YOUNG AND UPWARDLY MOBILE:

VOICES FROM

HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation submitted in completion of the degree Magister Artium at the University of the Free State is my own, original work and has not been submitted previously at another university, faculty or department.

I furthermore concede copyright of this dissertation to the University of the Free State.

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Introduction

Since the first democratic elections of 1994, South Africa has undergone insurmountable changes to its social structure, the most notable of which has been the shifting racial composition of the country's social classes. No longer hampered by the limitations aimed at preserving apartheid-era ideology, South Africa's Black population has steadily been crossing the divide into the once predominantly White middle- and upper-classes. Faithfully referred to as the 'emerging Black middle-class', or 'Black Diamonds', upwardly mobile Black South Africans individuals are at the vanguard of reshaping South Africa's social environment. The aim of this dissertation is to present an exploration into young Black South Africans lived experiences of upward mobility (i.e. the transition from one social class to another), while focusing predominantly on their self-identification, and identification by others. Before continuing, it is important to clarify what is meant by the term 'Black South Africans'. In the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998, the term 'Blacks' is used to refer to non-Whites (i.e. Coloureds, Indians, and Africans). However, the term 'Black South Africans', as it is employed in this dissertation, refers exclusively to Black Africans, and does not include members of the Coloured or Indian population.

To achieve an exploration into the lived experience of upward mobility and identity, this dissertation adopts an interpretive approach to social research. The philosophical tenets of interpretivism thus guide every facet of how the research for this dissertation is conducted. In chapter 1, I provide an in-depth discussion of precisely how interpretivism has informed my dissertation by describing each of the philosophical assumptions maintained throughout the research project. Chapter 1 includes descriptions of aspects such as the ontological, epistemological and methodological pillars that uphold my research project. Other fundamental topics include the axiological and rhetorical assumptions, and the overall theoretical framework as informed by various interpretive schools of thought.

Chapter 2 aims to define and discuss the conceptual framework which greatly informs my exploration of young Black South Africans' lived experiences of upward mobility. In chapter 2, I therefore discuss pertinent concepts, such as social mobility, class and race. Another aspect of the second chapter is to discuss how the three aforementioned concepts (upward mobility, class and race) intersect in South

Africa's past and present to form the social environment that envelopes my research participants' everyday lives. Therefore, the aim of chapter 2 is also to provide a review of the literature that deals specifically with the deleterious effects of apartheid-era legislature on the upward mobility of Black South Africans, and the steps that have been taken in post-apartheid South Africa to mend the racial inequality apartheid has created. The crux of this study's focus lies in exploring the identities of young and upwardly mobile Black South Africans. The final facet of chapter 2 is thus to define the concept of identity, and to describe precisely how it is incorporated into meeting this study's research objectives.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology and the various methodological tools that are used to meet the study's overall objective. In chapter 3, I introduce narrative research as the study's chosen methodology. More specifically, I describe an approach to narrative research known as the narrative practice approach, which further provides me with an analytical framework for analysing the research participants' narrative accounts. The second aspect of chapter 3 is to illustrate the various techniques used to accrue the research participants' lived experiences of upward mobility, and includes detailed descriptions of the various techniques involved in the process of collecting and analysing data.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation presents the findings of the research project as an amalgam of the various pillars espoused in the preceding three chapters. The data is thus presented in a way that, first of all, aims to reflect the philosophy of interpretive research through an approach known as impressionist tales. The presentation of the data is also divided into three main sections that reflect the facets of the concept of identification adopted for this study, as well as the three ways of analysing identification as upheld by the narrative practice approach. In the fifth chapter, I provide a summary of the dissertation and highlight the main findings of the research project.

Of course, for we who understand life, figures are quite unimportant.

-*The Little Prince* (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry)

Chapter 1: Philosophical and theoretical points of departure

At the start of any research project it is essential to reflect on the theoretical and methodological principles that will guide the research. Various theoretical and methodological paradigms exist, and these paradigms represent different ways of approaching research. A paradigm is defined as a fundamental image that the researcher has of his or her subject matter (Blaikie, 2010: 97) and is determined by the type of questions researchers wish to have answered, and also how these questions should be answered. Theoretical and methodological paradigms in sociological research are typically polarised into opposite groupings, namely quantitative or qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2010: 49).

In broad terms, quantitative approaches reduce phenomena to quantifiable data in order to objectively explain and predict future occurrences of those phenomena. Even in instances where the phenomenon may not naturally be conducive to a numerical reduction, quantitative approaches often employ a vast array of research instruments that have the capacity to adapt the research design in such a way as to provide the researcher with an avenue for collecting quantitative data. The ultimate objective of quantitative research is to generalise findings across the population from which the sample was drawn (Babbie & Mouton, 2010: 49). Quantitative methodology is therefore mainly mathematical in nature and geared towards ensuring validity and reliability by means of restricting the objective distance between researchers and the subjects of their research (Babbie & Mouton, 2010: 49).

Qualitative research on the other hand, is uninterested in objective explanation and the generalisation of results. Instead, qualitative research delves into an interpretive understanding of a phenomenon under study (Babbie & Mouton, 2010: 53). In other words, the aim is to provide a unique insider's perspective of a given situation. As such, qualitative methodology is directed towards methods that close the distance between researchers and their research subjects (Babie & Mouton, 2010: 53).

In this study, the aim is to explore young Black South Africans' experiences with upward mobility with the intent of forming a rich understanding of their identities. Between quantitative and qualitative research, the most appropriate to meeting the aims of this study is a qualitative approach, because of the paradigmatic tenets that accompany qualitative research. The two most commonly adopted paradigms in social scientific research are positivism and interpretivism. Although researchers may adopt positivism and interpretivism interchangeably with quantitative or qualitative research, the two paradigms are generally associated with a specific scientific approach. For example, quantitative research usually adopts a positivist worldview, whereas qualitative research is associated with an interpretivist worldview (Babie & Mouton, 2010: 53).

This study exclusively makes use of a qualitative approach to research in conjunction with an interpretive paradigm. The following section deals more closely with what this entails by discussing the philosophical assumptions that are inherent in interpretive qualitative research. In order to further emphasise the motive behind this study's use of the interpretive paradigm, the subsequent section frequently contrasts positivism with interpretivism in order to provide a better understanding of why a positivist paradigm simply cannot meet the needs of this study.

1.1. <u>Philosophical assumptions of interpretive/qualitative research</u>

Before continuing, it should be made clear what is meant by the term 'paradigm'. A paradigm, also referred to as a worldview, is defined by Guba and Lincoln (2004: 21) as a set of fundamental beliefs that define the nature of the world and the researcher's approach to studying it. Different paradigms have different philosophical positions in relation to the field of scientific inquiry, which is reflected more clearly in the assumptions that dictate how a research project is carried out. In order to clearly describe the philosophical assumptions maintained in my dissertation, this section is divided into five taxonomies adapted from the philosophical assumptions of qualitative research as discussed by Creswell (2007, 15-19). The proceeding subsections thus touch on the issues of ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (the nature of knowledge), axiology (the role of values), rhetoric (linguistic style of the study), and methodology (the scientific strategy of inquiry); and the various ways in which these assumptions inform this dissertation. It is important to note that the

philosophical assumptions, as related to this study, are informed by the philosophical foundations of interpretive research, and are later extended by the theoretical framework discussed in section 1.2.

1.1.1. <u>Ontology</u>

Ontological assumptions are concerned with a research project's worldview on nature of reality and what can be known about it (Guba & Lincoln, 2004: 21). Traditionally, positivism has maintained the ontological worldview that there is only one world and therefore only one reality that exists independently of our awareness of it. Positivist thinkers understand the world as functioning according to infallible laws which can be discovered through empirical research that is "*reductionistic, logical, empirical, cause-and-effect oriented and rooted in a priori theories*" (Creswell, 2013: 24). In terms of sociological research, early positivists maintained that the laws which dictate the functioning of the natural world are one and the same for the social world (Babbie & Mouton, 2010: 21). Social scientists who espouse positivist assumptions therefore use scientific methods similar to those used by natural scientists, which progressively move closer to discovering the laws and patterned regularities of the objective world, which presumably underlies a single reality shared by all (Monette, Sullivan, De Jong & Hilton, 2013: 40). Positivist researchers thus adopt what is known as realist ontology, which is mostly paired with quantitative methodological approaches (Martyn, 2010: 119).

Interpretivism on the other hand, the chosen paradigm of this particular study, primarily adopts constructivism as its chosen ontological viewpoint (Martyn, 2010: 119). Instead of viewing the world and reality as existing independently of the human mind, the constructivist worldview proposes that reality emerges from the mind's perception and interpretation of the world (Monette et al., 2013: 40). Constructivism sees our understanding of the world as a completely subjective product that is constituted through social interaction. Reality is therefore regarded as an invariably social product that never reaches a final state of conclusion, but is constantly emerging through our everyday social activities (Creswell, 2007: 20). Social reality, that is the same reality shared by muliple individuals, is regarded as infinitely complex and multiple (Guba & Lincoln, 2004: 26). This study therefore adopts the worldview that the research participants' perceived realities are intimately connected

with their subjective expereinces of the world. Exploring the research participants' expereinces therefore cannot be achieved by means of quantitative methods.

Interpretive researchers argue that this view of reality, as rooted in the unpredictable experience of human interpretation, cannot be quantified and objectively measured according to positivist methodologies (Monette et al., 2013: 40). Interpretive research rather attempts to turn the social sciences in the direction of 'Verstehen' or understanding, as opposed to positivism's philosophical aim of essentialist explanation (Mouton, 2001: 19). Max Weber, who is considered the father of interpretive sociology and the philosophy of 'Verstehen', emplores social researchers to look beyond the positivist credo of merely explaining human behavior as driven by cause and effect. Weber's interpretive sociology therefore situates social research in the philosophy ofinteracting closely with the people being researched in order to delve into the lived experience of a given phenomenon.

This study's emphasis on the lived experience is rooted in another fundamental tenet of interpretive research, namely that people's subjective experiences intimately reflect their perceived social realities. The interpretive researcher is thus tasked with uncovering how people experience a phenomenon from their own unique perspectives in an attempt to form a deeper understanding of how they perceive their everyday reality (Guba & Lincoln, 2013: 87). As I have adopted a constructivist ontological standpoint, this study focuses on the subjective experiences of those who participated in the research as a faithful representation of their social realities. The research participants' perceived realities are evidenced by the use of direct quotes in the presentation of my research findings (Creswell, 2007: 18). It is specifically because of this study's requirements for acquiring the research participants' subjective perceptions that I make use of a qualitative research approach; as it's associative methodologies are perfectly suited to garnering an interpretive understanding through an empathic relationship with the research participants (Monette et al., 2013: 40).

1.1.2. <u>Epistemology</u>

Where ontology focuses on issues of reality, epistemology deals with questions relating to the researcher's assumptions about knowledge production (Guba & Lincoln, 2004: 21). This study's epistemological position emerges in close collaboration with its constructivist ontological position (Crotty, 1998: 10). As already discussed, this study's ontological supposition regards social reality as invariably connected with how individuals interpret the world. This study focuses on presenting the research participants' perceived realities by getting as close as possible to acquiring their lived experiences with the phenomenon of upward mobility by means of an interpretive approach to research.

In order to assemble the type of knowledge required by interpretive research, the data collection process in this study requires minimising what Creswell (2007: 18) refers to as the 'objective separatedness' between researcher and research participant. Minimising objective separatedness entails working as closely as possible with my research participants in an attempt to gain a better understanding of their first-hand experiences with upward mobility and identity (Creswell, 2007: 18). In epistemological terms, the knowledge which emerges from this study is thus considered the result of a collaborative effort between me and the research participants (Guba & Lincoln, 2013: 40).

This study's epistemological position contrasts sharply with that of positivist social research, which is described as a nomothetic discipline, referring to its adherence to producing empirical knowledge that can be generalised (Babbie & Mouton, 2010: 272). As a nomothetic discipline, positivist researchers do not collaboratively construct knowledge with their research participants, but attempt to discover knowledge using deductive reasoning (Guba & Lincoln, 2013: 87). Deductive research begins with the formulation of a theoretically-based hypothesis which aims to reduce a specific phenomenon into a series of predictions. Once the data has been collected and analysed, researchers consider their findings in relation to the prevailing hypothesis, which may or may not be modified to match the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 2013: 87). In social research, deductive reasoning is typically used when researchers aim to uncover the patterned regularities of human action, and

seek to generalise the results onto the population from which their sample was drawn (Guba & Lincoln, 2013: 87).

Interpretive sociology, however, does not aim to produce empirical knowledge that can be generalised onto a target population. Instead, the aim is to yield a subjective understanding of the lived experience of a situation within its natural context. Interpretive research is therefore regarded as an idiographic centred paradigm that, unlike positivist social research, produces knowledge through inductive reasoning (Babbie & Mouton, 2010: 272). My research project is not approached from a set of predetermined hypotheses that aim to be generalised, nor do I attempt to present knowledge that provides an objective explanation of the research participants' lives. Instead, this study adheres to an inductive research design and is built from the 'bottom-up'. In other words, the findings presented in this dissertation emerged naturally throughout the process of undertaking the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2010: 272).

1.1.3. <u>Axiology</u>

Every research project is subject to the influence of numerous extraneous values. The extent to which this influence is made explicit in a research project is referred to as the study's axiological assumption (Creswell, 2007: 18). According to Guba and Lincoln (2013: 97), the values that may influence a research project mostly originate from the nature of the chosen paradigm, the paradigm's related methodologies, as well as the biographical history of the researcher.

As a major feature of positivist research is to produce accurate knowledge that can be generalised over a target population, researchers go to great lengths in order to keep their research as value-free as possible (Guba & Lincoln, 2013: 87). Positivist research is thus ideally conducted in an environment that allows researchers to tightly control the influence of external values in their studies. The most notable strategy in this endeavour is to minimise the influence of personal bias that may stem from the researcher's involvement in the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2010: 43). The knowledge produced by positivist research is thus suitably regarded as value-free.

However, in interpretive research, the researcher is regarded as an indispensable part of the research process whose personal involvement cannot be avoided (Salkind, 2010: 1160). Even in cases where researchers may be using unobtrusive methods of data collection, it is ultimately through their own understanding that their research participants' experiences are interpreted and presented. Axiologically, this dissertation requires that I openly state the value-laden nature of my research (Creswell, 2007: 18). As much as the knowledge in this study may be considered the outcome of a joint effort, the findings are inevitably the product of my own interpretation of the raw data. This study therefore recognises and embraces the fact that the knowledge produced within its pages are value-laden and cannot be generalised.

1.1.4. **Methodology**

The methodological assumption of a study deals with the strategy of inquiry available to a researcher and serves as a middle-ground between a study's selected paradigm and the research methods involved in conducting research. Not to be confused with 'methods', which refer to the techniques employed to collect and analyse data, methodology refers to the philosophical approach to research employed by a study (Bailey, 2008: 35). A study's methodology provides a lens through which a researcher can evaluate his or her research objectives and select the best means of reaching those objectives (Bailey, 2008: 35).

This study's chosen research methodology is narrative research, which is an approach that focuses the data collection process around collecting the life stories of individuals who have experienced a specific phenomenon during the course of their lives (Luton, 2010: 54). In the case of this study, the aim is to explore the life stories of young Black South Africans who have first-hand experience with upward mobility, in order to understand the presence of identification in their lives. The narrative approach is best suited to this endeavour as it provides me with the opportunity to explore the effect that upward mobility has had over the course of my research participants' lives, and to delve into some of the decisive moments in their pasts that have led to their current social positions. Narratives further provide researchers with unique and multiple perspectives on the same situation (Luton, 2010: 54). Using a

narrative approach thus affords me with the opportunity to account for the complex ontological position that accompanies an interpretive paradigm.

1.1.5. <u>Rhetoric</u>

The final philosophical assumption identified by Creswell (2007: 18) is rhetoric, which refers to the linguistic style of a research project. The relative importance of rhetoric should not be underestimated. For ancient philosophers such as Aristotle, rhetoric formed the backbone of successful persuasion in everyday interaction. The relative importance of rhetoric is especially true when it comes to conveying the 'outlook' of a particular study. As positivist research functions to produce knowledge that is objectively accurate and value-free, researchers populate their studies with terms such as 'internal and external validity', 'generalizability' and 'objectivity' (Creswell, 2007: 18). This type of vocabulary aims to convey a study that is steeped in scientific rigour, which ultimately assures potential readers of the project's empiricism.

However, this dissertation often makes use of a personal tone (as evidenced by the frequent use of personal pronouns) that conveys the predominantly interpretive approach to research (Creswell, 2007: 18). Using terms such as, 'to understand' instead of 'to explain' and 'dependability' instead of 'generalizability' are just a few terms in the glossary of qualitative rhetoric that reflect the type of interpretive knowledge that is presented in this study.

1.2. <u>Theoretical framework</u>

Apart from the philosophical assumptions inherent in opting for an interpretive approach to research, this study is also informed by three interpretive theoretical traditions, namely Phenomenology, Existential Sociology, and Reflexive Sociology. The aim of this section is to discuss each of these schools of thought in order to relate their respective theoretical frameworks to the conceptualization of this study.

