



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

*Institutionen för pedagogik och didaktik*

***“Maybe it’s the way I’ve  
been brought up?”***

*A study on South African young women’s preconditions  
and future goals in post apartheid society*

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## **ABSTRACT**

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**Titel:** *Maybe it's the way I've been brought up?*

*- A study on South African young women's preconditions and future goals in post apartheid society*

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### **Purpose**

*The aim of this Minor Field Study is to investigate how young women in two different South African schools experience their growing up conditions as well as their future goals and dreams. I will try to find out if they are experiencing either upward or downward social mobility.*

### **Method**

*Observations, document studies, informal dialogues and study visits are part of the ethnographic method which helped me understand and gather information about the South African context. Semi-structured open-ended interviews were used to gain deeper insight in the girls' situation, their opinions and views.*

### **Results**

*To most of the girls, having a career was important. Having a career means you succeeded in life. Hence, the girls approached the term career from different angles. The white girls felt they had to carry out what is expected of them, while as I quite often saw the black girl as more proud and happy about the situation, being in the "school with opportunities".*

*These girls experienced different kinds of life. The black girls travelled miles back and forth to go to the school, being laughed about by some people in the townships as well as in the schools. Some of the white girls had been home schooled by their mothers and were not used to such noise. My results show that many of the white girls in the post-apartheid society experienced downward mobility, while as many of the black girls experienced upward mobility.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In South Africa almost all children start school and more than 80 percent continue on to seventh grade. Attending school is a human right and nine years of education is compulsory in South Africa. Education is not free of charge; it can cost from a few Rands to thousands of Rands. State schools are much cheaper than private schools, but to a poor family it can still be expensive. If parents cannot afford to pay the attendance fee, the school uniform or books, the children will be restrained of attending school.

In the country of South Africa, many people are doing their best to make a change. Apartheid is gone in theory - but I wanted to find out how it works in real life.

Do people feel they have the possibility of realizing the goals dear to them? The woman's role is inferior the role of the man with regards to job opportunities and powerful positions in society, but how does the gap look like amongst South African women?

### **Presentation**

Sixty percent of all bearers of HIV-virus are women and teenage girls have a risk that is ten times the risk of boys to get the virus. One of the reasons for this is that teenage girls often get infected by older men. More than every third South African woman is witnessing of being raped once or more in their lifetime. In addition teenage pregnancies are not something unusual. The young women of South Africa have different views than men when it comes to foreseeing the future. Naturally this affects the living terms of women.

My ambition is to do a research on how young women regard their growing-up conditions as well as the future thoughts of South African women. I have chosen to do the research part of my final thesis in South Africa due to many reasons; one being convinced of the importance of doing a field study in a country of transformation. Research can in some ways help to understand how the South African women are thinking and feeling. Seeing the situation from an outsider's point of view I believe it can be easier realising the structures and patterns that enables or precludes the country's development.

On paper it is shown that girls are attending school to a high degree, but how does it work in practice? Is the expectation that they will be working in the home? And do they feel they can have a career without forsaking having children? I have been interested in finding out about girls living conditions in a country of transformation. More than anything I am interested in knowing how they experience their own situation. Equality between men and women is one thing, but will black and white girls ever see each other as equals and through the new school system take the opportunity to interact and build networks for the future?

### **Aim of study**

In South Africa a great deal has happened in a very short time. In theory the whole society has transformed and some are saying that all South Africans have the same possibilities. Is this really

the case? My preference tells me that young women are the ones leading development forward. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century women have been granted the right to vote, as well as entering universities and the labour force to a larger extent. Therefore I have based my work on young women's thoughts and experiences.

I am convinced that the key to development is education, especially when it comes to the uplifting of girls in education. Therefore I have chosen to do this field study in two urban South African schools, with black, coloured, Asian and white students. Thus, the study will consist of interviews with black and white students only, this since these two ethnic groups are the ones that are the ones mostly affected of what has happened after the democratic election in 1994 .

My main questions have been:

- In what way are the young black and white South African women, experiencing social mobility in post-apartheid South Africa?
- How do these girls interpret identity and femininity?
- What is a successful woman to them and who do they think they will be in the future?
- Do South African white and black girls feel they are walking the earth, having the same preconditions as each other?

Young women in post-apartheid South Africa, need to sit next to each other in school, but when school has finished they often live miles away from each other, in mainly predominantly white and black areas. School seems to be a great opportunity to meet and mix, to learn from each other, being from a different area, a different "colour" and often also from a different socio-economic class.

As South Africa is a country of transformation, some people have to give up their benefits to earlier disadvantaged groups. The British sociologist Anthony Giddens (2006) has written a great deal on class and gender. Even though Giddens is not known for his gender perspective, I have found his theory on social mobility very useful for this study. Through my interviews with girls I will try to understand their respective outlook on life, all through the perspectives of what context they are coming from.

### **Study outline**

Before continuing the report to answer my purpose and questions I want to give a description of the South African nation and society, especially emphasizing the impacts of its history. The following presentation of the women's role and the education system is also of importance for understanding the context where I have carried out my minor field study.

In the chapter on methods including methodological approach and limitations I explain the premises for this study and how it was carried out. It is followed by the chapter where I present the theoretical framework. Here I introduce the theories I find relevant for this study.

I have chosen a perspective of identity, equity, femininity and social mobility. In the empirical results I have chosen to enclose the girls' answers. This is followed by a summary of results, a final discussion, analysis and a conclusion. Moreover there is a discussion of the findings and I connect the empirical results to the theoretical framework, thus showing relations between identity, equity, femininity and social mobility in a post-apartheid society.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **General facts about South Africa**

South Africa has a population of 44 million people, spread over the nation's 1 219 912 square kilometres. The two capitals are Pretoria and Cape Town. Port Elizabeth, where my field study was carried out, is the fifth largest city.

There are 11 official languages today. Except for English and Afrikaans, introduced by immigrants mainly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there are also nine native African languages, the two dominating being Zulu (24%) and Xhosa (18%). English is the official language of teaching and learning in schools, but remains the mother tongue of not more than 8% of the population. The literacy rate of the total population is 86, 4% (men 87%, women 85.7%)

The native languages represent ethnic groups with the same names. According to the Apartheid division into racial groups, still used today, native African people are called black (79% of the population). The other groups are White (9, 6%), coloured (8, 9%) and Indian/ Asian (2, 5%). Over 70% of all South Africans confess to Christianity, most of them belonging to one of the many congregations. All the general facts here are collected from CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) (<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sf.html>).

In general white people speak English and Afrikaans, coloured Afrikaans and Indians speak English. Among black people there is a big variety; Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Venda, Sotho etc. With the groups of people come their different cultures and traditions. Many African people seem to mix Christianity with traditional beliefs about spirits and ancestral worship. These traditions and beliefs are stemming from Bantu ancestors. (Bantu people are spread over large parts of Africa south of Sahara. They have in common that their languages all belong to the same family of languages, the Bantu, consisting of about 500 languages.)

### **Abbreviations and definitions of terms used in this essay**

Rand	The currency used in the country, 1 Rand equal to 0,83SEK
SWO	School with opportunity, i. e. a well resourced school
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency System
African	Descendant from African black groups
Afrikaner	Descendant from European settlers



Coloured	Descendant of mixed Africans and Afrikaner origin
Learners	Mainly used in South Africa instead of 'pupils'
Township	Informal settlements where only black people live, often under very poor circumstances, the poorest areas are also called squatter camps.

## **South African history**

A summary of South African history contains a lot of war and disagreement between the many different ethnic groups that always has and still inhabit the country. Long before the Europeans arrived in the 17<sup>th</sup> century there were a diversity of ethnic African groups (or tribes) living side by side but sometimes also in war with each other. With time they merged into bigger groups and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Europeans met mainly the Khoi khoi and the San people at arrival in the Western Cape. Bantu people from East Africa spread over South Africa were followed, among many others, by Xhosa and Zulu in the eastern and northern parts.

Gradually the Europeans moved further into the country, pushing away African settlements and forced people to work for them. It was the Dutch settlers primarily that moved; they were tired of the British rule and started the, so called, Great Trek. The reason for this movement was also their increase in numbers and later the discovery of the richness lying underneath the ground. The mining industry started, in search for gold and diamonds in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was a ground for even more disagreements and war. The British were most successful but in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the British and the Dutch started to collaborate and unite against the Africans. The South African union was established in 1910. English and Dutch became the official languages and that same year the first elections were held. Only whites were allowed to vote. Africans were seen as a lower race without any political rights and they were deprived their right to land and human rights.

