"We Are Still in Apartheid:" Girls' Perspectives on Education Inequality in Democratic South Africa and Models for Social Change

Rebekah Lindsey Joyce

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“WE ARE STILL IN APARTHEID:” GIRLS’ PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION INEQUALITY IN DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA AND MODELS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

by

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ABSTRACT

“WE ARE STILL IN APARTHEID:” GIRLS’ PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION INEQUALITY IN DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA AND MODELS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Rebekah Lyndsey Joyce
Old Dominion University, 2016
Director: Dr. Jennifer N. Fish

Centering on the perceptions of black South African girl learners from impoverished township communities provides a new informed lived knowledge regarding social and educational inequality in the nation’s post-apartheid era. Perspectives from intersectional feminist theory and Black Feminist Thought offer an appropriate and unique approach to analyze the multiple socio-economic inequalities these girl learners face every day. By gathering original narrative data from a group of girls, their teachers, and the principal of Fezeka Secondary School in Gugulethu, South Africa, the intersections of inequality these girls face will be illuminated as critical factors to consider for policy and program aid initiatives. By gathering the narratives of these girls and members of the school, the challenges girls face in their journey towards secondary education completion and access to university education will be situated in the larger historical context and social structure of South Africa. This thesis also analyzes original data from the founders of international education NGO Education without Borders, which has a longstanding history at the school, and focuses on the ways that this organization and many others like it could bring more meaningful and necessary change to girl learners. Both international and national policy and program efforts centered on education development must consider the multiple oppressions a given group of learners face, and by implementing group produced knowledge, work to understand how these oppressions coexist and interact. The
findings from this study demonstrate that girls not only provide a more informed perspective of the social challenges that personally affect them, but also that these narratives could improve the reach and success of education policy and program initiatives. The study demonstrates through the case study of Education without Borders how an organization’s openness to incorporate girls’ perspectives can lead to more appropriate and effective educational development and change.
This thesis research is dedicated to the students and caring teachers of Fezeka Secondary School in the Guglethu township of Cape Town, South Africa, and to Ruth and Cecil Hershler and the educators and volunteers of Education without Borders in Canada and around the world, whose dedication towards building a better future for themselves and their communities never waivers. I will carry your stories with me forever, and will always continue to support you through lifelong solidarity. I also dedicate this research to my thesis director, Dr. Jennifer Fish, whose commitment to service learning, gender based rights, and global social justice replenishes my own passion for this work. I hope to be half the woman she is some day.
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Thank you to Ruth and Cecil Hershler for your lifelong, dedicated work on education and social justice issues in South Africa. Your stories and legacy inspire me to continue the fight towards equality in education wherever I go.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Now, even as over twenty years have passed since the 1994 legislative end of apartheid in South Africa, structural apartheid is still highly visible and extremely detrimental to the livelihood of the nation. While the apartheid government and the legislation created under the apartheid era dismantled with the formal adoption of democracy in 1994, every social institution within the nation is still effected by the residue of apartheid\(^1\), where residence, schools, health care, and everyday social institutions remain divided by race, as well as class. This residual inequality falls unequivocally upon populations who were segregated and mistreated for decades before, during, and now “after” the age of apartheid. South Africa, in its transition from apartheid to democracy, has moved slowly to address the structural inequalities perpetuated by one of the most oppressive forms of racialized government the world has ever seen. Nowhere is the disconnect between the possibilities of democracy and continual socio-economic inequality more evident than in the current state of educational disjuncture within the nation. In this study, I focus on the inequalities and challenges of one of the most marginalized populations in South Africa, black African secondary school girls from impoverished townships\(^2\). The Native Urban Areas Act of 1923 made it so that all non-white South Africans had to live in a designated location. This act created the township of Gugulethu in the Western Cape (the geographical

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1 The term “structural apartheid” notates the difference between the legal, state-sanctioned era of apartheid from 1948-1994 and the residual apartheid that exists today with in every social structure of the nation.

2 To clarify, townships are the historically black African communities outside of urbanized areas that were created to segregate the black African population from the white population under apartheid. Townships are characterized by their shack housing, limited sanitation, water, and electrical access, and by the extreme levels of poverty that exist, especially in comparison to white urban areas. This apartheid era creation is still in full effect today.
focus of this project) and many others like it. Yet, arguably the most detrimental piece of legislation from the apartheid regime on education, if not the most destructive legislative act during apartheid in general, was the Bantu Education Act, first implemented in 1952 and 1953. Today, this population still struggles to realize basic educational goals of passing the national matriculation exam for grade 12, while facing numerous social inequality related barriers when seeking access to tertiary or higher education in universities. In many ways, the potential of South Africa’s revolution into democracy is symbolized within girls’ access to the new “rainbow nation’s” dream of equality for all.

As South Africa increasingly joins the international global market in its transition to a capitalism-based democracy, higher education attainment becomes more and more critical to compete in the job market. Also, as black African secondary school girls are encountering severe barriers both within secondary education and in their transition to tertiary education, the halls of the academy recreate social apartheid in South Africa. I argue that while educational inequality is extremely detrimental for the secondary schoolgirls themselves, the systemic exclusion of black African girls from higher education comprises one of the nation’s most acute challenges in fulfilling the vision of equality and peace for all its populations.

The primary goal of this study is to shed light and understanding on the challenges faced by black South African schoolgirls in disadvantaged townships. This study is informed by girls who are mostly directly affected by these structural social barriers as they alone hold a lived


knowledge of the impact of these residual social inequalities. Much research has been done on the continuing social ills of the marginalized black African schoolgirls of impoverished townships in South Africa,\(^5\)\(^6\) and many studies examine multiple coexisting barriers simultaneously.\(^7\) However the interactions between multiple social problems are often overlooked in policy and program initiatives. Additionally, studies that include multiple variations of inequality often gather their data quantitatively or narratively from adult participants, rarely recognizing the unique perspective that girls possess. For example, the affect of losing a parent to HIV/AIDS, a common occurrence in South African townships, has been examined as it relates specifically to black schoolgirls who are more likely to drop out of school than boys in order to look after the household.\(^5\) Meanwhile, other studies have analyzed gender inequity and security in impoverished South African schools, drawing on narratives from teachers alone.\(^9\) Yet the voices and experiences of girls themselves are often left out of the conversation. Given the multiplicity of social issues that exist for these girls, which will be


further detailed in the following chapters, and in their efforts to thrive and achieve educational success and access to tertiary higher education, this project also aims to find the gendered and racialized inequality differences that black South African schoolgirls face versus their male counterparts and white counterparts with regards to educational attainment and access.

This thesis works from the premise that black South African schoolgirls face different challenges than their male learner counterparts when working to complete their education. At the same time, this study also examines the ways that these girls are pressured and overworked more so than male students in their own communities and white students (both male and female) in more affluent privileged communities. In analyzing these disparities, case studies of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and international education NGO Education without Borders reveal how legislative, policy, and aid efforts could be more successful to better impact the everyday lives of black South African schoolgirls if they would take a feminist approach to examining potential solutions to the various social inequality issues that restrict the educational access to higher education for girl learners in black African townships of South Africa.

South Africa is failing to meet internationally accepted minimal standards for education, as defined by international human rights organizations such as the United Nations. Because of this, even with acknowledgement of its democratization, the nation is falling behind in the constantly evolving sociopolitical-economic stratus of the world. This deficiency in educational provisions is not a blanket issue for the entire nation as reports from the UN and other statistics may suggest, it is instead an issue that falls along racial, gendered, and class lines, privileging

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whites over indigenous learners, pushing down the most impoverished of students from a chance to obtain quality education and work, and leaving the girls and women of these groups in the most precarious situation of all. A deeper look into census data and the realities of mostly white and historically black schools in later sections, along with narratives from school girls, teachers, and other educators themselves will highlight this divide.

Before, and even more severely during apartheid, indigenous black South Africans were relocated into township areas, outside of the central urban centers of the nation. This geographic separation created strict lines between communities and their school systems, and was dictated by race. During apartheid, the most destructive legislation in terms of long-term effect was the Bantu Education system of 1953, created to severely diminish the quality of education for black Africans, quickly producing a class of “compliant and productive workers,” who could not question their so-called place in the white supremacist apartheid nation. The apartheid government heavily altered and restricted the type of education curriculum offered to black learners, furthering the intentions of the regime to place black South Africans at a lower economic and class status within South African social hierarchy. Townships are characterized even today by extensive poverty, lack of basic physical resources such as safe housing, clean water, and sanitation access. Also, many social ills have lingered on for the black African population as a result of apartheid including high rates of drug abuse, alcoholism, HIV/AIDS.

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11 When using the term “indigenous” in this thesis, I refer to ethnic and racial groups that inhabited what is modern day South Africa for millennia before colonization began. Therefore in this thesis, indigenous is used synonymously for the black South African population, also extending the term to include indigenous East Africans who were forced to South Africa during colonization and the slave trade periods.


gang related violence, and high levels of rape and violence against girls and women.\textsuperscript{14} When trying to uncover the nature of educational inequality between mostly white areas and non-white areas of South Africa today, the social affordances of privileged white South African communities and the social ills of segregated and impoverished communities of color, especially those of indigenous black Africans, must be examined simultaneously. From this distinct history, research provides a focused analysis of the current state of education access in South Africa today for girl learners of historically black townships, with a focused examination of the issue of lack of university access.

\textbf{Intersections of Inequality and the Oversight of Aid}

Human lives and experiences do not exist within a vacuum, with each version of oppression or inequality played out in mutual exclusivity from another, however, these problems exist simultaneously and are experienced together by those who are impacted. Drawing upon race alone, the initial factor for apartheid, is not enough to inform the challenges developed in the current state of educational inequality, as it exists today in South Africa. While apartheid policies intentionally created the racial segregation that still can be seen throughout the nation today, further byproducts of the discriminatory practices that arose from the apartheid era include gendered inequality in both educational and economic access, and class based inequality. Many efforts, by the South African government and other outside international aid organizations, to correct these issues have fallen flat due to the lack of understanding and marginal accounting for the multiple layers of social inequality that exist simultaneously. Inadequate understanding at the

intersections leads to inadequate policy and program planning and failure to change the nature of the problems. A case of such failure can be seen in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals initiative.

A prime example of the way that lack of understanding of the nature of social issues and the inadequate utilization of knowledge from those who live these inequalities can lead policies and programs to fail in implementing change is found in the United Nation Millennium Goals Campaign, as it was applied to South Africa. With seemingly good intentions, the United Nations initially proposed the Millennium Campaign in 2000 and began planning and implementing the campaign in 2002. The Millennium Campaign sought to reduce poverty and related social problems in the so-called developing or third world nations, or at least significantly reducing these inequalities, by the end goal date of 2015. Eight different general goals were set to invoke changes on a global scale, especially for countries labeled as “developing.” These goals included “eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and global partnership for development.” Yet, with such general lofty goals, no individual accounts of particular countries’ social issues were taken into consideration, often rendering these goals inapplicable to many populations.

Now in 2015, the United Nations recently produced the “Millennium Development Goals Report 2015,” giving information on the successes and shortcomings for each of the goals for

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various targeted regions around the world. While studies have taken place regarding previous similar UN initiatives, such as midline reports for the MDGs, there is a gap in available research on the outcomes for the end 2015 Millennium Development Goals due to the inadequate amount of time that has passed since the 2015 report. While both midline successes and failures have been acknowledged previously, especially as related to the 2008 global economic crisis, it is important to note that many nations in Africa consider the MDGs “to be a tool in the wider development and planning framework that may help to end the tragic conditions that deprive so many Africans of their basic rights.” Yet the goals would stand as much more effective tools if they were to take into consideration the intricacies of geographically and socially specific issues as they occur in a given region of the world.

In this project I argue that the reasons for goal failure are due to the UN’s failure to account for the knowledge of the true nature of these problems as experienced by those who live these inequalities daily, specifically black African secondary school girls of impoverished townships. Given the case of South Africa, I further contend that the United Nation Millennium Goals would benefit from greater successes through use of a feminist perspective to inform the nuances of each goal, which would include using the voices and knowledge produced by these girls to inform policy and program initiatives. Specifically for this project, I will focus on Millennium Goals Two to “achieve universal primary education” and Goal Three to “promote


gender equality and empower women” as a part of this case study. I center this work upon these goals and South Africa specifically, to investigate the interactions of these goals for South African secondary school children, to demonstrate how these goals interact on both a macro and micro level, and how they impact daily experiences of whole marginalized groups. Without clearly informed goals there may be an adverse effect, further ostracizing disadvantaged populations. The topics of gender equality efforts and educational access in South Africa provide the central focus for this research, and providing dynamic links to the successes and failures of the universal development goals established by the United Nations. To uncover issues of educational access inequality as related to gender inequity, I use the case studies of Fezeka Secondary School in the historically black impoverished township of Gugulethu in Cape Town, South Africa, and focus on the model international education NGO Education without Borders.

Now, even twenty years after the end of apartheid’s extreme systemic segregation South African township schools continue to be racially divided. Even given governmental efforts to repair the countless damages inflicted on non-white South Africans due to apartheid, the damages persist today. Effects of the destructive 1953 Bantu Education Act still restrict the realization of education equality in South Africa along racial lines; among the nation’s black African secondary school students “48 per cent graduate; among white, 95 per cent.” Those schools that were previously black South African schools under apartheid continue to be disproportionately under resourced in terms of infrastructure, funding, and staff. This severe shortage impacts the quality of teaching as well as students’ capacity to learn and thrive. In


some cases, teachers are untrained and suffer a lack motivation within the classroom, given the surmounting challenges of the social disparities they face each day. For students, social problems shape their daily lives inside the school gates and outside in the surrounding communities. Alcoholism, drug abuse, rape, teenage pregnancy, gangs, and various forms of violence are normalized aspects of students’ daily lives. For girl learners, these oppressive structural conditions take a certain toll. While the South African government has made attempts to resolve some of these problems with legislation, tangible results for improvement fail to reach students or to improve the everyday lived experiences of girl learners.

To help aid the intentions of the South African government, and specifically the Department of Education, international non-governmental organizations (or NGO’s) and transnational regulatory agencies such as the United Nations often bring in programs to try and improve conditions. For example, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals included South Africa as a developing nation, and the UN worked together with the South African government to help South Africa implement these goals as specifically related to the nation. A separate Millennium Development Goal report was created explicitly for South Africa which considers how since the 1994 end of apartheid “South Africa has set out to rigorously dismantle the apartheid system and to create a democratic society based on the principles of equity, non-racialism and non-sexism”.22 Also, smaller international NGOs such as Education without Borders have worked to develop educational aid programs in schools with unequal access. However, whether at a macro or micro level, the programs mentioned above included, these

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initiatives have been largely unable to reach most learners in ways that make a tangible difference in their capacity to complete secondary school and access university education.

While NGOs and major transnational regulatory agencies are often well intended, organizational perceptions about local education needs and suitable programs do not always match the community’s perceptions. This project explores the effects of transnational regulatory agency United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals and international NGO educational aid on black secondary schoolgirls in South African townships, not only to uncover the reasons that these programs often are unable to create meaningful change but also to exemplify how a feminist approach to solving these issues would be more appropriate. By examining the case study of Fezeka high school in the Gugulethu township of Cape Town, the study will focus on the disparities between the UN Millennium Goals, and what faculty, and staff of under resourced schools like Fezeka have identified as true areas of need. Education without Borders will be further examined as a model international education NGO, as the nature of the organization and its relationship to the school creates some meaningful opportunities for students seeking higher education access.
Overview of the Study

This thesis is founded upon my continued study of girls’ education and inequality in the context of the so-called developing world. By examining the social issues and inequalities girls face, as they experience them in their own voices, a clearer understanding of the true intersections of oppression for black South African impoverished schoolgirls emerges. Also, by talking with the girls, their teachers and mentors about educational inequality, lack of access, and the role of international policy organizations and educational NGOs, a new knowledge about actual program and policy needs arises to better inform any action or aid. Realizing that black African girls face much more restrictive challenges and extra familial responsibilities, than white and black African male learners in regards to secondary education success and higher education
access, I coin the idea of the “girls second shift,” informed by second shift feminist theory. By examining educational inequality through an intersectional feminist lens with regards to gender, race, and class, a new knowledge emerges which can better inform international policy efforts on education and gender equality, and best guide educational NGO aid in providing the programs that are needed as acknowledged by those who will actually benefit from said programs.

The research was also designed to develop a better understanding and new knowledge as to the ways that disadvantaged girls like those of Fezeka can circumvent the social ills of their given society and seek secondary education completion and tertiary education to further enrich their own lives and help them to realize their own life goals. By employing a feminist research methodology, I was able to help a group of learners with their photojournalist projects, which allowed me to create a bond with the students I worked with and a safe space for dialogue that informs this study. Also, I continued the feminist scholar-activist approach of “giving back” to communities researched, which has been utilized by Dr. Fish and EWB at Fezeka for many years. By standing on the shoulders of my sisters before me and drawing from those established relationships to inform my own work, I worked with EWB able to conduct community based interviews and ethnographic based observations amongst a group of girl learners. From this content, I focus my analysis on the state of educational equality and access as these participants see it.

I chose this project as a way to further knowledge surrounding the true layers of inequality for these amazing girls, who continue with me in spirit every day. My goal is to share their stories to better inform the policy and program initiatives that try to support them in realizing their educational dreams. Only by working alongside these girls and through my days witnessing interactions in Fezeka, combined with the invaluable insight offered from teachers
and the members of EWB, have I come to realize the insurmountable resiliency and hope these girls possess, even in the face of many oppressive challenges. Their continued dreams to become doctors, lawyers, the next leaders of their nation, also inspire me to continue this work into the future and again to create new initiatives with EWB to give back to these girls. Even while living in one of the most impoverished and challenging townships of South Africa, these girls continue to strive for their rights, and for their dreams of achieving the education they so much deserve, all while carrying the further burdens and responsibilities placed on girls in this specific South African context. These girls are not vulnerable and in need of saving, as some development initiatives would suggest; they can save themselves and accomplish their dreams on their own merit if policies and programs could be effectively implemented to address the social inequalities they face.

**Overview of the Thesis**

In this thesis I begin with a section that lays out the basis for the feminist ethnographic methodology used for this study, and the limitations of its use. Further, this section will examine in detail previous literature on the theoretical perspectives on gender and development, contextualizing the nature of the struggles South African secondary school girls face and the extra burdens they carry as they strive for their chance at achieving a quality education. Literature on the socio-political and historical context of the nation of South Africa and the region of the Western Cape and Gugulethu provide a full picture of the social structure and social inequalities particular to the context of girls in this study. Some literature on higher education access and inequality is also employed to contextualize how across societies, intersecting
oppressions create more extreme barriers for marginalized girls of color than for privileged learners.