1.2.1. <u>Phenomenology</u>

Of the three theoretical frameworks discussed in this section, phenomenology played the most distinctive role in the overall conceptualization of the study, both as a supplement to the study's underlying paradigmatic assumptions, and as an

informative framework for exploring how my research participants' perceive and construct their social realities. Phenomenology is a theoretical tradition and a philosophical approach to research that tasks researchers with exploring the implicit and often taken-for-granted assumptions that individuals use to make sense of their everyday experiences within the life-world (Overgaard & Zahavi, 2009: 93). According to Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), the founder of phenomenology's foundational concepts, the ultimate goal for phenomenologically based research is to "*return to the things themselves*". That is to say, to return to studying the life-world exactly as it presents itself to human consciousness in what is otherwise referred to as the lived experience (Crotty, 1998: 78).

At the core of phenomenological thinking is the life-world. For Alfred Schutz, whose work has become popularized for applying phenomenology to the field of sociological inquiry, the life-world or 'Lebenswelt' refers to the prescientific, yet "*principle*" reality that encapsulates all human activity, social and otherwise (Overgaard & Zahavi, 2009: 99). According to Schutz, the life-world can be thought of as an all-encompassing social reality that is constituted by a number of smaller, self-determined domains of reality known as 'provinces of meaning'. These domains (for example the domain of scientific inquiry) are characterized by their own unique sets of logic and therefore differ from each other in terms of how they rationalize and approach reality. However, one thing they share in common is the fact that in essence, they are all modifications of the same enveloping life-world (Overgaard & Zahavi, 2009: 100).

We experience the life-world and its various provinces of meaning through the 'natural attitude', a state of awareness that rarely calls into question what is generally regarded as an overlooked and "*self-evident*" reality (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973: 3). Phenomenologists proclaim that by placing aside our socially constructed understandings, and reconsidering our immediate experiences of perceived phenomena, we open those worldly phenomena to new avenues of meaning that may serve to validate or enrich our prior understandings of the life-world (Crotty, 1998:78).

In line with this philosophy of research, this study attempts to explore the identities of young and upwardly mobile Black South Africans by uncovering their lived

experiences of self- and external identification in relation to having achieved upward mobility. In order to do so, I attempt to uncover the implicit meanings the research participants use to make sense of instances where their identities have been salient in various everyday interactions. To help me achieve this goal, I refer to the most important conceptual foundations of phenomenological sociology. The concepts discussed in the following subsections are specifically concerned with understanding the different ways in which we, as conscious and interpreting selves, are invariably responsible for shaping our perceived social reality through our interpretation of the life-world.

1.2.1.1. <u>Intentionality</u>

At the very foundation of our experience the life-world is the concept of intentionality. According to phenomenologists, intentionality refers to the act whereby the human mind directs consciousness onto any perceived phenomena. Whether we are directly looking at an object, remembering a past event, or even just using our imagination, every conscious act is regarded as an act of intentionality (Sokolowski, 2000: 8). The phenomenological use of the word 'intentionality' should not be confused with the layman's use of 'intention', which refers to a purposeful act, e.g., "I didn't tell anyone I found a wallet because I intended to keep it". Instead, intentionality, as it is used here, exclusively refers to the act whereby the human mind dialectically adjoins itself to a perceived phenomenon through consciousness.

In phenomenological sociology, intentionality is the conscious bridge between the mind and the world that inevitably produces the experiences we use to shape a meaningful reality. Every conscious individual is always in the act of making sense of the life-world, and the two (the life-world and subject) cannot be regarded independently (Crotty, 1998: 79). Phenomenology's ontological standpoint extends this view further by maintaining that our conscious experiences of the life-world are given meaning through the mind's capacity to attach meaning to perceived phenomena. In turn, these meanings constitute the social reality we perceive as a reflection of our daily lives. Phenomenologists thus regard what we perceive to be a meaningful reality as something that is generated through the experience of life-worldly phenomena, or more accurately, the appearance of life-worldly phenomena (Crotty, 1998: 79). Accordingly, the reality we experience as real has no objective

truth to it other than that which is given to it by us. W.I. Thomas' dictum, "*If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences*" is thus taken to heart throughout the course of this study. While collecting data and producing the final analysis, I look at the research participants' experiences with an open mind and accept their subjective perceptions as a truthful reflection of their perceived social realities.

Phenomenology's ontological worldview has emerged in direct contestation to the philosophy of objective explanation that has historically characterized the aim of modern science (Sokolowski, 2000: 146). By tradition, modern science has been steadfast in maintaining that the world as we experience it through our senses, as colours, sights and sounds, does not truly reflect the 'real' world. Instead, the world we experience on a daily basis is nothing more than a mere subjective construct, pieced together by our biological responses to stimuli from material objects in the physical world. The subjective world of everyday life is essentially considered 'unreal', and is regarded as a completely separate entity from the 'real' world of objective truth. We are thus assumed to inhabit two distinct worlds: the 'unreal' subjective world of everyday life, and the 'real' objective world which can only truly be explained by scientific means (Sokolowski, 2000: 147).

However, phenomenology attempts to mend the subjectivist-objectivist rupture maintained by modern science by pointing out that the institution of modern science is itself a subjective product of our experiences with the life-world. Instead of discovering an entirely separate 'real' world, modern science merely subjects our experiences within the life-world to more meticulous methods of inquiry to provide us with empirical knowledge concerning our subjective experiences. This does not mean that phenomenologists reject modern science, as without it, we would not have access to the type of factual knowledge of the life-world, which would otherwise be unobtainable without the use of modern scientific techniques.

Applying the above retort to the field of social scientific inquiry, phenomenology endeavors to situate the social science of human nature within the prescientific realm of the life-world in order to shed light on the taken-for-granted processes that guide our scientific endeavors. The expectation is that in doing so, we open the field of scientific inquiry to new ways of exploring the life-world (Sokolowski, 2000: 151;

Overgaard & Zahavi, 2009: 98). Therefore, apart from this study's attempt to uncover the taken-for-granted meanings that shape the research participants' social realities, it also attempts to uncover the taken-for-granted decisions made during the course research project. I achieve this by being as transparent as possible about my decisions in the operationalization of this research project.

1.2.1.2. <u>Intersubjectivity</u>

In light of the disposition to highlight subjectivity as a truthful source for individuals' perceived social reality, phenomenological research has often been accused of giving way to a solipsistic philosophy that reduces the presence of other world-experiencing persons to mere subjective phenomena (Sokolowski, 2000: 152). This argument essentially charges phenomenology with failing to take into account the sociality of everyday life, making it an unfit approach to sociological research. However, the allegations phenomenology's scientific inadequacy are refuted by the fact that phenomenology explicitly combines subjectivity and sociality to define the life-world as an intersubjective experience (Overgaard & Zahavi, 2009: 96). Intersubjectivity refers to the incidence whereby multiple conscious selves intentionally experience a common phenomenon (Overgaard & Zahavi, 2009: 96).

Phenomenological sociology maintains that our interpretation of the life-world changes drastically when taking into account the existence of other world-experiencing persons. Apart from our own subjective positions, the world becomes known to us as something that can at any given time be viewed from innumerable standpoints. In the presence of other selves, the world takes on a quality that surpasses our own subjective comprehension of it, and we are able to appreciate it as something that is perceived by other people from perspectives that allow them to experience the same world differently to how we would (Sokolowski, 2000: 152). Phenomenologists agree that because the life-world is always experienced by more than just one person (i.e. through multiple subjectivities), it is said to be an intersubjective experience. In order to account for the intersubjectivity in my research participants' everyday lives, this study delves into their individual subjective perceptions and experiences with common aspects that accompany their upward mobility, for example issues of race and class and identification. This also allows

certain patterns to emerge that indicate similarities or differences in the way the participants' social realities are constructed.

Sokolowski (2000: 152) describes two moments in which the life-world presents itself as an intersubjective experience. In the first moment, we experience others much in the same way as we experience ourselves, as the physical personification of a conscious mind and self. The mind that occupies the perceived body may never be known to us, but one thing that remains true is our understanding that the perceived body is manipulated by a consciousness similar to our own. Recognizing the perceived other as similar to ourselves, we are able to form an uncomplicated understanding of how the world may appear to the perceived body according to its outward expressions (Sokolowski, 2000: 154).

In the second moment, we experience the life-world as something that is simultaneously experienced from different perspectives. Our experience of the life-world thus becomes known to us as specifically relating to our unique perspective. Perceiving the life-world from only one viewpoint, we can only experience it according to individual the perspective we perceive it from, barring us from experiencing it as anything other than what we already know. We can, however, change our positions relative to the life-world and allow ourselves to view it from different perspectives. The life-world itself remains unchanged, yet our experience of it alters according to the newly adopted perspective. Far from being able to experience the world from every conceivable angle, our experiences are limited to a combination of our past and present viewpoints, while the perspectives not yet seen by us only represent the potential for new experiences (Sokolowski, 2000: 152).

During the interviews, the research participants' frequently mention how they believe other young Black people experience particular situations in their narratives. Instead of overlooking these perceptions, I explore them with the intent of understanding why the research participants understand their experiences to be different to other young, Black peoples'. This also allows me to explore how their social positions may have an impact on how they perceive the life-world. The concept of intersubjectivity further forces me to pay attention to my own perspective of various aspects in the research participants' narratives. Doing so has allowed me to identify many of the taken-for-granted ways in which I interpret the life-world, making it significantly easier to

present the research participants' experiences in a way that truthfully reflects their perceptions.

Despite maintaining that the life-world is experienced intersubjectively, i.e., through the senses of infinitely different individuals, this does not necessarily mean that each individual perceives the life-world in an entirely different manner. To further bolster the argument that phenomenological sociology has the capacity to contribute to the field of sociology, phenomenologists emphasize the significance of cultural values in creating a shared experience of the life-world. The remaining two subsections, which fall under the topic of phenomenology, describe how our intentional experience of the life-word, and the reality this creates, is profoundly shaped by cultural values.

1.2.1.3. <u>Stock of knowledge</u>

According to Schutz, our interpretation of the life-world is only possible because we are able to draw upon a collection of interpretive frameworks, known as 'typifications', that allow us to instantly make sense of perceived phenomena. When we react to people, objects or events, we do not do so according to the individual features that comprise those things. Instead, we implicitly categorize perceived phenomena and interpret them according to the context of the experience (Overgaard & Zahavi, 2009: 102). For example, if I am walking down the street and encounter an animal, based on the appearance of the animal and the environment I'm in, I can tell that the animal is a dog and not a camel. Furthermore, by judging from the demeanor of the animal I can assess the situation as relatively harmless or as a threat to my life, in which case I will act accordingly. The process of typification occurs in the blink of an eye, and is one of the crucial ways in which we are able to effectively deal with obstacles that arise in our trajectory through the life-world (Overgaard & Zahavi, 2009: 102). As trivial as the above example may seem, typification is regarded by Schutz as the nucleus around which theoretical notions of consciousness are formed, and the point of germination for the natural attitude (Gurwitsch, 1974: 115).

Typifications are not objective constructs waiting to be discovered. When we are born, we enter into a world that has already been interpreted and given meaning by countless others before us. We inherit those typified meanings through socialization,

allowing us to make sense of our lived experiences, and to react to them in a manner that fits our cultural values (Gurwitsch, 1974: 174). These countless typifications coalesce to form what Schutz terms one's 'stock of knowledge' (Schutz, 1970: 74).The process of typificationthus tends to vary according to the different societies and, within those societies, the often contrasting cultures that people belong to. It is because of these culturally distinct ways of interpreting our experiences that we find different and often contrasting cultural values when it comes to interpreting experienced phenomena (Gurwitsch, 1974: 117).

The stock of knowledge may be thought of as an inventory of pragmatic knowledge that makes it possible to deal with emergent problems in the life-world in culturally acceptable ways that remain beneficial to our involvement in the life-world (Schutz, 1970: 74). Schutz goes on to describe the stock of knowledge as an amalgamation of our own past and present experiences, as well as the experiences of others usually handed down to us by authoritative figures such as our parents or teachers (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973: 288). Our stock of knowledge thus evolves constantly throughout our lives and never reaches a final state of "*sedimentation*" (Schutz, 1970: 74).

At any given time, we also experience the life-world from a unique perspective known as the 'biographically determined situation' (Schutz, 1970: 73). In the same vein as the concept of one's stock of knowledge, the biographically determined situation essentially refers to a set of implicit typifications that allow us to make sense of the life-world. However, the defining feature of the biographically determined situation is that it is not necessarily a cultural inheritance shared by many others, but is unique to each of us. According to Schutz (1970: 73), each individual is characterized as occupying a temporal, spatial and social position that sets his or her interpretation of the life-world apart from other individuals'. This unique position is defined by numerous aspects that are unique to each individual, such as biographical history or personal values and beliefs. Although certain aspects of our biographically determined situation may be shared with other individuals, it remains an invariably unique position that is shaped by an infinite combination of experiences, and the outcomes of taking different paths in our personal life trajectories (Gurwitsch, 1974: 121).

The biographically determined situation is supplemented by the knowledge that certain taken-for-granted aspects of our social positions are imposed upon us while others are capable of being influenced through personal agency (Heeren, 2010: 45). Schutz emphasizes the biographically determined situation as the root of the systems of interest that motivate purposeful action (Heeren, 2010: 45). One's biographically determined situation may therefore also be influenced by the motives that guide our decisions in life. To quote Overgaard and Zahavi (2009: 104): "*my aims and interests decide how I experience things and people around me*". In this regard, Schutz distinguishes between 'because motives', which place our behavior in past experiences; and 'in-order-to' motives, which associate our behavior with the future state of affairs we wish to realize through our actions (Heeren, 2010: 45).

The concept of the stock of knowledge presents an intrinsic aspect of this study's exploration of the lived experience of upward social mobility, as it emphasizes the importance of inherited knowledge as a framework for how the research participants not only experience the life-world, but also how they make sense of their identities. In conjunction with focusing on the past and present experiences that have shaped my research participants' stock of knowledge, I attempt to uncover notable instances where their interpretations of various experiences have been influenced by the stories inherited from significant others, such as their friends, parents, and other upwardly mobile Black South Africans.

The research participants' experiences are further explored by taking into account that their perspectives are fundamentally shaped by their unique biographical situations. To understand how their biographical situations may influence their perceptions of upward mobility and identity, I explore important moments in the research participants' life-histories that indicate significant turning points in their perceptions of the life-world. I further explore how their because motives and their in-order-to-motives play a part in shaping their perceptions of achieving upward mobility.

1.2.1.4. <u>The social construction of reality</u>

Schutz's concept of typification spurred a sociological interest in uncovering how a multitude of subjectivities could be unified by shared experiences of the life-world, and how these shared experiences come to form a shared social reality (Packer, 2011: 158). The most influential contribution to this interest comes from Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's seminal book, '*The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge'*(1967). In their book, Berger and Luckmann expand upon the phenomenological realization that reality is a subjective construct that emerges from the intentionality of human consciousness. Similar to Schutz's concept of the stock of knowledge, Berger and Luckmann propose that the meaning structures we use to interpret the life-world are inherited by way of primary socialization (socialization through our parents) and secondary socialization (socialization through authoritative figures such as teachers).

However, those subjective structures that allow us to quickly make sense of different phenomena are not simply created out of thin air, and at the same time, the phenomena we intentionally interact with on a daily basis are not inherently charged with meaning (Crotty, 1998: 43). Therefore, unlike prior phenomenologists such as Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz, Berger and Luckmann maintain that society cannot only exist as a subjective reality, but exists as both an objective and a subjective reality (Packer, 2011: 159).

Berger and Luckmann's concept of a socially constructed reality begins with a sentiment put forward that all human activity is subject to being formed into habits through 'habitualization' (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 70). As we interact with the life-world, we come into contact with various challenges that need to be overcome. These challenges are subjectively interpreted and given meaning in an attempt to find the most expedient ways of dealing with them. When we continue to deal with these challenges, we learn which responses are best suited to dealing with the problem at hand within an economy of effort. The most profitable responses are repeated over time in varying situations and become routinized as part of one's stock of knowledge.

By constantly repeating the same response in various situations, we essentially remove the need to purposefully go through "*all those decisions*" related to the problem at hand (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 71). Habitualization serves the purpose of forcing repeated action into the background of our thoughts, which opens the foreground for "*deliberation and innovation*". This serves as an intrinsic function for our survival, as it has allowed the human species to develop a mastery of obstacles that is not necessarily inherent in its biology (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 71). It is this very primitive process of habitualization that precedes the social institutions that dictate a shared experience of reality.

In the social setting of the life-world, our responses to everyday challenges are subject to the acknowledgements of other social actors who themselves have to find solutions to emergent problems. In lieu of the sociality of human existence, only responses that are sanctioned by others with whom we share the life-world are repeated and habitualized. Eventually, our habitual responses become shared typifications in what is known as 'institutionalization' (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 72). Through the constantly shared use of these institutionalized ways of making sense of the life-world, we invariably begin accepting them as unquestionable responses to various phenomena. At this point, in a phenomenon referred to as 'objectivation', the subjectively created institutions, which guide our interpretations of the life-world, become separated from their human producers and are perceived as existing independently of human cognition (Flaherty, 2009: 229).