In 1912 the South African Native National Congress (later the African National Congress, ANC, 1923) was established as a reaction to this, fighting to get the rights back. Their effort was useless and in 1924 the racist National Party came to power for the first time. The following years they collaborated with another party against "the black threat" and in 1948 they presented their new policy "Apartheid", which gave them the governing power alone.

## **Apartheid**

The white South African minority ruled over the non-white majority. Segregation was enforced at all levels of society, from public places like washrooms and railway carriages, to residential neighbourhoods and schools. Millions of blacks were herded into so called 'homelands' well away from the main cities and worked as migrant labourers in gold and diamond mines. To uphold these strict laws violence, torture and imprisonment was used frequently and people were scared to obedience. After years of international condemnation, economic and cultural sanctions and growing domestic resistance, the apartheid regime began to weaken.

The ANC led the fight against this oppression and Nelson Mandela was one of the front leaders. In the beginning ANC used non-violent demonstrations, strikes and civil disobedience, but in the 1960's they saw no choice but to use weapons to defend themselves and to make their point.

During the 1960's - 1980's massacres took place, non-white people disappeared and were imprisoned, tortured and killed. Non-whites had no right to speak out or contradict the Apartheid regime. The rest of the world started to react and boycott Apartheid around this time. Pressure was put on the government and even though it took time, results came in the 1980's.

In 1985 the violence culminated. Behind the scenes meetings were held between the government and the imprisoned Nelson Mandela. ANC leaders in exile met with influential persons from South Africa and other nations, so eventually some compromises were agreed on how to solve the crisis.

In 1990 president F.W. De Klerk lifted the ban on the ANC and freed its leader Mandela, after 27 years of imprisonment. A series of complex negotiations followed, paving the way for South Africa's first national election involving both whites and non-whites. On April 27 1994, the ANC received an overwhelming 62 per cent of the vote and Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first post-apartheid president. (The historic summary is written with my own words, only dates and years have been collected and/or verified with Holmström and Siverbo (1998).

### **Preamble, Constitution of South Africa**

The Constitution, published in 1996, is the supreme law of the land. No other law or government action can supersede the provisions of the Constitution.

We, the people of South Africa,

Recognise the injustices of our past;

Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;

Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and

Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.

We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to -

Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;

Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;

Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and

Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

May God protect our people.

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso.

God seën Suid-Afrika. God bless South Africa.

Mudzimu fhatutshedza Afurika. Hosi katekisa Afrika  
(<http://www.constitutionalcourt.org.za/text/constitution/text/preamble.html>).

## **Education according to the South Africa Constitution**

Everyone has the right -

1. to a basic education, including adult basic education; and
2. to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

(2) Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account :

1. equity;
2. practicability; and
3. the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.

(3) Everyone has the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions that -

1. do not discriminate on the basis of race;
2. are registered with the state; and
3. maintain standards that are not inferior to standards at comparable public educational institutions.

(4) Subsection (3) does not preclude state subsidies for independent educational institutions  
(<http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/1996/96cons2.htm>).

## **The South African school system**

South Africa has 12 million learners, 366 000 teachers and around 28 000 schools. Of all the schools, 6 000 are high schools (grade 7 to grade 12) and the rest are primary (grade 1 to grade

6). The educational system covers 13 years and the compulsory years are grade one to grade nine. Thus grade R, the reception year, and grade ten to twelve are not compulsory. Primary school is grade one to six and high school is grade seven to twelve Grade 12 is also called the matric. For university entrance, a matric "endorsement" is required (a minimum of three subjects passed at the higher, rather than standard, grade), although some universities do set their own additional academic requirements. A standard school-leaving South African senior certificate is sufficient for technikon or technical college study.

Backlogs from so many years of apartheid education, however, are immense. Illiteracy rates are high at around 30% of adults over 15 years old (6-8 million adults are not functionally literate), teachers in township schools are poorly trained, and the matric pass rate remains unacceptably low. While 65% of whites over 20 years old and 40% of Indians have a high school or higher qualification, this figure is only 14% among blacks and 17% among the coloured population.

South Africa has a vibrant higher education sector, with more than a million students enrolled in the country's 21 public universities, 15 technikons and many colleges. There is one white person in four black persons in South Africa. At the university it does not look like this. Three out of four of the places at university are being addressed by white students.

If you are a student with good grades you can however get financial help. A bursary means you won't have to pay the 10 000 Rand a year that your fellow class mates have to pay for education. To qualify for bursaries at the university, the student must have good results and he/she must be a "needy" student. In other word there need to be proof that the student and his/her parents do not earn enough to afford these fees. Therefore a lot of black students are at bursaries, in some cases beginning at high school level. Private companies also recruit students to assist financially so that the students could work for them after completing their studies.

Spending on education has increased tremendously in the post-apartheid era: in 1994, the government spent R31, 8-billion on education and by 2000; this figure had risen to R51, 1-billion. At six percent of the country's GDP, the country's investment in education rates among the highest in the world ([http://www.africen.nl/index\\_bestanden/Page917.htm](http://www.africen.nl/index_bestanden/Page917.htm)).

### **A mix of public and private**

Like so much else in South Africa, their education system is characterised by diversity: schools and universities vary greatly in terms of quality, financial resources, ethos and size. Although today's government is intent on rectifying the imbalances in education, the apartheid legacy lingers on. The greatest challenges lie in the poorer, rural provinces like the KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, where I did my study. In the more affluent provinces like Gauteng and the Western Cape, schools are generally better resourced.

Most institutions fall under the auspices of the state, but due to an emphasis on local or community-based governance, and a strong and growing private school and higher education sector, the educational landscape is colourful. Most state schools are state-aided to some extent: the government provides the minimum, and parents contribute to basics and extras in the form of school fees. Fees vary considerably, depending on factors such as class size, facilities and the

quality of teaching offered. In conclusion you could say that the education system is a mirror of the society it exists in and shows great contrasts and differences.

## **The woman's role in South Africa**

### *The triple abuse*

For most part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women of South Africa lived under what is called the triple abuse: race, class and sex - and it is also in this order the women have tried to struggle against this abuse that's been a part of their daily lives. In general, all racial and ethnic groups in South Africa have long-standing beliefs concerning gender roles, and most are based on the premise that women are less important, or less deserving of power, than men. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in some rural areas of South Africa, for example, wives walk a few steps behind their husbands in keeping with traditional practices. The Afrikaner religious beliefs, too, include a strong emphasis on the theoretically biblically based notion that women's contributions to society should normally be approved by, or be on behalf of, men.

Twentieth-century economic and political developments presented South African women with both new obstacles and new opportunities to wield influence. For example, labor force requirements in cities and mining areas have often drawn black men away from their homes for months at a time, and, as a result, black women have borne many traditionally male responsibilities in the village and home. Women have had to guarantee the day-to-day survival of their families.

### *Women and Apartheid*

Women became the major source of resistance to many race-related restrictions during the apartheid era, especially the pass laws, which required Africans to carry documents permitting them to be in white-occupied areas. The Women's Defence of the Constitution League, later known as the Black Sash, was formed in 1954, first to demonstrate against such laws and later to assist pass-law violators.

Conservative Afrikaner women have organized in support of Afrikaner cultural preservation and apartheid since the 1970s. The Afrikanervroue-Kenkrag (AVK), another Afrikaner women's organization, was formed in 1983 and worked primarily to oppose racial integration in schools and other public places. AVK membership grew to about 1,000 during the mid-1980s. The group published a monthly newsletter and cooperated with other Afrikaner organizations, but the AVK lost support when mainstream Afrikaner political leaders began working toward racial inclusiveness in the 1990s.

### *Women in the 1990 - present*

Women are achieving new prominence in politics as a result of the sweeping political reforms of the 1990s. During his presidency, ended in 1999, Mandela laid the groundwork for the emergence of a multiethnic society. The constitution, adopted in 1996, is one of the most progressive in the world, outlawing all discrimination on the basis of race or ethnic or social origin, or religion and

belief alongside sexual orientation, disability and pregnancy. ( <http://countrystudies.us/south-africa/58.htm>)

### *Women in politics*

In May 2006, 13 out of 28 ministers were women and ten out of 22 vice ministers/deputy ministers. Thirty percent of all South Africa's parliamentarians are women, which puts them at number eight in the world in terms of gender equality in government.

The country leapt quickly from a position of 141 in the world before the 1994 elections to number eight, when the African National Congress adopted a 30% quota on its party list. Eliminating violence against women and improving educational opportunities for women were almost universally supported goals in South Africa in the mid-1990s, but these goals receive only rhetorical support, in many cases. More urgent priorities are to eliminate the vestiges of apartheid legislation and to improve economic and social conditions for the very poor, for children, and for other groups that were especially disadvantaged in recent decades. Gender-related inequities appear likely to be decried, but relegated to secondary importance, well into the twenty-first century. ( <http://countrystudies.us/south-africa/58.htm>).

