, resulting in a deep-rooted feeling of being included in the system (Le Roux & Groenewald, 2021).

University X attracted students from as far as the North West province. Moreover, the university attracted many poor students who would not ordinarily have been accepted at the larger universities owing to a lack of finances. The students from the rural North West, unlike me who comes from the Northern Cape, were still holding onto some of their cultural practices. Some of these practices entail participation in schooling initiation, as a cultural practice that allows youngsters admission to the adult world. Some of the students were initiated and believed strongly in the teachings that come with these experiences. This dynamic, if not handled

with care, could have had serious implications for the sound relations among students at the university. As a non-initiate and both a student leader and a hard worker, I had to mitigate the situation to ensure a healthy environment for these students.

One of the pitfalls of the #FeesMustFall campaign, from which University X was not exempted, is that it has tested the maturity and resilience of both the University X education staff and students. At one point, while I was trying to continue attending lessons despite the growing tension between students and management, someone poured fire-extinguisher powder over one of my favourite lecturers. The academics stood their ground, exhibiting great resilience.

During the #FeesMustFall campaign, I was part of the student leadership on campus. The students protested about numerous issues, including the pursuit of social justice, increased funding for higher education, the need for transformation in higher education environments, and curriculum reform (Nomvete & Mashayamombe, 2019). There was a growing divide between Black and Coloured students – some wanted to return to class and continue a slow strike while others wanted classes shut down with a full-blown demonstration. These were uncharted and precarious grounds. I had to exhibit leadership and guide the students. The decisions that had to be taken were to protect both the university and the students.

Overall, University X was a good place to be. As it grew in character, so did the staff, and so also did diversity. University X was a haven for all students, irrespective of their background. To date, the university continues to succeed.

11.3 Student narrative 3: Snazzy

I am a 28-year-old Coloured female. I was born in the Northern Cape. I grew up in a semi-urban community where I still reside. I grew up following the Christian religion. My upbringing ties in with Harro's (2010a) first phase of socialisation. I grew up in a family of three children, of which I am the eldest. I was raised by a single parent, my mother. I come from a working-class family as my mom worked in a clothing factory. My moth-

er's salary was the only source of income in our family. Owing to the long hours my mother had to work, my siblings and I had to stay with our grandmother and grandfather.

Being raised by a single mother and coming from a working-class family forced me to attend public schools. In high school, particularly Grades 11 and 12, my mathematics educator fell ill and could not attend school for two terms. It was quite a struggle to find a substitute educator. As a result, we were not taught for a whole quarter, and with that backlog, my mathematics marks were disappointing. My physical science educator was almost never in class although he was present at school. Because of the absence of the educator from class, minimal learning and teaching took place. As a result, my physical science marks were also unsatisfactory, although I passed by doing self-study. The disadvantage of being a person of colour in a country where Whites were privileged concurs with Harro's (2010a) view on the categorisation of people and places me in the subordinate group.

The situation at the school at that time was most unsatisfactory with very little input from the authorities. This had a negative impact on many learners' futures. My plan at that time was to apply to a university to study medicine, but with the marks that I had obtained in physical sciences and mathematics, I qualified for teaching or nursing. I believe that if I had attended an ex-model C school, which are generally well managed, or if my mother could afford extra mathematics and physical science classes, my mathematics and physical science marks would have been better and I would have been able to follow my dream of becoming a medical doctor. My poorly resourced and managed school resonates with the claim of Tatum (2013) that the subordinate groups are systematically disadvantaged by society because of group membership.

My mother tongue is Afrikaans. The medium of instruction at the schools that I attended was Afrikaans with English as an additional language. At university level, the medium of instruction was English. I thought since the university was built in a town where Afrikaans is mostly the dominant language, the university would offer the courses in both Afrikaans and English. The transition from being taught in Afrikaans and having to adapt to being taught in English was quite challenging in my first year. I started

feeling more comfortable with the English classes in my second year. My adoption of English as a medium of instruction signalled the beginning stages of the development of a liberatory consciousness (Love, 2010). However, I felt marginalised in terms of the language used at the higher institution I attended. Students whose home language was English or who had received English-medium instruction at school were advantaged. This made me realise the complexity of one's identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Most of the lecturers at the institution could speak Afrikaans. When a concept was unclear, I experienced anxiety and frustration, but I would engage with the lecturers in Afrikaans to understand the concept better. I was pushed beyond the boundaries of my comfort zone, as alluded to by Van Gelderen (2023).