For Berger and Luckmann, language and communication act as indispensable carriers of the implicit meanings that constitute the various objectivations that guide our understanding of the life-world (Foster & Bochner, 2008: 85). However, the content of language does not merely mirror the meanings within objectiviations, but it is also responsible for reconstructing objectivations and the perceived social reality that emerges from them (Heide, 2009: 54). From the time of our birth, we are almost constantly exposed to language, and the objectivations carried forth by language are inevitably internalized through socialization. Furthermore, because we experience objectivations as preceding our existence, we blatantly accept them as objective features of our social reality (Crotty, 1998: 52).

Therefore, what we regard as a true and objective reality is merely the product of social actors interacting in the same social environment. Yet, despite the notion that there is no objective truth to the social institutions that define social reality, the mere fact that they have consequences for how we perceive the life-world means that they are experienced as objective truths (Crotty, 1998: 52). This study deals with a number of objectivations that are present in the everyday lives of upwardly mobile Black South Africans, such as race, class, and identity. One of the fundamental aims of this study is to explore the participants' first-hand experiences with objectivations, namely class, race, and identity, and to delve into the different ways in which they intersect with each other in the participants' everyday lives. However, despite how 'real' these objectivations may be in the lives of everyday South Africans, this study maintains the worldview that they remain the subjective constructs of social interaction, and therefore cannot be considered objective truths. The literature review in the following chapter explicitly highlights the social construction of the concepts inherent in studying the lived experience of upward mobility in South Africa, such as race, class, and identity.

1.2.2. <u>Existential Sociology</u>

Where the ideas espoused by phenomenological sociologists, such as Alfred Schutz, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann point towards the sociality of everyday life, existential sociologists promote the individuality of everyday life. Existentialism is most commonly known as a philosophical topic initiated by ancient Greek thinkers. However, it was just after the Second World War that existentialist thinking became the predominant academic influence it is today, thanks to the work of prominent authors such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus (Kotarba, 2009: 141). Existentialism is first and foremost a way of thinking that regularly serves as a source of creative inspiration (Johnson & Kotarba, 2002: 3). Authors or artists oriented to the philosophy of existentialism often find themselves dealing with issues relating to the human condition, and the responsibility that our being entails (Kotarba, 2009: 141). What these authors have in common with others who have dealt with existential maxims, is that they all denote a certain sense of rebellion against the traditional parameters of what it means to be a social being (Kotarba, 2009: 142).

In contrast to the emphasis on the life-world, experience and emotions (as expressed by existentialist sociologists), early sociologists such as Emile Durkheim maintain that social reality is something that transcends human interpretation (Manning, 1977: 200). Reality should thus be investigated as an entity removed and isolated from the human interpretation thereof (Manning, 1977: 200). Social structures are considered autonomous in the sense that they are able to develop without necessitating the influence of human consciousness (Kotarba, 2009: 142). This structuralist stance is sharply contrasted by existentialist views which place human consciousness as a key factor in the construction of society. In 1962 Edward Tiryakian published 'Sociologism and Existentialism' in an attempt to resolve the polarization that had manifested between structuralist and existentialist views. The resulting existential sociology is defined by Douglas and Johnson (1977: vii) as "*the study of human experience-in-the-world in all its forms*". Existential sociology describes everyday life as ever-changing and highly tumultuous, yet dependent on human interpretation for the construction of reality (Kotarba, 2009: 140).

According to Douglas, human free will and agency play key roles in the construction of reality, while emotions are identified as one of the most influential forces underlying human agency (Douglas, 1977:23). Douglas argues for a re-evaluation of the way in which we situate conscious and unconscious emotions and feelings in our day-to-day lives (Kotarba, 2009: 143). According to Douglas (1977: 32), primordial feelings such as anger, lust and hate, are subconscious emotions that reside in the inner self and constitute one's 'brute being'. Maurice Marleau-Pontyfirst used the term brute being to refer to the inherently primordial character that underlies every aspect of human life. The intrinsic emotions that constitute one's brute being are considered as significant enough to override the common reason of values instilled by everyday society (Douglas, 1977: 32).

Reason only serves as a point of reference that guides people's gratification of brute being (Kotarba, 2009: 144). Douglas further posits that human emotions thus have the propensity to act as either destructive or constructive forces in the construction of social reality (Kotarba, 2009: 142). For example, because of the power of human emotions to overpower reason, social life is constantly at risk of suffering at the hands of those who have allowed their darker emotions, such as hatred or greed to

dictate the agency behind their actions. The opposite is also true in the sense that brute emotions such as love, respect and empathy may serve as a source of solidarity in society (Douglas, 1977: 10). Thus our experience of the world most often depends on a negotiation between our brute being and the social appropriateness of acting on the various emotions that constitute our brute being (Kotarba, 2009: 146).

Another significant contribution to existential sociology comes from the work of Joseph Kotarba and Andrea Fontana, who center their contribution to existential sociology on the social construction of the self (Fontana, 1987: 11). The existential self is defined by Kotarba and Fontana as an individual's constant and dynamic formation of self within contemporary society (Kotarba, 2009: 145). According to Kotarba (2009: 145), renewed existential interest in the self has risen out of recent debates that have pointed out the inefficiencies of classic theories of the self. Studies that place the self as the major unit of analysis have proven to be more problematic than anticipated. This is not only because of the brute being that produces a highly subjective construct of the self, but also because of the unpredictability that characterizes the social foundation of the self. As society shifts and changes, individuals mold their self-concept in such a way as to adapt to the inherently unstable social environment. Thus the self remains in a constant state of flux as it adapts to an individual's experience of social reality (Kotarba, 2009: 145).

According to the classic existentialist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the emergence of a healthy, socially-oriented self relies on an individual's perceived placement in the social world (Kotarba, 2009:147). Adding to this, because the social world is in a constant state of flux, the self is never seen as having one distinct identity (Kotarba, 2009: 147). This is a sharp contrast to the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, which understands the self as existing in relative freedom from any form of social constraint. The self, according to Sartre, is thus in a constant state of flux not because of its shifting social environment, but because individuals are constantly engaged in a process of trying to find meaning in what would be an otherwise meaningless existence (Kotarba, 2009: 147). Regardless of how existentialists conceptualize the emergence of the self, one thing remains certain: the self is always in a constant state of emergence (Kotarba, 2009: 148). In order to facilitate the becoming of the self, individuals are able to draw from the meanings that others

have constructed and compare those meanings to their own. This provides the individual with a point of reference that informs his or her decisions in dealing with the impasses of everyday life (Kotarba, 2009: 151).

According to existential sociology, the dynamically changing social environment plays an immense factor in the formation of the existential self. I thus attempt to pay attention to the research participants' experiences of what they felt were significant changes to their social environments, which may have stemmed from achieving upward social mobility. As the self is regarded as dialectically connected with the surrounding social environment, I also explore how the research participants perceive their transition into a higher social class to have influenced their individual identities.

Existential sociology further places pressure on me to remember that the self is in fact rooted within the human body and that the elemental brute being is the "*fundamental experience of human life*" (Kotarba, 2009: 146). Therefore, although the study focuses on some of the socially constructed aspects of the participants' reality, I cannot ignore the fact that a large part of their experiences are unique to them, not only because of their biographically determined situations, but also because of the emotions felt during particular experiences.

Existentialism is intimately linked with phenomenology's understanding of the life-world being an intersubjective experience. Although we can only regard intersubjectivity in instances where we find a multiplicity of world-experiencing persons, phenomenology emphasizes that the role of the individual subjectivity cannot be disregarded. After all, an intersubjective experience can only be regarded as intersubjective because it is viewed from multiple, individual perspectives (Overgaard & Zahavi, 2009: 96). In this study, existentialism and the concept of brute being act as significant foundations for exploring the each of the research participants' individual perspectives of the life-world.

1.2.3. <u>Reflexive sociology</u>

Pierre Bourdieu's reflexive sociology is the final body of theoretical work that influences how this study is constructed. Bourdieu's reflexive sociology attempts to resolve what he recognizes as "*the debilitating reduction of sociology to either an objectivist physics of material structures or a constructivist phenomenology*" (Wacquant, 1992: 5). Bourdieu attempts to close the rupture between objectivism and subjectivism, not by reducing his tenets into a workable theory, but rather by developing a sociological method known as the 'social praxeology of science'. This method aims to produce knowledge generated through social research that is freely transferable between objective and subjective approaches to social inquiry (Wacquant, 1992: 5).

1.2.3.1. <u>Double reading</u>

Bourdieu describes the social universe as living a 'double life'. Society, on one hand, exists as an objectivity of the first order. That is to say, it exists objectively outside of human consciousness as "*constituted by the distribution of material sources*" (Wacquant. 1992: 7). On the other hand, society also exists as an objectivity of the second order, where it is constructed by the subjective meaning structures that arise from the human mind enacting consciousness on to the life-world. As society exists in two orders, social research is often conducted as a 'double reading' that divides research into either structuralist or phenomenological inquiry (Wacquant, 1992: 7).

The first reading focuses on the objective social structures by way of what Bourdieu terms 'social physics'. Here society is approached from a structuralist point of view and is regarded as something that can be quantitatively measured and explained independently of the human actors that inhabit its structures. Bourdieu criticizes this approach for reifying social structures into a reality that is formed and exists as autonomously outside of subjective interpretation (Wacquant, 1992: 8).

The second reading, 'social phenomenology', deals with society as an "*objectivity of the second order*". Differing sharply from the structuralist point of view, social phenomenology adopts a constructionist stance that describes reality as existing in a state of flux and always constituted by the everyday practices of social actors in the

life-world (Wacquant, 1992: 9). This approach also comes with its own weaknesses. Viewing society as an inconsistent mass of subjective interpretations negates the resilience of social structures, which by extension washes away any tangible explanation for how reality can be socially reproduced (Wacquant, 1992: 10).

Bourdieu thus attempts to develop a total science of society that combines the epistemic merits of both approaches while avoiding their inherent shortcomings (Wacquant, 1992: 7). The structuralist and constructivist approaches to social research are thus combined into a 'social praxeology': a singular approach that views social reality in two separate 'moments'. The first moment sets aside everyday subjective interpretation in order to describe the objective social institutions that influence social actors' subjective interpretations of reality. Once the objective institutions have been clarified, attention can be shifted to the second moment which is geared towards exploring the social actors' everyday lived experiences of the identified structures (Wacquant, 1992: 11).

It is beyond the scope of this study to conduct both a quantitative and a qualitative approach to the lived experience of upward mobility. A quantitative approach is therefore sacrificed in order to emphasise the study's phenomenological interest. Bourdieu's insistence of approaching social research from two moments, however, remains an important feature in preparing for research. Instead of piloting quantitative research to identify the objective social structures in the participants' lives, I identify significant aspects of South African society that are objective truths in the participants' lives. In order to do so, I make use of quantitative information such as available statistics on levels of inequality, and the presence of racialism in South Africa. These aspects are identified and discussed in greater detail in the literature review.

1.2.3.2. <u>Reflexivity</u>

The term 'reflexivity' is generally used to refer to a researcher's concerted attempts at minimizing the influence of bias during research. Although Bourdieu is not the originator of the reflexivity *per se*, it is his unique brand of reflexivity that forms the axiological cornerstone of this study. Bourdieu's notion of reflexivity goes beyond the responsibility of the solitary researcher to limit the impact of his personal values

during research. To Bourdieu, the theories that guide social research are in effect the socially constructed products of people who tend to overlook the unconscious decisions they make when conducting research. Bourdieu's concept of reflexivity thus explicitly attempts to develop an 'epistemological program' that uncovers the unconscious systems of classification that delineate scientific thought (Wacquant, 1992: 36).

Bourdieu distinguishes between three types of biases that may "*blur the sociological gaze*" (Wacquant, 1992: 39). The first bias stems from a researcher's own biographical history, while the second bias is derivative of the academic stance chosen by the researcher and the integral points of view that accompany his or her chosen intellectual position. As already stated, this dissertation embraces the fact that because I adopt an interpretive approach to research, the knowledge which is produced is value-laden and the ultimate result of my own interpretation. It is therefore inevitable that the findings presented in the final chapter contain biases from my own biographical situation.

The third, and uniquely 'Bourdieusian' source of reflection, is intellectual bias. This refers to researcher's predisposition to overlook the systems of logic behind scientific practice (Wacquant, 1992: 39). Applying Bourdieu's idea of reflexive research to this study thus also requires a continuous re-evaluation of the reasoning behind certain paradigmatic, theoretical, and methodological choices. It is specifically for this reason that the rhetoric of this dissertation often reflects a personal tone, as I aim to highlight the rationale behind the various decisions that had an influence in the operationalization of the research project.

1.3. <u>Conclusion</u>

This chapter discusses the two major foundations that are responsible for shaping the study and its putative aims. The first section introduces interpretivism as the study's chosen research paradigm. Following the discussion on some of the defining features of interpretive research, the philosophical tenets of interpretivism are applied to the ontological, epistemological, axiological, methodological and rhetorical assumptions that uphold the study. Emerging from these philosophical assumptions

is this study's overarching goal to explore young Black South Africans' lived experiences with upward mobility, while focusing on their identification.

The second section of this chapter outlines the various theoretical frameworks that guide my exploration of the participants' lived experiences. In this regard, the theoretical foundations of phenomenological sociology provide an intricate framework of concepts well-suited to exploring the lived experience of everyday life. The second theoretical framework discussed in this chapter, existential sociology, emphasizes the importance of brute being as the driving force behind each of the participants' unique perspectives of the objectivations that are present in all of their everyday lives. The objectivations that are most likely to be shared amongst the participants are identified by incorporating statistical data in the literature review, as per the research philosophy maintained by Pierre Bourdieu's concept of double reading.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Where the aim of the previous chapter is to discuss the philosophical and theoretical frameworks that underlie my study, the aim of this chapter is to highlight the conceptual frameworks that support this study's exploration of the lived experience of upward social mobility from the perspective of young Black South Africans. This chapter begins with a brief description of social mobility and an understanding of society as hierarchically arranged. From this, society is seen as structured according to social classes that reflect varying positions within a division of labour. This is followed by a description of the changes that have occurred in South Africa's division of labour since the end of apartheid as a result of the transformative measures initiated by the South African Government since 1994. The literature review further describes how the transformation in South Africa's division of labour has contributed to an ever-growing number of young Black South Africans achieving upward mobility by entering into professional occupations once reserved for the White minority.

Another significant aspect of this chapter is to define and discuss the concept of identity as it is applied to this study. As mentioned, the study's primary topic of interest is to explore Black South Africans' lived experiences of upward social mobility. The focus of this interest, however, is to explore how the research participants identify themselves and experience being identified by others now that they find themselves engaged in the process of transformation in as far as social class is concerned. The final section of this chapter thus specifically deals with the concept of identity and how it is incorporated into meeting the broader aims of this study.

2.1. Social mobility, class and occupational status

2.1.1. Social mobility

In order to grasp the concept of upward social mobility and the implications it has for people's identification, it is important to note that society is not a homogenous space, but is stratified according to a hierarchy of social positions that imbue their occupants with varying degrees of status. To use a geological metaphor, stratification can be compared to the consecutive layering of earth and rock that has, over the millennia,

formed the earth's crust. Sociologists have borrowed this idea of successive layering and transposed the term 'stratification' into the field of social science. In sociological terms, stratification refers to the hierarchical differentiation of social positions into layers or strata that emerge due to the unequal distribution of power, prestige and economic resources in society (Saunders, 1990: 1). Social mobility is the process whereby individuals or groups move from one social position to another within the same stratified system (Shephard, 2009: 227).

Social mobility can either be classified as intragenerational mobility or intergenerational mobility. Intragenerational or horizontal mobility occurs when an individual's movement from one social position to another remains within the same social class, e.g., when the daughter of two lawyers becomes a doctor (Shephard, 2009: 227). Intragenerational mobility is typically analysed by taking into account the extent of social mobility an individual has experienced throughout his or her life time (Shephard, 2009: 227). Intergenerational mobility, on the other hand, also known as vertical social mobility, refers to the transition between social positions that are situated within two distinct social classes (Shephard, 2009: 227). It is with intergenerational mobility that individuals can experience upward mobility, which is the progression from a lower to a higher social class (Shephard, 2009: 227).

Intergenerational mobility is typically measured by comparing an individual's current social class to that of his or her parents' (Shephard, 2009: 227). The individuals chosen to participate in this study are specifically chosen on the basis that they are experiencing, or have experienced intergenerational mobility relative to their parents' occupational positions. As the act of upward mobility sees individuals moving from a lower to a higher social class, the following subsections deal specifically with the definition of class and the way it shapes individuals' everyday lives.