Chapter two provides an in depth examination of gender and intersections of oppression as related to educational achievement and access. In this section I provide evidence to demonstrate the ways that the voiced knowledge of those who experience the reality of social inequality allows for a new understanding of the nature of intersecting social challenges. The narratives of the girls will be analyzed and discussed in this section to express the way in which they view the nature of their social reality, and the perspectives they have on educational access and barriers to achievement. Teachers and mentors also provided exceptional insight into the conditions that specifically marginalize black African girl learners in South Africa, and provide identified areas of need where NGO aid could be most effective in helping these girls finish secondary school, pass matriculation, and achieve their dream of reaching access to university education, especially given the absence of state involvement. After this section, I draw from existing data to examine the international education NGO Education without Borders as an effective model of international education aid. The results of an in-depth search into the nature of the organization, its history, how and why it was founded, and what it aims to achieve today are discussed to provide evidence as to why EWB is an exemplary model for creating more effective forms of educational aid. In depth interview data from the founders of EWB, a telling poem written by one of the founders, and an analysis of the programs they provide to Fezeka position EWB as a distinct and exceptional model aid organization. A discussion of areas of improvement to help the organization become even more effective for assisting learners, especially as related to gender and university access, expands this analysis. By asking essential questions to the founders about the nature of their organization, further challenges that exist both within Fezeka
and related marginalized black African communities emerge to provide a specific view of new areas for improvement. Finally, this section covers the need for a girls program at Fezeka and the EWB response and plan to address this need. A concluding chapter offers a summary of the research and will sheds light on future directions for analysis as produced by this thesis. A brief epilogue will also provide a window into the experiences I faced and the difficulties I felt as a scholar-activist throughout this study.
CHAPTER II

CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

This chapter focuses on the methodological and theoretical foundations of this study. In this chapter I begin by introducing the methodology used in various phases of the study. Next I turn to the theoretical frameworks, that informed the questions asked and the analyses developed within this study. Core feminist methodological and theoretical approaches were used to ground this research, and connect it to overarching feminist pedagogies, founded upon the struggle for equality and social justice. Feminist research paradigms advocate for social equality across all demographics of any given society, along with the critical link between knowledge and action. Therefore these approaches are most central to the context of South Africa, where struggles for social justice and equality on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, and other forms of social identity, have taken place for decades.

Education, the spread of knowledge, and shared personal narratives of lived experiences have been and continue to be vital elements in the struggle for social change and the development of equality in South Africa. Therefore, this research is most heavily informed by these tools for change. I focus on one of the most marginalized social groups in South Africa, whose voices are often invisible in academia and political decision-making realms. I analyze the unrelenting and prolonged challenges that black African secondary school girls face in the current post-apartheid state of South Africa as they struggle to overcome the reality of social inequality that inhibits their chances of completing secondary education, passing the national matriculation exam in grade 12, and keeps them marginalized from entering institutions of higher education.
Methodology

Feminist methodologies require a reconstruction of the lens through which we view society. By refocusing our analytical attention on the real lived experiences of women and girls, a new set of truths is revealed.\(^1\) Knowing that the race, gender, and class divides related to apartheid still exist structurally in South Africa, in this study I draw upon ethnographic data from those young women whose everyday lives are impacted by such harsh realities of inequality. Under the direction of core feminist principles, I purposefully collected the stories of those who live this residual oppression in order to better map the way they see the causes and effects of the challenges they face, the structure of their lived realities, and the resilient hopes they have for the future. This choice of methodology avoids the homogenization of girls and women in the “developing” world, and instead allows for their own voiced experiences to unveil group intricacies and individual nuances.\(^2\) Homogenizing “Third World” women is a major critique of much Western feminist scholarship, yet recognizing the vast differences in identity and experience of girls and women in the developing world avoids exercising a discursive power over said groups.\(^3\)

I also draw on structural analysis in this thesis, as attempts to correct social inequalities and develop human rights have been framed structurally, through legislation and on a policy


basis. Numerous legislative and policy based efforts proposed to challenge the social ills of post-apartheid South Africa often aim to fix issues without addressing the true nature of the problems: the underlying broken social structure. Further, these measures most often fail to inquire about the true nature of lived social inequalities from those who actually experience them every day. For example, while understanding that the United Nation’s Millennium Goals⁴ and various international education NGOs have tried to aid the overwhelmingly absent South African government in fixing some of these structural inequality issues, I wanted to investigate the effects of these policies and forms of educational NGO aid for black African schoolgirls in South Africa. I wanted to know whether the legislation and policy attempts ever accounted for the actual social inequalities and problems that exist for the most disadvantaged in South African society, versus homogenizing these issues with the rest of the continent. I wanted to know whether they ever asked actual people who lived through structural inequality daily about how they themselves view the nature of the problems, the possibilities for solutions, and expectations for the future. Thus, the structural analysis I apply is based upon individual experiences on the ground, in attempts to magnify the standpoint of women and girls most closely connected to the material, emotional and sociological impacts of South Africa’s enduring apartheid system.

Aside from simply examining the various structural oppressions that black South African schoolgirls face, using the case study of Fezeka Secondary School, I argue that these oppressions intersect and exist as the most detrimental remnants of apartheid, and are most harmful to girls. To examine this notion methodologically, I utilized, recorded, and transcribed interview data responses from twenty girls at Fezeka Secondary School in the Gugulethu township of Cape

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⁴ “United Nations: Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015.”
Town, compiled field notes from an interview with the school’s principal Mr. Bucks Baloyi, recorded and transcribed data from extensive interviews with EWB employed librarian Charmaine Visagie-Africa, and Sonwabile Mayekiso who teaches at the school and runs after-school programs as well. These interviews are combined in analysis with further narrative data obtained through an in depth interview with the founders of the educational NGO Education Without Borders (EWB), Ruth and Cecil Hershler, whose organization forms a case study model for this project. In addition, extensive field notes were taken during each interview and field observations were also analyzed to provide a complete context under which the research was conducted.

The data as a whole present a more thorough picture of the multiple intersecting oppressions faced by black South African secondary school girls every day. These intersecting oppressions include racial segregation in comparison to majority white schools which are better resourced, leading to unequal educational opportunities in terms of likelihood to complete secondary school and access university education. Additionally, these girl learners face gender inequity compared to male learners regarding security in school, including a high risk for sexual violence within and outside of the school. This heightened risk for girls to experience sexual violence increases their likelihood to contract HIV/AIDS. Further, as girls are challenged with

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8 Shisana, Olive., Rice, Kathleen., Zungu, Nompumelelo., and Kangelani Zuma. “Gender and...
threats rape and sexual violence, which continue to be preserved by failed state legislation, these systems of oppression operate still within a social structure that institutionalized multiple forms of violence during apartheid.\(^9\) Girls are more likely to drop out of school to help raise their siblings and run households, while simultaneously boy learners enjoy institutionalized male privilege.\(^10\) All of these societal inequalities, imposed upon black girls in South Africa, are intensified by the generations that lost equal access to education and the economy during apartheid, and found recovery in the post-apartheid era a nearly impossible reality. I argue that until a more clear understanding of this complex intersection of oppressions is possessed by international NGOs and transnational regulatory agencies such as the United Nations, any aid or legislation aimed to remedy educational and economic inequality will be ineffective. This argument can be applied not only to the context of South Africa, as is the focus of this study, but to other so-called developing nations as well, provided that the unique context of a given area is also taken into joint consideration. I also uncover the social dynamics within the community of Gugulethu, and Fezeka Secondary School itself that lead to the failure of aid implementation and development for education in impoverished black townships like Gugulethu.

A central component to the data used in this study stems from interviews of girl learners conducted with the Education without Borders staff over the course of two weeks at Fezeka Secondary School in the summer of 2015. I quickly built a relationship with learners as I worked

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as a facilitator and writing coach for the EWB afterschool photojournalism program. The afterschool photojournalism program is run by Greg Hillyard, a professional photographer in Cape Town, who comes to Fezeka each year to work on this extracurricular project funded by EWB. Ruth and Cecil Hershler, founders and directors for EWB, had identified an area for need in the program: Greg needed support in the writing part of the program to help students craft their essays to accompany their photographs. The program took place over the course of five weeks, and twice per week during that period Greg came to Fezeka to give photography tutorials. The students were paired into groups of two, and were required to create a theme for their respective group projects. Each group was to write a short essay (two-five) pages on their topic. Additionally, each group was given a camera to add a photographic component to their essay, looking for moments to capture in the school and in the community surrounding the school that would fit their essay topics.

Each topic was chosen by the given group, but was largely based on issues and problems the students self-identified within their own community. For example, the group of girls I worked with most closely identified the issue of inequality girls and women face before and in marriage in the Xhosa community. This group was a great fit not only given my educational background, but also allowed for a closer bond between the girls and me, which created a free space for dialogue about my own research questions as well. Throughout this process, I assisted by helping students construct and refine their essays, and also helped them capture images in Fezeka and in the community to fit their themes. Because of my work with this program, and the longstanding relationship my professor-mentor Dr. Fish maintained with this school and EWB since the early 2000s, I gained access to an opportunity to interview twenty girls from the school alongside EWB staff members. As one of Dr. Fish’s students, I was able to easily access
schoolteachers, leadership, and EWB faculty and administration during my time as a service-learning student. I employed the pre-established trust that was built through Dr. Fish’s relationship to the school and EWB’s long standing interactions there. As the photography program has been established at Fezeka for several years now, I was able to fit right into the program as a facilitator, and the student-coach relationship was formed almost instantaneously. Thus, this research blended my experience as a service-learning student on a study abroad experience and the opportunity to develop an original research project.

While working with EWB, I co-produced a report for the organization that focused on a gender analysis of Fezeka’s population and the possible needs of students in the after-school programs. I developed this piece with the EWB staff members and delivered its findings to the organization. The material in this report serves as secondary data for this thesis. Alongside EWB staff members, I interviewed eighteen of the girls as a group, practicing feminist pedagogy, which encourages collective dialogue, to create conversation and allow for an open space to discuss the challenges and inequalities that are a reality of these girls’ everyday lives and the issues that they directly experience.\textsuperscript{11} The other two interviews with the girls were done separately, yet also in the library, as to allow for each girl to answer without the pressure of others nearby. These interviews were semi-structured, with predetermined questions used along with new questions and discussion between the girls and myself as the dialogue progressed. The questions I asked were specifically in regards to the girls, how they see their lives, and how they identify and experience the intersecting structural oppressions that exist for black South African girls and women. Also, for the two girls I interviewed together without the larger group present, I

was able to both ask them the same interview questions and utilize participant observation as they worked together in my assigned group on their essay for the EWB photography program. Aside from the interview with the founders of Education without Borders, which was conducted over Skype, all interviews took place on the campus of Fezeka, mostly in the student library. I recorded each interview and transcribed the audio clips, word for word, for further analysis. I also took extensive field notes throughout this entire process, as some of my data came not just from the responses of interviewees, but also from my own observances during my time at Fezeka and in Gugulethu. As promoted in feminist methodological practice, my field notes also served to guide my own thoughts and develop my research questions into deeper relevance as time went on.\textsuperscript{12} Therefore, this thesis is based on the combined data of multiple transcribed ethnographic interviews, participant observations, field note examination, and some statistical census information from the South African government and the United Nations, which sheds some light on the structural apartheid that still pervades South African society today.

It is also critical to address the limitations of this study. First, as a western woman, most often perceived to others as white, I must constantly negotiate my privilege and status while doing research on the social issues of a group with whom I do not share a common social identity or location. Given these limitations, I conducted this project in an ethnographic manner to ground my data in the actual voices of the girls at the axis of this inquiry. I draw from their responses in the EWB report as they gave them, unaltered in any way, in order to keep myself as objective as possible given the reality of the nature of ethnographic research. Primarily, this core feminist methodology allowed me to maintain that instead of speaking for these girls, I worked to create a space for them to speak freely for themselves. Therefore, this data is truly grounded in

their own lived experiences and their verbalized interpretations of the nature of their social reality. Also, as a student I was more so able to blend into my research and immerse myself with the girls. My age was visibly older than girls I interviewed; however my status as a younger person, a student, and a female left much room for meaningful connection. For example, as younger students we were able to connect on common experiences with social media. Also as younger females, the girls inquired about my own relationship and upcoming wedding. So, along with these standing relationships with the school, I was able to earn the trust of the students and staff very easily. Regardless, I note the complexities of my own identity as they drastically differed from the identities of those I interviewed. This factor brings up the important dilemma in feminist research in regards to the privilege of the researcher. Scholars have noted that further legitimation and development of feminist research methodologies can only take place through ongoing dialogue that recognizes the interwoven complexities of diverse feminist epistemologies and research as conducted in reality.¹³ Scholars and researchers most inevitably come into situations like that of this study with a degree of privilege over the community population, however it is scholar-activism that allows for a mutual exchange.¹⁴ Scholar–activism is research conducted in a framework where the researcher treats community members, and in this case learners as well, as fellow researchers instead of acting as the sole expert, and simultaneously the participants provide the researcher with a new perspective and form of understanding a particular

¹³ Fish, Jennifer Natalie. 2006. p. 67.

topic. In other words, with a scholar-activist methodology, “everyone involved is considered a scholar-activist.” Scholar-activists may obtain data, yet in return must fulfill a commitment to the community in which one works and develops relationships, in order to give something back.

**Scholar Activism**

As previously detailed, this project was conducted in the spirit of scholar-activism, and of the strong feminist epistemological commitment which, encourages that the knowledge produced from research is in turn recognized and “given back” to the community of focus. At the time research and interviews were conducted with EWB, I had not yet planned a scholar-activist component to this project, to allow for the knowledge gained to in turn assist the girls of Fezeka. I waited, as is the whole underlying purpose of this thesis, to hear what the actual needs were from the girls I worked with, so that any scholar-activist project to aid the school and the girls would be informed by the voices of the girls, Fezeka and EWB staff and teachers themselves. After taking some time after arriving back in the United States and repeatedly listening to the interview recordings conducted for the EWB report, I heard the need for a structured girls afterschool program that would help these girls better navigate the social challenges they face both inside and outside the school. While this model parallels many international development approaches, it would be distinct to this setting, and all of the specific needs of this location.

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Currently I am working with the founders of EWB, Ruth and Cecil Hershler, to plan a girl’s afterschool program at Fezeka. The program will hopefully assist in teaching girls how to avoid some of the most dangerous challenges they face in reaching educational success such as drug and alcohol abuse, peer pressure to join gangs, teenage pregnancy, and violence. Moreover, it is my hope that such a program will ultimately provide Fezeka girls a space for solidarity where they can learn from each other and find dependence upon each other in true feminist form. The program will also centralize in an aim to include assistance for girls who want to succeed educationally in passing grade 12 and matric, and help those who strive for tertiary education and need assistance with tasks such as filling out applications and starting email correspondences with universities’ admissions. Though this thesis will be completed by the time this program comes into fruition, my dedication to seeing it become a reality will long continue. I will work with the Hershlers this year to create the program, and importantly seek ways to help them raise funds to make a girls’ program at Fezeka come into existence. My ultimate hope for this portion of the project is that such a program could be implemented at Fezeka and further be used as a model for change at other disadvantaged schools in South Africa.

Informing the Study: Theoretical Perspectives

This project employs the theoretical frameworks of several major feminist paradigms. The guiding framework of Black Feminist Thought posits that black women and girls establish a specified knowledge that identifies the “standpoint of and for black women,”¹⁷ and girls as well.

Black Feminist theory therefore best captures the need to focus upon the knowledge generated through real lived experiences and the challenges for the girls working to obtain a secondary education in the Gugulethu township of Cape Town. Analysis of the data was done with guidance from feminist theory on intersectionality, keeping in mind that the girl participants’ lives are not one-dimensional and that “intersectionality is a means of capturing both the structural and dynamic aspects of multiple discrimination.” Furthering the intentions of this study to examine the relationship of transnational education NGOs on South African township secondary schools, postcolonial and transnational feminist theories are also employed, building on the notion that standpoint epistemology is essential for understanding the true nature of a given groups’ oppressions. Renowned postcolonial and transnational feminist scholars, such as Chandra Mohanty contend, “Third World women occupy a specific social location in the international division of labor which illuminates and explains crucial features of the capitalist processes of exploitation and domination.” In the same breadth, I argue that girls of the so-called developing world also hold a particular social standpoint, which sheds light on the institutionalized social structures that perpetuate racism, sexism, and class inequality, even in this post-apartheid era of South Africa.

While guided under the premise of intersectionality, the main theoretical paradigms to be employed for this project are based upon epistemologies from three particular feminist schools of ideology. First, intersectionality provides the overarching theoretical framework for this thesis.

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While Crenshaw is noted for coining the term, others have expanded on the tenants of the theory and applied to the methodology. For example, Berger (2004) examined the intersecting ways in which women who are HIV/AIDS positive are stigmatized, pointing out how intersecting identities are not just factors of social oppression alone but often of social stigmatization as well; the case of social stigmatization due to HIV/AIDS is extremely prevalent in the South African context. Intersectionality examines the “interlocking systems of inequalities, subordination, and domination,” which is especially helpful when looking at the multiple oppressions and privileges afforded to different groups based on race, gender, and class in South Africa. Kathy Davis (2011) best describes the usefulness of intersectionality when she states:

It (intersectional theory) promises an almost universal applicability, useful for understanding and analyzing any social practice, and individual group experience, any structural arrangement, and any cultural configuration. Moreover, it can - by definition – be employed by any (feminist) scholar willing to use her own social location, whatever it may be, as an analytical resource rather than just an identity marker.

Intersectional theory guided my analysis of my own social location as I discussed in the limitations to this study, and was crucial to the understanding of the social location and multiple identities of the girls that I focus on in this study.


The founding scholars of intersectional theory, including Kimberle Crenshaw, Nira Yuval-Davis, and Michelle Fine, contend that there are still unexplored aspects of intersectional theory, which I aim to address in this study as well. The scholars note that intersecting identities and oppressions related to gender, race, and class connected to the modern nation-state have yet to be fully analyzed in regards to how “women negotiate the neoliberal state; that is, how girls and women from very different political and demographic spaces survive when the State refuses to attend to the needs of communities and families.” This new area of intersecting oppressions and the state, in regards to legislative attempts, international policy organizations like the United Nations, and educational INGO aid, will be examined in the context of education for black African girls in South Africa today.

Also since the inception of intersectional theory, further tenants of the framework have been developed by other feminist scholars. The concept of sisterhood, or girls and women as a group of sisters regardless of race, class, sexuality, and other forms of identity, has been widely contested in post-colonial feminist studies. This is key when examining the central focus of this study, as the girls I interviewed are not a part of a homogenous group of global sisters experiencing the same lives. Instead, these girls, like all girls and women around the world, must be understood without assumptions of similar experiences, while recognizing the objective differences that exist between and within groups. I also want to point out four main tenants

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added to intersectional theory by Bonnie Thornton-Dill, as they are crucial in the analysis of this study, gives new goals for intersectional scholarship by stating that we must seek to:

1. “Reformulate the world of ideas so that it incorporates the many contradictory and overlapping ways that human life is experienced.

2. Convey this knowledge by rethinking curricula and promoting institutional change in higher education institutions.

3. Apply the knowledge in an effort to create a society in which all voices are heard.

4. Advocate for public policies that are responsive to multiple voices.”

In accord with these four tenants, this thesis is centered in the goal of incorporating the often forgotten voices of black South African schoolgirls, and incorporating this new knowledge in recommendations for educational policy and aid change. Additionally, the inclusion of these voices provides a framework that should be applied to all government and international policies and programs. It is a focus of this thesis to incorporate these tenants, especially in hopes to reformulate the nature of education access for black African girls in South Africa with the new knowledge they produced in this study. Aside from intersectional theory, however, other feminist paradigms also offer a useful lens through which I analyze educational inequality for these South African girls.