## **The intended walk towards equity**

### *Affirmative Action*

Affirmative action makes sure that qualified designated groups (black people, women and people with disabilities) have equal opportunities to get a job. They must also be equally represented in all job categories and levels of the workplace

Employers must:

- find and remove things that badly affect designated groups;
- support diversity through equal dignity and respect to all people;
- make changes to ensure designated groups have equal chances;
- ensure equal representation of designated groups in all job categories and levels in the workplace; and
- retain and develop designated groups.(Based on Legislation in Section 15 of the Employment Equity Act ([http://www.labour.gov.za/basic\\_guides/bgguide\\_display.jsp?guide\\_id=5848](http://www.labour.gov.za/basic_guides/bgguide_display.jsp?guide_id=5848)))

### *Girls' and women's different paths*

Kathleen Gerson, professor of sociology at New York University (1985) has investigated how women make the choices they do by work, career and motherhood. She distinguishes four paths which different women follow in their lives.

Some still follow a traditional path. They settle down to full-time mothering, and only work outside the home for short periods; if at all. For them motherhood is a career, with which they are reasonably satisfied.

Others have found themselves caught between the traditional outlook and an awareness of the rewards a good job outside the home can offer. They experience rising work aspirations and ambivalence toward motherhood. These women may be married while in their late teens or early twenties, but either became disillusioned with their married state or found themselves divorced and on the job market a few years later.

A third group follows a non-traditional path. Women in this category are clear from early on that they want a career in paid work, and try to ensure that their domestic circumstances permit this. In earlier times, most might have succumbed to pressures to forsake career ambitions in favor of the family and motherhood.

A fourth pattern is represented by women who experience falling work aspirations, and come to see the home as a haven. They may enter the world of work with high hopes but for one reason or another find that their ambitions thwarted, and turn to the home as a retreat from the disappointments of work.

Gerson's theories are more than 20 years old. Thus, these four different paths are still relevant to reflect upon today.

## **METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

### **Ethnological and qualitative method**

My study will be based on an ethnological, qualitative method (Stukat 2005), comparing black and white girls in two different schools. My initial ambition was to compare one township school with only black students and one urban school with only white students. When in South Africa I realised I had to change my focus, since the school system does not work like this anymore. There are many township schools with only black learners, but as far as I know there are very few schools with only white learners. In the city of Port Elizabeth, where I did my study, my contact person, PhD Noluthando Toni, organised the schools for me.

Mrs Toni gave me the opportunity to do interviews and observe students in three different schools, one township school with only black students and two mixed urban schools with black, white, coloured and Asian students. In the township school the students paid about 60Rand per year to attend the school and some parents had problems affording to pay for one or a few children. In the urban schools the students paid between 8500-10 000R for a school year. These schools were mentioned as "schools with opportunities" especially among the black students.

I used girls in the ninth grade as my selected group. This meant some of the girls in my study were from late fourteen to early sixteen. By choosing this group I hoped to be given a great deal of interesting material to work around. This is an age when many girls have started to reflect upon themselves and the world around them. My contact person Noluthando Toni picked the schools for me beforehand, since she knows what schools are representing the society.

Observations, interviews and conversations have been the base of my research. My ambition was to spend one month in each school; April 2006 in the school with mostly black students and May 2006 in the school with white students. After understanding how the South African school system of today work I changed my mind, spending about two and a half weeks each in two different mixed schools -"schools with opportunities". The two and a half weeks that I spent in the township school will not be part of my study, since only black learners are attending these schools. My time in South Africa was limited and therefore this was the methodological approach I found most suitable for this study.

### **Literature study**

I have used different theories, such as Anthony Giddens' theory on social mobility (Giddens 2006), Fanny Ambjörnssons comparative study on white girls from different socio-economic classes (Ambjörnsson 2003) and Åsa Andersson's dissertation on young girls living side by side in a multi-ethnic Swedish suburb (Andersson 2004). Beverly Skeggs is an expert on the connections between class and femininity and in her work *Becoming respectable-formations of Class and Gender* (Skeggs 1997) she breaks down the whole idea of being a woman in today's society. I have used the literature frequent when analyzing my interview results.



## **Disposition of study**

The data collection took place during April and May 2006 in Port Elizabeth. I have observed the learners and carried out a number of interviews in and outside of class. I have also had many rewarding informal conversations.

## **Study visits**

During my two months in South Africa I tried to grasp the big picture by spending as much time as I could with both black and white young women. This included hanging out in the Summerstrand church (only white) as well as the New Brighton church (only black). Some afternoons were spent in malls together with the students, while some weekends meant going to a play to watch them perform.

These so called study visits or informal meetings included a lot of observations as well as collecting of material to this final thesis.

## **Observations**

I tried to stay close to the students as much as possible. Experience tells me that it is a good way of staying focused. Furthermore, I believe that it feels more natural for the students if I follow them every day, without interruption. My first step was observing the students. I chose to do this for two-three days in all the different schools. This to highlight how often the girls spoke in class and in what way they expressed themselves. Moreover, I have been interested in how they speak to each other as well as how they interact with boys, the teacher and so forth.

Observations were being made every awaken hour, but perhaps I was more focused with my notepad during lessons and in the student cafeteria. I am well aware, however, that a lesson with me in the classroom is not as the average lesson, since the learners' attention often is towards me.

## **Interviews**

After some time of observations I began with my group interviews, interviewing four girls at a time. I tried to identify different personality types, as I wanted the group to represent the entire population of girls at the schools. This was quite complicated though, after only seeing these girls in action for about two days.

I decided to start with group interviews, since this was a way to get the girls talking and make them reflect upon their lives before the individual interviews.

After the group interviews I identified four girls in each school that I wanted to talk further to. There was not once a problem with interviewing the girls. The teachers had got directions from the headmaster of letting me do as I pleased. At a few occasions the teachers asked me not to be away for too long, but in these cases I did not bring the students with me, since I did not want

them, nor me to feel stressed out. Bringing the girls along was neither a problem. To me it seemed as if they thought of themselves as "the chosen ones". It was as if it was quite prestigious to be interviewed and therefore I several times had to explain to some of the other girls that I just did not have enough time to interview them as well.

### **Group interviews**

When doing the group interviews I asked the girls open questions, questions where they were given the option to answer as they pleased. I did not want to lead them into answers. I recorded all the material, which I have transcribed. We spent between an hour and one and a half-hour together, depending on how talkative the group was. My role was to ask them questions, not to confirm their answers. The interviews took place in a quiet place, preferably the library. I have chosen to enclose a shorter version of the interviews. Still, they are all longer versions than what is normally being used in a final thesis like this. I have chosen to do this, since I think you can get a great deal out of reading their full answers, grasping the context in a better way.

### **Individual interviews**

Doing the individual interviews I gave the students a lot of time on their hands to answer my questions. I asked the questions and whenever they wanted me to clarify I did that, but first and foremost it was the student who was going to reflect upon their life and their future. Six group interviews and eight individual interviews will be the base of this report. In conclusion, 36 students have been involved in my field study, but only 24 will be the base of this report.

My informants have willingly helped me to carry out the study, although some of my questions could come across as sensitive. I report a large selection of their answers in the results.

### **Weaknesses and limitations**

If I would have had more time I could have got to know the South African society and school system a bit more before starting my field study. Now I had about eight weeks for doing this, so surely I felt pressured from time to time. Doing research in a society you know little about, can be good in one way though. You are an outsider looking in and do not take into account things that are obvious for the native person. Since you experience so much every day it can be hard to keep your head above water. All the impressions make it hard to keep one hundred percent focused. You feel as if you want to ask questions about close to everything, but still you want to stick to your professional role as a "researcher", not making the students feeling awkward around you.

My report is being based on two schools. My contact person, Mrs Toni, tells me these two schools are representing the new South Africa.

### **Reliability**

In this study I have chosen a qualitative approach and therefore have to accept the decline in reliability of the results, compared to other strict scientific methods. Asking open-ended questions opens up for individual answers from the interviewees, thus it is difficult to reproduce

the study and get exactly the same answers. Although small, the sample is representative and chosen from a specific group, namely young women aged 15-16 in middle class schools in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

I have questioned myself from time to time if I really am studying what I came to South Africa to study. Validity is a complex conception. Naturally not only the group-and individual interviews have affected my interpretation, but the whole South African world around me.