2.1.2. Class

Contemporary sociological definitions of class owe much to the contributions of social theorists such as Karl Marx, Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu. For Karl Marx (1818-1883), capitalist society is seen as divided into two distinct classes, namely the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. According to Marx, individuals' positions within these two classes are determined by their relation to the means of production, which

refers to those resources directly responsible for producing economic profit, such as factories and land (Singh, 1976: 4). The bourgeoisie, also referred to as the 'haves', are those individuals who have direct access to the means of production through their primary ownership of the means of production. For the proletariat or the 'have-not's', who do not own the means of production, the only available resource is labour, which they offer to the bourgeoisie in exchange for access to the means of production (Singh, 1976:4). Marx's view of class thus conceptualised the division of labour in society as purely stratified according to individuals' access to economic interests.

Max Weber (1864-1920) generally agreed with Marx that classes emerge out of economic interest. Weber views people's class position as based on their 'market situation', which is their access to the labour market via the ownership of assets such as factories and property (Rothman, 2005: 35). Individuals' position in the market situation has immense bearing on their access to what Weber termed 'Lebenschancen' or 'life chances', which are life-enhancing opportunities, such as access to higher education or well-paying occupations (Singh, 1976: 4). Weber classically differentiates between three types of class positions that relate to their quality and quantity of life chances, namely the upper-class, middle-class, and lower-class (Singh, 1976: 4).

What sets Weber's analysis of class apart from Marx's, is his opposition to the idea that society is purely stratified according to economic interest. A Weberian view of social stratification also sees society as divided according to status groups that differ in their associated prestige (Rothman, 2005: 36). Although these groups may differ in the composition of their members, for example communities based on occupation, ethnicity or ancestry, one thing they all share in common is the prestige they share in the eyes of others (Rothman, 2005: 36). The notion of status groups conveying a certain amount of prestige in the eyes of others adds a new dimension to the concept of social class, as it implies that our class positions play a fundamental role in the way we are identified by others. This dimension of class is a particularly important aspect of my study as I not only wish to explore how young and upwardly mobile Black South Africans identify themselves, but also their experiences of identification by others.

Extending the ideas of Marx and Weber, Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) reconceptualises the concept of social class altogether, and it is his culturist definition of class that informs this study. Bourdieu's view of social stratification understands class distinctions as emerging from the social interaction between individuals who embody different cultural practices as a result of occupying varying positions in social space (Crompton, 2008: 100). In his posthumous book, '*La Distinction*' (1984)*,* Bourdieu illustrates his conception of social class by drawing from the statistical analysis of the correlation between occupation and life-style. Based on his analysis, Bourdieu describes society as a "*three dimensional social space*" where individuals, with similarities in their embodied lifestyles and cultural dispositions, are grouped together to form distinctive social classes (Bottero, 2005:148).

However, rather than viewing classes as divided by steadfast boundaries, each class is separated from the next by an imaginary line which is best described as "*a flame whose edges are in constant movement, oscillating around a line or surface*" (Bourdieu, 1987: 13). These boundaries are continuously shifting as they are established and maintained through the social interaction that occurs between people who occupy different positions within the field. In this case, the field can be regarded in similar vein to the notion of the objective social structures that frame our everyday lives (Crompton, 2008: 100). More specific to this study, the field in question, which frames the research participants' experiences, is South Africa's division of labour.

2.1.3. <u>Class and access to capital</u>

The field is comprised of varying social positions that imbue their occupants with varying degrees of power. According to Bourdieu, one's position in the field is intrinsically related to the ownership of four forms of capital, namely economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital (Jenkins, 1992: 85). Economic capital quite simply refers to an individual's accumulated material wealth. Cultural capital on the other hand, is relatively more abstract, and refers to an individual's institutional knowledge acquired through educational attainment and one's competence or familiarity with the dominant class's cultural knowledge (Dillon, 2010: 407).

Unlike economic capital, which may be acquired or lost in an instant, cultural capital is something that can only become embodied over time. According to Bourdieu, those regarded as belonging to the upper-class implicitly use this to their advantage to solidify the exclusivity of their privileged positions (Dillon, 2010: 408). Social capital refers to the prospective resources that stem from personal and inter-personal bonds of acquaintance (Dillon, 2010: 408). The final form of capital, symbolic capital, is similar to Weber's notion of status, and refers to the honour attributed to possessing the type of legitimated capital most valued by society (Dillon, 2010: 408).

The four forms of capital are strongly interrelated, and individuals can use 'reconversion strategies' that convert one form of capital into another in order to change their social positions. Cultural capital, in the form of academic credentials, may therefore be used to obtain greater economic capital, while economic capital may be used to acquire cultural capital (Boterro, 2005: 149). In this sense, there are no distinct borders that distinguish one social class from the next. Instead, on either side of the imaginary line that separates positions in the field, we find social classes that differ in terms of the density of a particular form of capital (Bourdieu, 1987: 13). Apart from questions on identity, this study also attempts to explore the lived experience of various aspects of upward mobility unrelated to the concept of identity. One of these aspects is exploring participants' perceptions of the important forms of capital necessary to achieve upward mobility.

Various combinations of the aforementioned types of capital not only dictate individuals' social positions, but also produce the various social environments, referred to by Bourdieu as 'conditions of existence' or 'class conditions', that profoundly shape our everyday lives (Bourdieu, 1980: 53). During our socialisation within a particular class condition, we internalise a set of class-specific dispositions that form a similarly class-specific 'habitus'. The habitus is a durable interpretive framework that allows us to react to the cues from the life-world in a pre-reflexive way that is fitting to our class positions (Elder-Vass, 2010: 99). The definition of habitus should not be confused with the meaning implied by 'habit'. The term 'habit' implies that action is only able to forfeit conscious reflection after it has been reproduced through repetitive action. Habit is thus regarded as the product of

repeated action. Habitus, on the other hand, is regarded as the origin of spontaneous action, which proceeds in the absence of any conscious reflection (Weininger, 2005: 91).

According to Bourdieu, individuals who share the same class condition tend to be exposed to similar opportunities and demands that result from the specific combination of capital that constitutes their social position. This in turn develops into a shared habitus that allows individuals, who are conditioned in the same social position, to embody social practices specific to their class condition without any explicit deliberation of the rule (Elder-Vass, 2010: 99). We might find two individuals with different combinations of capital experiencing and interpreting the life-world differently and embodying completely different social practices because of the class conditions that characterise their contrasting social positions (Boterro, 2005: 149). For example, because the social positions of industrialists and commercial employers tend to require more economic than cultural capital, their embodied social practices reflect the pursuit of opulence and the consumption of expensive goods. University professors on the other hand, whose social position requires the predominance of cultural over economic capital, gear their lifestyles towards intellectually demanding, ascetic forms of culture (Weininger, 2005: 94). These two groups are thus distinguished by contrasting lifestyles, which illuminate the "*antithesis between quantity and quality, belly and palate, matter and manners, substance and form*" that emerges from a class-specific way of interpreting the life-world (Bourdieu, 1984: 175-176, as cited in Weininger, 2005: 94). Another fundamental aim of this study is to explore this contrast of habitus in the participants' narratives as a potential tuning in their identities.

2.1.4. Class and upward mobility

Bourdieu's conception of social class forms an understanding that upward mobility involves much more than simply improving one's access to life chances. Each social class is characterised by its own way of interpreting the world and acting in what is regarded as a socially acceptable manner. Experiencing upward mobility is essentially the experience of transitioning from one world to another. Bourdieu's view of upward mobility is especially salient in Ochberg and Comeau's study '*Moving Up and The Problem of Explaining an Unreasonable Ambition'* (2001). In their study,

Ochberg and Comeau use quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the parental support experienced by upwardly mobile students during their academic careers. In order to emphasize the experiences of upwardly mobile students, Ochberg and Cameau contrast the level of support upwardly mobile students experience with that of more privileged students. For the privileged students in Ochburg and Cameau's study, the decision to attend a higher education institution is generally supported by their parents, who themselves understand the immense value inherent in academic credentials. Because of the support expressed by their parents, privileged students' narratives reflect a "*shared enthusiasm*" where both parent and child work together to ensure academic success (Ochberg & Comeau, 2001: 132).

Upwardly mobile students, on the other hand, tend to paint a bleaker picture in contrast to their privileged counterparts. Although the parents of upwardly mobile students may support the decision to attend a higher education institution, their general lack of experience with higher education creates a markedly less supportive environment as they do not have the cultural capital necessary to offer advice if needed (Ochberg & Comeau, 2001: 133-135). This lack of experience also manifests in the contrasting value that upwardly mobile students associate with higher education in comparison to their parents. The upwardly mobile students seemingly attribute an idealized value to their studies that is rooted in the acquisition of cultural over economic capital. However, their parents do not share the same sentiment, and tend to judge the value of higher education according to the access it creates to economic gain. This often results in the parents criticizing the students' decisions to acquire degrees in subjects that do not amount to well-paying jobs. The disagreement on the worth of higher education creates narrative accounts that consistently point to an estrangement that develops between upwardly mobile students and their parents.

Yet, this estrangement is rooted in something much more idiosyncratic than a misunderstanding of what one should be getting out of an admittedly costly education. For many upwardly mobile students in Ochberg and Comeau's study, the disunity between themselves and their parents is rooted in the conflict between the worldviews of two distinct class conditions. By attending higher education

programmes and obtaining degrees, the upwardly mobile students have essentially changed the content of their capital and injected themselves into a new social class that has opened their eyes to a "*different way of being*" (Ochberg & Cameau, 2001: 142)*.* This way of being, however, goes strongly against the grain of the type of moral character that is associated with their parents' working-class origins, thereby creating the experience estrangement (Ochberg & Cameau, 2001: 136).

The argument here is that upward mobility is a complex process that involves much more than the objective accumulation of capital. By transitioning from one class to another, upwardly mobile individuals implicitly change the world around them and open themselves to a set of dispositions that differ from their class of origin. This has a pronounced effect in the way individuals identify themselves and are identified by others.

This study aims to explore how upwardly mobile individuals, specifically young Black South Africans, identify themselves and experience being identified by others now that they have transitioned into a higher social class. In light of Ochberg and Cameau's study, it is safe to say that the acquisition of a university degree may be used as an indicator of an individual's transition into a higher social class. However, exploring upward mobility through educational attainment alone fails to take into account instances where individuals do not necessarily adopt the social practices and dispositions of a higher class. Adopting something as implicit as social practices or cultural dispositions as indicative of class may also prove problematic in the sense that these aspects do not necessarily reflect direct sources of identification. This study thus emphasizes the role of occupational status as a powerful socially mandated indicator of one's social class.

2.1.5. <u>Occupation and class</u>

For structural functionalists, such as Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore (2008), upward social mobility can only exist because society is arranged according to the shared understanding that certain social positions are held in higher esteem than others. According to Davis and Moore (2008: 30), society is regarded as a functioning mechanism that remains operational as long as there are people willing to fill the occupational positions necessary to keep the social system alive. Social

stratification creates stability in society by ordering occupational positions according to relative importance; and distributing economic and non-economic rewards, such as power and prestige relative to the skill needed to fulfil the duties of each position. This essentially ensures that those individuals with the appropriate aptitude and competences are motivated to fill the positions deemed valuable to society (Davis & Moore, 2008: 30).

According to Bourdieu, the division of labour is a powerful social organisation that dictates one's position in the greater social structure (Bourdieu, 1987: 13). Bourdieu understands one's occupation as indicating two fundamental attributes to the rest of society. On the one hand, it classifies an individual as having the type of primary qualities deemed necessary to occupy a certain position in the division of labour. These properties include one's position relative to the means of production (in the Marxian sense); one's life chances relative to the labour market (in the Weberian sense); and the power that is associated with the combination of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital specific to certain social positions. On the other hand, one's occupation also indicates the possession of secondary qualities that are determined by the mechanisms that govern access to certain occupations on the basis of criteria, such as level of education, age, gender, and race (Brubaker, 2005: 52). It is for this reason that occupational status is regarded as the most proficient category for identifying one's social position in contemporary Western society (Crompton, 2008: 51). However, it is important to note that occupation merely acts as a direct indicator of an individual's social position, and does not necessarily constitute a class in itself (Brubaker, 2005: 52).

2.1.6. <u>Towards a class schema for South Africa</u>

The role of occupation, as a mundane indicator of one's social position, is a crucial aspect in the conceptualisation of class in this study. As a criterion for selecting participants, the occupations held by prospective research participants are compared to those of their parents in order to gauge whether or not they have experienced upward mobility. In this respect, the study makes use of a class schema comprised of five South African class categories identified by Jeremy Seekings (2003: 17) that are defined according to occupation and educational attainment:

• **upper-class** (UC): managers and professionals;

• **semi-professional class** (SPC): teachers and nurses;

• **intermediate class** (IC): routine white-collar, skilled and supervisory;

• **core working class** (CWC): semi-skilled and unskilled workers (except

  farm and domestic workers);

• **marginal working class** (MWC): farm and domestic workers.

According to Seekings (2003: 17), what ultimately sets these classes apart is the level of qualification required for individuals to occupy them. Upper-class occupations, such as lawyers, physicians and accountants, require at the least a university degree; occupations in the semi-professional class, such as teachers and nurses usually only require a diploma; and for the occupational classes below that, individuals tend to require a high school diploma or less (Seekings, 2003: 17). This study focuses exclusively on the experiences of young upper-class professionals who have acquired their positions through higher education, and whose parents' or primary caregivers' occupations are found to be lower in the occupational class schema. It is argued here that by acquiring occupations found higher in the class schema than the occupations of their parents, the research participants in this study have in fact experienced upward social mobility.

In summation of this section, by obtaining an improved position in the division of labour, upwardly mobile individuals acquire a combination of capital that grants them greater access to life chances; opens the doors to changes in their lifestyles; and exposes them to a different set of class-specific dispositions. Although the boundaries that distinguish social classes are necessarily vague, Western society consistently draws upon occupational categories to distinguish between these positions. The experience of upward mobility is thus punctuated by the fact that by acquiring a professional occupation, individuals effectively adopt an identity that signals that they now belong to a social class that is held in higher esteem than most others. Thus underlying this study's interest to explore the experience of upward social mobility, is the need to explore how upwardly mobile individuals (specifically

upwardly mobile Black South Africans) identify themselves and experience being identified by others now that they occupy significantly higher positions in the social hierarchy.

2.2. <u>Race and racism</u>

A study that aims to explore young Black South Africans' lived experiences with upward mobility and identity simply cannot ignore the concept of race in lieu of the country's infamous history of racial inequality. Keeping with the dissertation's constructivist foundation, this section provides a brief description and definition of race as a social construct. During the 1600's, European colonialists began embarking on vast explorations to map the globe. In their travels, explorers frequently came into contact with people who looked and acted differently to established European notions of 'normal' conduct. The use of racial classification thus took hold as means of grouping the various types of people situated around the globe that were, in essence, unlike Europeans (Walton & Caliendo, 2011: 3). In the seventeenth century, four racial classifications identified by the French physician Francois Bernier in 1684 were in use, namely Far Easterners, Europeans, Blacks, and Lapps.

By virtue of scientific advancement, these categories were extended and reformed during the early eighteenth century, and further divided the world's population according to five racial categories: Caucasian (white), Mongolian (yellow), Malayan (brown), Negroid (black), and American (red) (Walton & Caliendo, 2011: 3). Commentators of colonial Europe frequently compared their own civilization to that of other racial groups to paint a picture of the 'other' as uncivilized and subhuman, which served as a justification for the violent oppression of other races in Europe's colonial endeavours (Kivisto & Croll, 2012: 5).

During this time, racial categories merely reflected symbolic markers of contrasting cultures. This changed dramatically during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century when scientists began undertaking experiments in biological determinism to associate racial distinctions with human biology (Alexander & Knowles, 2005: 10). These experiments not only attempted to identify physical characteristics that distinguished different races, but also equated these physical distinctions with

differences in cognitive processes, such as intelligence, moral judgment and aptitude in leadership. This form of thinking inevitably opened the way for a racial ideology that maintained the superiority of one race over another on the basis of genotypic variance, with the White European race at the very top of the hierarchy and the Black race at the bottom (Alexander & Knowles, 2005: 10).

Biological determinism found a particularly steady foothold in the ideas of social Darwinism, a school of thought that applies Charles Darwin's theory of "*the survival of the fittest*" to the study of society (Ansell, 2013: 145). According to Social Darwinists, human society is able to attain complete social well-being if the unhealthy elements of society are allowed to be weeded out through natural societal processes. Social Darwinian ideology thus ardently criticised any type of welfare state for ultimately supporting social complacency and preventing the emergence of a healthy society (Kivisto & Croll, 2012: 6). American sociologist Franklin Giddens, who was also an officer in the Immigration Restriction League, echoed the sentiments of Social Darwinism when he suggested that poor immigrants should be prevented from having children by forcing them to live in workhouses that were akin to prisons (Kivisto & Croll, 2012: 7).

Darwinism was also extoled in the Eugenics movement initiated by Sir Francis Galton in 1883. Eugenics, the science of improving human biology through genetic regulation, was an established ideology shared by many scientists during the late nineteenth century (Caliendo & McIlwain, 2011: 138). The goal of eugenicists is to halt the deterioration of human stock by eliminating undesired hereditary traits from the gene pool through judicious selective breeding (Caliendo & McIlwain, 2011: 138). Maintaining the racial hierarchy that emerged in the prior centuries, early European eugenicists viewed the unconstrained breeding with people of inferior genetic stock (i.e. negroes and immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe) as a direct threat to the commencement of a faultless White race (Ansell, 2013: 66).