Black Feminist Thought epistemology, as developed by Patricia Hill Collins, the Combahee River Collective, and others over the years, will provide a guide for the type of

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ethnographic interview based methodology I will use to collect narrative data from the students, faculty, and staff of Fezeka secondary school in Gugulethu. Hill Collins stated that the “dialectic of oppression and activism, the tension between the suppression of black women’s ideas and our intellectual activism in the face of that suppression, constitutes the politics of black feminist thought.” By examining the knowledge of black girls in South Africa through the utilization of dialogue, I will be able to create a space for the voice of these girls’ shared intellect regarding the intersecting oppressions they personally face. The same method will also be utilized to interview the founders of EWB, as I will allow them to explain the nature of their organization directly, rather than solely analyzing the NGO from my own outside observations. Other main theoretical paradigms of postcolonial and transnational feminism, examine the way western ideology and misconceptions are often placed onto societies of the global south and east. Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues against the assumption that women and girls of the developing world are an “already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic, or racial location,” cautioning researchers, governments, and policy makers to take each specific research context into full consideration. Scholars such as Nancy Naples (2002) have also argued that researchers, policy makers, and NGOs must caution themselves in the naming practices used for women and girls of the developing world, noting that these populations should


28 Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. p. 3.

not be romanticized or “othered” within the terms, research, policies, and programs produced.\textsuperscript{30} This thesis accounts for the politics of naming, and takes a more mindful approach in discussing the structural issues of the girls in this study. Moreover, Andrea Cornwall and Maxine Monlyneux argue that even within rights-based development and social justice research initiatives, feminist researchers must consider that “rights” may mean something entirely different depending on a given group and social context.\textsuperscript{31} Therefore, in this work I maintain that instead of prescribing rights-based solutions onto the girls of this study, the girls themselves and those who live within their community should inform the appropriate conditions for any rights-based change. Maria Mies (1994) also built upon postcolonial and transnational feminist theory, noting that so-called Third-World women and girls are often kept in the private spheres and out of public development processes.\textsuperscript{32} I contend that it is essential that the girls of this study are included in any program or policy initiatives designed to address the multiple social issues they face, and that anything else would not only be disempowering, but would also be a disservice to the personal knowledge and experience they possess. These post-colonial and transnational feminist theories are especially relevant in the examination of post-apartheid South Africa. Although apartheid ended twenty years ago, the effects of colonialism and apartheid are still rampant, and the effects are highly visible in township secondary schools.


Black women’s voices often go unheard therefore rendering black women excluded from power in societal institutions. Hill Collins argued that in order for black women to self-empower and transcend intersecting forms of oppression, black feminist thought as a form of knowledge should not only be accepted, but must be based upon the lived experiences and voices of black women. Seminal works by Hill Collins and the Combahee River Collective on Black Feminist epistemology, center upon the realization of oppression and social issues for black women as a whole, and also on the lack of voice given to those issues and experiences inside and outside academia. Every major social institution in South Africa, and in many parts of the world, is based on a social hierarchy that privileges whites, heterosexuals, and males. Additionally, academia, from history to other forms of social science, is based overwhelmingly on the ideas and experiences of white men. The lack of space for black women to participate in these spheres limits the accuracy of knowledge and knowledge production. Without the voiced shared experiences of black women facing various intersections of oppression, a full understanding of these societal oppressions and of these women’s (and girls) lives will always be incomplete.

Another feminist lens through which I will examine this issue is a theoretical perspective developed by Arlie Russell Hochschild, referred to in feminist and sociological studies as the “second shift.” Traditionally in the ideology of the “second shift,” the focus is upon the extra, unpaid domestic work a woman does in the home and for her family that her male partner often does not do. However, I argue that the theory based on this phenomenon can also be applied to explain why black South African girls often work the “girl’s second shift” after school, unlike

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their male counterparts. Black South African girls often face extra care-work of their households and younger siblings after school,\(^{36}\) which in turn detracts from the amount of time they can spend on homework and afterschool activities. I investigated how gender roles and structural inequalities leave these girls with less time to do their work and with more responsibility in the household than their male family members. Ultimately the examination of this nuanced issue will be done to relate back to the knowledge produced by the girls’ lived experiences, and how these intersecting challenges keep them from reaching secondary and tertiary educational dreams. The methodological and theoretical frameworks provided in the above sections helped to guide the way this study was conducted, and aid in the analysis of the data collected for this research. With these perspectives in place, I now turn to further contextualize the socio-political, historical, and geographic identity of South Africa and the Gugulethu township of Cape Town, the regional focus of this study.

**Setting the Context: History, Socio-Polity, and Education in South Africa**

Given that there are many socio-cultural, historical, and geographic factors to consider in South Africa, it is important to contextualize these to inform the study. Apartheid, literally meaning apartness in Afrikaans, was the word coined by the white supremacist National Party as they won the 1948 national election and began decades of racist, oppressive rule; apartheid formalized the racial hierarchy in South Africa which placed black Africans at the bottom and

whites at the top.\textsuperscript{37} In between the bottom and top of the racial hierarchy in South Africa, other constructed racial groups also faced degrees of oppression, including “coloureds,” an interracial group between African, Malaysian, and European; Indians are another racially oppressed population within South Africa, descending from Southeast Asians who were captured and brought to modern day South Africa during the colonial period.\textsuperscript{38} Now in 2015, although it has been twenty years since the legislative end of apartheid in South Africa, the structural remnants of apartheid are still in glaring existence. For example, in the 2011 South African census, data collected showed that 98.6\% of the population in the Gugulethu Township, one of the most impoverished townships in South Africa, located in Cape Town, identifies as black African.\textsuperscript{39} This number is significant as the Gugulethu Township was created to segregate black Africans geographically during apartheid. Even though some black South Africans have moved into higher status categories by class, the townships remain completely comprised of the majority black African population, with the lowest socio-economic resources. In contrast, the Camps Bay section of Cape Town, which was historically a white wealthy community during apartheid, remains overwhelmingly 80.2\% white, and 12.2\% black African, many of whom serve as live-in domestic workers for white families.\textsuperscript{40} The overall population of Cape Town that identifies as


black African is only 38.6%, and only 15.7% white, with other groups identifying as either coloured\textsuperscript{41} or Indian.\textsuperscript{42} These numbers are significant because given the overall population, the same percentages are not found in equal numbers across districts with income disparities, levels of educational attainment, and unemployment rates. While only 9% of black Africans have reached education attainment higher than grade 12, 8.7% of coloured and 42.5% of whites have education that surpassed grade 12. Also, while unemployment for whites is at a low of 4.71%, 34.5% of black Africans and 27.6% of coloured workers face difficulty in finding work. (City of Cape Town Census, 2011) These numbers reflect one of the many ways to see the existence of continued structural apartheid today, as historic segregation policies of older eras still geographically and socially separate racial groups, with wealth and security concentrated in white areas, and poverty and other forms of social inequality persisting in black African townships.

Transnational feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991) notes that in nation-states such as South Africa, the “third world is defined through geographical location as well as particular socio-historical conjectures.”\textsuperscript{43} Therefore, aside from the geographic divides between races due to apartheid, I also want to examine the history of how these inequalities came to exist more thoroughly. Historical accounts provide a particular lens through which the current state of

\textsuperscript{41} I note again here that South Africa has its own set of officially recognized race categories. black African’s are those who identify as indigenous to South Africa before colonialism. coloured identifying persons are those considered to be of mixed race. Indian or Malay identifying persons are those of South Asian or Indian decent whose ancestors were brought to South Africa as slaves during the colonial period. white identifying persons are those of European or other western decent.

\textsuperscript{42} “City of Cape Town-2011 Census.”

\textsuperscript{43} Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 1991. p. 2.
South African society can be understood. South Africa was colonized in the 1600s by the Dutch, who later enslaved black Africans and South Asians and forced them to come to Cape Town. This continued through the period in the 1800s when the British asserted their imperial presence in South Africa, forcing enslaved persons to work in sugar cane fields and serve the needs of the white community.\textsuperscript{44} Later the British dominated the area after the Boers War in the very late 1800s and early 1900s. It was during this period that segregation increased and black South Africans were economically and socially abused as a result of the efforts for white supremacy. In the early 1900s the South African Native Affairs Commission and the Natives Land Act made it nearly impossible for black South Africans to own land outside of certain areas allowed by the dominant white segregationist South African government.\textsuperscript{45}

In the late 1940s, the National Party implemented even more strict segregation policies, decreasing the quality of schooling for black South Africans, and so began the era of apartheid. At this point, discrimination against black South Africans became protected under the law, and various forms of oppression against black South Africans and other non-white groups ensued. “Forced removals from ‘white’ areas affected some 3.5 million people and vast rural slums were created in the homelands, which were used as dumping grounds.”\textsuperscript{46} Gugulethu was one such area created to displace black South Africans into poverty, and Fezeka, created in the 1960’s in an


abandoned hospital,\textsuperscript{47} was one such school were unequal education existed as government approved curricula for black Africans were enforced. In some ways, the apartheid era was a much more severe, violent, and devastating form of the segregation that had been implemented in South Africa for so many decades before. The apartheid policies made it impossible for black South Africans to vote, or to exist equally at all in the oppressive “white” South African society that white South Africans had constructed. This oppression translated to every aspect of black South African life. “In virtually every sphere, from housing to education to healthcare, central government took control over black people's lives with a view to reinforcing their allotted role as "temporary sojourners", welcome in "white" South Africa solely to serve the needs of the employers of labour.”\textsuperscript{48}

Beginning in the 1940s, the Eiselen Commission began to plan a social engineering curricula for black African students, with efforts to make black children obedient and unquestioning semi-skilled workers in an emerging industrial economy.\textsuperscript{49} While the Eiselen Commission was only marked the beginning of an incredibly destructive period in South Africa regarding education, it paved the way for a legislative act that was to ruin education for black Africans for decades to come. In conjunction to the Eiselen Commission, the Urban Areas Act of 1952 implemented the designation of specific areas where blacks could live and Pass Laws restricted the conditions under which the black labor force could survive.\textsuperscript{50} Soon afterwards, the


\textsuperscript{50} Fish, Jennifer Natalie. \textit{Domestic Democracy: At Home in South Africa.} New York: Routledge.
Bantu Education Act destroyed the access of black Africans to a quality education, and therefore any equal opportunity to participate in the labor economy, for generations to come.

The Bantu Education Act was designed by the “father of apartheid” Hendrick Verwoerd (who went on to become the Prime Minister) so that all black schools would have to register with a centralized government education ministry, and the registry and curricula for every school would be designed by the Minister of Bantu Education. One article quotes Verwoerd noting his intentions in his own words when he stated, “There is no place for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour…What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?” The act gave total control to the ministry in regards to teachers, course content, and any other related factor regarding schools the government designated as Bantu. These measures mark the beginning of the destruction of black education in South Africa, and this disruption in educational access and education equality was the initial factor that perpetuated so many other social issues seen in South Africa for blacks since that time. It is also important to recognize, however, the acts of resistance that were conducted during this period, to better contextualize the nature of the current government today.

In the early 1900s the African National Congress party, referred to from here out as the ANC, was birthed most directly out of the need to combat the Native Land Act of 1913, which was one of the founding pieces of exclusionary legislature against blacks before the official era

2006. Print. p. 32.


52 Commey, Pusch. 2014. p. 22.

of apartheid.\textsuperscript{54} From its creation the ANC organized and transferred knowledge amongst the non-white communities with the goal of resisting white supremacy. Yet a major criticism of the ANC throughout the apartheid period is their unclear stance on education reform.

There was much conflict within the ANC and the black communities on whether to introduce an alternative to Bantu education based on a traditional academic liberal model or a curriculum that included indigenous cultural practices and language, but that would not be valued within the dominant emerging capitalist economy.\textsuperscript{55} According to the Bantu Education Act, black children would learn both English and Afrikaans, meaning they would have difficulty reaching satisfactory English proficiency and would therefore have difficulty qualifying for most jobs in South Africa that were above any low-wage or skilled labor level.\textsuperscript{56} Aside from curriculum changes, the new regulations required rural communities to adapt to courses they were not accustomed with, while working families were detrimentally impacted by the shortening of school hours and tuition increases. The number of black learners enrolled in school doubled during the 1954-1965 period, yet government spending on black learners did not proportionately match the enrollment increase.\textsuperscript{57} At this point the failure of the ANC to act on education as a central focus point for justice led to many students fleeing the nation in exile, to search for better educational opportunities. Once the ANC realized this trend in the 1970’s, the organization aided in the creation of education for South Africans in exile, for example, founding


\textsuperscript{55} Govender, Sam and Aslam Fataar. 2015. p. 3.

\textsuperscript{56} Govender, Sam and Aslam Fataar. 2015. p. 3.

\textsuperscript{57} Govender, Sam and Aslam Fataar. 2015. p. 3.
the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in 1978 in Tanzania. Yet when the time for liberation came, there was no clear alternative form of education, and the few efforts by the ANC to remedy the lack of education for black learners was ultimately ineffective, leaving generations of the population undereducated and under qualified for meaningful employment in South Africa.

The legislation and policy of the apartheid regime lasted for decades upon decades. However, as noted above, this environment of constant oppression birthed a collective response of black South African social activism against apartheid, and similarly a black South African knowledge base was formed on the principles of social activism for change. After many years of struggle and resistance to the violent effects of apartheid, the early 1990s marked the end of apartheid and the beginning of democracy in South Africa. Nelson Mandela was the first elected black South African president, and the Constitutional Court of South Africa was founded in 1994 to rewrite the nations constitution and citizen rights.

Today, specifically in regards to the focus of this project, Gugulethu and formerly segregated townships like it, remain in poverty with extreme levels of inequality compared to the previously white sections. The following statistic is based on educational attainment in Gugulethu: in 2011 only 31.5% of the black African population had completed grade 12, with only 5.7% attaining any further education beyond grade 12. In total contrast to the data from Gugulethu, the much more economically affluent suburb of Camps Bay on the Cape coast is much better off in many ways. With an informally segregated population of 80.2% white,

58 Govender, Sam and Aslam Fataar. 2015. p. 4.


educational attainment of the majority whites in this suburb is as follows: 26.9% of this majority white population have attained grade 12 or higher with 65.3% reaching educational levels higher than grade 12.\(^6\) This data will be analyzed further in later chapters, however it is quite clear that although apartheid ended 20 years ago in South Africa legally, structurally it is still extremely present. Knowing that these divides still exist, in this study I will analyze gathered ethnographical data from those whose everyday lives are impacted by this harsh reality of inequality. I share the stories of those who live this residual oppression in order to produce a new knowledge and better map the way they see the cause and effects of the challenges they face.

\(^{6}\) “City of Cape Town- 2011 Census Suburb Camps Bay.”
CHAPTER III

A CASE STUDY OF EDUCATION INEQUALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

In this chapter I focus upon the intersections of inequality that work within South Africa along divides of race, gender, and class, as these social challenges exist simultaneously to frame the lives of groups and individuals and negatively impact educational access. In this section I take a unique approach and uncover the inequalities that exist for learners at Fezeka Secondary School in the historically black African township of Gugulethu as they and their educators see them. By doing so, new narratives are provided, that produce a previously unexposed knowledge about the intersections of oppression that exist for these individuals. This study turns from the predominant quantitative approach to qualitative social problems analysis through census and survey data, to expand the qualitative body of research on communities like Gugulethu. In comparing original data and other literature, a new more informed knowledge about the true nature of these problems and new potential solutions are produced. The deeper understanding emerging from these voices will help to better inform future aid efforts and policy plans. As Rothchild (2006) explains, “Feminist methods most commonly embrace triangulated qualitative approaches, using in-depth interviews, participant observations, and other components of ethnographic work.”

Therefore in this study, the combination or triangulation of ethnographic interviews, field notes and observations, and literature and census data provides for a more thorough understanding of the social structure that oppresses so many black African girl learners today. The relationships formed with the girls and the time spent working alongside others at the school made all of this possible.

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Keeping in the same paradigm of feminist epistemology as described in the previous chapter, the use of ethnographic interview data has allowed the voices of those who are oppressed directly by the structural problems of their society to have their own views heard and acknowledged. While the lived experiences of the girls, teachers, and administrators in the section of the study do not require any form of further validation to ring true and real for the individuals themselves, there is an added notion of empowerment when a platform, such as an academic study that could potentially effect policy and aid plans, can be created by the community itself to draw community informed awareness to the issues.

I want to begin this chapter by prefacing the social challenges of black South Africans through a brief examination of census data that exposes stark social inequities, in various interconnected economic, social, and geographic forms. This data will help frame the overarching challenges that indigenous black African communities face today, and will provide a point of comparison for the original data collected for this study. Afterwards I will relay and analyze data gathered from the participants of the study, in partnership with the EWB organization. After census data analysis, I continue with the conversations, observation notes, and matric data provided by the girls themselves, teachers working at the school alongside EWB, and the school principal Mr. Baloyi. Yet first, the political and historical context on poverty and the census data from the 2011 City of Cape Town Census tell an indisputable story of the extreme inequalities existing still twenty years after liberation.
Social Problems in South Africa Today—Poverty and Inequality

Though the post-apartheid new constitution of South Africa in 1994 made every citizen group and individual equal in the eyes of the law, the intentions of legislation to further equality have not been fully realized in the lived experiences for South Africans of Color. In other words a great paradox exists in South Africa today. As Stauffer 2015 points out, “On one hand South Africa has one of the world’s most inclusive and representative constitutions,” yet major economic inequality and a large scale of poverty still exists in the nation today. Differences between the economic prospects and the wealth of white individuals, especially white men, in comparison to the prospects of black Africans, especially black African girls and women, are quite astounding. With over two decades passed since the legislative end of apartheid, income and wealth inequality are still huge structural social problems dividing South Africa today, with overwhelmingly more People of Color, women and girls living in poverty.

Scholars have noted that addressing the issues of systemic poverty has been a central priority for the ANC since the 1994 liberation. In other words, the ruling government has made many legislative policy attempts to change the degree of poverty in post-apartheid South Africa. However while legislation and policy changes may be a move in the right direction, they are ultimately meaningless without enforcement and accountability, or actual tangible efforts to


change the nature of the economic and social structure. Sadie (2014) notes that “placing equality on the statue book does serve a normative function,” yet she points out that “it does not inevitably lead to change in lived experience.”

Tying back to the main contributions of this research, the realization that legislation and international NGO efforts are ultimately most often ineffective unless they are tangibly enacted and informed by the voices of those who live the realities of inequality, this study offers participant informed knowledge which leads to new recommendations for how to best legislatively and economically address issues of poverty for South Africans in the future.

In relation to poverty issues, aside from the clear legislative shortcomings from the ANC, the South African government overall, and NGOs post-apartheid development efforts, it is again most critical to highlight who is severely impacted by these deficits, and moreover how they themselves view the nature of the situation. Overall across various social groups in South Africa, and especially in black African communities, women and girls are most often more impoverished than men, and even more so in rural and township areas. A prime example of this can be seen in the following table; as demonstrated here, severe income, educational, and economic inequality divides exist between groups from the historically indigenous black African Gugulethu township and the wealthy white community of Camps Bay.