My experience at school with my mathematics and physical science educators prompted me to study teaching instead of nursing. With all the challenges I experienced as a learner, I always strive to be the best mathematics educator any learner could have, so that the learners do not feel that they cannot follow their dream because of me. I am teaching in the community in which I was raised. Most of the learners that I am teaching experience the same contextual factors that I experienced when I was their age. Through my teaching, I want them to rise above their current circumstances.

11.4 Student narrative 4: Sharlene

"You are a Black, Xhosa girl, why are you denying your culture, your home language, your heritage ...?"

These were the statements that I grew up with – statements that, because I had Afrikaans as my home language, were constantly thrown in my face. My name is Sharlene Thandile Makeba, a young South African human, who has a passion for languages, more specifically, Afrikaans.

Just to be clear, I do prefer being called Sharlene, and not Thandile. But we'll get to that later ...

Growing up in a small town, south of the Free State, my community has always been rich in terms of language diversity.

Most of the residents' spoken languages include Sesotho, IsiXhosa, and Afrikaans. Afrikaans is one of the most common languages used across races in my community. According to Tajfel and Turner's (1979) SIT, a person's cultural and historical background can lead to different dynamic roles depending on the specific social context in which they find themselves. My parents, however, are not among the Afrikaans-speaking residents. My father, who is the strictest person I have ever met, is Xhosa, and perfectly fits the stereotypes of being the most stubborn, hard-headed traditionalist. My mother, who I firmly believe is dear Jesus's sister, is a Tswana-speaking angel. She is the most soft-spoken, kind-hearted, and oh, so ever-loving person you'd ever find. I am thus racially categorised as Black and/or African. This is the one category or group I have had to fight to explain my love for the Afrikaans language. According to Tatum (2013), there are classifications of "otherness", highlighting that the dominant group (agent) enjoys privilege, while the subdominant group (target) faces disadvantage.

Within a Xhosa household, it is law that the home language be used as the means of communication. I, however, found my home in another language. This might stem from the fact that I had Afrikaans Home Language as a subject from Grade 1 to matric. My love for the language was ignited in secondary school, where I had a teacher who, when teaching literature (poetry, novels, and drama), would perform the texts, reading with such passion that the Afrikaans classes became an escape for me. The language, its structures, and conventions, both as a subject and communicative means, became my refuge.

I am a product of bullying as I have been bullied throughout my primary and secondary schooling. I have been bullied based on my gender, race, and language. Target groups are marginalised, taken advantage of, and subjected to bias, inequity, and various systemic barriers (Harro, 2000a).

I couldn't make friends, so I was alone. This forced me to delve deeper into books and academia. I found this helped me to escape from reality and became a support and coping mechanism for the bullying. My matric year (2015), however, was the highlight of my schooling. I was nominated and elected as class representative, RCL vice president, SGB learner component, and the dux learner of the year! This opened my world to

multiple opportunities, boosted my confidence, and developed not only my interpersonal skills, but at the time, my very low and fragile self-concept and self-esteem.

My self-esteem, its foundation and what I thought was my ticket to university, all came crashing down when I was accepted to study teaching in 2016 at University Y, but was unable to, owing to financial constraints. This sent me into a deep depressive state where I felt academia, which was my support system, had let me down. I could not face anyone and isolated myself from everyone and everything, including academia. After the first trimester of 2016, I was accepted into a learnership. I did not complete the course; however, I learnt a lot about public relations, interpersonal skills and how to equip myself with positive support and coping mechanisms.

By the end of 2016, I applied to study at University X and because I knew finances were an issue, I also applied for funding. My sister and I baked and sold muffins and scones to pay for our registration fees, while waiting for the bursary to pay out. All I knew was that I could not go back to the underprivileged, financially disadvantaged community and household. I received a firm offer and was looking forward to joining the new and young university in 2017.