Eugenic thinking also spread across countries like the United States of America, where forced sterilization remained a legal practice until the 1970's. However, the apex of eugenics occurred between 1933 and 1945, when the Third Reich used 'racial hygiene' programmes to sterilise and exterminate groups who posed a genetic threat to Adolf Hitler's creation of an Aryan master race. The Nazi's targeted any

groups deemed inferior, such as Jews, ethnic minorities and gypsies, which ultimately led to the genocide of 6 million people (Ansell, 2013: 68). Eugenic thinking lost an immense degree of support after World War 2 following the atrocities that were committed in support of eugenicist arguments. Although eugenics has resurfaced in studies relating to sexuality, intelligence, crime, and mental illness, it remains a deeply contentious school of thought (Ansell, 2013: 68).

During the 1960's a surge of social and political movements, spearheaded by the work of humanist writers such as Frantz Fanon, shifted the understanding of race as a biological phenomenon to viewing race as a social construction. Contemporary, and more politically correct notions of race, view racial classifications as socially constructed categories that define people according to phenotypical characteristics, such as differences in skin tone, hair type, and facial features. Racial categories do not represent objective truths. They are only considered to be socially significant because they have been associated with importance through everyday social interaction that is situated in specific historical and political contexts (Brinkerhoff, White, Ortega & Weitz, 2008: 178). Although we may view race in a way that no longer sees it as an objective truth, race has influenced society for centuries, and continues to do so to this day. In the following section I discuss how race and class intersect specifically within the South African setting to provide a broad picture of the social environment that frames young and upwardly mobile Black South Africans' everyday lives.

2.3. <u>The division of labour in South Africa</u>

This study's topic of interest is propelled by the striking history that continues to shape young Black South African's individual lives. Since the arrival of the first European settlers in 1652, South Africa's Black population endured incredible subjugation at the hands of a White minority on the basis of perceived racial differences. The oppression of Black South Africans reached an apex during the apartheid era (1948-1994), when racial inequality became institutionalized by the ruling National Party (NP) in an almost five decade long attempt to protect White supremacy through skewed economic and political privilege. The first democratic election in 1994 beckoned a new era, where the racial inequality solidified during

apartheid would ebb away, creating the first signs of newly unified and egalitarian South Africa.

However, contemporary South Africa continues to suffer from the ever-present legacy of apartheid rule. As Jeremy Seekings states: "*It would be astonishing if post-apartheid South African society was not shaped profoundly by the experience of apartheid, remaining distinctive in terms of the social, political or economic roles played by race*" (2008: 2). For the majority of South Africa's Black population, upward social mobility remains an unreachable dream, leaving many entrenched in appalling levels of inequality. Nonetheless, there is a small glimmer of success mirrored in the accomplishments of a growing number of young Black South Africans who have been able to take hold of the opportunities created by transformative policies and achieve upward mobility. It is the 'Black Diamonds' and 'Buppies' (members of South Africa's emerging Black middle- and upper-classes) whose narratives are explored in this study. In order to grasp a basic understanding of the social structure that has shaped their experiences with social mobility, the following two subsections discuss the historical and contemporary political agendas that have played a part in spurring upward mobility among Black South Africans.

2.3.1. <u>The apartheid era</u>

A significant aspect of apartheid's legacy, and the precursor to racial inequality in South Africa's division of labour, was the formal institutionalization of racial segregation by the ruling National Party (NP). The most prominent legislature implemented by the NP, was the Population Registration Act (No.30) of 1950. In accordance with the Act, all South African citizens were required to be racially classified as Natives (later referred to as Blacks or Bantus), Whites (Europeans), or Coloureds (those of mixed descent). Indians would not be included in this system of classification until 1959, as the NP did not regard South Africa's Indian populous as permanent inhabitants (Clark & Worger, 2013: 49).

Racial classification during the apartheid era was not a necessarily clear cut affair, and being assigned to a racial category typically followed what at the time was considered 'common sense' and loosely interpreted rules of appearance based on one's hair and skin colour (Seekings, 2008: 3). Using this system of classification,

the NP designated specific living areas to each of the racial categories (Durrheim, Mtose & Brown, 2011: 4). The implementation of The Group Areas Act (No 41) of 1950 ensured that access to high-value suburbs and other similarly highly valued properties were exclusively reserved for Whites (Durrheim et al., 2 011: 4). Indians and Coloureds were relegated to areas surrounding White communities, while Africans were mainly forced into the outlying rural areas and townships that would become characterised by rampant poverty and the lack of even the most basic of amenities (Durrheim et al., 2011: 4).

Mass classification of South African citizens commenced during the 1951 national Population Census. Despite their general lack of expertise, census enumerators systematically determined the race of every citizen according to the four (Black, White, Coloured, and Indian) racial categories (Seekings, 2008: 3). Following this mass classification, all South African citizens were required to have their race printed on identity documents. For the African population, however, racial classification also meant having to carry with them at all times what came to be known as a 'dompas'. These passes contained information such as the carrier's marital status, rural district and employment status. Anyone unable to present such a pass at the request of the police would face immediate arrest (Clark & Worger, 2013: 50). Passes such as these were required to enter and live in White areas since the early nineteenth century, and the extent of pass laws varied according to province. It was with the introduction of the Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act (No.67) of 1952 that controlling the influx of non-Whites into White areas became standardised throughout the entire country (Clark & Worger, 2013: 50).

The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (No. 49) of 1953 sought to limit the contact between Whites and non-Whites (Blacks, Coloureds, and Indians) even further by limiting access to public services like hospitals, public transport, and public buildings to Whites only (Clark & Worger, 2013: 50). Cities were littered with signs prohibiting non-Whites from using even the most basic of facilities. Yet this form of racism was not only institutionalised by the country's judicial system, but also through the everyday acts of its citizens (Durrheim et al., 2011: 7). Non-Whites were not only considered subservient to Whites during apartheid, but were expected to act subservient to Whites. Black people's racial identity was constantly being

undermined by 'baaskap', a master-servant mentality that degraded Blacks by referring to them as "boys" and "girls" regardless of age, while even White children were referred to in terms of respect such as 'kleinbaas' (little boss). Walking down the street, Blacks were expected to move aside to allow Whites to pass by, and were the constant victims of obscene racial abuse (Durrheim et al., 2011: 7). These laws ensured that contact between races was extremely limited, and whatever contact that was permitted, was biased in such a way as to conserve the master-slave narrative that upheld White dominance (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010: 230).

2.3.2. <u>Apartheid and the segmentation of labour</u>

The most damaging aspect of apartheid was the NP's attempts to secure the White minority's economic dominance by inflating skilled or 'White labour', while depreciating the value of unskilled or 'Black labour'. Considerable investments in White schooling ensured that White children, even those from poorer families, were given the skills necessary to ensure a profitable position in the labour market (Seekings, 2008: 4). The Black population's access to White labour was denied outright by completely dismantling the educational value of so-called Bantu schools. The then Minister of Native Affairs, Hendrik Verwoerd, famously made the case for restricting Bantu education by stating that "*racial relations cannot improve if the wrong type of education is given to natives*" (Veriava & Coomans, 2005: 60).

Acknowledging Verwoerd's sentiments, the NP introduced the Bantu Education Act (No.47) of 1953. The Act allowed the NP to control all aspects of South Africa's education system. Racial segregation, governance, curriculum, training and funding, were all dictated by the apartheid state. White schools had the benefit of highly trained teachers and the best facilities, while the Black population was forced to attend schools that were purposefully biased in such a way as to ensure that Blacks could not gain the qualifications necessary to obtain skilled White labour (Veriava & Coomans, 2005: 60). The Extension of University Education Act (No. 45) of 1959 further enforced the regulation of education to deny non-Whites access to White higher education institutions. Separate universities and colleges were thus established for Africans, Coloureds and Indians, but remained subject in every way to the scrutiny of the apartheid state, whose main concern was to produce a submissive Black population that would not rise to oppose the government (Durrheim

et al., 2011:8). These acts essentially ensured that the occupational advancement of Black South Africans would not extend beyond unskilled or, at the most, semi-skilled labour (Clark & Worger, 2013: 55).

However, there was one major flaw in preserving the ideological and economic dominance of White South Africans: the White minority, which comprised less than 20% of the total population, simply could not contribute enough to maintain sustainable economic growth. From the 1970's onwards, the apartheid government slowly began reinvesting in Bantu education and eroding racial barriers within the labour market in attempts to fill the widening gaps in administrative, educational and a few select professional occupations (Seekings, 2008: 5). These changes were far from truly eliminating apartheid and rather signified an attempt by the NP to reconfigure apartheid in such a manner as to stifle the challenges that were arising from countrywide protests and international sanctions. Yet, after years of failing to curb threats to the longevity of apartheid rule, the NP finally agreed, at the beginning of the 1990's, to engage in negotiations with Black opposition parties, such as the African National Congress (ANC) in order to begin the process of phasing out apartheid legislature (Durrheim et al., 2011: 14).

In 1994 all South Africans, regardless of race, were given the opportunity to vote in the country's first democratic elections, the result of which led to a resounding win for the African National Congress (ANC). However, the corrosive legacy of apartheid legislature created immense inequality and deepening rifts in terms of the country's cultural diversity (Seekings, 2008: 5). The vast majority of the Black population was firmly rooted in severe poverty, while White South Africans made up the bulk of the middle- and upper-classes (Hoogeveen & Ozler, 2006: 60). This was most evident in the country's Gini index: a measure of equality, which ranks countries according to their placement on a scale that ranges from 0 (these would be completely egalitarian societies) to 1 (the most extreme form of inequality). By the end of apartheid, South Africa's Gini index was ranked at 0.56, making it at the time one of the most unequally stratified countries in the world (Hoogeveen & Ozler, 2006: 60).

2.3.3. <u>Persistent racial inequality</u>

A major task of South Africa's current ruling party, the ANC, along with eradicating the rampant racism created by apartheid, is to redevelop South African society in a way that provides equal opportunities for economic growth to all. The forerunning policy that shapes South African legislature in meeting the ANC's goals is the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). The Constitution produced a Bill of Rights that champions human dignity and puts social rights at the forefront of rebuilding post-apartheid South Africa. Given the political circumstances under which the ANC was brought to power, the Bill of Rights signifies something more than a set of theoretical implications for development. It symbolizes an overarching promise to give back the rights taken away during apartheid and to erase its legacy of racial inequality (Motala & Pampallis, 2001: 16).

The ANC's first attempt at meeting the tenets laid out by the South African Constitution was the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP). Initiated prior to the 1994 elections by the Tripartite Alliance (the ANC, COSATU, and the SACP), the RDP is a socio-economic policy which sought to alleviate poverty through a radical restructuring of the South African economy (Lodge, 2002: 54). The RDP reflected the ANC's stern opposition to the enormous polarization that had developed between rich and poor along bases of race and gender. The program aimed to improve the country's excessive inequality by channeling equitable spending into key areas such as education, healthcare and infrastructure in order to stimulate job creation (Davids, 2005: 43). Despite countrywide support for the RDP, the ANC government sadly did not have the means to facilitate the type of ambitious change envisioned by the proponents of the program. According to Davids (2005: 43), the RDP meant many things to many different people. Inevitably, it was the conflicting expectations of the program that would eventually lead to its downfall in 1996. Although spending in education and basic infrastructure had improved, the levels of unemployment and inequality were climbing steadily (Hoogeveen & Ozler, 2006: 60).

The RDP's failure to close the widening gap between rich and poor resulted in the ANC shifting its plans for redevelopment onto the shoulders of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy, or GEAR (Hoogeveen & Ozler, 2006: 60).

GEAR is a macro-economic strategy that was commissioned in 1996 under the leadership of the then South African Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel. The primary objective of GEAR is to improve the economic well-being of South Africa's poor through privatization, trade reforms, and greater access to the labour market by bridging the gap between the state and the private sector in order to apply restraints to wages and anti-inflationary policies (Davids, 2005: 43; Andreasson, 2010: 164). This approach is based on the premise that flexible economic growth in the private sector would have a 'trickle-down effect', equating to greater access to job opportunities for those found in the poorer margins of South African society (Andreasson, 2010: 164). However, since its implementation, GEAR has been criticized for being a profit-centered approach to the redistribution of wealth that only preserves the economic and occupational elitism of a privileged minority (Davids, 2005: 43).

Following continuous failed attempts at rectifying inequality and persistent racialism, former-President Thabo Mbeki described South Africa as torn between two very distinct nations: "*One of these nations is White and relatively prosperous...It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure…The second and larger nation of South Africa is Black and poor...This nation lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. It has virtually no possibility to exercise what in reality amounts to a theoretical right to equal opportunity, with that right being equal within this black nation only to the extent that it is equally incapable of realization. This reality of two nations, underwritten by the perpetuation of racial, gender, and spatial disparities born of a very long period of colonial and apartheid white minority domination, constitutes the material base, which reinforces the notion that, indeed, we are not one nation, but two nations*" (Mbeki, 1998: Retrieved from the Department of Internal Relations & Cooperation website).

Although improving various aspects, such as the country's standards of education and disassembling institutionalized racial segregation theoretically gave Black South Africans the means to participate in the labour market, the fact remained that the White minority continued to exercise predominant control in the country's division of

labour. In 1998, 89% of senior management positions were occupied by Whites, while only 6% were occupied by Blacks, and the remaining 5% by Indians and Coloureds (Mathur-Helm, 2011: 366). There was an overwhelming fear that those Whites who occupied senior positions, ultimately those with the authority to dictate Blacks' entry into the labour market, continued to harbor sentiments of apartheid era racial prejudice. The belief was that this would ultimately prevent the occupational advancement of Blacks, thereby perpetuating race-based inequality in South Africa's social classes (Henrard, 2002: 111). A noteworthy aspect of the ANC's redevelopment policies was thus to give the Black population the platform to be included in South Africa's labour market and close the widening gap between South Africa's rich and poor 'nations'.

This goal continues to hinge on the Employment Equity Act (No. 55) of 1998. Under section 2 of the Act, the purpose is stated as (Department of Labour, 1998: 5):

"*to achieve equity in the workplace by-*

(a) *promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; and*
(b) *implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce.*"

'Designated groups' refers to those groups of the population who are regarded as historically disadvantaged, i.e., Blacks (which in this instance refers to Africans, Coloureds and Indians), women and the disabled (Alexander, 2013: 135). However, although affirmative action policies proved successful at including these groups into working class occupations, Black South Africans remained under-represented in middle-class and upper-class occupations. In fact, between 2000 and 2002 the representation of Whites in senior management and qualified professional occupations increased from 64.1% to 68.5 %, while the representation of Blacks (Africans) correspondingly dropped from 44.1% to 31.4% (MacEwen, Louw & Dupper, 2005: 23).

Thus in 2004, the ANC introduced Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), an initiative aimed at introducing a greater number of Black South Africans into top senior management and qualified occupational positions. Where affirmative action is mostly successful in improving levels of racial inequality in the working class, BEE is aimed more towards deracialising the middle- and upper-classes (Alexander, 2013: 140). A fundamental aspect of BEE is to "*Africanise*" not only the South African economy and labour market, but also the values and knowledge production of South African society as a whole (Andreasson, 2010: 174). BEE initiatives are built on three core directives: redirecting power into the hands of the Black population, ensuring an equal distribution of labour through controlling human resource development, and indirectly empowering smaller communities through private enterprise development and basic needs fulfilment (Burger & Jafta, 2006: 7).

However, the gains achieved by affirmative action policies and BEE initiatives have done little to subdue critics. Since the implementation of these initiatives, a number of high-ranking government officials have made the transition from the political field to becoming major players in the corporate arena. This has casted speculation that affirmative action and BEE have only served to protect the financial and political interests of a small powerful Black elite (Andreasson, 2010: 174). South Africa currently remains one of the most socio-economically unequal countries in the world. The Gini index has risen since the end of apartheid from 0.56 in 1991 to 0.65 in 2011 (World Bank estimate), signalling increasing discrepancy between rich and poor. Almost half (45.5%) of South Africans live below the poverty line, with Black South Africans making up over 94.2% of this total (Statistics South Africa, 2014: 27).

None-the-less, the prevalence of poverty within the Black population has lightened since the end of apartheid. In 1995, 68% of Black South Africans were living in poverty, which decreased significantly to 54% in 2011 (Hoogeveen & Ozler, 2006: 2). This is still in sharp contrast to levels of poverty amongst White South Africans, of whom less than 1% live below the poverty line (Statistics South Africa, 2014: 27). Although inequality in South Africa continues to be defined along racial lines, racial inequality no longer reflects the type of overt discrimination that was present during apartheid, but is indicative of the type of inequality that is inherent in conventional class-based stratification.