### **Ethical considerations**

To protect the participants of this study total anonymity is guaranteed. The students, their parents and teachers were informed from the very beginning of this, as well as of their free choice to participate, to interrupt the interview whenever they felt like or not to answer a question. Nobody but the author has listened or will listen to the recorded material. The author also guarantees the participants that the information given will only be used for the purpose of this particular study.

## LITERATURE AND THEORIES

### Document study

When it comes to studying class as a consequence of sex, female researchers has been forerunners in the matter. Here I would like to mention Fanny Ambjörnsson, Åsa Andersson and Beverly Skeggs. Since my own reference is a western, middle class frame I have chosen to use literature reproducing a western perspective. This to have an “outsider looking in”- perspective on the matter.

In her book *I en klass för sig* (Ambjörnsson 2004,) Fanny Ambjörnsson compares Swedish girls from different socio-economic classes in different educational programs with each other, trying to answer the question: How does one become a girl? Ambjörnsson compares girls with a working class background with girls with a predominately middle class background. The ethnologist Åsa Andersson writes in her book *Inte samma lika* (Andersson 2003) about identification amongst girls in a Swedish multi ethnic suburb in the late 90's. Her thesis discusses what factors are important in teenage girls' lives. Beverly Skeggs writes in her book *Becoming Respectable- Formations of Class and Gender* (Skeggs 1997) about the construction of femininity, sexuality and subjectivity. Ambjörnsson, Andersson and Skeggs all discuss the questions of class and gender and draw parallels to our growing up conditions.

### Giddens' theory on social mobility

In an interview, Anthony Giddens talks about social mobility in contemporary society and assesses the role of education. Giddens says that education shouldn't be seen as a panacea for all society's problems. He continues on saying that it has a significant role to play, but we can't hold schools and Universities solely responsible for promoting social mobility. It's important not to think of the education system as if it works in a vacuum – factors like changes in employment and the economy, and the social determinants of children's educational attainment, are critical in determining patterns of mobility. (<http://www.polity.co.uk/giddens5/news/sociology-and-social-mobility.asp>). Using Giddens can in one way be complicated. He is not known for his feminist perspective. In addition to this Giddens is basing his work *Sociology* (2006) on many other sociologists thoughts and theories. Here I would like to mention Paul Willis work *Learning to Labour* (1977). However, I have found the theory on social mobility being of great importance for this study and I will therefore refer to Giddens all through this final thesis.

Giddens' theory on social mobility shows structural patterns, but also an example of how people behave when changing their social status. In studying stratification, we have to consider not only the differences between economic positions or occupations, but what happens to the individuals who occupy them. The term social mobility refers to the movement of individuals and groups between different socio-economic positions\_(Giddens 2006).

Vertical mobility means movement up or down the socio-economic scale. Those who gain in property, income or status are said to be upwardly mobile, while those who move in the opposite direction are downwardly mobile. In modern societies there is also great deal of lateral mobility, which refers to geographical movement between neighborhood, towns or regions. Vertical and lateral mobility are often combined. For instance, an individual working in a company in one city might be promoted to a higher position in a branch of the firm, located in another town, or even

in a different country (Giddens 2006).

There are two ways of studying social mobility. First we can look at individuals' own careers-how far they move up or down the social scale in the course of their working lives. This is usually called intragenerational mobility. Alternatively, we can analyze how far children enter the same type of occupations as their parents or grandparent. Mobility across the generation is called intergenerational mobility (Giddens 2006).

### *Downward mobility*

Although downward mobility is less common than upward mobility, it is still a widespread phenomenon. Downward intragenerational mobility is also common. Mobility of this type is quite often associated with psychological problems and anxieties, where individuals become unable to sustain the life-styles to which they have become accustomed. Redundancy is another of the main sources of downward mobility. Middle-aged men who lose their jobs, for example, either find it hard to gain new employment at all, or can only obtain work at a lower level of income than before (Giddens 2006).

Many of the downwardly mobile, in terms of intragenerational mobility at any rate, are women. It is still common for women to abandon promising careers on the birth of a child. After spending some years bringing up a family, such women return to the paid work-force at a later date, often at a lower level than at which they left – for instance, in poorly paid part-time work (Giddens 2006).

### *Social stratification*

Sociologists speak of social stratification to describe inequalities that exist between individuals and groups within human societies. Often we think of stratification in terms of assets or property, but it can also occur on the basis of other attributes, such as gender, age, religious affiliation or military rank (Giddens 2006).

Individuals and groups enjoy differential (unequal) access to reward on the basis of their position within the stratification scheme. Thus, stratification can most simply be defined as structured inequalities between different groupings of people (Giddens 2006).

One of the main problems posed by the study of gender and stratification in modern societies sounds simple, but turns out to be difficult to resolve (Giddens 2006). This is the question of how far we can understand gender inequalities in modern times, mainly in terms of class divisions. Inequalities of gender are more deep-rooted than class systems; men have the superior standing to women even in hunting and gathering societies, where there are no classes. The problem in studying gender and stratification, however, is that women have only rarely been directly included in research into occupations and work situations.

### *Intersectionality*

When studying women and class one will sooner or later stumble on the term intersectionality. Intersectionality is a theory which seeks to examine the ways in which various socially and

culturally constructed categories interact on multiple levels to manifest themselves as inequality in society.

Intersectionality holds that the classical models of oppression within society, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, class, or disability do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination (Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift 2-3 . 05).

## **THE SCHOOLS IN THE STUDY**

### **Pearson High School**

Pearson High School is a co-educational higher education day school located in Summerstrand, one of the upper middle class areas in Port Elizabeth. The school was founded in 1926 and is still today considered to be a very attractive school. Pearson High School is emphasizing sports and networking with parents. To me, this school seemed much stricter than the other schools I visited. The students were very respectful towards me, greeting me good morning ma'am, good afternoon ma'am and so forth.

### **Victoria Park High School**

Victoria Park High School is a co-educational higher education day school located in Port Elizabeth's sought-after Walmer suburb. Founded in 1940, the school retains the founder's emphasis on a concern for the development of all aspects of young people. I found VP's teachers and students a bit more laid back compared to the ones at PHS.

### **The informants**

When presenting the group interviews I will be using material from a larger number of white, than black, girls. I have chosen to do this, since the white girls are much overrepresented in these schools. By interviewing more white girls in these schools, I hoped to get a truer picture of the situation in post-apartheid South Africa.

Many of the black girls, attending these so called "schools with opportunities", came from poor backgrounds. In some cases their parents' emergence into middle class was their benefiter; sometimes they were granted a place in school thanks to bursaries. A couple of the girls lived in white middle class areas, though.

The white girls, however, were all born and raised on farms, in town houses or in complex. Everyone, except for Patricia at Victoria Park, came from a middle class or upper middle class background. My interpretation of Patricia's home, however, is that her parents came from working class and that the downward social mobility had hit hard on her family.

Before starting my observations, however, the headmasters informed me that the white girls belonged to the same socio-economic group as well as did the black girls. To me it was therefore important to try to identify different personality types in these respective schools, as I wanted the group to represent the entire population of girls at the schools. This was quite complicated though, after only seeing these girls in action for about two days.

I decided to start with group interviews, since this was a way to get the girls talking and make them reflect upon their lives before the individual interviews.

I have enclosed the interviews, initially without an analysis or theoretical discussion. Instead of pinpointing the sensational answers given, I first want to present the whole interviews. I have

chosen to do this to give a full understanding of a teenage girls' life in post-apartheid South Africa. Before moving on to the different interviews I will present the names and ages of the girls.

### **The white girls at Pearson High School**

Group 1: Zaskia aged 16, Marjorie aged 16, Amy aged 16, Emma aged 16.

Group 2: Imé aged 15, Léonie aged 15, Carmela aged 16, Nicole aged 16.

I later chose to have an individual interview with Emma from group one.

### **The black girls at Pearson High School**

Group 3: Olwetu aged 15, Awetu aged 15, Nosiphu aged 16, Siya aged 16.

I later chose to have an individual interview with Olwetu.

### **The white girls at Victoria Park High School**

Group 4: Tallus aged 16, Debbie aged 16, Ashley aged 15, Patricia aged 15.

Group 5: Danielle aged 16, Louwmarie aged 16, Chelsea aged 15, Kate aged 15.

I later chose to have an individual interview with Patricia from group one.

### **The black girls at Victoria Park High School**

Group 6: Ceke aged 16, Azuki aged 16, Nomtha aged 16 Nombasa aged 16.

I later chose to have an individual interview with Nombasa.



## INTERVIEW RESULTS

### Interview with white girls at Person High School (group 1):

I start with asking the girls about their home conditions.