I started as a shy, withdrawn girl, sceptical of the unknown, scared of the bigger, older bullies. I was accepted for a BEd in teaching in the Intermediate Phase. University X allowed me to build on my interpersonal skills, gave me new hope and knowledge to bridge the gap between academia and psycho-social support. It allowed me to build my self-esteem, self-concept, and self-efficacy. I found myself, reestablishing and reigniting my love for education, for languages, and for Afrikaans.

I came across students from various provinces, who spoke different languages. Yet, every time I was asked what my home language is, I would be conflicted, both intra- and interpersonally. I would be conflicted as to how I should explain that I am an Afrikaner, not a Coloured, not Xhosa – just someone who loves Afrikaans. I identify with the language in more ways than one. I not only found a home within the language, but I found my sense of belonging and identity. SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) starts with the idea that individuals shape their identities through their association

with social groups, and that these affiliations help to enhance and affirm their self-identity. The statements came like stones again – from students who were from both Black and Coloured communities who believed I was either confused or trying to fit into varsity life.

Earlier, I mentioned I prefer being called Sharlene, and not Thandile. This is most definitely not because I do not love my second name. On the contrary, my second name means "to be loved", which I believe has drawn people to me and has nurtured my love for Afrikaans. They either love me at first sight or love me later after having gone through personal reflective sessions regarding their personal preferences and prejudices.

When my name was read out loud, my second name was never mentioned. This caused confusion because a young Black female would respond. The combination of my first name and surname created a certain expectation, namely, to encounter a White, mature female. And after being asked multiple times what my second, Black/African name is, I decided to introduce myself as Sharlene Makeba. I both enjoyed and was annoyed by the different reactions – some were amused and some acted aggressively – and the latter motivated me to never use my second name when introducing myself. The formation of group identities entails categorising one's 'in-group' in relation to an 'out-group' and a tendency to perceive one's own group in a more favourable light compared to the out-group. This leads to a collective, depersonalised identity based on group membership that is associated with positive characteristics (Tafel & Turner, 1979).

Another reason for preferring 'Sharlene' was because both White and Black students, as well as lecturers, struggled with the pronunciation of my second name. Both students and lecturers were confused as to how fluently I could speak, debate, and write in Afrikaans. This resulted in conflict with fellow White, older and male students, and my aggressive personality did not help matters much either. I cannot seem to filter or sugarcoat my thoughts, especially when faced with discriminatory slurs or comments, such as "You should stick to your own language". I am very blunt and regard myself as blatantly honest. It is for this reason that I found it difficult to make and keep friends in the first two years of my studies.

I was excited at the prospect of breaking stereotypes and categories of otherness as I am the total opposite of what I look like and what people perceive when hearing my name, but I am also making strides in convincing my peers that Afrikaans is not always White. It is not a person or an entity, but rather a community, an identity, which changes constantly based on context, and most definitely, not because of race. My excitement is also based on the fact that we are moving towards a place where Afrikaans no longer holds the stigma of oppression and pain, but that it is rather viewed as a language that pays homage to what we define as a rainbow nation. According to Harro (2000b), liberation requires us to interrogate and contest our assumptions, structures, and regulations while clarifying our diverse needs, viewpoints, strengths, resources, and skills throughout the journey.

In my second and third year I was a tutor and mentor for first-year students. This allowed me to develop my leadership and management skills. This position gave me my sense of power back, changing from the shy, withdrawn student to the bold, outspoken, and engaging leader. Using my new-found voice, I was able to form a book club with other students, promoting the inclusion of Afrikaans in dialogues and in the club. Harro's (2010b) cycle of liberation illustrates the process by which individuals recognise oppression and discriminatory behaviours, as well as how change at personal, relational, and institutional levels can result in transformation. I was known as 'Pieternella van die Kaap' for the rest of my undergraduate studies as I was the only Afrikaans student in the book club and I had to read one of Dalene Matthee's almost 650-page books for the Funda Mzantsi National Competition. I was able to participate on a national stage for the love of the Afrikaans language. I managed to obtain third position nationally for a book review in Afrikaans and was later nominated for and subsequently won a Youth Quiver Award presented by the Afrikaanse Taalraad, for the protection and preservation of the language. University X gave me the platform to grow individually and professionally, enabling me to become the best version of myself.

Four years later, I am a proud, postgraduate honours student, an Afrikaans Home Language educator, and a lifelong learner in the teaching profession.