Although the vast majority of South Africa's Black population remains below the poverty line, there has been a significant deracialisation of South Africa's professional occupation groups, resulting in a minority group of Black South Africans achieving upward mobility into the upper rungs of South Africa's social ladder (Seekings, 2008: 2). Given the racial shift to South Africa's class structure, I aim to explore how the research participant's perceptions of being a minority group amongst most Black South Africans factors into their self-identification and identification by other Black people.

2.3.4. <u>The salience of race</u>

Another prominent feature of the ANC's transformative project for South Africa is to build a unified nation that foregoes apartheid-era racial distinction, which is embraced in the campaign slogan "*Many Cultures, One Nation*". Soon after the ANC's win in the first democratic election, discourses of South Africa being a 'rainbow-nation' flooded the media after Archbishop Desmond Tutu famously declared the people of South Africa as the "*rainbow people of God*" (Ross, 2008: 1). The new state attempted as much as possible to espouse this sentiment by removing all traces of the prior apartheid regime. Major changes were made to national symbols such as the flag and the national anthem, which is now sung in four languages and incorporates aspects of the old national anthem (Die Stem van Suid Afrika/The Call of South Africa) and a hymn associated with the Black liberation movement (Nkosi Sikeleli Afrika) (Orman, 2008: 147). In essence, every attempt was made to emphasise that South Africa is no longer entrenched in the apartheid ideology of Black versus White (Seekings, 2008: 5).

As much as these gestures can be commended for moving South Africa into a new era of racial and cultural tolerance, many have claimed that by embracing a multicultural ideology we are still upholding the racial categories imposed during apartheid (Seekings, 2008: 6). In 2004, the then cabinet minister Mosiuoa Lekota ardently criticised the country's political role-models for perpetuating apartheid-era racial categories by using such terms as 'Blacks', 'Whites', 'Indians' and 'Coloureds' in public and bureaucratic discourse. According to Minister Lekota, this only serves to placate racial indifference and does little to supplant the damaging effects associated with apartheid-era racial ideology (Alexander, 2013: 134). Although overt

racism has been outlawed, apartheid-era racialism continues to underlie much of the inter- and intra-racial interaction that occurs in post-apartheid South Africa (Durrheim et al., 2011: 22). The salience of race thus remains a prominent feature in the way South Africans categorize themselves and others (Seekings, 2008: 5).

At the end of apartheid, all institutionalised racial barriers eroded, giving way to an unhindered opportunity for intergroup contact. However, an analysis conducted by Durrheim and Dixon (2010) of survey studies aimed at measuring the quality and quantity of intergroup contact in South Africa between 2000 and 2005 suggests that social interaction between South Africa's racial groups remains an ambivalent affair (Durrheim & Dixon, 2010: 275). Durrheim and Dixon's research on attitudes towards racial integration further suggests increasing racial isolation amongst the Black population, while Whites continue to express the type of doubts and even opposition to integration policies that was present during the transition into democracy (Durrheim & Dixon, 2010: 273-288).

The quality of intergroup contact in South Africa is well illustrated by a number of studies that explore the incidence of informal segregation that occurs in various social contexts. Alexander and Tredoux (2010) for example, aim to explore spatial segregation at a South African university during lectures and in the broader setting of everyday life on campus. Their findings suggest that unless the interaction between the students is mediated by an outsider, students tend to arrange themselves spatially according to their racial affiliation. Once the racial groups have separated and essentially found their 'own space' in the lecture hall or on campus, interaction between them remains limited (Alexander & Tredoux, 2010: 381). Similar studies, such as those conducted by Schrieff, Tredoux, Finchilescu, and Dixon (2010: 5-17) of inter-racial seating arrangements in a university residence dining hall; Durrheim and Koen's (2010: 448-468) study of seating patterns in lecture halls; and Finchilescu, Tredoux, Mynhart, Pillay, and Muianga's (2007: 720-737) study on interracial mixing at a South African university all suggest that intergroup contact between South Africa's four race groups remains segregated along racial lines. In relation to the setting of this study, the subject of the salience of race could not be more significant. In 2008, Bloemfontein and the University of the Free State were the centre of international media attention because of an alleged racist video produced

by White students. Merely referred to as the "Reitz incident", the outcry caused by the video was a turning point in the University's strategy to create more racially integrated hostels. At the time of the incident, most of my research participants were in fact students at the University of the Free State. The impact of experiencing the racial tension caused by the Reitz video could have a profound effect on how the research participants continue to perceive racialism in their everyday lives (Elliker, Coetzee & Kotze, 2013). The topic of racialism and it's perceived effects on the participants' lives is therefore an important aspect of this study's exploration in the lived experience of upward mobility.

2.4. Identity

In the pages preceding this one, I frequently mention this study's intent to explore the identification of upwardly mobile Black South Africans. The aim of this section is to provide a definition for the concept of identity and to describe how it is implemented in this study's overall objective. The concept of identity has a long standing history in Western philosophy as a means of rationalising the self among others. However, identity only started gaining attention as a focal point of theoretical and empirical research during the 1940's (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 2). Even so, theoretical work on identity tended to remain within the bounds of psychological inquiry. It was only until the popularisation of the work of famed psychologist Erik Erikson that the concept fell under the gaze of prominent sociological theorists such as George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer, and W.I. Thomas (Vryan, Adler & Adler, 2004: 367).

During the tumultuous political climate that characterised the United States during the 1960's, the term identity exploded across disciplinary borders and became a popular topic of interest in the everyday discourse of journalistic, political and academic circles. By the mid-1970's, the prevalence of identity in scholarly and popular writing became so inflated that social scientist W.J.M Mackenzie referred to it as a term "*driven out of its wits by over-use*" (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 3). Yet, the proliferation of identity persisted and became especially resonant in the field of sociological inquiry thanks to increasing concerns over social issues related to race, class and gender during the 1980's (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 3). Today, the term identity is a clichéd yet staple feature of academic and popular discourse. Phrases such as 'identity crisis', first coined by Erikson during the 1950's to describe one's

failure to acquire a true sense of self, are uttered in movies and academic journals alike with little understanding of what identity truly means. Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper amicably refer to this as the true identity crisis (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 2).

2.4.1. <u>Defining identity</u>

A particularly tenacious obstacle when referring to identity is providing a definition for it that neatly explains what identity is and what role it plays in everyday life (Lawler, 2008: 2). In the social sciences, definitions of identity have polarised into strong essentialist conceptions on the one hand, and weak constructivist conceptions on the other (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 10). Strong conceptions of identity view it as an unchanging, corporeal 'thing' that everyone has or can obtain. These strong definitions further imply that there is a bounding sameness and tangible difference that makes individuals and groups distinct from one another. A major criticism of strong notions of identity is that by treating identity as an essentialist concept, we reify putative identities based on social categories, such as gender or race, into perceptively objective classifications with real consequences for those who are classified by them (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 10).

Weak or constructivist definitions, on the other hand, represent the far left of the continuum and view identity as multidimensional and continuously negotiated through social interaction (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 11). Constructivist concepts of identity have become increasingly popular in contemporary identity research due to theorists looking to turn away from the reifying implications associated with strong essentialist definitions. However, the constructivist school of thought also has its flaws and has led to what Brubaker and Cooper refer to as "*clichéd constructivism*" (2000: 11). In the swiftness to discredit identity as something that is 'unreal', constructivist definitions have turned identity into a vague premise that disaffirms the institutionalization of currently recognized social categories. This essentially removes any academic purchase from identity and renders it meaningless to social analysis (Brubaker, Cooper, 2000: 11).

Brubaker and Cooper's proposed solution to walking the tight rope that is defining identity is to do away with the term altogether. They maintain that the current

ambiguity of identity has propelled it far beyond its use as a meaningful topic of analysis. However, with the interdisciplinary focus that has befallen the concept, simply removing it from the academic lexicon is not necessarily a feasible option (Jenkins, 2008: 14). Instead, what is needed is a way of designating identity that opens the term to interdisciplinary use, while maintaining enough 'rigidity' to remain a worthy subject of analysis.

Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000: 14), and Richard Jenkins (2008: 14) note that the first step in untangling the definition of identity is to alter the way we use the term in academic discourse. For Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 14), the term identity implies something that is 'real', an objective truth that is an unquestionable aspect of social reality. Identification on the other hand, as derived from a verb, presupposes that it is an active process. This "*invites us to specify the agents that do the identifying*" and ultimately invalidates what may be perceived as externally imposed and objectively real differences between individuals and groups. However, both identity and identification, regardless of which we decide to use, inevitably run the risk of reification. What matters is not *which* of the two terms we decide to use, but *how* we decide to use them (Jenkins, 2008: 14). With that being said, this study makes use of both identity and identification interchangeably.

Identity, as it is used in this dissertation, refers to the putative classifications individuals and collectives use to characterise themselves in relation to other individuals and collectives (Jenkins, 2008: 18). Although this maintains the use of identity as a noun, it should always be understood as accompanied and established by the active process of identification. In this case, identification is regarded as a mundane yet indispensable interpretive system that allows each of us to construct a meaningful social reality. At the heart of this process is the principle classification of oneself as an individual or as the member of a collective according to the interpretation that we relate to others along lines of similarity and difference. This interpretation emerges from the dialectic relation between internal subjective processes and external social interaction with others (Jenkins, 2008: 18).

From the process of identification, we are able to develop a cognitive map of sorts that provides us with the multidimensional knowledge of who we are in relation to other individuals and collectives; and who we are in relation to our positions in social

space. At its most fundamental level, identification is the socially constructed and multidimensional capacity to know "*who's who*" and "*what's what*" at any given moment (Jenkins, 2008: 5). This study attempts to explore what it is like to be a young and upwardly mobile Black South African in central South Africa by focusing on the internal-external dialectic that actualises the process of identification. In order to do so, this study primarily makes use of Richard Jenkins' (2008: 39) explanation of the process of identification, which is discussed later in this chapter (section 2.5), to explore the research participants' narrative accounts.

2.4.2. <u>Identity as the primary unit of analysis</u>

Another major oversight that has contributed to the confounding perplexity of identity involves confusing identity as a category of practice with identity as a category of analysis (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 4). Identity is used as a category of practice when referring to the role it plays in everyday life (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 4). As already mentioned, identification is a fundamental aspect of everyday life. It allows us to distinguish ourselves from others according to social categories such as gender and race; and relationally according to personal and interpersonal relations with others.

However, Brubaker and Cooper warn against taking identity as a category of practice and turning it into a category of analysis. That is to say, we should be careful when taking identity as a fundamental process of everyday life and making it the subject of empirical research. Merely doing so in an offhand manner runs the risk of reifying the mundane process of identification into perceptively unquestionable identities that exist as part of an objective reality (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 5). Using race as a category of analysis, for example, presupposes that race exists as an objective classification. This negates the underlying social processes responsible for the institutionalisation of race, implying that it exists as a feature of an objective reality. Researchers should at all times account for the process of reification by portraying the putative identity under analysis in such a way so as to highlight the social processes involved in crystallising it into an institutionalised social category (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 5). It is specifically for this reason that I have included sections to this chapter that describe the social construction of class, race and identity.

Also, as discussed in the previous chapter, this study is deeply rooted in the theoretical tradition of phenomenology. This implies the need to explore the constitution of a meaningful social reality through the mundane social processes that constitute individuals' everyday lives. In this case, identification is considered part and parcel of these mundane social processes. However, the aim of this study is not to turn identity into a category of analysis, i.e., to empirically explain the process of identification as it relates to upward social mobility. Instead, this study attempts to understand the experience of upward social mobility with regard to the process of identification.

2.5. <u>Orders of identification</u>

Before discussing exactly how identity is accounted for in this study, it is important to defend the atypical sociological tradition of placing the individual at the centre of identity research. There is a tendency in sociology to draw a clear distinction between collective and individual modes of identification, and to treat these two as entirely separate phenomena (Jenkins, 2008: 37). The sociological distinction between individual and collective identification is further exacerbated by the ontological inference that shared collective identities are more 'real' than individual identities. Sociologists thus mostly tend to avoid the type of "*methodological individualism*" favoured by psychological inquiries into identity (Jenkins, 2008: 37-38).

I have argued in the previous chapter that the social world is experienced as an intersubjective reality. This implies that although we understand the world as inhabited by other subjectivities similar to our own, we essentially interact with the world and those other selves from the perspective of individual selves. Sociological inquiry therefore cannot ignore the importance of the individual subjectivity as a dimension of sense-making. Identification in this case is regarded as an interpretive framework embodied in pragmatic individualism, which allows each of us to make sense of the world from a unique perspective. Although the process of identification emerges from social interaction, it is inherently embodied as an individual interpretive process (Jenkins, 2008: 39).

Tying into the existential supposition discussed in the previous chapter, it is important to note that no two individuals experience the world in the same way. All individuals are unique and have correspondingly unique senses of who they are. However, we all experience the life-world within three interrelated 'orders', namely the 'interaction order' (what goes on between people), the 'institutional order' (established ways of doing things), and the 'individual' order (what goes on in individuals' heads)(Jenkins, 2008: 39). These orders, which typify the way we experience the world, are intersubjectively common to each individual, and our experiences within these orders form the foundation upon which our identities are formed. Although it is impossible to assume that any of the participants in this study identify themselves in a certain way, it is possible to obtain multiple perspectives of upward mobility and to explore how it influences individuals' identities (Jenkins, 2009: 40). By keeping the three orders of experience in mind during the data collection and analysis process, I attempt to find consistencies in the research participants' experiences that would contribute to a phenomenological understanding of upward mobility with regard to identification.

The following orders are primarily derived from Jenkins' *Social Identity Theory'* (2008). However, the orders of experience, as Jenkins describes them, bear similarities with three forms of identity found in Burke and Stets' book '*Identity Theory'* (2009), and the alternative idioms for identity found in Brubaker and Cooper's article *Beyond Identity* (2000). The subsequent subsections that discuss the orders of experience described by Jenkins thus also include the writings of Burke and Stets (2009) and Brubaker and Cooper (2000) to provide a richer understanding of how identity is incorporated into this study. Furthermore, in each order of experience, I have included reviews of studies which have more or less dealt with topics that are relevant to each specific order. The studies discussed in this section are specifically included here because of how they inform my own understanding of how to approach the concept of identity in the research setting.

2.5.1. <u>The interaction order</u>

As we share the life-world with innumerable other social actors, it is inevitable that we interact with other persons in some shape or form. These everyday interactions, which play an instrumental part in how we construct a meaningful social reality, fall within the interaction order. In the interaction order, the importance of social interaction as a framework for guiding the way individuals see themselves takes precedence. During interactions with others we implicitly enact a public image. That image, which is taken as one's identity, is always subject to the generalisation of one's counterpart in the interaction. Based on the other's reactions to the enacted identity, we may or may not engage in impression management to adjust the enacted identity to fit the generalisations of the other individual (Jenkins, 2008: 42).

Burke and Stets refer to this routine public portrayal of one's identity as a role identity, and further note that this form of identification is strongly related to one's social position (2009: 113). In this case, it is important to note the difference between a social position and role. A social position is an institutionalized social category that each and every individual occupies at any given moment (Burke & Stets, 2009: 113). Social categories bundle people into various classifying schemes that denote who they are in relation to others in society. Roles, on the other hand, refer to the internalized expectations that dictate the type of conduct, beliefs and values that are considered normative to one's social position (Burke & Stets, 2009: 113). Each social position may have numerous roles associated with it that vary according to the specificity of expectations they reflect (Burke & Stets, 2009: 113). Roles also extend to cover other putative expectations such as the types of goals one should achieve while occupying a social position; and the type of social interaction that is deemed appropriate to that situation (Burke & Stets, 2009: 114). Roles are primarily derived from two sources, namely the conventional dimension and the idiosyncratic dimension.

In the conventional dimension, which relates to Jenkins' (2008: 18) concept of the external process of identification, we internalize role expectations by way of socialization. When two individuals interact, they both implicitly relate to each other in terms of the social positions they might be occupying, and engage in impression management to successfully assume those identities (Burke & Stets, 2009: 114).

Although the content of an interaction may not explicitly be centred on identity, the act of presenting a public image that correlates positively to one's social position remains a discreetly inherent aspect of any interaction.

The idiosyncratic dimension on the other hand, which relates to Jenkins' (2008: 18) understanding of the internal process of identification, refers to one's own unique interpretation of a role identity as a source of the meanings we associate with a particular social position (Burke & Stets, 2009: 114). Brubaker and Cooper refer to this idiosyncratic understanding of one's social position as 'self-understanding'(2000: 17). The term self-understanding refers to an individual's unique subjective understanding of who he or she is relative to a social position rather than by widespread and "*structurally determined interests*" (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 17). In this particular order of experience, two fundamental questions arise that are relevant to exploring identity in this study: How do upwardly mobile Black South Africans see themselves relative to their changing social positions? And what are the motives that informed their decisions to take the steps that lead to their upward mobility?