Emma: "I think a lot of people in P.E. live in worse circumstances than us. We are privileged, I think like everyone that comes to Pearson comes from around Summerstrand and this area...we're very privileged here. I think most people don't live like this."

I came to SA to find out if things have changed in the post-apartheid society. Therefore I start to ask the girls about their thoughts concerning dating a black guy. This is what they told me.

Emma: "My friends are always at my back 'cause I always like coloured guys, I think they are so hot. And my parents would kill me. Not because they are racist or anything, just like: how would your kids look?!...the coloured guys they just have these great personalities and they are so outgoing and stuff ...I like coloured guys, but I don't know what my parents would say...that's the reason why..."

Zaskia: "My parents are not like racist, but they still believe you have to stick to your own race and like my dad said if I ever bring a black guy home or so, he would tell them like 'you have to leave' so he won't be happy with me, like ja, they expect me to stay with a white guy."

Marjorie: "Friends are good, but not as for going out."

The girls are very outspoken and I continue on asking them about black and white girls going to the same school. What are the similarities/differences between the girls - if any?

Amy: "Well, most black girls like the girls in our class they don't think they are better than us or something, but ja I have had a few arguments and stuff with black girls, when they think they are right they are right, ja."

Marjorie: "Black have different personalities than whites do."

Zaskia: "One girl she's in year ten here at Pearson and she's like white personality wise, she's like us and stuff, but outside she's like...and she can't even speak Xhosa and I have like another friend he's coloured and he's like really, really good friend...I mean I can talk to him about anything really, but he is so white inside."

Amy: "Sports we got Xhosa girls in our group, but we always fight...we always fight...they're always right."

Marjorie: "It's just that their way is so different you know, like you know we are actually scared of the other team - they just go for it."

## **Interview with white girls at Pearson High School (group 2)**

The next day I meet another group of white girls. Imé, Carmela, Nicole and Léonie. These girls tell me their thoughts on relationships.

Imé: “Mixed marriages are not very common. But there are like mixed relationships, but I haven’t really seen marriages.”

Nicole: “Long time ago it happened very seldom, but it’s getting more and more...but in the future I don’t think there will be lots.”

I ask the girls what they want to do with their future.

Nicole: “Yeah, I wanna work hard this year and then next year I wanna go to Demlin and study and then I want to do dancing at the same time ‘cause I want to be an interior designer and a dancing instructor at the same time. And yeah, I think I just wanna pass this year with good marks and then my parents will allow me to go Demlin...’cause I said I have to work really hard cause it is hard to get into college.”

I also ask these girls about their thoughts concerning dating a black guy. This is what they told me.

Carmela: “No my mum said to me it’s your choice and whatever, but my dad says no ways...”

Léonie: “My dad, like last year we were speaking about it me and my parents and my dad is actually very rude, I tell him like what would he do...and he says like ‘no bring him I make him work in the garden’...he would not approve of it...ha, ha, ha...”

We talk about dating a black boy for a while. After this we move on to discussing the similarities/differences in colour when it comes to their own sex.

Carmela: “ja, they are like, I have got like girls in my class and other friends and stuff like, but I don’t like sit with them at break and stuff, they are more like class friends.”

Imé: “But normally you are not attracted to different colour”.

Nicole: I just think it’s better to stick with your own race.

A lot of things have happened in post-apartheid South Africa and I wonder how these girls look at the matter.

Imé: “I’m not being rude or anything. Coloured people are like previously disadvantaged and then ‘cause they have like, they have disadvantaged circle so like ten years ja, but some of these people are so rich and stuff, like wealthy and they have the

same opportunities like to swim and change everything, but they are previously disadvantaged so it is not going to happen...”

Nicole: “I say it’s unfair, because if the white person has more qualifications it’s not because he’s white it’s because he’s got more, so they’ll be more suitable for the job and I mean obviously there are other opportunities so the black person could go and get another job, but I don’t think it is right even though everyone is equal and they shouldn’t be treated differently...but still if they have a better qualification...’cause they are basically being racist towards white people.”

Imé: “Yeah and ma’am sometimes a black person does something wrong and that’s against the law and they let go and go and go and that’s corruption, ma’am, and as soon as a white person does anything then it gets a race-thing and like a huge...”

Nicole: “And now it changed around, instead of everyone being equal as it supposes to be, it’s the black people treating the white people low.”

### **Interview with black girls, Pearson High School (group 3):**

I want the girls to start with telling me their thoughts when it comes to a typical South African family.

Olwetu: “Calm, humble, with problems...a typical SA family would have like job, like poverty problems, racial problems, normal problems like in any other family”.

Nicole: “In most township families the parents are not married and there are lots of children and...”

Alwetu: “A typical SA girl...um, goes to school, doesn’t like school, hates most of her teachers, um has crushes, is dating, drinks, smokes, ja and some get pregnant...and some HIV- positive.”

Olwetu: “Some have been raped previously.”

So, what do they want to do in the future?

Alwetu: “Um, I wanna finish matric and go to university and study electrical engineering and then maybe after a year or so I wanna go to London, I always wanted to go to London.”

I ask the black girls if they want to date a white boy.

Siya: “I want to go out with a white boy!”

Alwetu: “My parents would be happy...’cause it means I’d be having something different...like not having the same thing all the time like having...”

Olwetu: "But my parents would not be happy..."

I move on, asking them if white and black kids are socializing with each other

Alwetu: "It's still children in our class that like teases us and they think it's funny and like 'oh, ja your parents were like poor and stuff and you guys are black and stuff and you don't deserve to be here', they would say stuff like that and laugh so I still think it's racism, yeah."

Olwetu: "Most of the time it all comes down to boys...it's like twofaced...girls are twofaced, like lots of girls would complement you on this, but on the side they will like talk bad about you..."

Alwetu: "The English they are very different from Africaans...'cause they understand the situation like black people have been through during the apartheid thing...and they try to be nice you know, talk to you and stuff...and ask you questions about how it felt and..."

#### **Interview with white girls, Victoria Park High School (group 4)**

On South African girls of today

Ashley: "ja, they are much more mature I think...and a lot louder...outspoken, ja."

Tallus: "My mum...well my grandparents, I actually spoke to them the other day...they said well Tallus you are so grown up for your age...and I said well it is actually not that...everybody is like that...you're just living in another time and ah, my mum said I'm more mature than her and the next generation will be more mature...it's just... we take things, life, more seriously...AIDS going around...you have to be more aware..."

I continue asking the girls about school and the future

Debbie: "Me, I'm not sure, I'm sort of wanna do music, maybe like teach music or so, or if I can't do that I would like to become an accountant and I'm not sure if I want to go to university, but if I do I want to take a gap year first....'cause I wanna travel and see stuff...I'd like to go to England and stuff 'cause my family is there and Rome, 'cause it's Rome, interesting, and maybe like, I'm not sure what else, around Europe and stuff."

Patricia: "Me, I want to work in a beauty parlour, I like pulling wax off...I'm planning on talking to the people at Beautywazz because she's got a bunch of certificates and stuff and I want to know where she got that stuff...and I want to start a family really young."

I wonder if the girls ever thought of colour when it comes to dating.

Patricia: "Personally I would not want to date a black guy and have a child with him, 'cause think about your child it would end up being stuck between two races and not know."

Tallus: "I spoke to my nanny and she said, but she is not black, she is coloured, 'would you mind your daughter date a white guy' and she said 'no, our family would disown her, 'cause you have to stick to your culture, your race...and you know...and that's just how I was raised."

Patricia: "That's not how I was raised, it's how I feel."

Debbie: "Some of my friends would mind...but my parents would not mind, no."

On black and white socializing:

Patricia: "To me equality means a false pretends, 'cause everyone says that in SA everything is equal...Do you know that if you are a black woman you get more but if you are a white male you get more than a white woman. It's going backwards, they're going backwards...that's the thing you have to hire five black people who aren't qualified and what about the white people who are qualified now..."

Debbie: "You have to work for it I think., 'cause the country is trying, ok they haven't got it right yet, but at least we're working on it."

Talus: "In some ways, they are much more mature than us, 'cause in their daily life they have to do more they have to learn to cook from a really young age, clean..."

Ashley: My mum doesn't let me do anything...

Tallus: "We have a nanny all week."

I clarify and ask them if they socialize with any of their black class mates after school.

Tallus: "Do you mean like some of our friends from school, do we meet after school? No, not really, but I mean many of them have troubles, like if I want to go to Walmer Park (a shopping mall) and I say like Azuki, she lives far away and not many of them have cars and..."