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Demographic Comparison: Gugulethu and Camps Bay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011 Census Data</th>
<th>Gugulethu</th>
<th>Camps Bay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td>99% black African</td>
<td>80% white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Attainment</td>
<td>31.5% Grade 12 completion, 5.7% Higher Education</td>
<td>26.9% Grade 12 completion, 65.3% Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>39.84%</td>
<td>6.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Rate (Working age intentionally seeking employment)</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>52% Female and 48% Male</td>
<td>51% Female and 49% Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Monthly Income</td>
<td>71% at 3200R or less</td>
<td>17% at 3200R or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in Formal Dwelling</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in Shack Dwelling</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Public Sewer System</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>99.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Bucket Toilet</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using electricity for heat</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using paraffin</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With No Heat</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Data from City of Cape Town Suburb Census 2011

So much is realized from the census data above in regards to income inequality and poverty amongst different racial groups in South Africa. First, this data makes it clear that racial segregation in South Africa is still extremely prevalent. White and black African communities remain extremely geographically divided even two decades after the end of apartheid, and with these racial divides comes the engrained economic divides carried into this new era of structural apartheid. With 71% of black Africans in Gugulethu living at or below the poverty marker of 3200 Rand per month (approximately $300), a stark contrast in income in equality is seen with the comparison of only 17% of whites in Camps Bay living at or below 3200 Rand per month. Further, the unemployment rate for black Africans in Gugulethu is over six times more than for white Camps Bay residents. These severe inequalities carry palpable risks for those who remain in the margins of South Africa’s emerging democracy. For example, impoverished Gugulethu citizens are much more likely to live in shack dwellings, with informal or bucket toilets, which is linked to gender based violence as buckets are often in alleyways outside the dwelling. At the
same time, the insecurity of shack dwellings increases substantively with the prevalent use of paraffin heat sources, which are linked to health issues and fire risk. These extreme manifestations of inequality illustrate the daily implications of poverty that accompany the educational disparities across these racialized geographic divides.

The data above frames the overall macro-level poverty, income, infrastructure, and educational inequalities of South Africa, yet much more can be understood from the qualitative data collected for this study, as demonstrated in the following section. Personal narratives and real life accounts connect the macro issues to individuals and micro level interactions. Personal narratives show possibilities for individual or group agency that cannot be gathered from quantitative data, and they furthermore demonstrate the differing ways that groups and individuals experience these realities in their everyday lives, producing a new and more informed mode of knowledge. It is through the acknowledgment of constantly silenced voices that feminist methodology challenges old assumptions about the nature of social problems in a given time and place, and creates a new understanding about a given society.

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An Administrative Perspective

“Everyone wants their kids to be at Fezeka because it’s a school with a history.”  
-Principal Bucks Baloyi, August 2015

I begin the narrative data analysis with the school principal of Fezeka Secondary School in Gugulethu, Mr. Bucks Baloyi, as this was the first interview conducted and therefore the first impression gathered for this study. Mr. Baloyi has shown a consistent dedication to his school over the decades. He began by explaining how Fezeka had been built in 1965, and was proud of the name of the school which he said means “Our dreams have been realized.” Mr. Baloyi began working at Fezeka in 1974 as a teacher during the height of apartheid. He stated he later applied to study in the 1980’s at University of Cape Town in the Western Cape to become an administrator. His experience as a university student was extremely rare, and he was one of very few to get into university during this time. In 1991, Baloyi returned to Fezeka as the school principal and retired for the first time in 2006. He said you “retire if you feel like it at age 55.” Yet in 2014 his commitment to education and to the learners of Fezeka brought him out of retirement and back into the school to continue his work.

I asked Mr. Baloyi to tell me about Fezeka in regards to student success over the years, or in other words how students achieved national matric standards and what they did after their time at Fezeka. He began by relaying the successes of the school and its students during his first tenure as principal.

The school had good music and results and extramural activities. One kid was sent to Texas to work with NASA in 2003. At that time the matric pass rate was 90%.

I asked Mr. Baloyi when and why he returned to Fezeka from his retirement, and what happened during the years he was away.
In between the new principal didn’t keep up the school. He resigned. In 2014 before I returned the pass rate was down to 62%.

Mr. Baloyi conveyed that he was urged to come back by teachers and other community members after the failure of the previous administration. He returned in 2014, yet stated he plans to retire once and for all in 2016.

After discussing his personal connection to Fezeka over the years, I inquired as to the academic challenges, social challenges, and the inequities faced by Fezeka students as related to their ability to reach academic success, or graduate, pass matric, and make it to university. I wanted to know the likelihoods for academic success and the barriers that would prevent a student from reaching their goals of attaining an education that would ultimately allow for more equal competition in a qualifications-based capitalist job market. I inquired about gender differences for learners, knowing that capitalist economies favor men over women,\(^9\) and that women are often left out\(^10\) of development processes.\(^11\) He told me that because of Fezeka’s history, many teachers at the school are still community members and are former graduates of Fezeka. “Most of the teachers at the school are former graduates, and they say to the students ‘this is not your school, this is my school too.” In efforts to build a solidarity and role model base for students, teachers make an effort to give students something to aspire to. However, many teachers are unqualified to teach by national standards, and while there is an extreme deficit in


the resources for classrooms in Fezeka compared to white schools, teachers often aren’t familiar with how to use the equipment and technology that is present.

This is supposed to be a science school but we have only one educated science teacher. There is equipment for science but it isn’t used. It just sits there. We have about 35:1 ratio in classrooms.

The first signs of inequality between black African schools in townships and mostly white schools in wealthy communities began to surface here. Even with the most dedicated learners, teachers are not able to provide the level of material students need to compete for university spots and jobs with students who come from privileged schools where teachers are highly qualified. White schools with smaller teacher to student ratios allow for more attention to be given to each learner, while the high student-teacher ratio at Fezeka means less individual tutoring time. Mr. Baloyi also stated that due to Department of Education regulations some years ago, many teachers left Fezeka but could not find employment in other schools. Now he notes that there is a need for “supplemental teachers to tutor and fill in subjects.” The Department of Education also, according to the principal, pays for textbooks yet the books are outdated and out of line with the national curriculum guidelines, especially for “math, science, geography, and history.” Also, while the DOE pays for useless textbooks, impoverished families of learners barely are able to afford uniforms and often aren’t able to pay tuition fees. Baloyi explained that the Department of Education allows for a “norms and standards budget,” which combined with the aid of international NGO’s like Education without Borders, allows for afterschool programs such as “after school study sessions, debate, dance, violin, music, chess, soccer and sports.” Yet physical structural issues of the school disallow a safe space for sports and other activities.

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Aside from teacher issues, classroom challenges, and Department of Education shortcomings, there is a serious infrastructure problem at Fezeka as well, which inhibits the teaching and learning environment from optimization.

The field for sports is full of trash even though there is some sports equipment. We need funding for security for the field and a fence to be secure. Security is the biggest issue. People don’t look after school like they do in white communities. And we need more classrooms and more space. There is not enough for the number of students. There’s no space for dancing and music, no practice room.

In a community such as Gugulethu, with such high levels of poverty and so few resources, it is no surprise that the school has become a site for theft and violence. Economic desperation creates an environment\textsuperscript{13} where resources are taken from the school, and anything from the technology equipment to the toilets can be stolen. Also, with the increasing number of gangs and heightened levels of gang violence in Gugulethu, the school is also susceptible to gang violence without proper security. The photograph below was taken in August 2015 and demonstrates the dire structural state of the school campus.

In addition to severe school structure and security problems, student pass rates, graduation and university entrance rates are residual problems extending from the various curricular, instructional, and infrastructural issues described above. I asked Mr. Baloyi about the issues with the national matric exam for Fezeka.

There are 1,052 students here. Matric is given in October. Department of education just passes them to grade 12 then they can’t pass matric. Forty-nine passed last year. Many students are absent from school because of family problems, and the ones who are absent don’t progress.

Given the low likelihood of students from Fezeka to have the resources available to help them graduate, pass matric, and make it to university, I asked Mr. Baloyi about where students go once they graduate if not to university. I also inquired about whether he perceived a difference between the likelihood of a girl succeeding in reaching graduation, matric passing, or university entrance over that of a boy. Data from other studies suggest that various gendered challenges are
presented to boys specifically or girls specifically, preventing their academic success.\textsuperscript{14} He stated:

The majority of students are girls and mostly girls pass. Girls are in the population majority in school and in the community. Boys don’t come to school. There are about seventy percent girls and thirty percent boys at this school, and seventy percent girls and thirty boys in afterschool programs. Of the students that pass matric, ten percent go to university (University of Cape Town) and eighty percent are girls. Many go to technical schools instead or go to work.

The numbers principal Baloyi gave, and the notion that girls are much more likely to succeed academically than boys, struck me as surprising. Previous studies on this topic have shown that girls are in fact less likely to be present in school and to succeed in graduating and reaching higher education access.\textsuperscript{15} This information will be compared to other accounts from teachers and students later in this chapter, especially as all other accounts refute the gender divides stated by Mr. Baloyi, and in agreement with previous studies show that girls are actually much less likely to have equal access to the classroom and are much more likely to drop out and fail to reach tertiary education. Yet, at the end of the interview, I also asked principal Baloyi what the school needs most now going forward.

EWB built eight classrooms which is a great relief for school. Enrollment number went up to 1,500 until EWB said that’s too many. Plans for this year is to get teachers who left back and get more classrooms. I want every kid in grade 12 to get to matric.

Principal Baloyi seems intent on expanding enrollment and rehiring teachers who left due to DOE regulations, yet also is committed to increasing the matric pass rates for students. However,


with a lack of infrastructure and resources for the 1,052 already enrolled, increasing enrollment would likely stretch scarce resources even further.

The interview with principal Baloyi was the initial window into the structural challenges, educational inequalities, and gender issues that exist for students at Fezeka, however it was his comments on gender and the notion that girls perform and advance at significantly higher rates than boy learners that stood out the most. This narrative was out of place from the previous literature examined for this study on the same topic. Therefore, I set out to gather perspectives from other teachers and from the students themselves, to see how gender is perceived in the community, at the school, and to uncover any gender-specific challenges that keep boys and girls from having opportunities for educational success and advancement.

**In the Academic Trenches: Teachers’ Perspectives**

After my interview with principal Baloyi, throughout the rest of my work at Fezeka, I had the opportunity to return several times and conduct other interviews with two teachers who tutor at the school and work along with the international education NGO Education without Borders to offer after school tutoring and monitor some after school extracurricular programs. Dr. Jennifer Fish and I conducted the first teacher interview together, asking many of the same questions used for the interview with principal Baloyi to gain the teacher/tutor perspective from Mr. Sonwabile Mayekiso. The interview was recorded and later transcribed word for word. Mr. Mayekiso, Dr. Fish, and I sat in the Fezeka library one afternoon last August to discuss the gendered perspective and social inequality challenges that exist for students at Fezeka.
We began the interview by discussing how Dr. Fish and I had been assisting with the EWB after school photojournalist project over our time in Cape Town. We then asked Mr. Mayekiso about how EWB could better assist girls at Fezeka, if the gender difference was real, and if so was it something that would restrict a girl from reaching matric and university access. As with the other interviews in the study, I give verbatim accounts as to avoid misconstruing any intentions of the interviewee. In response to our first question, Mr. Mayekiso stated:

Yeah, yeah it is. It is. You know, with this immediate environment, what happens is this: you will find that most learners that go through to university are boys. Girls drop out for different reasons. There’s teenage pregnancy. Although the government has been very lenient now of days, because they let the child, the learner to continue here, her studies while she is pregnant. So, but, even so, the girls are most likely to drop out, you know? More than boys, and we have another center that we were running down there, St. Francis. We were running the math and English with that. St. Francis it’s an adult education center, and mostly the learners that are there are not so adults like myself, like my age, but they are those who have been dropping out. For the past five years you find the girl just after dropping out, she’s just sitting down doing nothing in her home, and then that center is trying now to kind of get those girls and the boys who have been naughty, some of them were inmates previously. So they’re coming back and trying to get their lives together, in terms of education. But still that center, even at that center what I’m getting at, you find that most people who are there are boys. Most people who are there are boys, so girls in this environment, in this community, and any previously disadvantaged community for that matter, the boys and the girls hardly ever make it to university, even to grade 12 or grade 11. They fall pregnant in grade 10, grade 9, and some of them, during their cultural, um, due to cultural perspectives, you know, once she gets pregnant now her parents would see a suitor for her, or somebody you know, they just put that one and that one and they put together as man and wife, and that’s the end of it.

According to this account, and the evidence of Mr. Mayekiso’s claim, girl learners in fact are much more susceptible to factors that lead to dropping out of school and never making it to university, such as teenage pregnancy, early marriage, and cultural norms that keep teenage mothers in the home and out of the classroom. This response is a direct match to the findings of
other research studies\textsuperscript{16}, which have focused on these issues individually instead of simultaneously\textsuperscript{17}, as this work aims to do. Also, through this portion of the interview we learned about the adult learning center that EWB has fostered at St. Francis school in Gugulethu, however, as Mr. Mayekiso points out, even those learners are overwhelmingly boys and men.

When Mr. Mayekiso informed us that often due to teenage pregnancy, girls will be matched with a husband by their parents, this led us to inquire whether that was often the father of the child or another individual. He noted that there is increasingly a cultural practice of teenage fathers disowning their children to avoid the very hardship that teenage mothers face of being pulled away from school. We asked about how parents choose a suitor or a husband for their teenage daughters who have given birth.

Anyone, even if the father of the child is not there, because what happens is these days in our community is that a boy can get a girl pregnant and then he denies everything and then, even after a DNA test or what, what, he just does not want to get involved, the boy. Because he wants to continue, that’s the gender difference now, he wants to continue with his studies. Although he got somebody pregnant, and that somebody is now stuck in that situation, you know, she is stuck in that situation and then her parents will say “Ok, now go and find a job,” or even somebody in the community can just say “Ok, you can marry that man,” even if he is old, as old as her father! They say, “Ok, you can just go and have your future in marriage. Maybe your future is in marriage, not in education.” You see?

Teenage fathers often escape the responsibilities of fatherhood, as there are no measures in effect legally to ensure that these fathers are required to co-support their children. Also, as Mr. Mayekiso pointed out, parents of teenage mothers often push their daughters out of education.


and into the labor force or marriage, often with a much older man. He noted that the husband assigned to the girl often takes over fathering the new child. Yet even as a girl’s parents pull her out of education to work or become a wife, a girl’s husband will also keep her from returning to school.

That man would take the baby, and own that baby now, but she would be stuck. Very few of them, I would say one out of ten of girls or women in that situation would go back to school, after marriage. Many times the husband would not allow a wife to go to school. You know? Because of cultural, you know, opinions and values and things like that, they’ll say, “No you can’t be a wife and wearing a school uniform” you know, and all that, because you’re supposed to wear traditional, like a woman, a wife, not like a girl. “You’re not a girl anymore!” So you know all those cultural views and you know stereotypes that if, if you are a wife and go to school you will get another boyfriend, you know? Yeah, so you will leave this man. So that’s why they kind of put them in a jail, in a sort of, like a bird, put them in a cage for the rest of their lives. They just, they’re children. Children, children, all children, not even you know. She will go back to school if she gets a divorce or if the husband dies.

The idea a girl ceases to be a girl at the point of motherhood, and instantly becomes a woman, is an important distinction in the given context. As some studies show, in indigenous cultures in South Africa, girls are expected to mature into women and take on responsibilities at an earlier age than boys, yet they are still under a patriarchal gender construction that gives boys and men more power over girls and women.¹⁸ As Mr. Mayekiso notes, traditional cultural values keep girls and women restricted to the allowances of their parents and husbands. The analogy of the caged or jailed bird offers insight on the way that girls are barred from achieving their educational goals from patriarchal norms that privilege boys and men. Girls who become teenage mothers are essentially removed from any educational opportunity, unless as Mr. Mayekiso notes, they are one of the fortunate few to enter education again later in life. Yet realistically,

even if a girl were able to make her way back into the educational system as a woman later in life, years of economic prospects and income loss can never be recovered.

Mayekiso explained to us that many of the girls who are pulled out of school, whether for motherhood or other reasons, often become domestic workers, or in other words, find themselves working for the same white communities they hoped to compete with in the job market had they been able to meet their educational goals of reaching university. Further, as if the exclusion from educational opportunities and relegation to an unwanted marriage or low-wage job is not enough, girl mothers are often made to feel a sense of shame from their parents and their communities; a truly demoralizing occurrence.

Most of them, they were, you know, forced to get married, because they disappointed their parents because apparently this has been the way parents you know, uh sort of revenging, vengeance for the girl who got pregnant while she was still a girl. So they say no school for you, you’re a woman, and she will end up working as a domestic worker you know.

With removal from the education system, forced labor and marriage, and added family and community shame, teenage mothers face significant gendered social inequalities that boy learners do not have to confront. Teenage fathers are protected by familial and community cultural norms that allow them to evade fatherhood and continue their own educational prospects as they want.

I asked Mr. Mayekiso what happens to these girls, teenage mothers who are removed from school and forced into marriage. While he had explained that their assigned husbands would forbid them from going back to school, I inquired as to the other conditions for teenage mothers in a forced marriage. He explained that the expectation for motherhood would continue for these girls. He said they

Stop school and marry this old man, even if this man has got a wife. So because our society is a polygamous society, polygamy is not taboo with our society, so ok that man would take you as a second wife because you are a wife now, you bare children. So you
are no longer a girl, you are no longer in this family, you know, such things that they say, “Ok, we don’t want to do anything for you.” And some of them really they got their future messed up, future prospects of education, career, just messed up.

These teenage mothers are not only pulled out of school and wed to an older man, but they are expected to continue having children, furthering the chances that they will never return to the education and career goals they once had. He explained that older general cultural mentalities about the appropriate roles for girls and women versus the roles of boys and men still exist today, and still keep girls restricted from equal access to the institutions of education, labor, and economy that boys and men are afforded due to gender norms.

You know, previously in our culture, in our continent, previously, the girl would not be sent to school. My mother was not sent to school. Her father had everything, but he only sent boys, because, they said your future is in your marriage, in your husband’s house, that’s where your future is. You don’t have a future here in this household, because you are going away, you will get married. So they boy would be sent to school, to better schools, to a higher education institution, because he’s the future of his house. He’s the one that will take the name of his house further. You are not going to take this, the name of this house further because you are going to take your husband’s name. So, that was the condition then, but even now, that mentality is still sticking now. Although now in modern times, they kind of modernized that mentality, but it is still there. It is still there. So, hence you find out, most learners that are dropping out are girls. At this school, they are dropping out. Yeah because the parent wouldn’t support her. Even if she failed, if she failed, oh you failed so there was no use of you going to school. That use of mentality is still there.

Unlike male learners, girls at Fezeka, and other schools like it, clearly have significant gender biases and inequalities to face when trying to achieve their educational goals. Yet even if somehow a girl can overcome these oppressions, further social inequality awaits in the halls of the academy.

Our interview with Mr. Mayekiso continued onto other gendered issues learners face besides teenage parenthood. I asked him about for those few that do manage to make it to university from communities like Gugulethu, whether they were mostly boys or girls, and what would be the challenges, if any, they would face upon university entrance.
Most of them are boys, and another problem that they, I think that it’s a general problem, not only our community, African community specific, another problem that they get in the university, they get, it’s a, because some of them who really, really, I would say who won’t let anything in life, although they had the misfortunes of getting pregnant, but when they get into university they start to compare themselves from that child. That child has got everything, and then they don’t have everything. You know? They start to get into a life of prostitution, because they want things that their parents, while they are still in university, I know many of them in the city, many of them in UWC in Western Cape, I’ve seen many of them doing that, you know? Doing prostitution just to get that money, because everybody is now showing off what they have.

While most learners reaching university from Fezeka and other schools in communities such as Gugulethu are most often boys, of the very few girls who do make it into university, challenges relating to poverty follow them into the halls of academia. Studies on student success in universities have shown that family socio-economic status is directly correlated to student’s academic achievement. Therefore racial inequities of economic privilege become much more pronounced as indigenous black African girls from impoverished townships are sitting in university classes with privileged wealthy white students who can afford the latest trends and technology. There is less of a sense of belonging for impoverished girls who reach university as other privileged students have much more access to social and material capital. However scholars note that it is a sense of belonging that is crucial for learning and success.