11.5 Conclusion

Each student grappled with multifaceted identities shaped by race, language, class, and culture. Pieter, a White Afrikaans male, experienced being the only White student at university; Joseph, a Black student from a poor township, navigated cultural integration; Snazzy, a Coloured female from a working-class family, faced language and educational barriers; and Sharlene, a Black Xhosa woman, challenged stereotypes through her passion for Afrikaans.

Language emerged as both a bridge and an obstacle. Pieter had to adapt from Afrikaans- to English-medium instruction, Joseph navigated between Setswana and English, Snazzy struggled with the transition from Afrikaans to English instruction, and Sharlene faced criticism for identifying with Afrikaans despite being Xhosa. All four students found their university experiences profoundly transformative. The diverse environment at their institutions pushed them beyond their comfort zones. Pieter gained empathy as a minority student, Joseph became SRC president despite his age and background, Snazzy overcame language marginalisation, and Sharlene transformed from a bullied, shy student into a confident leader and an award-winning advocate for Afrikaans.

Each narrative demonstrates remarkable resilience. Joseph overcame previous university failure and poverty, Snazzy persevered despite inadequate schooling, Sharlene survived years of bullying, and Pieter navigated identity challenges as the sole representative of his racial group.

Despite democratic progress, the narratives reveal persistent inequalities. Joseph's township still reflects apartheid segregation, Snazzy's under-resourced school limited her career options, and both Pieter and Sharlene faced assumptions and prejudices based on their racial identities and language choices.

The stories of the four students collectively illustrate how higher education can serve as a space for personal liberation and social integration, while highlighting the complex identity negotiations still occurring in post-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter 12

Concluding remarks

The collective narratives of **Gabriella**, **Vince**, **Reatlegile**, **Morwamocha**, **Phoenix**, **Christel**, **Sonny**, **Star**, and **Stephanie** reveal the deeply personal and socially situated experiences of South African academics navigating a transforming post-apartheid higher education landscape. Their stories reflect intersecting themes of identity, loss, resilience, transformation, and hope, each shaped by race, culture, language, and history.

Several narratives, particularly those of **Gabriella** and **Vince**, both Afrikaans-speaking academics, highlight the shift from Afrikaans's dominance to its contested status in a multicultural society. Gabriella reflects on how her **Afrikaner identity**, once linked to privilege, has become marginalised in post-democratic South Africa. She nonetheless finds hope in the revival of Afrikaans across diverse communities. Vince similarly grounds his academic identity in Afrikaans literature, expressing gratitude for the space to teach it at a newly established university despite earlier rejections.

This tension around language identity finds resonance in **Reatlegile's**, **Sonny's** and **Christel's** experiences. Reatlegile, a **Black woman**, expresses deep pride in promoting **mother tongue instruction**, drawing strength from her Setswana heritage and her students' cultural engagement. Similarly, **Sonny** reflects on the challenges her daughter faced when Afrikaans became a barrier to integration after relocating provinces. Her parental identity intersects with her professional journey, echoing **Christel's** emphasis on the **humanity of students** and how teaching requires navigating difference with empathy and critical self-reflection.

For **Christel**, **Star**, and **Stephanie**, transformation is both personal and pedagogical. Christel, a **White woman**, shares how her journey from high school teacher to university lecturer led her to embrace a more human-centred, inclusive pedagogy grounded in **Ubuntu. Star**, a **Black academic**, foregrounds **social justice and conscientisation**, recognising how her own biases had to be unlearnt through student engagement. **Stephanie**, identifying as **Coloured**, reflects on reclaiming and redefining her identity – a transformation prompted by her son's liberating view of 'Coloured' as culture, and her exposure to theatrical depictions of apartheid's legacy.

The burden of post-apartheid inequality and the reality of class divides are powerfully articulated by **Phoenix** and **Morwamocha**. Phoenix, a **Black male academic and single parent**, grapples with societal gender norms, the emotional weight of caregiving, and the contradictions of privilege versus poverty. Similarly, **Morwamocha's** identity as a **Black South African man** is shaped by witnessing the Marikana massacre and his participation in socioeconomic movements. Both narratives emphasise how political disillusionment and economic inequality continue to shape social identity, particularly among the poor and the working class.