### **Interview with white girls II, Victoria Park (Group 5)**

This interview is different from the rest, since there is a lot of giggling going on. It is obvious that the girls are friends and are trying to impress each other with their answers. Therefore I have only enclosed the serious part of the interview.

I ask the girls about dating a black boy

Louwmarie: "Maybe it's the way I have been brought up...it's weird..."

Chelsea: "Personality...how trustworthy they are and everything... I don't know, they like, he, he...eh they all seem to have AIDS."

Danielle: "I think someone said it's like 80% of Africa or something..."

Chelsea: "I was once gang raped by twenty black guys, so I'm pretty against them and I had to go for a HIV-test."

Louwmarie: "We don't talk about it in my church, 'cause I go to a catholic church and we don't bring that stuff up."

On South African girls

Chelsea: "... typical black South African girl...loud...and some of them are really, really bitchy!"

Kate: "and rude"

Danielle: "and they have attitude..."

Kate: "But you get some that are fun and bubbly, you know Pumsa, she's like so white joh, she's like white people, she's so cool."

Here again, the white girls tell me that some of the black girls can be fun to hang out with. Those with "white personalities."

### **Interview with black girls, Victoria Park High School (Group 6)**

I start to ask the girls if they could give me a picture of the "typical South African family of today"

Azuki: "It's not what you see on TV-all that happy stuff..."

Nombasa: "Ehm, in most cases you get single parents, most cases fathers are not around."

Azuki: “They drink and they are abusive sometimes...and if you are a strong woman you won’t stand the abuse, you’ll get a divorce.”

Nomtha: “My parents are married and quite happy, well at least that’s what I think, I don’t know what happens behind closed doors, so otherwise I don’t think it’s a very typical family...well anyway in most cases parents don’t seem to think we’re growing up and we do the same thing as they did, so they kind of overshadow it and pretend they don’t know what’s going on...”

#### On school and the future

Azuki:”...when it comes to marriage I actually want to get married, but I don’t want to change in person...and the marriage is fifty-fifty, so if I cook he has to do the dishes, I’m not going to be a housewife cause I will have my own ambitions as well, I wanna do career with maybe science arts, somewhere around that area, and I’m going to, I don’t think I’m going to set myself up...ja, I think I’m going to learn here in P.E. it’s not going to be such a big thing where I live.”

I ask the girls if they could describe a typical South African girl. However, they soon give me a description of a white South African girl.

Azuki: “Yeah, you must have the hair, you must have the looks and the body and you must have the general nice clothes, personality doesn’t count...looks first, personality comes later, when you get to know the person.”

Ceke:”And they pay more attention to their boyfriend than their parents.”

Nomtha: “And their schoolwork.”

Ceke:” ...they always stick around the boyfriend and the click ja...”

#### **Individual interview with Emma, one of the white girls at Pearson High School**

##### On family and housing

“My dad is Dean at the university and my mum she is a housewife. We have a house in Summerstrand. I see myself like a person with lots of values and, um, I think I can be perfectionist sometimes it is also my downfall sometimes and um...I can be described as a loyal person...stand up for what is right for me and the people close to me...I like justice. Who doesn’t like to stand out...who likes to blend in...”

### On future dreams and plans

I define success as having a good family and a stable household and ja, so I'd like to have a good job and a loyal husband and kids maybe...that's my dream for the future and my plan, the only plan I can make so far is to finish matric and study somewhere, have an education...

I wanna be an air stewardess, but I don't think my parents are too keen about it...really ever since I was young I wanted to do that...maybe if I don't like have a husband and a family I decide to do that.

### On spare time

Well school is actually quite a new thing for me, 'cause ever since I was small I've been homeschooled...but I don't really enjoy coming to High School so much...sometimes I find people can be really nasty...

### On equality

I think equality has always been really, really important to me, like when the school did not have a soccer team I wanted a girl's soccer team, so it's important to me that we get treated equally, so that, um, there will be something that in my future will be important.

### On black and white socializing

I think as I said...clearly there is a popular group and it's never a black person in that group, I don't know the reason for it and I think that's the main difference like they seem to be more acceptable to social life and I don't know whatever...other differences...ja, I think our school...you know it's quite hard like before the group interview I never thought about it, you know, 'cause it's just the way it has been, but it seems as if we do sport or whatever the black kids always sit at one side and the white kids at another side.

### On having the same opportunities in society

Well, this is not what I think, but what people tell me, you know like black empowerment I don't know whatever it's called 'cause I see even my dad now, like technicon and UPE (University of Port Elizabeth) is merged and he was like demoted cause there was a black or female or whatever who could get the job...so in my future I don't know...that's not really what I think, but apparently you know I'll have less opportunities because I'm white...I think that if you're good at what you do and try your best ability that you can get good opportunities in life...

### On the post-apartheid South Africa

I just think it's easier sometimes to just leave politics out...just forget about any misunderstandings in the past.



...No, no apartheid is not gone now...there are lots of kids at school who still, especially in the Africaans classes, who don't like black people at all...I think all the black kids moved from the Africaans to the English class, cause I think it's hard for them to be in the Africaans class, but otherwise in the English class, it is more acceptable, yeah."

### **Individual interview with Patricia, one of the white girls at Victoria Park High School**

#### On family and housing

My dad is kind of a male whore...he can be a very bad father, but sometimes he can be good...ja,, my dad is a karaoke singer, casual songs, like a bar magician. My mother is a salesperson, I think my stepfather is something for like Ford. And my dad is also a builder.

#### On future dreams and plans

Having a career means financial freedom, to do things not like someone would marry a man and expect him to provide. My boyfriend is actually very firm on that issue, but for me I think I would feel safer if I earned my own money. In that way if anything ever happened, if I needed to, I could leave and feel safe doing it. Um, so career is something that has to be fun, but also knowledgeable and interesting and free basically.

My plan is to be a young mother so that I can relate to my kids, to get married pretty early and that, um, to build up a career of my own, in the beautician, therapy, psychology, whatever.

#### On spare time

I watch tv, enjoy reading a book...I pamper to my boyfriend, well, I attend to my boyfriend, and ja...if he wants water and I go get it or he wants a back scratch then I scratch his back, 'cause that's just my way of showing little things that I really, really love him. That's just my way of saying 'babe I love you'.

#### Black and white girls

I think the differences, the way they see their culture and how everything has to go their way, because they were here first. Um, the way that they can be so loud, I think they can be really loud, and I don't know how some black people can't speak English properly,

I think white women in this country are much degraded because people don't think, because our society is turning into apartheid again accept this time it is with the white people being pushed away... I think white women have a far less chance of getting a brilliant job than a black woman.

On the post-apartheid South Africa

Apartheid is not gone, it's turning around, I think the black people wanna get us back for apartheid and everything, like that, turning things around. If you look in schools there are more and more black kids less than it is white...now in your company you have to have at least five black people in your company, regardless whether or not they can do the job, you can't hire the five people that you know who can, you have to hire five black people...what does that do that the white people who worked their arses off for seven years to get their degree to be able to do that job and then be turned down because they are not black. You know there are a lot of things saying that you have to be black for it and that's not right.

**Interview with Olwetu, one of the black girls at Pearson high School:**

I ask Olwetu to describe a South African family and she immediately starts to tell me about her mother.

...there were people you know like scuffing her, you know people saying like she is trying to be like everything you know. I mean if you stay in one place you won't be anything...I live in a normal house, I never lived in a shack. Some of the houses in New Brighton are as big as the houses in Summerstrand, it's just that the location is different, so yeah we live in a normal house...

On dreams

I'm ambitious, eh dreamy..someone who wants to be successful, and though you know my family, my mother and father were in the apartheid era, I mean my dad spent eight years in Robben Island, you know I want to be something I want them to look at me and you know think that they like 'we did a good job raising you'.

My dad was imprisoned for you know political reasons, he was also part of the underground ANC thing so he got caught and everything, but he also crossed countries without a passport so he was like a criminal offense so he did that to you know the ANC to study military and everything...

On spare time

I do my homework for about two hours. I also clean a lot. It's not like in Summerstrand and all that stuff you know, where there is a maid and a nanny, you just leave your plates after you, have eaten you leave your plates...on Saturdays you clean like, you wake up, eat your porridge, you clean...

On equality

Yes, um I don't wanna have a home where the father thinks that he is the man you know, he's the one who can change the tire, he's the one who can fix the car and he's

the one that can do any knife work, any rescue work, and I don't want to have a home where the wife wears the pants in the family...I wanna have a family where we discuss things, where we come to an understanding, where everything is both ways...