Mr. Mayekiso further explained that the stark peer pressure black African girl learners face in a mostly white university classroom often leads students to pursue other means of attaining financial resources to keep up with white students.

Although sex-work has increasingly become more acceptable as a profession in South Africa in recent years, the propensity of indigenous black African girls who make it to university

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to begin prostitution in order to try and keep up with white students, exposes these girls to dangers of sex trafficking.

There were statistics that were given out by the Department of Education, of Higher Education, that mostly many of them they even go to being HIV positive because of that kind of behavior that they got themselves in, because of you know, not money or clothes, or money to buy clothes, to buy watches and stuff like that.

Further, due to the high levels of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, amongst the highest of any African nation, and in combination with the lack of safe-sex education learners receive in secondary school, these girls are also at risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.  

It is the economic inequality and structural instances of residual racism from the apartheid era that have created an environment where black South African girls in universities face so much peer pressure that they risk their own health and safety.

The numerous social challenges and inequalities indigenous black South African girls face when trying to navigate their way through secondary school, and for the very few who make it through university, led me to inquire whether there is a trained social worker or counselor available at township schools to help learners emotionally and psychologically cope with the hardships they continually experience. Renn and Reason (2013) found that students with higher socio-economic status have access to attend schools with better resources, including higher qualified teachers and guidance counselors. Therefore in my own examination of mostly white, wealthier schools in South Africa, like Camps Bay High for example (which will be further discussed later in this chapter), I realized that privileged schools are afforded counselors for learners, even though the set of challenges white learners face are much different from those of

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impoverished black African learners. School advisors and counselors can reinforce a sense of confidence and belonging for students, and help them navigate their personal social and emotional needs. Mr. Mayekiso explained that schools are supposed to always have a social worker or counselor on the premises, however this is most often not the case.

The school, they use the assistance of a social worker. Yeah. Each school is supposed to have a social worker on the premises, but very few schools, very, very, few schools adhere to that arrangement, very few schools. The school is supposed to have a social worker during school, eight hours a day. The person should be there eight hours a day. But what happens now is that they have to call the Department of Social Development to ask for a social worker to come on that event, only on that event. But, according to government, there needs to be somebody in the office on the school premises, so that any time, any where, because they shouldn’t get into these kinds of things, so they need to talk to somebody. You know you find all these killings that they mentioned, some of them are very unnecessary, because they are gang related. So people, these children need to talk to somebody like that. They need to talk to somebody like that, before if they can get into a serious situation.

Legally, each school is supposed to have a social worker or counselor on the premises full time, present for the duration of each school day. However, in impoverished communities and schools such as Fezeka, there is often no social worker present unless, as Mr. Mayekiso pointed out, a tragic event takes place, and even then often no one arrives. In this portion of the interview Mr. Mayekiso mentioned the murders of some children at Fezeka in the community, often alcohol, drug, and frequently gang related murders of secondary school children. I will bring up this issue again at a later part of this chapter where I discuss the interviews with girls, as this story is best told by the peers of the children who are killed, the girls who now live with the fear and emotional weight of losing friends and classmates.

Yet, reconsidering the lack of a counselor at the school, I further asked Mr. Mayekiso why there isn’t a counselor available if having one available on the school campus daily is

mandated by the government. He brought up a critical problem that overall keeps many of inequalities and disparities for black African communities and schools in place.

The problem is our government has got good vision, but they are not enforcing those things, those visions, those policies, you know those laws or rules. They are not enforcing, they just put ok, ok let’s take, I’m just taking an example of the matter of the corporal punishment. It is known by every teacher that he or she isn’t supposed to beat a child, but every now and then in the news, we are hearing that. The teachers hurting children, injuring children, the use of corporal punishment, using corporal punishment, you know. So the government is not enforcing, it is just there in the gazette, in the government gazette, that ok, teacher you should not do that, principle make sure that there is this person on the premises.

Enforcement of laws and regulations is often nonexistent in indigenous black South African communities and schools. Scholars note that even though laws and regulations may be created, and while the creation alone may “serve a normative function, it does not inevitably lead to change in lived experience.”24 While the government prides itself on having the same policies for wealthy white communities and impoverished black townships, the realization of such policies often does not occur. This is visible in this instance of the schools not having a much-needed counselor on hand, but also visible overall. As explained previously, curriculum standards, infrastructure, teacher qualifications, and access to higher education are not implemented to benefit impoverished black students the same as privileged white students.

The interview passage above also notes another detrimental factor impacting student success in communities such as Gugulethu. While laws and regulations are enforced at privileged white schools, in impoverished black schools the lack of accountability for regulations also creates an environment where teachers can become abusers of students. There is no safeguard in place to protect indigenous black learners in impoverished schools from the corporal punishment and abuse from teachers. Meanwhile, the lack of a counselor means that students who are abused

at school have nowhere to turn for guidance. Teachers and EWB workers who can manage to put in extra time often take over the mentoring and counseling duties that a trained social worker would have. This extra workload for teachers and EWB staff highlights the need for a girls program, which could work to help girls emotionally and psychologically cope with the intersecting challenges they face.

So if there can be a program of focus on this issue then that would be great, that would really change things for the girls. You know if they can have somebody to talk, you know, because I know some of them, probably you have heard, last month, was it last month? Yeah, last month school children died in the tavern, ages of 15, 14, 13 in Kayelitichia. Because you know there was a gunfight in the tavern, and people were on the roof, on the veranda upstairs. There was a stampede, and the railings fell off and they went down. And they died, about 5 of them died, no 8. You ask yourself, what is our problem? Why do school children go to the tavern? Let alone, they’re alone at the tavern, and no one enforcing the rules of the liquor authority, that no one under 18 should get in to such places. But, in the first place, school children, why do they go there? They’ve got problems. They’ve got problems at home. Because some of them they drop because of having problems at home. Some of them are living in, under the fatherless household. And they still need, they really need, a father figure. So they go to places like that to get a father figure. To fill that space within themselves. But they go to those places. That’s why they got themselves pregnant, you know, because of going into such places, looking for something that they never had.

While the teachers and tutors of Fezeka, and of other schools in communities like Gugulethu, have their own duties to fulfill as educators, they also often must step into the role of a parent figure, a counselor, and a mediator. The combination of social issues that are present in Gugulethu and other similar communities means that girls are subject to alcohol abuse, drug abuse, sexual violence, and as described in the account above, even death. Unfortunately, throughout my time in Cape Town, this was not the only instance I heard of a child death due to alcohol or drug abuse, gang violence, or sexual violence.

An ironic shift from the oppressive apartheid era to the present “post-apartheid” era can be seen in the normalization of gender-based violence in impoverished historically black African communities. Resources are scarce, crime is high, and girls and women are the most likely to be
subject to gender-based violence.25 During apartheid, Mr. Mayekiso conveyed that girls and women were more respected and that there was significantly less violence against girls and women in the community, or at least in the public sphere. However today, even as traditional minimal clothing which exposed bodies has been replaced with western style clothing, Mayekiso notes that girls are much more likely to be raped, abused, and blamed for the abuse they face due to their choice of clothing. A cultural ideological shift has clearly occurred.

My father used to say something about these things, these rape and stuff today, he said “I don’t understand because in our time,” in his time, he said “we used to not wear anything. We used to go naked, because we didn’t have clothes. We were just sometimes, just wearing it’s called a sheepskin or a cow skin, or a goat skin. We were virtually naked, but there was no rape.” He would see a girl being naked, but he would not rape her. But people now are wearing things now, tight jeans, just to consider themselves, but they’re being raped. But that’s why he said he doesn’t understand. People are wearing now jeans, and they are being raped. But while they were wearing sheepskin, being naked, they were not raped! Even at night. My father would say, you would meet a girl at night you would respect her.

In addition to being subjected to abuse, sexual assault, and blame, girls are also now targeted by gangs or pressured to join gangs themselves. Girls are pressured into alcohol and drug abuse as well, especially a cheap drug that is easy to find in townships today called tik. Usually smoked, tik is a cheap form of crystal meth, now more abused by teens in impoverished communities more than alcohol.26 Lasting effects of tik abuse include psychological and emotional damage that cannot be undone or made up for in the future27. Mr. Mayekiso explained:


27 Watt, Melissa., Meade, Christina., Kimani, Stephen., MacFarlane, Jessica., Choi, Karmel.,
They are targets. So now, that’s why now you even find them, not only by being still impregnated while they are still in school, but sometimes they get now into gangs because of that, because they want to protect themselves. We find them in gangs, joining the boys, or they are having their own gangs, where they stab each other, they shoot each other. They are still in school! Because now, they know there are drugs, cheap drugs going around, because they also smoke those drugs, because they want to protect themselves. They know that if a boy has raped a girl, that they will just go and finish that business. So it’s those social issues, cultural issues. Yeah. And the expectations are very low. Parent’s expectations of girls: very low. Very few parents who are really supportive of their girls, very, very few.

From this account, girls are often ostracized by many in the community aside from the few teachers and tutors, like Mr. Mayekiso, who try to prevent girls from getting pressured into dangerous activities. Families, parents, boys and men, and communities as a whole disregard girls. These girls aren’t supported in attaining their educational dreams, and instead they are subjected to violence and abuse, then often disowned and blamed for something that was ultimately out of their control. Girls need a place to turn to in the school for help, and teachers and tutors need the aid of a counselor to help mentor these girls. The interview with Mr. Mayekiso was very in-depth and telling; he provided, as shown, many detailed accounts of the issues that girls face in township schools, as they navigate culture and identity in this critical developmental phase. He also provided suggestions on what could be done to help girls surpass these challenges. I turn now to another set of accounts from a librarian and tutor, who also works at Fezeka under the auspices of EWB.

After my interview with Mr. Mayekiso, he told me I should come back on Saturday to interview the school’s librarian, Charmaine Visagie-Africa, who works as a tutor and librarian at Fezeka for EWB. I returned on Saturday morning and found Charmaine in the library, and I explained who I was and the project I was working on. She was instantly connected to the topic

and very interested in discussing her perspective on the gendered social inequalities that her girl learners face. We were able to talk alone in the school library, as the students were busy with other activities at the time. Also, I recorded the interview and provided Charmaine’s responses verbatim, as to offer her perspective in her own voice and lived experiences. I began the discussion by asking Charmaine about her time with EWB, which students and schools she works with, and why she does this work. As she described:

Gugs comprehensive, grade 8. Then we’ve got Mseki at the back of Fezeka grade 7, and Fezeka is grades 8, 9, and 10s. And it sounds like a little but all the learners together is a lot of students and it’s a lot of work and it really tires you at times. Some days it’s much easier than others, you know, but I enjoy what I do. I love working with children. And I think what it is, what’s so nice about it, is when you see what you have accomplished when you set yourself a goal and what you have achieved.

Charmaine relayed her passion for teaching and working with students, and the pride she feels in helping them advance. I asked her about the various activities EWB offers at Fezeka, besides the photography program, and she explained that there is also a garden, a choir, tutoring, and their used to be drama as well but that was cut due to a lack of funding. She explained that while the drama club was a favorite amongst Fezeka students, it was too financially challenging for EWB to continue supporting it.

A drama teacher that needs to be paid, and I don’t think they come cheap. But what we also do is that every activity that takes place, we provide a meal. You know, the school’s got to feed everyone during school and most of our learners will go home and there will be nothing to eat when they get home. So this will be their last meal until tomorrow morning. Some of them will come just for food, but I can’t speak for all of them. But most of them are just here for the food. We even have learners fighting over the food. You know, it’s just a sandwich with a piece of bologna on it, and they will even hide it away.

As Charmaine relayed here, in impoverished communities such as Gugulethu, students may be interested in extracurricular programs at the school, but the prospect of getting a meal is even more important. Students who may not have food to eat at home often come to these afterschool or weekend programs to get a meal and get away from their homes for a while. EWB clearly
understands this need and moves its priorities into providing what students require to physically continue their education, aside from tutoring and arts programs.

After this part of our discussion, I explained to Charmaine that what I really wanted to find out was her perspective on any gender differences for learners at the school and in the community, and what challenges she perceived as being significant for girl learners in their efforts to graduate, reach matric, and achieve university access. I asked her how life was for girls at Fezeka.

Funny that you’re brining this up because we actually had that chat in the library last week. About a girl in the program, I asked her why is it you aren’t doing your homework at home? What is stopping you? You know? So the response that she gave to me was they (her parents) can’t help her because they don’t understand the work themselves.

Centuries of colonialism and slavery that marginalized and oppressed People of Color in South Africa gave way to the apartheid era. In this period, as generations of indigenous black African families were kept out of the school systems and barred from having access to university education, let alone a primary and secondary education, created the current situation where parents and elder family members are unable to help children do their school work. Scholars have shown that “a combination of parent education and access to information has a direct correlation to parents’ involvement in their child’s secondary education.”

Therefore impoverished indigenous black African children in South Africa without formally educated parents or family members will often be unable to be involved in the child’s education or to help them with their school work. This cycle of inequality continues to repeat itself decade after decade. Girls unable to get a proper education today will also have the same kind of trouble their parents did in regards to finding employment and reaching career dreams. Apartheid was a drastic measure that powerfully disrupted the lives of entire populations for generations on end.

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Therefore, only an equally drastic powerful counter measure to correct the inequalities that have perpetuated from apartheid can actually have the potential to undo some of the structural damages that still occur.

I continued our conversation by asking Charmaine about any other challenges the girls may face at home that could inhibit their learning and success potential. I asked her also, with many parents gone from the home to work low-wages jobs in the city or lost to HIV/AIDS or other causes, what if any other responsibilities boys and girls may have in the home.

I know a lot of our learners in our program always speak about the chores that they have to do. Either they have to take care of their siblings, or the cleaning, or make the food, or you know, there’s a lot of work waiting for them when they leave here.

She explained that older children, most often the girls, are left to take care of the household duties and watch after younger siblings when parents are absent from the home. Yet, they are still expected to do their own homework without anyone present to help them. This highlights what I coin as the “girl’s second shift,” based on the notion of the “second shift” from Arlie Hochschild’s work.29 These girls work their own “shift” during the day as students in school, attending classes and doing schoolwork at the campus. However they also work a second shift when they come home after school. With parents missing from the home, elder children, most often girls become the household caretakers and instead of doing homework, having help with homework, or doing other playful activities, they cook, clean, and ensure the wellbeing of siblings in the home. In addition to the material and physical extra shift these girls face after school, this extra burden of care work also creates an emotional toll on the girls. In other words, there is both a physical and emotional girl’s second shift taking place here.

I asked Charmaine if there were any other household factors or community-based factors she recognized as inhibitors to girls education in the Gugulethu community. She restated some of what Mr. Mayekiso had said in his interview about rape and pregnancy being huge barriers for these girls’ educational success. Yet additionally, Charmaine told me a personal story of students she had known, a story that clearly demonstrates the multiple oppressive challenges that prevent girls from reaching their dreams.

I really was starting off with Education Without Borders, I was told not to be involved with that group, with the girls that were raped. And it wasn’t a ‘no’ to everybody, to every staff member of the school. But obviously when the principal trusted, you know, he would speak to you and you would be given two girls and you would have to deal with it, go to their homes. And then the two girls I was working with, they were even too afraid to mention it to me. And the one time I said it’s ok you can speak to me and trust me, and they wouldn’t let me speak to their mother only the father, just the father. It was actually the father that raped both sisters and were both pregnant of the father. On this campus. At this school. The one was grade 9 and the one was grade 11. Very nice students. Very, very talented, very bright, but I think after that happened you could actually just see their marks go down, they were just dropping. They want to reach out, but they’re also scared that it’s going to be known to everybody. So, you know and I might speak to the class teacher and so the class teacher might be involved, and maybe treat them a bit differently, you know? Because she was the one who was saying they were dropping and can we maybe do something about their program because they wanted to be in the EWB program. So I think yes, it does affect them. I don’t even think for them the worst part was going right back to school, going right back to the home everyday. The mother wasn’t aware of it because the mother was drinking every day and the father would abuse the mother. And at the time when the father does these things to the mother she was passed out because she was drunk. It takes a lot for them, to actually open up and speak. Because I think I, for that case, there was something like 14 months long. And eventually both of them just dropped out of school. When they had their babies they never came back.

Without a counselor available at the school, tutors and teachers like Charmaine and Sonwabile are co-opted into become counselors for the students with whom they work as teachers. In this story, two young girls raped and impregnated by their own father and left to defend themselves without a mother figure caring about what happened to them, as the mother herself was turning to substance abuse to escape the physical abuse she endured from her husband. This cycle of violence disrupted the lives of these children and forever changed the course of their futures.
Charmaine has worked at Fezeka over the years for EWB, and so I asked her if she noticed any difference between the students in the EWB afterschool programs, such as the photojournalist program, and the students who do not get to join those programs. A top select few of high performing students are selected for EWB extracurricular programs, yet I wondered if students involvement in them may change the likelihood that they drop out of school, become teenage parents, or become susceptible to the other numerous pressures that being a child in Gugulethu brings. Charmaine explained that she does notice a difference between the life trajectories of students in the EWB programs and students who are not involved.

I think that there is, there is, and also it depends entirely on them themselves, and the goals that they seek for themselves. From the program since 2013 we’ve had one girl leave from grade 11 that was pregnant. She was the only one that I know of that was part of our program that became pregnant. I have one student I kept in touch with him and he’s doing really well there. But you have to block that when you have a certain connection with a student and want to really mentor them. Others might get jealous and notice that. But they do well. One of our students did the photography program and he got into Stellenbosch, and he did that and now he’s travelling internationally as a photographer. He just took it to the next level.

Charmaine felt that surely individual determination and will power play a role in student success. Yet, she demonstrated a deep awareness of how structural inequalities overwhelmingly inhibit individual actions. However from her accounts, and from those that Mr. Mayekiso gave, students in these programs have a higher chance of attaining their goals and social challenges and pressures, more so than students who are not in these extracurricular programs.

To this point in the chapter, I have shared three different yet very detailed accounts from a school administrator and two tutor-teachers working alongside EWB at Fezeka. The account from Mr. Baloyi, the principal of Fezeka, was much different than the other two accounts from teachers who spend their days with students. While Baloyi asserted that he felt girls had a clear advantage in their chances for reaching graduation, passing matric, and potentially entering university, he did not offer any reasoning for why he felt that way. In comparison, the two
accounts from Charmaine and Sonwabile told a much different, much more detailed story about the gendered nature of student success at Fezeka and schools like it.

Each respondent identified clear gender differences in the challenges and pressures that inhibit girls and boys from achieving academically, however they both clearly articulated that they noticed girls have a much harder time advancing. Both teachers gave numerous detailed accounts of why girls are socialized to feel ashamed and less useful to their families and societies than boys, and why boys are encouraged to achieve, and to disown any responsibilities, like children, they may create along the way to graduation. Few protections are in place to keep girls from dropping out of school, and even fewer places exist for them when tragic events impact their lives. While these narrative analyses have been very detailed and comprehensive, the last section of this chapter will present accounts of gendered educational differences, as the girls themselves experience them, in their own words. The narrative accounts from these girls provide new knowledge on the lived daily experiences of the pervasive gender divides that exist in South Africa’s impoverished, historically black South African schools even in the post-apartheid context.