2.5.1.1. <u>Self-understanding and upward mobility</u>

One way to explore the research participants' self-understanding in terms of their social positions is to delve into their subjective perceptions of meritocracy in central South Africa (i.e. the Bloemfontein area- where this research is situated), as is the case with Telzak's (2009: 1-59) study to explore young Black South Africans' perceptions of meritocracy in Cape Town, South Africa. In a meritocratic society, individuals are able to achieve upward mobility by virtue of hard work, talent, and educational attainment (Browne, 2006: 48). Since the abolishment of institutionalized racism, South Africa has been experiencing a steady growth within the emergent Back middle- and upper-class. However, for most of South Africa's Black population, who remain entrenched in poverty, meritocracy is essentially regarded as a myth because of the difficulty of they face in acquiring the type of capital needed to achieve upward mobility (Swartz, Harding & De Lannoy, 2012: 35). Those who have entered into professional occupations by way of higher education thus find themselves in a social position that is unique to most other Black South Africans.

The research participants in Telzak's study come from varying socio-economic backgrounds and have experienced different degrees of upward mobility. Telzak explores his research participants' perceptions of meritocracy by focusing on their perceptions of three fundamental aspects of upward mobility, namely their perceptions of economic stratification in South Africa; their perceptions of the possible pathways to achieving upward mobility; and finally, their expectations of experiencing mobility in the future. Much like Telzak's study, my own study also takes into account the participants' subjective perceptions of meritocracy in South Africa. However, my study slightly departs from Telzak's study with regard to the aspects of upward mobility which are explored. My study focuses on the participants' perceptions of escaping poverty in South Africa; their perceptions of the role that race plays in achieving upward mobility; and their perceptions of the necessary forms of capital needed to achieve upward mobility.

2.5.2 <u>The institutional order</u>

In the institutional order, the emphasis lies on social identities. Here, an important methodological distinction between a group and a category is drawn. A group is a collective of individuals that is defined internally in the eyes of its members, and is unified according to the nature of the relations between those members. A category on the other hand, is defined externally by others, and its members are unified only in the sense that they share a commonality in the eyes of the person doing the identifying (Jenkins, 2008: 43). To avoid reifying either form of collective into objective realities, Jenkins (2008: 43) emphasises their emergence from the respective processes of group identification and categorization. Group identification and categorization do not occur separately, and are therefore very likely to influence each other in their construction (Jenkins, 2008: 43). Internal group identification and external categorization are the result of the interaction that takes place across group boundaries(Jenkins, 2008: 105). Therefore the distinction between group identification should not be interpreted as indicating two entirely different types of collective. Instead, group identification and categorization are better understood as emerging from separate "*moments of collective identification*" (Jenkins, 2008: 105).

2.5.2.1. <u>Group identification and upward mobility</u>

Group identification is seen as the product of a group of individuals sharing the view that they have something that is intersubjectively common to all of them, which also makes them uncommon to other groups. Group identification is thus the result of "*collective internal identification*" that is shared amongst members of a collective (Jenkins, 2008: 105). During interactions with others in the group, individual members begin forming relational bonds on the basis of the similarities they share with each other, and the differences they share with others outside of the group (Jenkins, 2008: 105). Burke and Stets (2009: 122) make the distinction between an in-group (people we view as sharing our group identity) and an out-group (people who do not share our group identity). Yet the relational bonds that constitute a group identity need not necessarily be well-established for a group to exist. Individual members of a group may feel that they belong to a group even if they do not know other group members on a personal basis (Jenkins, 2008: 108).

Therefore, instead of amalgamating all experiences of group identification into an all-encompassing 'group identity', it proves more beneficial to refer to a group on the basis of the individual group members' sense of belonging to that group. In this regard, we can see a sense of group membership as based on three 'intensities' of belonging, as identified by Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 18): 'commonality', 'connectedness', and 'groupness'. Commonality is the most basic form of group identification, and refers to group members' rather loosely based sense of belonging on the mere basis that they share an attribute that is intersubjectively common to the rest of the group. Connectedness refers to a sense of belonging that is built upon group members' relational ties with others in the group. The final and most intense sense of belonging is groupness, which is the emotionally laden sense that one belongs to a cohesive group that is fundamentally distinct from others (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 19).

For upwardly mobile Black South Africans who have obtained professional occupations, segregation not only occurs at the intergroup level by virtue of racial categories, but may also occur at the intragroup level by virtue of transitioning into a class that is unreachable for most Black South Africans. As discussed in the section dealing with upward mobility and social class, upward mobility sees individuals

moving from one class condition to another. This signifies a number of things to those with whom upwardly mobile individuals share their social space, such as the ownership of certain traits or an affiliation with a particular type of culture. However, being identified as the member of a higher class may have adverse consequences with regard to one's group identification.

The effect of upward mobility on the social identities of historically disadvantaged groups is the central topic of interest in Gosine's (2008: 307-333) study of Black North American adults' lived experiences with upward social mobility. Gosine's study presupposes that upwardly mobile individuals from marginalised racial groups often find themselves caught in the middle of two identities. On the one hand, these individuals often experience tenuous relationships with peers from their racial group of origin. The Black North Americans in Gosine's study are often referred to as "*sell outs*" by their peers for being affiliated with a class condition that is uncharacteristic of most Black North Americans. On the other hand, because these individuals' race sets them apart from the White's that dominate the North American middle-class, they also experience estrangement from their newly achieved class affiliation. This often forces them into situations where they have to justify their class identity to their Black peers and the White people in their achieved class in order to avoid negative stereotyping (Gosine, 2008: 307-333). Yet, although these individuals may experience conflict from both their racial group of origin and their achieved class, many express a strong identification with both their Black identity and their achieved class identity, with a few participants going so far as to state a strong sense of commitment to other Black individuals (Gosine, 2008: 319).

Much like the Black North Americans in Gosine's study, upwardly mobile Black South Africans are also prone to disunity from both their group of origin and the dominant group of their achieved class. This has led to the emergence of the term 'coconut' to refer to those Black South Africans who are affiliated with the type of White culture that is characteristic of South Africa's middle- and upper-classes (Rudwick, 2010: 55). The word, 'coconut' is commonly used in a derogatory way, and implies that those Black South Africans labelled by it supposedly regard themselves as superior to their racial peers and adopt elements of White culture in favour of a more traditional African culture.

Rudwick's (2010: 55-73) analysis of comments relating to an article posted on a South African newspaper's web forum (the Mail@Guardian's *ThoughtLeader)* with regard to an article posted on the topic of coconuts, points out that Black people are usually regarded as coconuts if they do anything that aligns them with the country's White population. Acts such as speaking English with a non-African accent, having White friends, or merely displaying solidarity towards Whites is enough to be negatively labelled. Yet, English and Afrikaans (English more so than Afrikaans) remain the languages of power in post-apartheid South Africa (Nash, 2009: 206). If a young Black South African is to become upwardly mobile and maintain that mobility, he or she is almost compelled to become familiar with these languages and their associative cultures (Rudwick, 2010: 64; Nash, 2009: 206, Mwakikagile, 2010: 217). A similar instance is reported in Telzak's study on Black Youths' perceptions of upward social mobility in Cape Town, South Africa, with a respondent claiming that upward mobility has placed him in a space where "*you're not black enough to be Black*" (Telzak, 2012: 24).

Based on this discussion, the upward mobility of historically disadvantaged individuals may result in a potential loss of relational ties with their group of origin, and a potential inability to be regarded as a member of their achieved class by the dominant group of that class. Studies suggest that in the South African context, this may lead to upwardly mobile Black South Africans being labelled as coconuts by their racial peers. Assuming that the participants in this study have experienced the type of alienation experienced by the participants in Gosine's (2008: 307-333) study would be counterintuitive to the dissertation's phenomenologically based foundation. Instead of approaching the interviews with a predetermined idea of their group identification, I explore the participants' experiences of interacting with members from their group of origin and members of their achieved class in order to gain an understanding of how they negotiate the gap between the two 'worlds' in order to construct a meaningful sense of group identification.

2.5.2.2. <u>Categorization in context</u>

The second moment of collective identification, categorization, plays an especially important role in the way we construct a meaningful social reality. As our knowledge of others can never expand to the point where we know the characteristics of each and every person, we often rely on institutionalised categories (based on race, gender, age, etc.) in order to maintain the illusion that we know what to expect from people we do not know (Jenkins, 2008: 105). Where group identification is the product of collective internal identification, categorization is the result of collective external identification (Jenkins, 2008: 105). Carrying forth the internal-external theme in Jenkins' understanding of identification, the way others see us may have an immense bearing in the way we see ourselves. It is therefore important to take into consideration the influence of categorization when exploring individuals' collective identities.

Every individual and group in existence is subject to the external categorization of its members by other people and social organisations. However, it is not entirely impossible that group members are unaware of the social categories employed to typify who they are. This forces us to pay attention to the consequences of external categorization on people's group identities (Jenkins, 2008: 106). Whether a category has any influence on the way individuals view themselves depends on its status as a nominal identity, which is an identity that merely exists as a name; or a virtual identity, which is an identity that has experiential consequences for those labelled by it (Jenkins, 2008: 44).

There are several possibilities that may arise from this distinction. On the one hand, we may see the categorical name of a group change while having no effect on the everyday lives of those classified by it. Whereas for some groups, a change in nominal identity may have tremendous implications for how members of those groups live their everyday lives. Furthermore, a group of individuals may share a nominal identity, but the experience of that identity may be completely different for each of the members in the group (Jenkins, 2008: 44). The likelihood of an identity having any effect on a person's life thus depends entirely on the context in which categorization occurs.

Classification by institutionalised social organisations is one of the most noteworthy contexts in which nominal identities have the capacity to influence individuals' and groups members' everyday lives. An organisation is a collective constituted by a network of positions that work together to achieve a common goal (Jenkins, 2008: 45). By allocating individuals to different positions, bureaucratic recruitment procedures also inherently bestow particular identities upon those individuals. An important aspect of these positions is that their distribution is directly related to political processes and power struggles within and outside of the organisation. Consistencies in the recruitment practices of different organisations thus create groups of people that are characterised by a common experiential reality (Jenkins, 2008: 45).

For example, consistencies in the distribution of positions in the labour market invariably bundle people into classes that share similarities in their life-chances and social reality (Jenkins, 2008: 45). Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 16) emphasise that the state is one of the most powerful institutions when it comes to the categorization of individuals, as it has the power and the resources to impose categories that social actors and bureaucratic institutions abide by. Yet, despite this power, the state is not the only social organization with the power to categorize individuals. External collective identification also takes root in other mundane social organisations such as the family or schools (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 16).

A major obstacle faced by Black South Africans is negotiating the negative social status that is implicit in their racial categorization. The apartheid government infamously divided South African citizens into four racial categories (Black, White, Coloured and Indian). However, these categories were more than mere nominal identities, they reflected virtual identities that imposed very different social realities on those categorized by them. Being categorised as non-White (in other words: Black, Indian or Coloured) during apartheid meant experiencing constant subjugation and obscene acts of racism and prejudice by the White minority. Despite the ANC-led government's attempts to 'level the playing field' as it were, with regard to racial inequality, 400 years of subjugation has done little to change the negative connotations associated with being labelled as 'non-White'. South Africans continue to live their everyday lives through racial lenses. This is especially problematic for

the Black population, considering that they have historically been labelled as inferior through a master-slave narrative aimed at preserving White privilege. Although overt racism has been outlawed in post-apartheid South Africa, Black people continue to face negative stereotypes associated with their race in everyday life, albeit in a more implicit manner (Mtose, 2011: 325-338).

Studying Black people's lived experiences of racism in post-apartheid South Africa, Mtose (2011: 325-328) provides an illuminating account of implicit and explicit forms of racism still present in Black South Africans' narratives. According to Mtose's study, Black people continue to be the victims of overt forms of racism, such as racial slurs and exclusion from certain activities. But the most frequent form of racism experienced by Black South Africans today stems from implicit forms of racism embodied in negative stereotypes and "*alternative forms of racism*" disguised by double speak (Mtose, 2011: 329-333; Durrheim et al., 2011: 32).

The stereotypical image of Black people in South Africa portrays them as lazy, uncivilised and untrustworthy. Although these stereotypes are rarely made explicit, they are frequently implied in everyday discourse. For example, the historical view of Black people, as incompetent and corrupt, is often perpetuated in the critique of South Africa's Black political figures (Durrheim et al., 2011: 32). In cases where Black people do not conform to racist stereotypes, they may experience being regarded as "*honorary Whites*" (Durrheim et al., 2011: 32). However, despite being seen as 'on par' with notions of being White, Black people are always seen in relation to the negative stereotypes that surround being labelled as Black in South Africa (Durrheim et al., 2011: 32; Mtose, 2011: 335).

Categorization by the state also carries similar negative connotations. Taking steps to create an equitable society, the ANC implemented affirmative action policies in order to improve the economic wellbeing of historically disadvantaged individuals (HDIs), i.e., Black people, people with disabilities, and women. On the one hand, it has led to the growth of an emerging Black middle-class and the 'Africanisation' of South Africa's economy. On the other hand, it has sparked criticisms of perpetuating racialism and pressing historically disadvantaged groups into occupational roles they simply do not have the qualifications for (Ndletyana, 2008: 77). Yet, what does this categorization mean for the everyday life of upwardly mobile Black South Africans?

A qualitative study conducted by Daniels & Damons (2011: 148-168) in a historically White South African University suggests that the presence of affirmative action policies has led to many historically disadvantaged individuals being labelled as the token of quotas set out by the objectives of affirmative action. These individuals' self-worth is continuously battered because of the insidious assumption that they do not deserve the positions they have achieved. This again raises two fundamental questions for my study: What are the participants' attitudes towards common labels used to categorise upwardly mobile Black South Africans and Black South Africans in general? And what does it mean to be labelled as Black and upwardly mobile?

2.5.3. <u>The individual order</u>

In the individual order, the emphasis rests on how each of us define ourselves as unique individuals, rather than occupants of a social position or members of a collectivity (Jenkins, 2008: 40). Although this form of identification focuses on individuals' subjective interpretation of who they are, it remains, like every other form of identification, a part of the social domain. As Jenkins (2008: 40) maintains, one's self-concept always emerges from a dialectical interaction between internal interpretive processes and external identification by others. The manner in which we make sense of ourselves on an individual basis is therefore invariably linked to our surrounding social environment and the perceptions others have of us.

One's sense of self does, however, maintain a certain degree of uniqueness in the sense that it is the idiosyncratic foundation upon which external aspects of identification are collected and compiled into one's overall identity (Jenkins, 2008: 70). How individuals identify themselves thus may or may not include external forms of identification, such as social identities or role identities; and may or may not include social categories such as race or gender. This raises the question of how I intend to account for the research participants' individual identities in my study. Exploring the research participants' individual identities may begin with the simple phrase, 'tell me about yourself', or 'tell me about who you are'. Although these questions may provide a valuable insight into my research participants' identities, and remain valuable in this study, they may also lead to scattered accounts with little to offer in terms of an exploration into identification.

According to Jenkins (2008: 70), a sense of self is the one form of identification that is the most stable over one's lifetime. However, the human world and all within it are subject to change, and although one's sense of self is the most resistant to change, it remains, as every other form of identification, an on-going process. Individual identification is influenced by aspects such as the mind's measures to adapt to changes; our interactions with other people; and identifying with "*accessories in the human world*", such as friends and family members, or even non-human accessories, such as music, neighbourhoods and occupations (Jenkins, 2008: 71). One's occupational position is a significant indicator of having achieved upward mobility in the eyes of others, I therefore attempt to explore the research participants' perceptions of how the transition from a lower class to a higher class has influenced their individual identities.

2.6. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the conceptual framework which guides my exploration of young Black South Africans' lived experience of upward mobility and identification. This chapter discusses concepts and definitions found to be valuable to my study, such as social mobility, class, race and identity. Social mobility is defined in this study as an individual's movement from one social class to another. With regard to the concept of class, this study adopts a culturally-centred approach which sees social classes as varying conditions of existence that confer distinct identities upon those who occupy them. Furthermore, given the social context of the study's objective, the concept of race is defined as a social construct.

Following the discussion of the above concepts, I provide a description of how race and class have intersected in South Africa's past to create the level of racial inequality that characterises the country today. From this discussion, Black South Africans are seen as the historical victims of seething racism and apartheid legislature that aimed to protect White privilege at the expense of the subjugation of the Black majority. This has created lasting effects that continue to shape the social realities of young Black people in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa in numerous ways. The most pronounced of these effects is the fact that upwardly mobile Black South Africans find themselves in a position where they are a minority group in relation to most other Black South Africans who remain in poverty.

The final section of this chapter introduces the concept of identity that was adopted for this study. In this case, identity or identification is defined as an on-going interpretive process that allows individuals to know who they are and who others are according to comparisons of similarity and difference. The aim of this study is to explore and understand how young and upwardly mobile Black South Africans identify themselves and experience being identified by others in relation to their higher social class. I do so by exploring the participants' narratives according to three orders of experiencing the life-world, namely the interaction order, the institutional order, and the individual order. In the following chapter, I describe the methodological philosophy and the research techniques employed to meet the objectives set out in the preceding pages.

Chapter 3: Methodology and operational account

The aim of this chapter is to situate my dissertation within a methodological framework by pointing out my choice of specific research methods, and to discuss how these choices are utilized to address the research questions that have emerged in the prior chapters. This chapter is thus divided into two main sections. The first section discusses narrative research as this study's chosen field of interest. More specifically, I introduce a narrative methodology known as the 'narrative practice approach' which, because of its focus on an individual's identity over time, plays an instrumental role in exploring the research participants' identities.