#### On future opportunities

I want to have the same kind of opportunities...yes, if the world...I see myself having the same opportunities or even better if you know if the racial problems in SA would all go away...cause I mean there is still like fighting, they're still arguing about Affirmative Action and everything, if it's wrong and everything, so I think everyone stand the chance to be equal one day...

I can't say like if we have the same kind of qualifications and we want the same job, I can't say that it's the right for them to choose me over you, cause you were not in the apartheid era, you were not even born then...I mean even if you were born you were a little child, I don't think it is right to punish you when it's not your fault and I don't think it's right for me to gain something if I wasn't there to fight when I didn't struggle, when I didn't lose job opportunities..."

### **Individual interview with Nombasa, one of the black girls at Victoria Park High School**

#### On family and housing

"Ok, I grew up in a location at Seize, with my mother's friends, cause she worked somewhere else as a teacher, I grew up without my father...my father has his own family, it's like he's married, he married and he has a family of his own, like my mother and him met and without getting married...ja, he has his own family. I only see my father when he comes by to pay my school fees, but it's really quick, it's really quick..."

#### On school and the future

Probably I will go studying here, at the university here in P.E, I haven't thought about it yet. I'm not sure, I think, but I would like to be a single parent if I would have children...cause marriages now are not just like a walk in the park, they are frustrating, I'd always read about people being married, killing each other and I don't think it's like it's fine, it's not that important well, from my point of view to get married as long as maybe my children do know they're the father and they sometime spend time with their father then I rather not get married...maybe in my 30's when I settled down and really know what I want, then I get married. A family member of mine would stay home with the children.

#### On future opportunities

Yes ma'am, I see myself having the same kind of opportunities, if I was clever, like if I was intelligent...not all the time, because I don't think so ma'am because most people

aren't like my mother is, she is not being paid as much as other white people are and I don't think it's good.

On the post-Apartheid South Africa

No ma'am apartheid is not gone, 'cause I think some people still feel the pain that they went through and maybe still feel the hatred towards white people of all the things they did to them, but the majority of people have forgotten.

### **Summary of interview results**

Before discussing the findings in the next chapter I want to review and briefly analyse the interview results.

Looking at the results in general, some aspects are frequent which indicates their importance. One example is the white young women's' feeling of jealousy or downward mobility, which affects so many parts of life; access to education, the work and career market, status etc. Time and time again the white girls emphasized that now racism was against the white people. Apartheid changed around and it was all due to affirmative action and such.

“It's going backwards. Now blacks are against whites”.

Some of the white young women that I talked to expressed their opinions in a more relaxed way when we were having informal conversations/individual interviews. These girls were well aware of the injustices in the past and were willing to fight for a more equal society.

The black young women, on the contrary, felt that they, as a consequence of the former apartheid society, were more or less exclusive. They were proud over the fact that they could go to a school with opportunities.

More than anything their answers showed that many of the white girls had dreams, while as the black young women were more determined- they strived for a better life, they wanted to climb upward on the social mobility ladder.

## RESULT DISCUSSION

At this point I find it relevant to go back to the purpose and repeat the questions that I have raised in this study:

- In what way are the young black and white South African women, experiencing social mobility in post-apartheid South Africa?
- How do these girls interpret identity and femininity?
- What is a successful woman to them and who do they think they will be in the future?
- Do South African girls and women feel they are walking the earth, having the same preconditions as each other?

Young women are more and more being welcomed into the universities as well as on the job markets. In the “schools with opportunities” that I visited, more than 60% of the black learners were girls.

South Africa is a country in the middle of a changing process and my main question has been if white girls’ expectations and goals differ from black girls and in that case how? My next question has to do with if these girls see themselves as having opportunities, being fully worth members of society.

How do these young women handle the new living conditions, living side by side? To what extent do old norms and values form them? Do they think and feel that segregation has changed after apartheid and the election of 1994? And perhaps even more important: do they feel they have the same conditions as each other?

What we all need to understand when reading the girls’ answers is that they are teenagers. Their own values are consequences of what they themselves have experienced. It is very important at the time. They are also very much influenced by their parents’ opinions and feelings. Their parents were raised in another kind of society, having another kind of frame to look back on. Therefore the reader should bear in mind that many of the students’ opinions may be a product of what has been said at home, around the kitchen table. Below you find one of the most frequent quotes from my time in South Africa:

*Maybe it’s the way I’ve been brought up.*

This was an excuse to think and feel in nearly any kind of way. In that very sentence it is as if they are justifying their opinions; putting the blame on the parents.

Below I will now reproduce some significant answers from the interviews and discuss them on the basis of the literature framework being used in this essay. I have categorized the most frequent conversational topics with different headings.

## **Being a South African girl**

Amy, white girl, group 1:

I have had arguments with black girls and when they think that they are right, they are right, ja.

Chelsea, white girl, group 5:

Typical black South African girl... Loud... and some of them are really really bitchy!

Azuki, black girl, group 6:

Yeah, you must have the hair. You must have the looks, and the body. And you must have the general nice clothes. Personality doesn't count. Looks first, personality comes later when you get to know the person.

Ceke, black girl, group 6:

And they pay more attention to their boyfriends than their parents.

The white girls claimed that the black girls talked loud, being bitchy, while as the black girls said that the white girls were expressing their emotions too often, also giving up everything they had for a boyfriend.

The girls' examples show how it is sometimes possible to subvert feminine ideals and limitations by overacting and thereby parodying them (Ambjörnsson, 2004).

Intersectionality holds that the classical models of oppression within society, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, class, or disability do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination ([www.allacademic.com](http://www.allacademic.com)).

Based on this passage I would like to emphasize their oppression towards each other.

## **Mixed relationships**

Chelsea, white girl, group 5, on dating a black boy:

They all seem to have AIDS.

Imé, white girl, group 2, on relationships:

Mixed marriages are not very common but there are like mixed relationships but I have not really seen marriages.

Nicole, white girl, group 2 on relationships

Long time ago it happened very seldom but it is getting more and more, but in the future I don't think that there will be lots...I just think it's better to stick with your own race.

Having a boyfriend as well as talking about boys in a certain way is central to the construction of girlhood. Showing oneself being able to attract a boy having the right kind of appearance, ethnicity, class and sexuality are a crucial way for a girl to achieve the status of successful and normal. In this respect, the heterosexual imperative is a normative one; one that generates struggle and competition among girls, and one that is fraught moreover with the risk of failure. (Skeggs 1997)

Racism is not a singular phenomenon, but several racisms are encountered in different historical and social contexts and with different extents and effects. Mainly two levels of experienced racism emerge in the girl's accounts: one of these is structurally social and the other consists of face-to-face situations. The first level relates to segregation in the housing and employment markets, and the second relates to face-to-face situations between people in everyday life (Andersson 2003).

Young women in South Africa are extremely vulnerable to rape, sexual abuse and domestic and other violence. Violence develops from a miserable lifestyle and black men raping white women adds on the racist opinions about black people.

The black girls saw HIV/AIDS as a threat, but did not feel they were that much exposed to it. Not as the white girls felt. None of the white girls, except for Debbie at Victoria Park were positive when it came to the hypothesis on having a black boyfriend.

Avoiding black boyfriends was a way for the white girls to elude the stigma of being cheap, sexually available, low class and possibly self loathing (Skeggs 1997).

On the other hand all of the black girls were positive to dating a white boy. One of the girls thought her parents would react, but the others were giggling and shouted "yes, yes, ma'am." It is not only class; it has to do with race and in a way showing the world, including the white girls and boys, that they are wanted by a white man. They are on the upward mobility train.

## **White and black living side by side**

Zaskia, white girl group 1:

My parents are not like racist, but they still believe you have to stick to your own race and like my dad said if I ever bring a black guy home or so, he would tell them like 'you have to leave' so he won't be happy with me, like ja, they expect me to stay with a white guy.

Nicole, white girl, group 2:

And now it changed around, instead of everyone being equal as it supposes to be, it's the black people treating the white people low.

Alwetu, black girl, group 3:

It's still children in our class that like teases us and they think it's funny and like 'oh, ja your parents were like poor and stuff and you guys are black and stuff and you don't deserve to be here', they would say stuff like that and laugh so I still think it's racism, yeah.

South Africa has been a multicultural society for many decades. However, this society has been divided in different parts and is still today, even though some people have started to mix. My question has been, however, if these girls feel as if they are living in a multicultural society, a society where you feel free to mix. Åsa Andersson writes in her book *Inte samma lika*:

"The good version of the multiculturalism is the one grounded in the humanistic concept of the equality of all humans, coupled with a tolerance for multiplicity. The bad version of multiculturalism is the one that limits people, intrudes upon their integrity and captures people in stereotypical categories. The ugly version of multiculturalism is the one that pretends to be something that it is not - it makes up a pseudo-tolerance dictated from a superior position, hiding social injustice in the name of multiculturalism."(my translation from Swedish to English).