In Their Own Words: Voices of the Girls

Feminist Methodology: Observations and A Group Interview

The interview data from school administration and teachers previously provided is crucial to this study in that it helped provide a new understanding of the intersecting gendered challenges indigenous black African girls from impoverished townships like Gugulethu often
face when striving for educational success. Those perspectives were given from second parties who, while they do not experience the same sets of challenges as the girls in the following section, interact with these girl learners on a daily basis, serving as witnesses to the struggles girls face in the school and in the community. However, the new perspectives from the girls themselves are most telling. The girls, in their own words, explain how overlapping challenges impact their lives and can inhibit their chances to reach their education and career dreams. Ultimately, this new knowledge should be utilized by both national and international policy makers, and by education NGOs, to better address the multifaceted social issues for these girls, and to best remove the barriers that keep them from reaching their full potential.

There were twenty interviews total conducted with the girls: two were one-on-one over the course of the weeks I spent with the EWB photojournalist program, and the other eighteen were conducted in partnership with EWB, in a group setting. The larger interview with the girls was organized by Mr. Mayekiso who runs the EWB Saturday tutoring program at Fezeka. While in the school library during the girls’ lunch hour, these eighteen respondents agreed to participate in the study. The girls were given their lunch snacks and the interview was conducted in a round-table framework in the library, in order to create a group feeling and provide a comfortable interview setting for the girls. Once the girls came in and took a seat, the EWB team, comprised of the teachers, Dr. Fish and I, explained our research interests and asked the girls to share their experiences. As the team shared with the participants, all of the individual names were kept anonymous to protect girls’ identities and privacy.

After introductions and some ice-breaking conversation, we first asked the girls about any challenges they perceived for girls and boys in regards to finishing secondary school, passing matric, and reaching university. The first student answered saying:
It’s hard for boys. Because boys are more like in peer pressure and they’re doing what their friends are doing. They can’t say no because they might be called a baby or a chicken. So it’s not that easy to finish school because there are other things to do.

This comment got the conversation about gendered differences in school rolling, and obstacles that boy learners encounter, such as peer pressure and name calling, were first brought to the forefront. While the group projected agreement on this statement, many issues for girls were beginning to surface as the next comments refocused the discussion back to girls’ challenges.

Girls want to listen to their parents, because they want to satisfy their parents, and they want to belong, and sometimes some of the jobs, they sneak out to do things. Sneak out, go to class, and pick up on those kind of things. So it’s really hard for girls to finish school and there is also peer pressure.

Girls also clearly face peer pressure, just as boys do, however this statement also highlighted the differing familial and parental pressure that is placed on girls and less so on boys.

We began to discuss what may keep girls from graduating or finishing school, and the responses reflected the data from the previous sections in this chapter from the teachers interviewed, and refuted claims from the principal that girls were more successful and had less significant challenges to educational achievement than boys in communities like Gugulethu.

I think girls drop out of school because they go through teenage pregnancy, because they are being peer pressured by other children. They feel pressure from other children, and they want the same things as other children. If they are poor they want to have things that they can’t afford to have, and they force their mothers to have things and then they don’t go to school because they can’t afford.

Teenagers from more impoverished communities like Gugulethu still access wealthier parts of the city when they can for visits. The girls expressed that they are very aware of the material differences that wealthier, often white children have, such as cellphones, nicer clothing, and other items. The girls in multiple resonations of agreement said that a girl would rather her parents buy a cellphone for her, or some other object, than pay her school fees, and that parents will often agree to this. While the need for these material goods, implicated by a western mindset
of material need, may be temporarily beneficial for a girl, long term benefits of finishing an
education cannot be realized when school fees aren’t paid. This notion of income and wealth
inequality is reiterated in studies that show how income inequality or socio-economic differences
can leave poorer students without a sense of belonging, keeping them from even trying to reach
their educational dreams.

Transitioning the discussion to factors that may inhibit a girl’s education from inside the
school, we asked the girls what might keep them from passing their matric exams. Two girls
answered back to back, providing insight on connections between factors inside the school and in
the community that prevent girls from graduating and passing matric.

One thing is that I’ve seen the grade 11’s and 12’s in my classes and that’s not good
because when you bunk, they either bunk the subjects that they know can, what can I
say? Subjects that you need to know at school, maybe math and things like that, but they
bunk subjects that they are not supposed to. When you’re failing classes you aren’t
supposed to you can’t pass matric, so that is why people in grade 12 can’t pass.

In this first response, there was an indication that the older students get the more likely they are
to start skipping classes (what the girls called “bunking a class”), and missing out on core subject
instruction that is critical as a foundation for passing matric and gaining university admission.
Also, in the next comment, there is a similar idea that upper grade level students often skip
classes and fail. The girls explained that many students start to feel a sense of defeat and give up
when their subjects become too difficult to keep up with.

Another Student: Another thing is that they, they feel like when they have reached grade
12, they like won’t put the effort that they used to have. So now people will tell you, “I
don’t like this subject,” like they are mad because they don’t do well in math, and maybe
the teacher that is teaching them won’t understand. And maybe won’t understand her or
him, and maybe he will tell himself that I’m not going to enter that class because that
teacher won’t understand what I’m trying to say. And then they will take that subject out
of their mind, they will say “I hate math,” and then when someone tries to bring
something so that he could know, he could understand math, he will say like “No, no, no,

I can’t understand math. No one can teach me math, because I can’t do it.” Then you will hate the subject, and the moment you hate the subject is the moment you will fail the subject. You are not positive about the subject, so you won’t learn it.

The narrative above highlights two important distinct issues. First, there is an acknowledgement that teachers at the school, aside from EWB hired teachers and tutors, often do not know the subject material themselves well enough to teach the students. Further, teachers may not be providing the level of mentorship and tutoring support to each individual student, helping them to grasp the content of the lessons. There are a variety of reasons for this phenomenon, all going back to content discussed previously regarding class size or teacher-student ratio, teachers’ capability to teach the course material required, and the multitude of societal pressures that often leave students with a defeated feeling and lead them to giving up and dropping out.

At this point of the interview the girls were very interactive, raising their hands to offer their perspectives on what they see as challenges for learners in the community and at school, hold them back from reaching their full academic potential. Many of the themes from the interviews with Charmaine and Sonwabile continued to resound, and the principal’s notion that girls are much more likely to succeed than boys continued to be discounted by the girls’ narratives. Our discussion continued as we transitioned to talking about the challenges they perceived for succeeding at university for the few students in their community who did graduate and pass matric, and apply for acceptance into a university.

The girls told me, that for many students who are eligible to apply to a university, they apply year after year and often feel defeated after multiple rejections.

Some of them will have to apply and they will not go through. They will apply each and every year, like some of them apply each and every year, but still they don’t get in, and

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then still they lose hope because they know that they have wasted their future, and there’s nothing to do now, and their mothers or family will not support them. They will just say “you’re useless,” and it will be like that. And then the child will see that he or she is useless and she will try to do something but still no one is there to support them.

The girls explained that students from their school and their community who work hard to become eligible for university admissions are often turned down anyways. They discussed how not only was this a feeling of personal failure for many, but also another point of familial or parental rejection. Students who reach this point of eligibility without acceptance face a sense of defeat, accompanied by a lack of support from family members.

Even if they do get accepted into a university, often learners are conflicted on whether they should go or not. The girls explained that friends or siblings they knew of that got accepted to a university often turned down the offer for financial reasons.

Some of them go through tough times, maybe a mother only in that family, no father, maybe that one parent don’t have money for their child to go to university, so their child does not get an opportunity to go to the university. And sometimes children feel like, what’s the use of going to university when my parent suffers like this? So one can go with their grade 12 certificate to just go find a job so that they can help their mother or father to get something to eat, so some children don’t get the opportunity to go.

Families in communities like Gugulethu, historically impoverished and deprived of economic opportunities and resources, often cannot afford to send their bright high achievers to university. Also, as the girls described, learners often turn down the chance of a university education, which would afford them a higher paying job and more job security, for a lower skilled low-paying job that would allow for an immediate but more precarious contribution to the family’s finances. Yet, getting back to those who apply and are turned away, I wondered what factors the girls recognized as inhibitors to university access for learners like themselves.

We asked the girls why they thought this would occur, or in other words, why would a student who is eligible to apply to a university get turned away. The answers were truly astounding; yet very telling of how aware these girls are when it comes to realizing the inequity
they are subjected to. They realized that often more privileged, wealthier, and white students are the ones who make it to university, with comparably very few students from communities like their own. The following two comments were stated back to back, from two different girls in the group.

Grade 12 learners being in schools here in Gugulethu, sometimes they can’t go because it is known that at the universities, if you put in your form, and they first take a learner who’s from a multi-racial school, and then they fill up their space with those learners, and then these schools here in Gugulethu are the last ones who get spaces. And sometimes when you go they send you back because you don’t have the right classes.

We are still in apartheid.

Although the girls in this group were all born well after the end of the apartheid era, they pointed to racial divides that still keep indigenous black African learners out of universities. They explained that there is essentially still a race hierarchy of sorts in the societal structure of South Africa, even though legislatively such a divide is prohibited. White students from mostly white, wealthy, prestigious schools, they explained, are the first to get accepted into universities, followed by children from multi-racial schools with more “coloured” and “Indian” students, and then any leftover spots are offered to black African students. The other girls all resonated and agreed with the one girl who stated that they still live in apartheid.

As this study strived to demonstrate, although legal apartheid with its racially divisive policies and programs ended more than twenty years ago, the damaging effects of apartheid that shaped the social structure and economic structure of the nation are still in full effect. Other studies focused on singular issues\(^\text{32}\) or policy critiques have found similar results,\(^\text{33}\) noting that


structural apartheid is still very much prevalent in “post-apartheid” South Africa. Powerfully detrimental acts during apartheid divided the races socially and economically, oppressing communities of color and stripping them of educational, economic, and social resources. However equally powerful positive measures have not been taken to help communities recover what was lost over decades of apartheid oppression and centuries of colonial oppression. The girls we spoke with, even in their young teenage years, are fully aware that structural apartheid is still very real and very damaging to communities like their own.

As the interview with the girls was coming to the second half, we talked a while about the extracurricular programs offered at the school and how the girls felt about them. The girls told me about a program called the Amy Biehl program, named after a white American college student who was killed in Gugulethu by a mob during the height of apartheid tension in 1993.34 The girls explained that Amy’s family had set up a program at Fezeka to honor their daughter’s legacy.

It’s called Amy Biehl because during apartheid time, there was a girl called Amy Biehl, and this girl used to be friends with black people. And this girl was taken here, and she had a car, and she was taking her Xhosa friend home. So she met some of the guys, and they said “what are you doing out here?” You guys do not care about us, you kill us or arrest us. So they shot her. But Amy Biehl’s mother said those guys will not make me mad, instead she started the after program called Amy Biehl for her daughter’s name, to give out food to children who suffer and to express children’s talents, to use their mind and come to school here.

The Amy Biehl program at Fezeka is one of extraordinary humanity with its roots grounded in the spirit of social justice and equality.

The girls also told me of a program they have called the “Guide” program, in which the girls support each other in solidarity, organizing on their own to create a girls’ support network at Fezeka.

We have an after program, its called The Guide, and we help each other. It’s a girl program, so we arrange ourselves, from 6-8, and then maybe 8-14 a guide, and then 14-18 you become a ranger. So we wear our uniform and we make promises, we open it for prayer, then we help each other with school works like if you got a homework assignment, we sit down and do it, we try to help you with it. And we do everything, we play games, we go camping, we go hiking, and we go to other children and we made squares into a blanket for orphans, and we donated books to other children so that they could read. We go to hospitals to see the children and make pictures for them to comfort them.

The Guide program is another great example of extracurricular activities that can build support for girl learners, providing a girl’s micro-community where they can rely on each other and do community service work at the same time. If a program like the Guide program was expanded and extended to more girls, with more support from meaningful NGOs like EWB, girls would be much more likely to have a support system that may help them overcome so many of the challenges they continue to encounter in their quest to reach their dreams and achieve academically.

I wanted to end this interview with the girls on a positive note, especially given the very difficult nature of some of the conversation topics. Therefore before we closed, I asked each girl to go around the table and say what their dreams were or what they wanted to achieve in life, and what they would change if they could change something about their school. The responses were inspiring, not only for the girls to verbalize for themselves and each other what their aspirations were, but also for myself. Hearing the positivity and the high hopes these girls still possess, even with all they have working against them, is a something that I will carry with me for my lifetime.

A Different Methodology: Observations and Individual Interviews

While working as a writing tutor with the EWB afterschool photojournalism project, I had the chance to work closely with a group of two girls over the weeks of my time in Cape
Town. Each group in the program had already been assembled in twos, with five groups total, and with the help of photographer Greg Hillyard each group came up with their own social issue topics to investigate before my arrival. The girls I worked with chose the topic of “Girls and Marriage,” and they wanted to investigate the reasons why a girl or a woman would choose to get married. The girls had already chosen four main questions that they wanted to investigate for their project: why do women get married, how are they treated, who should be blamed, and how do we fix the issue?

For the girls, my presence offered a sounding board for ideas and a framework for how to organize their paper into a short essay story. For me, the time I spent with these girls allowed me to see Fezeka and the community of Gugulethu through their eyes and minds, and the chance to examine the challenges girl learners in impoverished communities face in a more multifaceted way than a basic interview session. We began the project by sitting down in the school library on our first meeting day to come up with subthemes for each of the topic themes. For each of the questions the girls posed, they verbalized their responses as I recorded them for our use.

To the first question, “why do women get married,” the girls came up with four responses to discuss in their essay, yet for me these answers were also telling for how girls in this community view their future in marriage, especially as they also see the role of education in marriage. Their responses included love, family, growing up, and becoming a woman. Then to the question “how are they treated,” gendered inequalities in marriage and the family started to surface as they answered. The girls created the following points they wanted to cover in this section of their essay:

Men don’t treat women in a nice way; they take women for granted. In a fight one will say ‘I paid for you so I decide what happens.’ Women are expected to do most of the housework: taking care of children, and takes care of the man. Education and jobs might
change things, but mostly it’s the same. It depends on the men: if they still believe in traditions or not. Women have rights.

Marital practices in Xhosa culture still requires that a man pay a bride price, or a lobola, to the father of the girl he is marrying.\(^{35}\) Therefore the bride is actually “bought” with a monetary or material exchange. Originally lobola was traditionally intended to be gift of thanks from a husband to a wife’s father for allowing a blessing and acceptance of their marriage, however many now believe that these old traditional notions have been replaced and have now become nothing more than business transactions.\(^{36}\) The girls in my group explained that wives aren’t treated well by husbands, are verbally abused by them, and that wives overwhelmingly take on the majority of care work in a household. Yet interestingly, the girls noted that while education and career attain may alter the gender equity in a marriage, it is more likely that the dynamic of inequality would stay the same.

These girls came up with excellent ideas on what could be done about the inequity that women face in marriage in their culture. They wanted to use materials to *educate* others in the community, both women and men, about how “men and women can be equal even with tradition.” As we got deeper into this project after structuring the girls’ essay, we began to walk around the halls and buildings of Fezeka and the streets of the Gugulethu community close to the school. The girls went out with their cameras looking for real situations or objects that would fit the themes of their essay.

As we walked around the school, the girls took the opportunity to show me different parts of their school. The particularly striking part of Fezeka in terms of gender and social issues that


could prevent girls from succeeding educationally could be seen in the school’s bathrooms. In this study, challenges that girls face in school and in the community such as gender-based violence, peer pressure, and poverty have already been discussed and analyzed, amongst other issues. However many of these issues can be seen from the girl’s bathroom at Fezeka. The girls in my group took me to the bathroom to show me the structure, what was missing, and what was written on the walls.

In the Fezeka girls’ bathroom, the stalls have no doors on them, leaving girls susceptible to gender based violence in the school itself. The girls in my group explained that they felt unsafe in the restroom, and additionally felt uneasy in the restrooms due to a lack of privacy and a safe place for menstruating girls. They told me that most girls try not to use the restroom.
facilities because of the issues of safety and privacy, and instead will often wait until they go home at the end of the day to use the restroom. These restroom facilities not only pose a security and privacy risk for the girls of Fezeka, but also a health risk in that by waiting to use the restroom after school at home. Girls are more at risk for infections and other health issues as a result of these structural disparities. I also want to point out that in the second image, the words “slut skul” are written all over the wall. This image is one of many derogatory words written on the walls of the girls bathrooms at Fezeka. I asked the girls who would write messages like these, and they told me that boys often sneak in to write, and occasionally girls write messages as well. There are many phrases marked on the walls like this one, creating even more of a realized sense of gender inequity and contributing to the overall lack of security girls feel regarding their restroom facility.

As demonstrated in this chapter, multiple intersecting oppressions combine to detrimentally impact the likelihood that indigenous black African girl learners from impoverished township communities, will ever complete their secondary education and reach access to tertiary education. Some statistical evidence of the inequalities that still exist in post-apartheid South Africa, given in the first part of the chapter, established how race is still a contributing factor in regards to class and income inequality. In other words, the historically wealthy white communities stayed mostly white and wealthy even twenty years after apartheid ended, privileged with better infrastructures in their homes and communities, better educational opportunity, and higher levels of employment and income. Alternatively, historically indigenous black African communities that were impoverished after centuries of colonialism and decades of apartheid have stayed mostly the same as the post-apartheid era has gone on.
Perspectives from Fezeka Secondary School in the Gugulethu township, from the school’s principal and two tutors from EWB, have demonstrated how agreement on the reality of gender divides with in a social institution such as education aren’t always realized. The school principal was adamant, without providing any narrative or statistical proof, that girls have a much easier time succeeding educationally than boys, and will have less challenges in reaching their educational goals. Alternatively, the two tutors interviewed from EWB clearly noticed gendered differences in the challenges that boys and girls face in obtaining the education, and their claims that girls face more significant challenges than boys was supported by multiple narrative accounts. It is important to recognize the nuanced perspectives from each interview, as the differences often speak to disjuncture. When members of the community, such as the principal in this case, do not recognize social problems such as gender inequity, it may be difficult to implement change. However, when these interviews are analyzed in combination, it is clear that many other members of the Fezeka community recognize the extra burdens girls face in their journey towards educational success. With evidence from a study like this, it is possible that administrators will also begin to recognize this disparity for girls, and implement programs that address some of the gendered inequalities at the school and within the community.

These interviews, in combination with the statistical evidence and body of previous research, lead to the conclusion that girl learners in impoverished historically indigenous black African townships in post-apartheid South Africa do indeed face much more difficulty than male counterparts in achieving their educational dreams. Additionally, the interviews with the girls themselves also supported the same gendered notion of girls facing more barriers to educational success. A new knowledge of the intersecting challenges that girls face simultaneously has been
produced from this study, and most importantly from the voices of those who live in this oppression every day.
CHAPTER IV

OUTSIDE AID: THE CASE OF EWB

In their efforts to advocate for social justice, equality, and human rights, policy and aid programs intended to support disadvantaged populations, are not often guided by a grounded intersectional understanding of the actual social issues and oppressions that exist for a given population. In the previous chapter, I highlighted the necessity of the intersectional approach\(^1\) in programming and policy work, noting how a lack of knowledge about the true nature of social issues for a given group will lead to ineffective efforts for change. Also, as guided by the principles of Black Feminist Thought, any knowledge about the true nature of intersecting social issues must come from those who live the oppression themselves, in their own voices.\(^2\) Aid programs and policies, no matter how well intended, will ultimately fail without a comprehensive awareness and inclusion of the simultaneously occurring social barriers for a given group. Therefore, as organizations such as NGOs plan their initiatives, the guiding intersectional information they use should come from those who actually live the oppression in their own lives, as to provide a most relevant account of the intersections.