Despite different racial and cultural positions, nearly all contributors reflect on the impact of the **#FeesMustFall movement** and **COVID-19 pandemic** on higher education and society. **Vince**, **Reatlegile**, **Phoenix**, **Sonny,** and **Christel** document the disruptions and opportunities that arose from these events, including digital learning, student activism, and the fragility of human life. The stories converge around a shared ethic of care for students, for families, and for communities.

Across these rich, layered narratives, there is a shared struggle to **balance personal histories with collective transformation**, to **honour one's heritage while embracing diversity**, and to **remain hopeful in the face of persistent inequality**. Whether navigating the loss of a spouse (**Phoenix**, **Christel**), changing provinces for work (**Sonny**), or reconciling past privileges (**Gabriella**) with present realities, these lecturers embody the ongoing, unfinished project of transformation in South African higher education.

Ultimately, their stories affirm that **social identities are not fixed**, but continually negotiated in relation to political histories, institutional cultures, family life, and pedagogical practice. This collective testimony calls for an academic environment rooted in **empathy, justice and critical reflection** where diverse voices like those of **Star**, **Stephanie,** and **Reatlegile** are not only heard but help shape the future of education and identity in South Africa.

Writing an ethnographic piece about ourselves was both an introspective and emotional journey. We were unsure of where to begin. We recalled our experiences, struggles, triumphs, and moments of doubt and felt a mix of vulnerability and empowerment. The process forced us to see ourselves not just as participants in our own lives, but as observers, analysing our own identity, culture, and the socio-political realities that shaped us. Through autoethnography, we found clarity. We realised that understanding oneself is just as crucial as understanding others. The act of writing became a form of liberation, a way to honour our journey, acknowledge our biases, and critically engage with our past. In the end, we felt a profound sense of purpose, knowing that our story was not just ours alone, but a reflection of those of many others who had walked a similar path.

Writing our stories was therapeutic, allowing us to confront past injustices. This led us to rediscover ourselves. Reflecting on our life stories evoked a mix of emotions such as pride, resilience, and a deep awareness of what has shaped us. Our families have been both an anchor and a source of inspiration, providing love and support. The path for some of us has been one of perseverance, navigating spaces that were not always easy, yet finding ways to carve out a place for ourselves and others who come after us. The exercise was cathartic, providing us with the vocabulary, the vehicle, and the voice to share deep-seated experiences that shaped and even scarred our lives. Moreover, the exercise afforded us the opportunity to try and understand the stories of others, so different from us, and most of all, an opportunity to heal.

For the two White females writing about their upbringing in South Africa was both emotionally intense and complex. Expressing those feelings demanded a delicate balance between personal reflection and the broader historical context. While remaining conscious of the privileges they experienced during apartheid, the White females are grateful for the

new democracy which afforded them opportunities to interact freely with 'other' people and learn about the rich diversity of South Africa.

Growing up in apartheid-era South Africa profoundly shaped our views on the country's history and its future, particularly in higher education. The inequality and division we have witnessed highlighted how education, power, and opportunity were deeply influenced by race, class, and politics. While significant progress has been made in creating greater access and transforming curricula in the democratic era, the legacy of apartheid continues to affect education, with deep-rooted social beliefs still challenging the system.

As we started recalling our experiences, struggles, triumphs, and moments of doubt we felt a mixture of vulnerability and empowerment. The process forced us to see ourselves, not just as participants in our own lives, but also as observers, analysing our own identity, culture, and the socio-political realities that shaped us.

We have been fortunate to get to know people across the 'colour bar'. There is the realisation that all people have good and bad qualities, and this is not because of race, ethnicity, or any other diversity, but because we are human! Interacting with colleagues and friends of different colours, allows one to see the human and not the colour. Interacting with diverse cultures and ethnicities offers a wonderful opportunity to show respect through learning about different traditions and customs.