## **In school together**

Emma, white girl, group 1:

My dad is Dean at the university and my mum she is a housewife. We have a house in Summerstrand. I think as I said...clearly there is a popular group and it's never a black



person in that group, I don't know the reason for it and I think that's the main difference like they seem to be more acceptable to social life and I don't know whatever...

Nombasa, black girl, group 6:

Ok, I grew up in a location at Seize, with my mother's friends, cause she worked somewhere else as a teacher, I grew up without my father...my father has his own family, I only see my father when he comes by to pay my school fees, but it's really quick, it's really quick...

These girls, in "schools with opportunities" lead such different kinds of life. The black girls traveled miles back and forth to go to the school, being laughed about by some people in the townships. "Who does she think she is, huh?" Some of the white girls had been home schooled by their mothers and were not used to such noise.

Chelsea, white girl, group 5:

A typical black South African girl...loud...and some of them are really, really bitchy!

The black girls claimed it being very important for the white girls to have a boyfriend and to be part of the "click".

Ceke, black girl, group 6:

...They always stick around the boyfriend and the click ja...

For the black students it was natural that the popular "click" consisted only of white students. To the white students this fact almost came as a shock at first. After thinking about it, they changed their minds, saying that it all came down to the black girls' behaviour.

## **Career**

Alwetu, black girl, group 2:

Um, I wanna finish matric and go to university and study electrical engineering and then maybe after a year or so I wanna go to London...

Nombasa, black girl, group 6:

Probably I will go studying here, at the university here in P.E, I haven't thought about it yet. I'm not sure, I think, but I would like to be a single parent if I would have children... A family member of mine would stay home with the children.

Education shouldn't be seen as a panacea for all society's problems. It has a significant role to play, but we can't hold schools and universities solely responsible for promoting social mobility. It's important not to think of the education system as if it works in a vacuum – factors like

changes in employment and the economy, and the social determinants of children's educational attainment, are critical in determining patterns of mobility (Giddens 2006).

Sociologists make a distinction between structural and individual mobility, and it is a very important one. Individual mobility means that, as one individual moves up, another inevitably moves down" (Giddens 2006).

To most of the girls, having a career was very important. Having a career means you succeeded in life. However, the girls approached the term career from different angles. The white girls felt they had to carry out what is expected of them, while as I quite often saw the black girl as more proud and happy about the situation, being in the "school with opportunities". In the old days, black people could only study to become five different professions (police, nurse, doctor, teacher and priest) and it was not many people that studied after their Bantu education. Going studying, having a career; this is not something that many in their family did before them. They know they should be proud about the fact.

For some of the white girls it was fully acceptable to first study and then become a housewife.

Emma, white girl, group 1:

I define success as having a good family and a stable household and ja, I'd like to have a good job and a loyal husband and kids maybe...I wanna be an air stewardess...maybe if I don't like have a husband and a family I decide to do that.

Patricia, white girl, group 4:

I think white women in this country are much degraded because people don't think, because our society is turning into apartheid again accept this time it is with the white people being pushed away... I think white women have a far less chance of getting a brilliant job than a black woman.

Perhaps what Patricia is saying can be compared to what many of the so called white trash women in the United States are expressing. White trash is meaning a lower social class white people with poor prospects and/or low levels of education ([www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com)).

To call someone white trash is to accuse a white person of being economically, educationally and/or culturally bankrupt. The white trash community is a large group of people often feeling that the government, the state and their country has let them down. Somebody else is making the money, taking their place. The black girls in "the schools with opportunities" had just started climbing the socio-economic ladder, while as some of the white girls actually saw their parents becoming worse off in benefit of black workers entry on "their" -former exclusive – job markets.

The social downward mobility sometimes has to do with white people making place for the black people. If you look at it from another perspective, it means upward mobility when black people can climb the socio-economic ladder (Giddens 2006).

In South Africa the affirmative action law sometimes means that for example white men are degraded and black women upgraded in order to even out the society and what went wrong in the past. To accept this fact will, regarding to the girls, take many years.

## **FINAL DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS**

Young women are more and more being welcomed into the universities as well as on the job markets. In the “schools with opportunities” that I visited, more than 60% of the black learners were girls. From this point of view I think that women have another power than men when it comes to changing societies. With this background I dare to say that women hold the key to development.

The girls had dreams, goals and expectations. However, talking to the white girls, wanting them to compare their opportunities with their black classmates, I often sensed that they were somehow jealous. After a few interviews I started realizing what it was all about. It came from home, the feeling of downward mobility.

The aggression and feelings of downward mobility may grow among the white girls, while the alienation and spirit of fighting may grow among the black girls. School has a big responsibility when it comes to changing societies; empowering girls as well as boys. In the South Africa case I see that lots of things needs to be done in practice, not only in theory. Democracy has been won, but they still have a long way to walk.

“It’s going backwards, they’re going backwards...that’s the thing. You have to hire five black people who aren’t qualified and what about the white people who are qualified now” These are not facts. Thus, this is Patricia’s experience of her own reality. She sees the society going backwards, since former disadvantaged groups are being in career jobs.

Women would gain working together. By networking women could develop and reach goals important to them. By fighting against each other the patriarchy will remain. I believe that school and the way girls interact with each other, in and outside of school, have a lot to do with what will come after. Feeling important, being part of an intellectual group will stimulate girls to higher education. But if never being let into the group, one has to sail against the wind. This could, however, be a motivator for a few. My guess, anyhow, before starting this project was that black and white girls, going to the same school in South Africa did go to the same classes, but without sharing the same experiences of life.

My conclusion here, after speaking to both black and white girls, would be that the black girls felt privileged to get an education. They would not waist their education for family life, but wanted to combine the two. The white girls on the contrary seemed much more at ease when talking about giving up a career on behalf of family life. Going back to Kathleen Gerson, one could say that the white girls were taking the traditional path, while as the black girls were on the other; the non-traditional path. If you see it from a broader perspective you would understand that for many of the black girls being a housewife is not even an option. Many of them lack the financial opportunities of doing so. Still, it seemed as they were more eager, than the white girls, on having a prominent career.

The black and white girls in my study expressed more or less the same kinds of dreams and goals. The black girls, however, were more motivated, more go-getters. Some of the white girls seemed deprived, telling me that apartheid is back, but now it's the other way around. They experienced an era, new not only to them, but also to their parents. Influenced by their parents and surrounding they adopted opinions on black people being less worth than white etc. Some answers I would say were frightening to a certain degree.

At one point we discussed the popular "click" in school. A white girl said: Well I guess that is just the way it is. Whites have better personalities than blacks. Blacks are being so bitchy." As if personality comes with color.

It was hard to deal with values from white girls about black men, but sometimes I could also see and in a sense understand where all their ongoing hatred stemmed from. Chelsea at Victoria Park High School said in the group interview that she had been raped by a group of black boys. Her friends said that they thought of all black men as having AIDS. Many of them had had bad experiences themselves, knew someone or heard about someone. True or not true, in their minds it is all real and therefore many of these white girls feel intimidated by black boys.

Black girls seemed very positive to have a white boyfriend. Here I see the pattern again; upward mobility. There are so many aspects to consider. It is not only class; it also has to do with race and in a way showing the world, including the white girls and boys that they are wanted by a white man.

On the other hand, it seemed to me as if the white girls more often than the black girls thought that it was important to please the man, the boy, the dad. The black girl seemed more independent in that sense, perhaps due to many of them growing up without a father figure, but a strong mother. Many of the black girls had learned to rely on themselves, not being able to have a male role model.

When talking to the girls about equality, having formal interviews as well as talking to them at break time, I realised they know about all these obstacles at such an early age as fifteen. They are all aware of these patterns. On the other hand they are very determined to strive for what they believe in. Black girls more often than white girls told me "I can be what I want".

There is a lot of frustration in South Africa. It seems that the country has a long way to go when it comes to experiencing the positive effects of multiculturalism. Perhaps it works in theories, but from my small sample I dare to say that it does not yet in real life. When you let a person climb up the socio-economic ladder, often it means that someone else needs to climb down. From my point of view, this is how social gaps are being build, how anger and racism grows. The state, with the school system first and foremost, needs to make a better plan so that black and white can experience the same conditions in this country of transformation.

Writing my final thesis in this country of diversity has indeed made me understand how different preconditions will form the students. I am certain that I, as a teacher, will treasure this knowledge and see my students from different perspectives. It is not all about where you are coming from-it is also about where you are going.

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