As this study already demonstrated, a new and more informed knowledge is produced from the voices of the oppressed, and that new knowledge can better aid organizations in their aid and policy efforts, making the possibility of success a greater reality. Failure to achieve any meaningful change often occurs without the inclusion of informed knowledge from the

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oppressed group. Within this chapter, I begin with an example of failed policy initiatives that may have been more successful and meaningful had an incorporation of grounded knowledge and an intersectional methodological approach occurred. Afterwards, I will detail how alternatively, Education without Borders can be seen as a model for how policy and program aid should work, as they take a more informed approach in their work at Fezeka. From this existing work, I make suggestions to improve their efforts with the incorporation of a feminist perspective guided by principles of intersectionality and Black Feminist Thought.

First, however, I do want to qualify the role of the state in regards to aid. This work has focused on citizens who are impacted by education aid efforts. This chapter details how international aid organizations and NGOs construct the nature of aid. However, first I note that a crucial element of this equation is missing: the involvement of the nation-state of South Africa. The South African government spends significantly on education, yet it remains virtually uninvolved with addressing social issues, gender and race-based inequalities in regards to education in the nation. The lack of involvement of the South African government in regards to developing education points to the existence a neoliberal political climate in which the privatization of education and the involvement of outside aid have became scapegoats for the government. The lack of involvement from the state further intensifies and perpetuates the inequalities that exist, as the state turns away from any responsibility to address these issues.

The lack of involvement from the state both at the local and national levels places a detrimental burden on secondary schools specifically, which struggle to navigate through the structural apartheid that continues to exist. By being absent in educational development initiatives and allowing outside aid organizations to address education issues, the state creates a pass for itself and evades its responsibilities to citizens. Simultaneously, citizens are not holding
the state accountable when it comes to reforming secondary education. Citizens’ disengagement from the state further allows the state to absolve its responsibility in addressing education issues. The absence of the state allows for international aid organizations and NGOs to fill the void created by the lack of state involvement. However, as I will demonstrate in the following sections, even the best intentioned aid efforts can fall short, while others that take into account the population identified needs often make meaningful change.

**The Dangers of Uninformed Policy**

Theoretical perspectives from post-colonial and transnational feminism provide a framework through which sociological analysis of the so-called “Third World” can take place while simultaneously avoiding “othering” or romanticizing a given group.³ Any “essentializing of Third World women negates the diversity of their lives and their agency in resisting oppression.”⁴ To avoid this homogenization of Third World women and girls, Mohanty argues that instead we should recognize the ways in which “Third World women occupy a specific social location…which illuminates and explains crucial features of the capitalist process of exploitation and domination.”⁵ The unique knowledge of so-called Third World women and girls

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⁵ Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. “Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of
must be used to inform new policies and programs intended to relieve social barriers; without it many efforts will homogenize a group leading to issue erasure and ultimately will be ineffective.⁶

A prime example of how policy and aid intentions can be detrimentally under informed can be seen in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals for Africa and South Africa. Developed at the turn of the century and the beginning of the new millennium, this campaign, in great generality, set goals for the world to achieve by 2015 and also helped nation states create their own Millennium Development Goal initiatives. Nation-state focused goals were more so tailored to the issues within each individual state in combination with the global goals. However, even the nation state goals were often just as misinformed as the global initiatives themselves.

With seemingly good intentions, the United Nations proposed the Millennium Campaign in 2000 and began planning and implementing the campaign in 2002.⁷ Ultimately the Millennium Campaign was aimed at ending poverty and related social problems in the so-called “developing or third world nations”, or at least significantly reducing these inequalities, by the end goal date of 2015. Eight different general goals were set to invoke changes on a global scale, especially for countries labeled as “developing.” These goals included “eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating

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HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and global partnership for development.” The goals of “achieving universal primary education” and “promoting gender equality and empowering women” are most relevant to this thesis, yet they are not necessarily informed by the true nature of education disparities in South Africa. Overwhelmingly, most students in South Africa overall achieve primary education; therefore this goal is less relevant to the context of the nation. Instead, the UN should have tailored South Africa’s Goal Two to include universal achievement of secondary education, and potentially even include access to tertiary education as well. Goal Three, or furthering gender equity and empowering women, is still very much unrealized even over twenty years after the implementation of South Africa’s new equality based constitution.

Now in 2016, the United Nations recently produced the “Millennium Development Goals Report 2015,” giving information on the successes and shortcomings for each of the goals for various targeted regions around the world. There is some current available analysis in the UN 2015 Goals report that explains why some of these successes and failures occurred, however analysis is surface level and does not reach the nuances of how each goal may interact with another. For example, the UN applauded South Africa for achieving Goal Two, or universal primary education, however this had already been majorly achieved in the nation. The UN did point out shortcomings in the nations’ efforts to achieve gender equity for women. Still, an analysis of gender in combination with the education system would have illuminated the real gendered divide in secondary and tertiary education, which is the real education problem area for

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South Africa now. In this section I briefly investigate and analyze the potential reasons for goal failure, including lack of intersectional population informed knowledge, and I offer explanations and potential solutions for these problems, continuing the use of the case study of secondary education for impoverished indigenous Black African girls in South Africa. I argue that the United Nation Millennium Goals, like any other policy or program aid initiative around the world, would have a higher likelihood of achieving their goals should an intersectional perspective and methodological approach be utilized to inform the nuances of each goal. Contextual information of each location and population must be used to inform any education initiative, and new community based knowledge should also be employed to shed light on the ways that initiatives may impact the daily lived experiences of a given group.

Specifically for this project, I focus on Millennium Goals two and three, or “achieve universal primary education” and “promote gender equality and empower women,” as these goals would most directly affect the population of girls I in this study. To help aid the intentions of the South African government, and specifically the Department of Education, INGOs and transnational regulatory agencies such as the United Nations often bring in programs to try and improve social and economic conditions. For example, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals report included South Africa as a developing nation, and the UN worked together with the South African government to help South Africa implement these goals as specifically related to the nation. A separate Millennium Development Goal report was created explicitly for South Africa. The goals specified for each country are still largely based on the universal goals set out by the UN, and in the case of South Africa’s individual report, nuances specifically related to education disparities and gender equality are not recognized. Within this

report, there is still a clear erasure of the intricate ways in which education and gender inequality structurally exist within post-apartheid South Africa.

For goal two of the UNMDGs for South Africa, or “achieve universal primary education,” is almost non-applicable to South Africa as the nation has hardly any trouble with primary education rates. According to the UNMD report itself, South Africa has already essentially achieved universal primary enrollment at 98% with numbers in favor of the girl learner. The UN touts this as a success, however the success in South Africa in regards to primary education has been a reality for some time. This is an example of how the UN Millennium Goals homogenized the continent of Africa into one, without questioning whether each goal was even pertinent to individual nation states. The area where South Africa is in dire need of improvement when it comes to education and gender equity is at the secondary and tertiary education levels, as described in the previous chapters. If the UN had taken an intersectional and grounded approach into creating their goals for South Africa, the goals would actually be focused on the real problems that exist today and not the perceived problems blanketed by organizations such as the UN over the continent.

Similarly with goal three of the UNMDGs for South Africa, or “promoting gender equality and empower women,” the organization also fails to understand the true nature of gender inequity in South Africa today. The report references South Africa the nation-state as a whole, as if the nation is one monolith of people who have the same economic and social structural circumstances in their lives, which as this study has already shown, is clearly not the case. The

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details of goal three for South Africa demonstrate the clear lack of understanding of the UNDP to comprehend the real nature of gender inequality in modern post-apartheid South Africa.

The constitutional mandate on gender equality is clear, and the legislative process is providing the building blocks for a gender equitable society. Eliminating violence is essential for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. The existing target, to eliminate the gender disparity in education, captures only one, albeit a key, dimension of gender inequality. Eliminating violence against women is a prerequisite for gender equality and empowerment of women. The follow-up by mothers and fathers on school and extracurricular activities of their children reinforces the family ties, favours socialisation at home and reduces the risk of violence and/or aggression in the streets. It is clear that South Africa has reached most gender equality targets, if not exceeded them. South Africa’s performance has also improved for several of the indicators over the period. A more serious challenge relates to other socio-economic concerns where women continue to have higher rate of unemployment than men, their share of non-agricultural wage remains below 50%, and a greater prevalence of violence against women.\(^\text{12}\)

From the above passage it is quite clear that while the UN still recognizes that gender-based violence is a real barrier for social equity in South Africa today, it diminishes the role of education in preventing gender-based violence. Further, it totally fails to acknowledge the many other intersecting social inequalities that also exist for non-white populations in the nation, and by erasing these problems in policy these equally important issues often get overlooked for funding and aid initiatives. The passage that references the need for parents to monitor their children’s homework and afterschool whereabouts is a clear ineptitude to understand the nature of social problems in townships like Gugulethu where even in a rare case that a parent is present after school, most do not have the educational background to help their children themselves. This section of the goals also acknowledges the higher unemployment rate for women, but fails to link that statistic to educational inequality and the extra burden of care work women take on in the home and community.

The case of the inadequacy of the UN Millennium Development goals to address the actual needs of South Africa is a prime example of how programs and policies can be a useless waste of resources and ultimately fail the population they originally intended to help. Instead of taking an intersectional approach\textsuperscript{13} to view different social issues impacting inequality in South Africa simultaneously, individual problems were pursued exclusively without acknowledging the ways multiple problems interact to create an oppressive structure. Further, instead of incorporating a community based informed knowledge the UNMDG in South Africa failed to address the ways that everyday lives are impacted by these structural social issues. Fortunately, there are examples of other organizations that do implement more mindful approaches to making social change and informed steps to alleviating inequality.

**Informed Aid: Education without Borders**

As stated previously, this project took place due to an opportunity to work alongside Canadian-based international education NGO Education without Borders. This opportunity allowed me to contact the founders of EWB for an in depth interview, through which they provided unique insight on how the organization was started and how it developed into what it has become today. All of these opportunities combined provided the chance to analyze EWB as a model for effective policy and programing that can enable social change and steps towards furthering equality, and to assess their use of an intersectional approach informed by group based knowledge.

Before I had the chance to interview the Hershlers, the cofounders and chairs of EWB, I thoroughly studied their website content to see how they portray themselves to the public, and what can be understood through their content. Founded fourteen years ago in 2002, the EWB vision “aims to provide improved educational opportunities and facilities in disadvantaged regions of the world.”\textsuperscript{14} The organization runs out of Vancouver in Canada, and became a recognized charity organization and an international education NGO in 2003. The mission statement of the organization asserts “EWB believes that the development of knowledge and skills gives individuals greater control over their lives and more possibilities and choices for their future. Enhanced educational opportunities build communities from within, and facilitate bridging between communities.”\textsuperscript{15} Instantly from the rhetoric chosen in the vision and mission statements of the organization, it is clear that the focus is on improving the lives of individuals and allowing the power of education to transform lives.

The focus on individuals and communities says a lot about how informed the organization is, in that focusing on individuals and communities puts those facing the oppression in the center, instead of centering the focus on global development and economic initiatives. More often than not, so-called education development initiatives with a gender focus only ever discuss the girl learners in that educating them can be seen primarily as a communal good, instead of a benefit for individual girls themselves.\textsuperscript{16} The girl learner is essentialized as a tool for development for the entire disadvantaged community, which erases the significance of an individual girl’s life, and also erases the agency she has in her own life and community as well.

\textsuperscript{14}“Education without Borders.” 2016. \url{http://www.educationwithoutborders.ca/about/}

\textsuperscript{15}“Education without Borders.” 2016. \url{http://www.educationwithoutborders.ca/about/vision/}

EWB strays away from focusing on their work as a good for the entire Gugulethu community, and focuses on individual learners instead. While girls’ issues may be incorporated into their larger education mission, any focus or programming on gender disparity is not specifically mentioned in their work.

The EWB website has two sections where short biographies of involved persons are provided. The list of board members and advisors is not very large, only seven advisors and twenty-three board members. Aside from the vision and “about us” pages, other pages on the site detail how one can get involved and donate by subscribing to the EWB newsletter, by volunteering at EWB sponsored events for fundraising or for the programs themselves, or by donating funds. However of all the information on the site, I want to focus in on the portion that details what EWB actually does and the kinds of programs it offers.

In the website tab “our projects,” EWB details the main extracurricular initiatives that have been started by the organization at Fezeka and in the few other schools the organization is now beginning to assist. According to the EWB website, at Fezeka EWB offers afterschool and weekend tutoring, dance, a food garden, an emphasis on math, English and life skills subjects, photography and choir. When reconsidering the social issues and needs that surfaced from the conversations with the Fezeka principal, EWB teachers, and the girls, most of the programs that Fezeka offers are relevant to the actual needs of the community. The most impactful programs that EWB offers to Fezeka are the afterschool and weekend tutoring programs, the food garden, and the extracurricular support especially for English, math, and life skills.

These programs address the identified needs for educational support in extra tutoring, especially as discussed previously, many teachers are not equipped with the right training to

\[17\] Education without Borders: Our Projects. 2015. [Link](http://www.educationwithoutborders.ca/projects/)
teach these subjects themselves. Further, the food garden program and the fact that EWB often offers a small meal or snack at their program gatherings, speaks to their understanding that students at Fezekas are often going without enough to eat at home and turn to the school for extra nutrition. The website for EWB provided a lot of information on the initiatives the organization provides to Fezekas, and much can be learned from their choices, however the full depth of the intention behind each program was not understood until I experienced the programs myself at the school and through my interviews with the Hershlers themselves.

From my own experiences, observing EWB’s presence at Fezekas before speaking to the Hershlers, I could tell that the students truly appreciated the programs they enjoy because of EWB’s efforts at the school. My first encounter of EWB in action was with the afterschool photojournalist program run by professional Cape Town photographer Greg Hillyard. The students in this group were aware that only a select few from the school were chosen to participate for the program, and they seemed a little shy to meet my American group but very excited to be participating. Programs like the photojournalist project, the choir, and dance groups offer outlets for students to escape the realities of their daily lives in Gugulethu, and also give students a place of safety and solidarity, often where they can find a much needed snack or small meal before heading home. Also, throughout my time in South Africa, I noticed right away the central importance of dance and song within Xhosa culture as ways to celebrate and create community bonds; therefore it is very keen of EWB to offer arts programs that relate to the culture of the students themselves.

Outside of the arts programs offered by EWB at Fezekas, the afterschool tutoring initiatives with focuses in English, math, and life skills, offer students a much needed resource to keep up in core subjects that are necessary for passing the national matric exam and entering
college. However, one factor that seemed to be missing from all the programs and initiatives EWB has implemented at Fezeka, was a program that acknowledged gender inequities in secondary schools like Fezeka, where girls could turn for guidance on the issues that they face that often times their male peers do not. Rothchild (2006) notes that social institutions such as the family or the school have been “historically determined to put girls at a severe disadvantage when it comes to maximizing opportunities for education and future opportunity.” Yet in all the programs offered to Fezeka students by EWB, there was no focus on gendered issues or any program aimed at relieving some of the gender disparities girls face as they strive to reach their educational dreams. After observing EWB’s presence in Fezeka, I wanted to talk to the organization’s leaders themselves to better understand how they chose which programs to implement at the school, and which social issues to try and alleviate for the learners.

Upon returning to the United States after my time in South Africa, I set up an online video interview with the Hershlers from their Canadian home, and discussed their story and the issues of Fezeka, Gugulethu, and South Africa as a whole. After introductory conversation, I began the interview by asking the Hershlers why they chose to leave South Africa and what was it like for them to grow up there. Cecil began by saying:

We first left in 1969 then in 1971. Finally in 1973 officially left because of inequality. Both our families were neutral. They didn’t act for or against apartheid. They were magical environments with nannies who sang to you as a child but you didn’t know why. As a young white child we grew up in a cocoon.

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Ruth added that they “didn’t want to grow a family there. We were very privileged.” She continued:

You had staff who lived with you and that was normal. Children (of the staff) could go visit but they were divided and that was just the way it was. Only when we got to university, we were in our bachelor years, we read and investigative article on Gugulethu. The single high school was an abandoned hospital.

Recognizing their own innate privilege in racially divided South African society, being white and coming from economically secure families, the Hershlers decided to start their lives together in Canada instead of living in apartheid torn South Africa where their efforts to resist racism were not permitted by the social structure at the time. It would have been extremely easy for the couple to stay in South Africa, and create no efforts to resist the segregated and unequal social structure from which they benefited from greatly. However the Hershlers felt strongly that they had to act and do whatever they could to change things, even if that meant eventually leaving the country.

The Hershlers, as young college students in South Africa, had started to try and organize educational aid for Fezeka during the apartheid era. The pair decided that they would try and contribute to the school as tutors themselves, yet they explained that under Bantu Education law, they were unable to fulfill their aspirations. Together, they explained to me that how they tried to do something to combat apartheid education barriers, but they were ultimately denied by the legal structure of the era, and were forbidden from helping Fezeka as the political climate in South Africa became more and more restrictive. Regardless, the couple acted anyways and tried to make an impact without being noticed by the government.

Ruth: We called the Fezeka principle in 1971 and asked what we could do. We helped rebuild the school and make a library in 1973. We wrote letters to the Bantu Department of Education asking if we could help the teachers and they said no, that it was against the apartheid law. We went to the mayor of Cape Town and they gave us 500R to rebuild the school. We cultivated relationships with that school.
Cecil: It’s very difficult for a white person to be in South Africa and not be privileged. This was the driving force of EWB- just before we left South Africa there was a knock on our door. The Principal and Vice Principal of Fezeka came bringing presents to our door. The neighbors stared. They came to bless us and said “we will never forget you.”

The Hershlers still managed to help Fezeka during a very unstable and violent time, even thought they could have chosen to stay safe and look the other way. The Hershler’s dedication to equal education has not waivered to this day, as they started EWB and continue to give back to Fezeka even twenty years now after apartheid has ended. I asked the Hershlers where they moved after they left South Africa and how Canada came to be their new home. Ruth explained how they ended up in Canada by way of the United States, and the difficulty of leaving family behind.

We left as students to study internationally but we wouldn’t have left if not for apartheid. It was very hard to leave our families especially for the first 10 years. We chose Canada with our 9 month old. We went to Georgia Tech first, then moved with Cecil’s mentor to Canada. Canada is a country with a more equitable social system.

The Hershlers, throughout our conversation, displayed their deep love for their true home, South Africa. They reiterated how they love their home country to this day, and that they never wanted to leave but felt forced to leave, both due to the overwhelming privilege they experienced in South Africa, and due to the violent climate that made their dreams of starting a family during the nineteen seventies very difficult. Cecil is a physician by trade, and as Ruth explained, they moved first to the United States for a short while with Cecil’s physician mentor and then to Canada permanently. Ruth recognized the difference in social equality even between the United States and Canada, and cited this as one of the main factors they considered when creating their permanent home.

As our interview continued, I asked the Hershlers to tell me about how they chose to start Education without Borders nearly thirty years after leaving South Africa. I wanted to know what kept them dedicated to educational inequality in their home country long after they had left and
started a new life and family of their own in Canada. Cecil explained that since the couple’s college days, “it was like a jolt of lightning went through our consciousness. This project was not a fly by night—this was a ‘we’re with you to till the end project.’” After the Hershlers grew their family and felt financially established enough to make a real difference, the couple returned to Fezeka in 2001 and approached then principal and now current principal Mr. Bucks Baloyi about starting Education without Borders, and inquired about what their new organization could do to help Fezeka once again.