Writing our stories also led us to realise that we should not hold onto the past. This does not mean forgetting what happened. No, we should acknowledge the past and its associated atrocities but not repeat the racist misgivings that were passed onto us because of the society that was created by apartheid. We were all scarred by apartheid. We strive to live mindfully, avoiding the repetition of racist notions by not thinking about people in terms of colour or ethnicity, or to generalise or accuse various races or ethnicities of actions or personality traits. We want to break free from the apartheid ideologies and biases that were instilled in those of us who grew up under those oppressive conditions. Many took a stand to end apartheid. It has now officially ended. We are relieved that we can now back South African teams in international competitions without any feelings of guilt. Despite being freed of oppression, we should be wary

that we do not continue oppressing ourselves and become prisoners of our own thinking and reasoning which are still based on the past. Transforming mindsets will ultimately contribute to the transformation of the country.

Racial identity serves as the main focal point around which all personal identities within these stories revolve. The experiences of individuals during apartheid and subsequent times are profoundly influenced by their racial categorisation as White, Black or Coloured. White individuals, such as Gabriella, Christel, and Pieter, started with an unrecognised sense of privilege, which was eventually challenged by significant experiences that questioned their group's perceived dominance. The following sums up some of the profound experiences in the collective narratives of the academics:

- *Gabriella* being puzzled by Black colleagues' academic competence until reflection and humility emerged.
- Black participants, such as *Reatlegile*, *Morwamocha*, *Phoenix*, *Sharlene*, and *Joseph*, narrate lives marked by marginalisation, struggle, and activism.
- *Phoenix's* alienation at a historically White university post-1994 and his single parenthood challenged dominant ideas of masculinity and privilege.
- Coloured narrators such as *Stephanie* and *Snazzy* expressed experiences of in-betweenness, often rendered invisible or misclassified in both apartheid and post-apartheid settings.
- *Stephanie's* disillusionment with racial labels and *Snazzy's* linguistic and educational marginalisation due to schooling in Afrikaans.

Racial positioning does not just shape the content of the stories; it defines the framework through which experiences of inclusion, exclusion, and belonging are filtered. Females narrate how during the apartheid era patriarchy intersected with gender, as rigid gender roles were enforced in societies. The following provides a summary of the shifts both academics and students had to make in terms of the gender roles, language, and ideology required by the democratic context:

- *Star* had to overcome strict gender norms at home; *Sonny* ordered clothes secretly due to dress restrictions; *Stephanie* resisted being 'excess' in a newly merged school.
- Men like *Vince* and *Phoenix* challenged dominant masculinities through caregiving and emotional introspection.
- Older participants reflected on gradual ideological shifts (e.g. from childhood socialisation into apartheid to adult resistance).
- *Gabriella's* shift from an insular Afrikaner identity to open engagement; *Vince's* arc from UDF activism to academic leadership.
- Younger student voices (e.g. *Joseph*, *Sharlene*, and *Pieter*) illustrate how post-apartheid institutions still carry embedded racial logic, despite democratic reform.

Rural upbringing often meant stronger religious and racial boundaries, slowing exposure to change:

- *Christel* and *Star* reflected on the late arrival of racial awareness in rural communities.
- Urban experiences involved direct confrontation with resistance and diversity.
- *Phoenix* and *Vince* encountered protest, activism, and institutional racism head-on in cities.

Academic identity serves as a critical site of transformation. Whiteness in academia is shown to be both privileged and destabilised. Black and Coloured academics articulate both pride and pressure.

- *Gabriella* experienced the marginalisation of Afrikaner identity in a post-democratic space but embraced multilingualism and pluralism.
- *Christel* evolved into a human-centred pedagogue through Ubuntu and reflective teaching.
- *Reatlegile* and *Morwamocha* foreground indigenous knowledge and the trauma of inequality.
- *Stephanie* reclaimed her Coloured identity through student dialogue and curriculum inclusion.

Academia is not neutral; it is a contested space of epistemic justice, where participants negotiate personal history, structural transformation, and their roles as agents of change. Although each narrative is shaped by unique circumstances, they weave into each other through recurring motifs:

- *Resistance through education*: Whether formal or informal, education appears as the catalyst for identity questioning and transformation.
- *Intersectionality:* All participants show how race, class, gender, language, and location intersect to produce complex positionalities.
- *Belonging and marginality:* The search for dignity and legitimacy personally, professionally, and socially is a shared thread.
- *Ethics of care and justice:* Especially in the later decades, many participants take on the role of caregivers, mentors, and critical educators, challenging hierarchical systems.