Although the Hershlers founded EWB and returned to Fezeka to try and bridge educational disparities for the indigenous Black African community of Gugulethu seven years after the end of apartheid, even today the social structure, as repeatedly demonstrated, remains extremely divided on the basis of race, gender, and class. Therefore I wondered how the Hershler’s felt about starting their programs at Fezeka now, not only as white outsiders, but also as white westerners now as well. I inquired as to whether they encountered any difficulties after starting EWB, in their altruistic goals of improving education for Fezeka students. Cecil told me that,

A few years ago we presented results to the teachers. One old board member stood up and said “your blood is the same as my blood.” I am South African. I was born in South Africa and I do what I can and I speak as fiercely as I can today. It’s economic injustice and corruption today. If we didn’t have people like you come back it wouldn’t be as positive. We need to keep the vision of their future. That’s what it’s all about.

The quote above demonstrates how EWB is committed to working with the members of Fezeka to improve education standards for learners there, instead of acting as outside saviors who place their initiatives onto the school. The Hershlers explain that their relationship to Fezeka administration is one of mutual support. EWB works so well to aid Fezeka as a co-supporter instead of an outside savior, especially as the Hershlers have a deep understanding of the intersecting social issues that are present for indigenous Black African communities in South
Africa still today. EWB operates in a spirit of allyship with Fezeka and the surrounding community; this is essential as the organization is creating a space for members to empower themselves instead of assuming the power to change the social structure themselves. Clearly EWB also has a critical and thorough understanding of the reality of inequality in South Africa today as it has transitioned since apartheid. As is recognized by the Hershlers, inequality in post-apartheid South Africa is less about race today as it is about the economic inequality that directly stemmed from racial inequality during apartheid.

**Acknowledging Issues and Fostering Allyship**

As capitalist economies have developed across the world in modern times, these economic systems favor few while keeping the masses disadvantaged and away from obtaining educational, political, and economic access. Most often the economic divides of capitalism today follow old divides of race and gender, even as many countries have moved away from colonialism and segregation practices and into “developed” status. Chandra Mohanty (1997) argues that “despite geographical and sociocultural differences between contexts, the organization of the global economy by contemporary capital” places disadvantaged groups in “similar ways, effectively reproducing and transforming locally specific hierarchies.” The phenomenon of economic inequality created by capitalism, which Mohanty describes, can be

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clearly seen in South Africa today, still along race and gender divides, and the Hershlers understand this division especially in terms of race.

The interview with the Hershlers continued as I asked them about what role they feel EWB can play in help alleviating some of these problems. Cecil answered that “We would like our kids to become socially and politically active. The students who show commitment go to camp for leadership. We change students so alumni can give back.” Essentially, the Hershlers hope that learners who go through the EWB programs at Fezeka will become activists themselves and work to change the social structure, and in turn that the children who leave their program will continue the work of helping the Gugulethu community as they become adults. However, the Hershlers still had not acknowledged disparities of gender in their understanding of the social issues that occur for Fezeka students, and had not mentioned of their extracurricular programs aiming to alleviate any gender inequity at the school.

Our conversation continued and I asked the EWB founders whether they hoped to keep maintaining their programs, or if they planned to ever exchange them over to Fezeka control, so that the programs could be run by Fezeka’s own teachers and community members instead of an NGO. Ruth answered my query, noting that they

Are always very respectful of school administration but we don’t work directly with them because it becomes ineffective. Teachers, if you speak to them, seem interested, but they don’t commit to helping. We asked teachers to be tutors but they don’t do the work. There is no role modeling and we’re overwhelmed with the unionizing. They said “it can’t work because we can’t work in a broken system. We can’t work with you.” We’re working with 125 learners this year, 10 in the photography class. We want to double the number of learners and raise the quality of what we’re teaching. We are working with administration to bring our English tutors once per week into the classrooms. We are trying to break through the classrooms.

Ruth highlighted the disconnection between the commitment of the teachers at Fezeka to helping the students with extra tutoring and mentoring. This issue resurfaced here, yet was first presented as discussed in Chapter Three, by the two EWB tutors interviewed for this project. Charmaine
and Sonwabile both conveyed that they do not get sufficient support from the rest of the teachers at the school, who are often undertrained in their own subjects. These tutors also had highlighted the extra burden EWB staff carry while working at Fezeka which Ruth touched on: there are no role models, therefore the EWB staff take on the role model aspect and often act as counselors to the students as well. However, this added shift of acting as a counselor to the students is extremely taxing on EWB staff, yet the commitment from the school, as highlighted above, simply doesn’t match up to the need.

The Hershlers remain positively committed to aiding learners at Fezeka regardless of the innumerable social issues that learners face and the apparent lack of support from the school’s administration. Cecil said, “When you feel you can do something you have to. It’s a drop in the ocean but it’s something. We go back every year for about 2 months to check on things.” At this point in our interview, the Hershlers relayed to me their awareness of the gendered social issues that more deeply affect girl learners at Fezeka than boys. Up to this point gender hadn’t been mentioned in this interview by the couple, but they brought up a striking case from one of their learners some years ago. “A young grade 9 student became pregnant but came back and finished. Her parents were lost to AIDS and she was being cared for by her grandma but then was raped by her uncle and put into foster care.” The Hershlers were clearly well aware of issues related to the systemic poverty enforced upon communities like Gugulethu during and since apartheid, such as teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and sexual violence. This story in particular impacted Cecil so deeply, that he wrote the following poem about the girl who faced so many intersections of oppression even in her young life.

Shame was sitting on a stool in the shack.

He was relaxed and his legs were stretched out in front
of him.

It was mid-afternoon and he was already drunk.

I had come to find his niece Onithe

She wasn’t there but her uncle was sitting around an overturned beer crate with a group of friends.

They were laughing and their mouths glistened while they pointed to the yard.

The yard was empty.

Onithe was not there.

Onithe was 13 and pregnant.

She had lost her mother and father to HIV/AIDS

and lived in this one roomed shack with her uncle.

I had met her recently when I had come to tutor English in her township school.

She had shyly confided in me that she had become pregnant with her uncle.

I had not said anything at the time shocked into silence by the absolute matter-of-factness of her words.

She had not returned to class since and I wanted to find her and understand what was happening.
I was prepared to conquer my fears and visit her home in the township after school. I wanted to find out whether she needed support or help. And now I couldn’t find her.

I never did see her again.

A few weeks later, I heard from one of her classmates that she had dropped out of school and had been taken by social workers to an orphanage. That’s when shame settled down for the long haul.

Loading my chest wall like a bag of cement

Squeezing my lungs.

The poem Cecil wrote is a clear demonstration of the intersecting multiple oppressions girls in township communities can face in their daily lives. Yet furthermore, this poem also points to the deep awareness the EWB founder held regarding gendered issues in the Gugulethu community and other communities like it, and of the other multiple intersecting social issues that disproportionately affect indigenous Black African communities in South Africa. The couple explained that while they realize what many of the major issues are for learners, funding limitations affect the types of programs they are able to offer at Fezeka. However, at the conclusion of our interview I asked the founders if they would be open to starting a supportive extracurricular organization just for girls at Fezeka, and they agreed that they would. Ruth explained, however, “It’s very hard to sustain from here. We want to find someone in South Africa to turn this over to. We owe our success to international students volunteering to help us.”
EWB is truly an organization that is aware of the intersections of oppression faced by the population it aims to assist. However, with funding and geography issues, EWB’s ambitions aren’t fully realized at Fezeka. The organization showed interest in providing the girls’ support program, of which both tutors and many of the girls interviewed for this study identified a need. However, as scholars note, “analyzing gender inequality in schools should be problematized with a careful explanation of how gender is socially constructed and maintained both in the school and the home.”

Therefore efforts to resist gender inequity in education must also exist not only at Fezeka for the girls, but must take place as a communal shift in Gugulethu, as well as on the state level. The community shift to recognize and fight against gender inequity must ultimately originate from the community itself, instead of being forced from outside. As stated previously in this study, a girls’ support organization for Fezeka is currently being planned by myself and the Hershlers, however support and leadership from within the Fezeka and Gugulethu community are key for such a program to succeed. Yet, throughout this entire interview with the founders of EWB, and through my interactions with the organization in the field at Fezeka, it is clear that they hold a strong commitment to working with the community they serve, and are very aware about the intersecting social issues that learners face. An added emphasis to the organization on girls’ social and educational disparities will make their initiatives that much more impactful and successful.

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis highlighted how a new and intersectional knowledge, informed by those who directly live at the crossroads of oppression and therefore can best define it, can be realized through feminist epistemological practices of narrative gathering and relationship building. Furthermore, this study demonstrates how this new knowledge must be used to inform policy and programming initiatives aimed at educational aid in disadvantaged regions of the world. In post-apartheid South Africa, Black African schoolgirls from impoverished townships face particular intersecting social challenges that most often keep them from achieving academic success. These girls are resilient and hopeful, even in the face of multiple barriers that keep them from graduating from secondary school, passing the national matric exam, and accessing a university education. The determination of the girls in this study to overcome the social barriers to education that they constantly encounter in order to reach their dreams will be a motivating factor in my own research for years to come. Additionally, the commitment of the teachers interviewed for this project and of the founders of the INGO Education without Borders to furthering education equality inspires me to continue researching impacts of social factors and education.

This study exemplified how group exclusion from social institutions of higher learning cannot be viewed in a singular dimension, but rather, as the girls and their mentors would say, multiple barriers must be examined together. Cornerstone theories from canonical works within Black Feminist Thought provided the appropriate framework for this study. By incorporating guiding paradigms from Black Feminist epistemology,¹ a distinct new knowledge informed by

¹ Hill Collins, Patricia. Another Kind of Public Education: Race, Schools, the Media, and
the girls of Fezeka, their mentors and principal, emerged to better define the ways in which these girls navigate the socio-cultural oppressions they face, especially their exclusion from tertiary education. As detailed in the interviews within Chapter Three, the girls from this study demonstrated their thorough awareness of the multiple oppressions they encounter simultaneously, yet because of the structures of inequality in which their lives exist every day. Oppressive social structures cannot often be overcome alone without informed legislative policy changes and program aid.\(^2\) Relaying back to quotes from Chapter Three, the girls voiced their concerns regarding gangs, tik abuse, alcoholism, teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence, and lack of support both academically and emotionally at school. Yet when one girl stated “We are still in apartheid,” and the rest of the girls agreed with this perspective, it demonstrated that these girls are not only aware of the history that created the current oppressive social structure in South Africa, but are informed as to how the residue of apartheid lingers on today.

In addition to theoretical frameworks of Black Feminist Thought, intersectional feminist theory also directly informed this study from the methodology processes to the analysis of each interview. Black feminists have noted, “historical linkages and systemic interrelationships that reveal the underlying ways any one dimension of inequality is shaped by another one are rarely fully examined. A problematic result is that the experiences of whole groups are ignored, misunderstood, or erased, particularly those of women of color.”\(^3\) With an understanding of the


necessity for intersectional feminist frameworks in analyzing the oppressions of girls and women of color, this thesis examined a comprehensive spectrum of inequality that exists simultaneously for Black South African girls. The sum of these oppressions must be understood as each issue works together and contributes to other issues at the same time. This study demonstrated that effective educational aid policies and programs must fully utilize this intersectional knowledge produced by those who directly face oppressions, if they are to be successful in implementing change and furthering equality.

International organizational initiatives, such as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, who fail to incorporate knowledge personally informed by those who live at the intersections of oppression into their policy and program formations, run the risk of homogenizing entire regions or groups. Misinformed policy and programming that does not account for the entirety of social issues that a population experiences, often enacts measures that become ineffective and useless, and possibly even detrimental to a given group. United Nations Millennium Development Goals for South Africa, especially goals two and three or “achieve universal primary education” and “promote gender equality and empower women,”⁴ homogenize the problems of girls and women in South Africa. Without regard for other social inequalities such as race and class, and without the understanding that post-apartheid South Africa still remains so divided, the UNMDGs overlook the multiple oppressions faced by girls and women of color in South Africa that boys, men, and white women often do not face. While many other nations in Africa continue to struggle at achieving universal primary education, South Africa’s

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real education issues are regarding secondary and tertiary education equality and access. The notion that South Africa’s education disparities are the same as other nations in Africa not only homogenizes the continent, but it disregards the real present need for educational reform specific to South Africa. These issues could be resolved by the utilization of intersectional feminist analysis, as it draws attention to the unique oppressions that women and girls face as they affect them personally, and highlights that education disparity in South Africa falls disproportionately in the secondary and tertiary levels. Often misappropriation of inequality leads to a focus on how a community as a whole faces oppression, yet simultaneously erases the specific extra burdens women and girls of a given community face. Yet by utilizing intersectional feminist frameworks, this misappropriated erasure is avoided.

In this study, the gender disparity that exists in the most economically and socially oppressed populations of South Africa formed a central focus to examine how marginalization falls to impoverished black African girls and women more so than male counterparts. Cultural and social norms in South Africa keep women and girls at a disadvantage in comparison with males in regards to educational access. The narratives from this study demonstrate how, in reality, it is the inequality that exists within South African social institutions and the lack of informed legislative policy and programming enactment that hold girls and women back from attaining their educational goals. The study demonstrated how the unfortunate realities of gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, alcoholism, drugs, teenage pregnancy, economic and social inequality, place South African girls at a great disadvantage in comparison to their male peers. The girls in this study, the two teacher mentors, and the founders of EWB realize this gendered

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divide, which stands as a barrier of educational achievement. However, the principal of Fezeka argued the reverse, that girls actually possess much advantage. The multitude of literature analyzed for this study, and the depth of data provided by other participants of this study discount the principal’s claim, and demonstrates the multiple ways in which girls actually face simultaneous disadvantages. This disconnect between administrative perspectives and the understanding from those who are in the classroom and experience gender-based inequality themselves must be reconciled in order for meaningful change to occur. Further, outside organizations must also develop a more informed understanding of these intersecting oppressions that girls at Fezeka and others like them face, if policy and program aid should be effective.

Yet, the case study of Education without Borders is a prime example of how an educational aid organization, if open to using intersectional informed knowledge to better address the real needs of populations they work with, can create meaningful change for a population. The founders of EWB exhibited a deep understanding of how their standpoint within the apartheid era of South Africa, and even in the post-apartheid era, afforded them with a substantial amount of privilege that Black Africans and other oppressed non-white groups cannot access. As students in college during the apartheid era, EWB founders Ruth and Cecil Hershler understood from an early age that education inequality negatively affects socio-economic outcomes for disadvantaged groups, further marginalizing people of color within social institutions of economy, labor, health care, and others. The Hershlers’ deep awareness of their privilege provided fuel for beginning EWB, and ultimately has lead them to live their lives with a goal of giving back to the disadvantaged of their home nation. Yet while they remain deeply aware of the intersections of race and class oppression for Black South Africans even today, improvements for initiatives towards gender equity in education could still be made.
The Hershlers demonstrated that they are aware of the gender inequity girls face in Fezeka and other schools like it. After initial analysis of the interviews and data collected for EWB, and after further analysis was completed for this thesis, I contacted the Hershlers to let them know the findings of this work. We discussed the disconnect within the school regarding the need for a focused extracurricular girls’ program that would help alleviate some of the social inequities and barriers the girls encounter in their efforts to complete secondary education and access tertiary education. Through this process the founders learned that in the future it will be more influential to the learners of Fezeka and the Gugulethu community if EWB continues to revisit community identified needs and utilize community produced knowledge about the nature of the social issues they face. The Hershlers will be able to use the findings of this thesis and the outcomes of the interviews as concrete artifacts that point to the necessity of a girls’ program. I also intend to create a more condensed user-friendly version of this work, so that EWB would have a physical document to share with their board. The data could be taken back to the board members and donors of EWB and explain the specific identified needs of girl learners so that the organization could raise funding for the program.

As portrayed in previous chapters, wealthier mostly white schools have access to resources that may help girl learners overcome any disadvantage or issue they face, specifically the availability of full-time school counselors. Meanwhile disadvantaged schools not only go without the aid of a school counselor, but teachers like Charmaine and Sonwabile find themselves working a second job as they act as substitute mentors and counselors for children who face much greater oppression than most wealthy white students do. Part of a girls’ program at Fezeka would be the inclusion of a professional counselor who could aid the students in their struggles to cope with the oppressions and challenges they face. This would not only take the
extra care work from teachers like Charmaine and Sonwabile, but would also provide the girls with the trained counseling and guidance support they so greatly need. Also, the disconnect between administrators and other perceptions of gendered disparities at the school could be bridged by allied collective initiatives, using the evidence within this thesis as an illuminator for areas of need and as a guide for potential program initiatives.

Finally, a much needed feature for a girls program at Fezeka and similar schools is the inclusion of academic advisors and mentors who are familiar with the challenges these students encounter in their quest towards secondary completion and tertiary access. As education scholars have noted, having parents that attended university provides students a greater likelihood of feeling like they belong in higher education. Yet learners in historically disadvantaged Black township communities of South Africa are extremely unlikely to have a parent who attended college, given the history of the geographic separation in education that occurred due to apartheid. Alternatively, an academic advisor could serve as a mentor and guide to learners as they strive for higher education access, helping them through the admissions process and reaching out to them as they adjust to university life. Even though first generation students often lack the sense of belonging that is crucial to success in higher education, if EWB or other education NGOs like it could hire such an advisor, students could rely on their mentor for guidance through various processes and possibly avoid the disadvantages associated with not having a college-educated parent.

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Future Directions

With the culmination of this thesis, a future goal as an outcome of this work is to aid in the process of starting a girls’ program at Fezeka alongside EWB. In the spirit of continued scholar activism, the research from this study can help guide the organization into making more informed and meaningful change for the learners of Fezeka, especially the girls. The knowledge produced by the girls and those in the academic trenches sheds new insight on the intersecting multiple oppressions that must be taken into consideration when planning any successful program or policy. Included in the girls’ program would be at least two additional workers to help alleviate the barriers girls face in their struggle to achieve educational success. First, I propose that it is necessary to implement the skills of a trained guidance counselor into the program, who would be employed to help girls and boys mentally and emotionally navigate the multiple disadvantages they encounter, and to better cope with the oppressions they face within their society. This addition would also alleviate the extra burden from teachers and tutors at Fezeka who are overworked in trying to compensate for the lack of a professional counselor. The second necessary addition would be an academic advisor who could help both the girls and boys prepare for and apply for university, and reach out to them offering guidance as they enter and continue in their university studies. Tasks such as creating an email account for correspondence with universities, filling out applications, and sending transcripts could all be taught or guided by the academic advisor. The inclusion of an academic advisor may compensate for the lack of a sense of belonging that first generation students often feel.

In closing, I conclude that this thesis has demonstrated a need for reformed frameworks for any policy or program initiatives, whether international or national, that attempt to aid
disadvantaged populations around the world. A new and better-informed knowledge can be found in the voices and experiences of those who encounter oppression and inequality in their daily lives. By gathering and incorporating this knowledge, organizations can create more meaningful change and better alleviate many challenges that disadvantaged persons encounter. Girls and women around the world would most benefit from intersectional, personally informed knowledge, as girls and women more often face overlapping oppressions related to gender. The final hope of this work as that new academic studies in the future will also focus on interrelating issues, and that more thoroughly informed research would lead to more informed and successful policy and program initiatives, enhancing the lives and educational access for populations around the globe.
WORKS CITED


http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/


VITA

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Rebekah L. Joyce is an alumna from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, where she received her Bachelor of Science in Sociology with a minor in International Studies in 2013. She continued her studies as a graduate student, earning her Master of Arts in Humanities in 2016 with a concentration in Women’s and Gender Studies, specifically focusing on gender and education. She also completed a graduate certificate in Women’s and Gender Studies. She has studied girls’ education in South Africa, and intends to continue her studies in the field of education.

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