The analysis of participants' stories over the decades illustrates a dynamic and evolving process of identity development influenced by South Africa's socio-political context. During the 1960s, identities were primarily formed through early exposure to the apartheid system. Racial divisions were perceived as rigid, and many participants accepted segregation as the norm, often internalising ideologies of fear and superiority without question. However, by the 1970s, these inherited identities began to show signs of fragmentation. A growing political awareness started to take shape, particularly through educational experiences, community conflicts, and nuanced contradictions that questioned the existing order. The 1980s were marked by significant upheaval due to school boycotts, activism, and escalating state violence. This era prompted profound contemplation regarding identity, gender dynamics, and systemic injustice, particularly among those involved in education or grassroots efforts. In the 1990s, the official end of apartheid provided a mix of optimism and anxiety. Identities began to become more fluid, with many individuals embracing the ideals of change while still facing ongoing structural inequalities. The 2000s brought forth more complex reflections. Change was no longer viewed as an overarching political strategy, but rather as a personal, everyday process. Participants recounted experiences of resilience, disappointment, and self-transformation, illustrating that social change is a continuous, intergenerational journey rather than a completed endeavour.

When considered collectively, these accounts create a rich tapestry of a multitude of voices, both in harmony and conflict, each revealing a segment of a larger narrative. Across various dimensions such as race, gender, class, and language, contributors express common themes of struggle, contemplation, development, and resistance. Together, they assert: "Although we were moulded by the oppression of apartheid, we are not limited by it." These voices highlight that identity is never one-dimensional or fixed; it is continuously evolving and being reshaped. They share insights into the emotional and psychological impacts of experiencing oppression, the process of unlearning inherited perspectives, and the subtle yet transformative acts of resilience found in teaching, parenting, activism, or simply voicing opinions. Furthermore, these narratives underscore the essential function of education – not merely as a former tool of indoctrination, but as a current avenue for healing, justice, and critical awareness. Their stories encompass contradictions and challenges, yet also convey a sense of hope. The narrators embody the complexities of South Africa – fractured yet aspiring, unequal yet resolute, divided yet profoundly interconnected. This multifaceted expression does not provide a singular answer or narrative; it encourages ongoing conversation, mutual acknowledgement, and ethical interaction.

Across these narratives, various prevailing discourses are apparent, yet they are consistently questioned and reinterpreted. The beliefs from the apartheid era in fixed, rigid racial classifications are challenged by narratives that emphasise mixed ancestry, fluid racial identities, and disputed connections to community. Whiteness, formerly considered the normative standard within educational settings, is undermined through teaching practices rooted in Ubuntu, native languages, and inclusive educational philosophies. Gender roles, especially those associated with patriarchy and domestic expectations, are confronted as women share their stories of resistance, aspirations for careers, and self-definition beyond traditional boundaries. Even Afrikaans, historically tied to the language of the oppressor, is reclaimed by Coloured and Black speakers who embrace it as part of their cultural identity. Perhaps most significantly, the idealised concept of a 'rainbow nation' following 1994 is scrutinised by individuals who still face exclusion, economic hardship, and subtle racial discrimination. These challenges to established discourses do not signify a dismissal of hope or change; instead, they provide a more profound and honest

exploration of the contradictions within post-apartheid South Africa. The narratives illustrate that although laws may change, genuine social transformation is realised through lived experiences, thorough reflection, and everyday acts of defiance.

The narratives in this book are not merely autobiographical fragments; they form a collective cartography of transformation. They

- illuminate how identity is relational and context sensitive
- showcase the emotional, intellectual, and moral labour of building a just society
- affirm that narrative itself is a method of resistance, healing, and pedagogy.

The narratives interweave like a braided rope, each strand distinct but made stronger in unity. In the end, what these stories teach us is that the personal is profoundly political and pedagogical. Through these layered, intersecting, and evolving voices, a new vision of identity, belonging, and justice emerges for South African higher education and society at large.

Moving forward

Since 1994, there have been more than 30 policy initiatives in higher education. These policy changes focus not only on accountability but also ensure that institutional capacity remains aligned with the needs of society. Transformation within universities, according to Habib (2016), can be achieved through diversifying academia, curriculum changes, student admissions, residence experiences, institutional culture, institutional naming, and inclusive language practices in activities.

The narratives in this book illustrate the important role of lecturers and students in achieving transformation in higher education. The authors had to deconstruct previously held worldviews and stereotypes. They adapted to South Africa's increasingly multicultural nature, observing more cross-racial interactions and friendships. The students illustrated that they were willing to work in diverse groups, and that afforded them the opportunity to improve their knowledge about each other. On a multi-

lingual and multicultural campus, students became more adaptable and open-minded.

The personal journeys of reflection have been pivotal in shaping the authors' approaches as academics, aiming to foster critical dialogue and empower students to participate actively in creating a more inclusive future. Looking ahead, the authors see the potential for South African higher education to evolve into a truly inclusive space, where all voices are heard and knowledge is democratised. Despite the challenges ahead, they remain hopeful and committed to contributing to a more equitable higher education system that offers equal opportunities for all.

Although conscious of the resilience of South Africa, some authors remain deeply concerned about inequalities, corruption, and crime in the country. Facilitating modules focusing on diversity raised a consciousness of otherness and oppression in some cases. Embracing cultural diversity within a community of practice became a daily commitment for the authors. The future of the self in higher education in a democratic South Africa presents both opportunities and challenges, shaped by the lessons of the past decades. The authors have a vision of a higher education landscape that is increasingly focused on transformation, inclusivity, and the decolonisation of knowledge. However, persistent inequalities, financial constraints, and governance issues remain significant hurdles for people in academia. As academics, they envision a future where higher education must strike a balance between accessibility and quality, ensuring that historically disadvantaged students receive the necessary support to thrive. The integration of technology and research-driven policies will be crucial in bridging gaps in education and fostering innovation. Additionally, the role of academics in shaping public discourse and influencing policy decisions will become even more vital. While there is much progress to be made, the authors are hopeful that a commitment to equity, critical scholarship, and global engagement will drive higher education towards a more just and progressive future. The future of academics looks very bright for those who are prepared to burn the midnight oil. The opportunities and prospects of promotion to higher levels are boundless.

The higher education space is steadily transforming, especially regarding accessibility, as more and more students are allowed to study at university, unlike decades ago when the authors were students. Students from historically marginalised communities are now afforded the opportunity to participate in higher learning, which bodes well for the economic growth of the country. New technologies also assist in the transformation of the higher education space. Together, these developments augur well for the future of higher education in South Africa.

As academics, there should be an encounter for personal growth, a continuous process of unlearning internalised constraints, embracing otherness, and using individual agency in rewriting a narrative and contributing to change. The authors envision a future in higher education that embraces diversity, fosters acceptance, and creates new opportunities.

The inequality and the redress of past inequalities related to race and gender appear to be the focus in the academic space. As a result, the opportunities within a democratic higher education space allow anyone who so wishes to soar.

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From the racially divided classrooms of apartheid to the diverse, yet occasionally still segregated, lecture halls of today, South Africa's higher education institutions remain both a mirror of national inequities and a potential catalyst for social justice. Despite the political shifts, racialised privilege, linguistic gatekeeping, and gendered hierarchies endure; yet within these same spaces, we find agency, resilience, and moments of profound transformation. *Negotiating otherness: academics' experiences of social identity* offers a deep and personal exploration of the life stories of nine academics and four alumni as they reflect on their unique journeys through South Africa's complex, and ever-changing socio-political context.

Negotiating otherness: academics' experiences of social identity examines how personal stories illuminate social identity formation. Spanning six decades, from the 1960s to 2024, the book reveals apartheid's lasting impact on institutional cultures and individual experiences. With ongoing challenges related to power, privilege and resistance in educational settings, the book shows how lives are shaped by race, culture, religion, language and age, first as learners, then as students, and later as academics.

Contents include the following:

- The history of higher education in South Africa
- Identity
- Methodology of the study
- Historical overview of South Africa before 1960
- Historical overview and narratives of the 1960s
- Historical overview and narratives of the 1970s
- Historical overview and narratives of the 1980s
- Historical overview and narratives of the 1990s
- Historical overview and narratives of the 2000s
- Historical overview and narratives encompassing the period 2011-2023
- Students' narrative

Negotiating otherness: academics' experiences of social identity is aimed at academics and scholars in higher education, as well as those interested in the history of education in South Africa.