The second portion of this chapter is dedicated to describing the various techniques utilized in this study, which link the chosen methodology with the philosophical and theoretical foundations discussed in the first chapter. In the second section, I discuss the various aspects involved in the operationalization of my study, such as the methods used to draw a research sample; the type of interviews used; the steps I took to establish a positive rapport with the research participants; and the analytical framework I used to apply the narrative practice approach to my research participants' narratives. This chapter also includes topics, such as the types of questions asked during the interviews; the steps I take to ensure the ethical integrity of my study; and the measures put in place to produce knowledge that is trustworthy, reliable and valid.

3.1. Narrative methodology

According to neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (1999: 10), "*consciousness begins when brains acquire the power…of telling a story*" (as cited in McAdams, 2008: 242). Every aspect of our lives occurs in narrative form. We speak in stories, we think in stories, and we give meaning to our experiences through stories. Storytelling is one of the most basic aspects of human communication, and plays a fundamental role in the way we make sense of ourselves and construct a meaningful social reality from our everyday experiences with the life-world (Andrews, 2004: 77).

A 'narrative turn' to conducting research has spread rapidly across various disciplines within the humanities. Yet, the use of narrative material as a research

methodology is not a particularly novel approach (Czarniawska, 2004: 3). Sociologists have been collecting narratives in the form of personal documents and life stories since the early days of the Chicago School in the 1920's, while anthropologists have been known to historically espouse narratives as a foundation for research (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012: 2). During the 1960's and 1970's, narrative research proved especially advantageous in exploring the lived experiences of marginalized groups, and uncovering the subjective meanings social actors attribute to their experiences with certain social phenomena (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012: 2). Narrative research has since grown in the light of its increasing popularity to the point where it is now recognised as a unique discipline with its own methods of inquiry (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012: 3).

At the centre of any narrative research project are personal stories, which researchers ideally collect through interviews and analyse in order to uncover aspects such as the "*content, themes and structure*" of individuals' storied lives (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012: 3). According to McAdams (2012: 16), the narrative study of lives tends to fall under one of two logics of inquiry, namely in the 'context of justification', or in the 'context of discovery'. In the context of justification, narrative research is conducted in order to objectively explain a particular phenomenon through the empirical testing of hypotheses. In the context of discovery, the aim is to explore narratives in an attempt to uncover expansive themes that contribute to an interpretive understanding of a particular phenomenon. Given the interpretive foundation of this study, the use of a narrative approach is meant to produce broad themes aimed at exploring and interpreting the internal and external identification of upwardly mobile Black South Africans, not to produce or test a particular theory of identity.

In this study I make use of a narrative approach known as the narrative practice approach, which analyses the features of a narrative performance in order to explore how individuals identify themselves, both individually and collectively. An important aspect of the narrative practice approach is that the emphasis rests more on *how* participants construct stories through narrative practices than on the stories themselves (Bamberg, 2012: 102). Narrative analysis usually highlights different narrative features, such as the performance, content or structure of narratives, or it

may attempt to explore the relationship between these three aspects during a narrative-centred interaction (Bamberg, 2012: 102). Although the narrative practice approach may also prove useful in exploring these aspects, the focus is primarily fixed upon exploring the interaction that takes place during a narrative inquiry. Researchers employing the narrative practice approach thus analyse narrative interactions in order to uncover aspects such as the purpose of participants' narratives, how they recount their narratives during an interaction, and their responses to questions throughout the interaction (Bamberg, 2012: 102).

The narrative practice approach is built upon six key premises that characterise narratives:

1. Narratives are implicitly recounted as the social products of people who are imbedded in "*specific social, historical and cultural locations*" (Lawler, 2002: 242)*.*The way in which people deliver their narratives is thus a matter of culturally determined narrative repertoires inherited during socialisation (Lawler, 2002: 242). For example, McAdams notes the contrasting differences in the autobiographical memory and story production of people from East Asian and North American societies (2008: 247). The analysis of narrative accounts is therefore closely linked to exploring the social contexts in which narratives are given purpose (Bamberg, 2012: 101). In my presentation of the analysis of my participants' narratives, I thus make a concerted effort to highlight their perception of the social context in which their everyday lives occur.

2. Narratives mostly take the form of written texts. However, the narratives that fall under the gaze of the narrative practice approach are ideally collected as oral recordings. Researchers using the narrative practice approach also rely on visual cues such as postures, facial expressions and gestures that indicate how participants tell their stories (Bamberg, 2012: 101). An important feature of the knowledge presented in this study, is that it is essentially the product of my own interpretation of the participants' narratives. However, my interpretation of those narratives is largely given meaning through the manner in which the participants tell their stories during the interviews. For example, my understanding of certain topics or issues as having relevance to my participants' narratives is often based

on the way they react to those issues in the conversational setting of the interviews. The presentation of this study's analysis thus includes various personal moments, recounted from my own perspective, that influence my interpretation of the participants' narrated experiences.

3. Individuals' narratives typically make reference to a world that consists of significant characters, places and events that are situated in the past (Atkinson, 1998: 2). By paying attention to the research participants' relation to the characters, places and events in their past, I am able to paint a greater picture of the contextual background that frames their stories (Bamberg, 2012: 101). For McAdams, the stories people tell unfailingly mirror societal issues such as race, gender, and class (McAdams, 2008: 247). In the context of my study, this means identifying significant events or characters in the participants' narratives that shape their own understanding of what it means to be identified, internally and externally, as a young Back South African who is upwardly mobile.

4. The stories told by individuals include experiences that range from early in their pasts, to stories that have occurred closer to their present situation. These stories are typically structured in the sense that they are constructed through culturally mandated elements of what their culture regards as an acceptable narrative (e.g. linking past and present situations or problem solving). However, individuals' narratives are also unstructured in the sense that they do not follow a chronological order, and are mostly fragmentary in nature (Lawler, 2002: 246). Narrative researchers thus compile seemingly disjointed experiences that span across time, and form them into a coherent plot with a beginning, middle, and an end (Lawler, 2002: 246; Bamberg, 2012: 101). This study slightly departs from the usual modus operandi of narrative research. Instead of rearranging the participants' stories into chronological narratives, I have grouped their experiences into unifying themes that are more appropriate to a phenomenologically based study.

5. The tellers of narrative accounts tend to integrate various themes into their stories that are relevant to the interaction at hand (Bamberg, 2012: 101-102). For example, themes such as personal growth; linking later challenges in life with

earlier struggles; describing significant turning points in the life course; and emphasizing the persistent conflict between deterioration and progression, are themes that typically present themselves in narratives that span across one's life (McAdams, 2008: 247). As this study focuses on the lived experience of upward mobility as the transition from a lower to a higher social class, the theme of overcoming social barriers features prominently in the presentation of my data.

6. When individuals tell stories, whether about themselves, about other people, or even fictional stories, they inevitably engage in identity practices that reveal aspects of who they are (Bamberg, 2012: 102; Lawler, 2002: 249). Therefore in my analysis of the participants' narratives, I do not overlook stories that place characters, other than the participants, as the subjects of significant experiences.

With regard to revealing the process of identification, narratives play a special role in the way individuals make sense of who they are. Narratives customarily serve the purpose of preserving cultural values, and carrying these values forward in the plots of stories. Children learn from an early age to tell their personal stories in a way that fits with their collectives' cultural interpretation of what rightfully constitutes the structure of a narrative(McAdams, 2008: 244). Not only does this allow cultural values to endure, but individuals are able to relate their own values to culturally established ones. This provides the platform from which individuals can develop a meaningful sense of self (Lawler, 2002: 249).

The most prominent way in which identities emerge through narratives, is when individuals order experienced events into episodes that constitute the plot of their life stories. In doing so, individuals are able to interpret later events in life as linked to earlier ones. Narratives thus indicate a temporal movement of one's life that links the past to the present and the present to the potential future. Every narrated event is thus given purpose as leading to a natural conclusion in one's present situation (Lawler, 2002: 250). Narrative research attempts to understand how people define their identities by exploring this temporal space "*in terms of what is viewed as changing and remaining the same*" (Bamberg, 2012: 103). Upward mobility, through educational attainment, is a lengthy process that sees individuals experiencing numerous changes to their lives over a long period of time. The view of identity, as

situated in narratives that occur over time, thus suites this study particularly well, as it forms the foundation upon which I am able to explore how the participants' identities have emerged during the course of their transition through society's different class groupings.

Another prominent feature of the narrative practice approach, which proves especially helpful in the context of this study, is that researchers are not limited to wide, expanding biographies in order to explore their participants' identities. As Bamberg (2012: 102) notes, "*Identity is navigated as much in the many small stories that are successfully or unsuccessfully prompted in ordinary interaction as it is presented in extended accounts of biographical material*". The narrative practice approach essentially requires that I not only explore the content of the research participants' narratives in order to understand how they identify themselves, but also the practices the participants employ when constructing those narratives during the interviews. In the following section I discuss the methods that are used to apply the narrative practice approach to this study.

3.2. <u>Methodological account</u>

Where the first section of this chapter indicates a narrative approach to research as my study's chosen methodology, this section illustrates how the tenets of narrative research, and the prevailing philosophical tenets of interpretivism, phenomenology and existential sociology, are carried forth into the research setting.

3.2.1. <u>Sampling</u>

Arguably the most crucial aspect to consider when undertaking social research is selecting a research sample that is relevant to meeting the needs of one's study. The first step in this process is defining the desired target population (Babbie & Mouton, 2010: 166). In this study, the target population is identified as young Black (African) South Africans between the ages of 18 and 30, who have achieved upward mobility (i.e., acquired professional occupations higher than that of their parents) through educational attainment, and who reside in central South Africa. Importantly, because this study advocates W.I. Thomas's dictum, "*If men define situations as real, they are*

real in their consequences", it was imperative to find research participants from the target population who define themselves as having experienced upward mobility.

Given the interpretive foundation of this study, the aim is not to generalise the findings across a larger population, but only to explore the experiences of those who participate in this study. I therefore made us of non-probability sampling in order to draw research participants from the desired target population (Babbie & Mouton, 2010: 166). More specifically, I made use of two forms of non-probability sampling, namely purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is an approach that allows me to hand-pick participants that I identify as fitting the specific criteria of the study's required target population (Adler & Clark, 2008: 121). In conjunction with purposive sampling, I located the majority of my research participants by means of snowball sampling. Also known as accidental sampling, snowball sampling is particularly effective when researchers experience difficulty in locating members from their desired target population. Snowball sampling essentially involves asking participants to nominate potential respondents they are acquainted with who fit the criteria for the target population (Adler & Clark, 2008: 122). Finding research participants who fit the requirements of my study proved to be one of the greater obstacles during the research process. Finding research participants who fit the requirements of my study proved to be one of the greater obstacles during the research process. With the help of a research participant, who I had met a few years prior to starting with this dissertation, and the help of those participants who followed, I was able to put together a sample of 8 individuals from various backgrounds who share the commonality of having experienced upward mobility.

3.2.2. <u>Data collection</u>

The data collection phase of the research project took place over the course of a year (2013-2014), and involved the use of two methods of interviewing, namely one-on-one phenomenologically based interviews and a focus group discussion. The purpose of the one-on-one interviews was to generate in-depth data that is derived from the participants' personal experiences with upward mobility an identity. Researchers using this method mostly rely on an open dialogue that illuminates the interpretation, feelings and understanding that participants attribute to their lived experiences. The one-on-one interviews thus began with a few predetermined

questions aimed at opening the dialogue between the research participants and myself. As the dialogue unfolded, I introduced questions or statements in such a manner as to encourage a continuous, almost natural progression to the interaction (Pollio, Henley & Thompson, 1997: 30).

In phenomenologically based interviewing, the researcher archetypally takes on a neutral, yet interested role and refrains from challenging statements made by the participants (Roulston, 2010: 17). The aim was for each participant to determine the course of the dialogue while I purely facilitated the topics of interest (Pollio et al., 1997: 30). There is another approach to phenomenologically based interviewing described by Roulston (2010: 18), known as the 'Socratic-Hermeneutic-Interview', that was incorporated into the one-on-one interviews and the focus group discussion. In a Socratic-Hermeneutic-Interview, the researcher and the participants actively engage in an open dialogue that affords both parties the opportunity to reflect on the perceptions that emerge during the course of an interview. This kind of interviewing is mostly focused on a back-and-forth exchange of ideas between the researcher and the participant, concerning the definition of concepts that emerge during the interview.

During the one-on-one interviews I attempted to strike a balance between both forms of phenomenologically based interviewing. For the most part, the interviews reflected an open interaction between me and the participants, where the participants' recounted experiences guided how and when the topics of interest were posed as questions. The participants were then given the relative freedom to narrate their experiences with little interruption. However, at certain points of the interviews I decisively set out to ask the participants what their definitions of certain concepts were, in order to openly reflect on them. Although I did not necessarily challenge the participants' definitions of certain concepts, this form of interviewing proved especially useful when exploring the participants' attitudes towards certain social categories that are intersubjectively prevalent in everyday South African life.

Succeeding the one-on-one interviews, I conducted a follow-up interview in the form of a focus group discussion. This discussion was partly conducted in order to address some of the inadequacies that were identified from the individual interviews, and to add a richer dimension to the data collection process. It would be valuable to

first discuss what is meant by the term 'focus group discussion'. According to Barbour (2007: 2), there is a general confusion surrounding the use of focus groups in research, and people often use the terms focus group discussions and 'focus group interviews' interchangeably. Focus group *interviews* refer to the process whereby the researcher gathers a group of respondents in the same venue, and addresses each of them individually with the same question, thereby producing individualised responses to each question. The researcher essentially conducts a number of individual interviews at the same time, in the same place (Barbour, 2007: 2).

A focus group *discussion,* on the other hand, is a much more malleable and dynamic process, where the aim is to create a relaxed environment that encourages participants to generate a wider range of perspectives concerning the researcher's topic of interest (Hennink, 2014: 1). Instead of posing the same question to each participant individually, I posed a topic of discussion to the entire group and provided the participants the opportunity to interact and discuss the topic freely. I only adopted a mediatory role during the discussion to ensure that the conversation remained in line with the specified topics (Barbour, 2007: 2). The group setting of the focus group discussion enabled me to gather data that was more rich and dynamic than the data collected during the one-on-one interviews (Hennink, 2014: 2).

During the course of the focus group discussion, the participants shared and discussed their thoughts with the rest of the group. The group was then encouraged to deliberate on these opinions by asking questions and providing their own views on the topic. The aim was not only to refine the topic of interest posed during the discussion, but also to identify new themes that add depth and clarity to the research participants' experiences (Hennink, 2014: 3). Furthermore, the collective interaction of a focus group discussion provided the opportunity to unify a number of individual narratives into a greater collective narrative that shed light on the intersubjective experience of young Black South Africans' experiences with upward mobility (Hennink, 2014: 3).

3.2.3. <u>Establishing rapport</u>

Narrative research is concerned with gathering data from a closely empathetic and respectful relationship. A notably important aspect of the data collection process was thus to create a safe and relaxed environment that encouraged research participants to speak freely about their experiences. Developing this relationship required addressing a combination of both explicit and implicit considerations during the research process (Josselson, 2007: 539). Needless to say, interviewees are more willing to share their stories if they are made aware of the style of interviewing they will be participating in; and if they feel that the data they are contributing will remain confidential and anonymous in nature. These explicit considerations are present in every form of scientific inquiry and basically refer to the formal ethical considerations discussed at the end of this chapter.

However, when responding to research questions, participants not only pay attention to the safety-net created by formal ethical precautions, but also to the understated interpersonal cues communicated by the researcher's general demeanour (Sands, Bourjolly & Roer-Strier, 2007: 356). The researcher's ability to communicate empathy, remaining non-judgmental and being emotionally responsive thus plays a fundamental role in the type of data respondents feel comfortable in sharing during an interview (Josselson, 2007: 539). The need to remain cognisant of these implicit considerations in qualitative research goes without saying, and I was always aware of the need to maintain a respectful inter-personal relationship during the interviews, while adopting the attitude of an involved listener.

Yet, even after a researcher is granted the opportunity to interview participants, the assumptions the participants have of the researcher in terms of his or her race, gender, social status, and institutional affiliation may make them reluctant to freely participate during interviews (Sands et al., 2007: 355). Interviewees may express sensitivity towards being asked certain questions, or even misconstrue questions as aimed at furthering institutional agendas or fortifying social inequalities (Sands et al., 2007: 355). As this study focuses on the upward mobility of young Black South Africans, it was important that I, as a White researcher, was able to transcend whatever perceived racial and cultural boundaries there may be between me and the research participants.

As Sands et al. (2007: 355) points out, we all occupy various social positions and categorical ascriptions relative to other people. According to the context of an interaction and the characteristics of the person we are interacting with, we typically classify people as outsiders (people who are not considered part of our social group) or insiders (people who are considered members of our social group). The same holds true within the context of an interview. Interviewers viewed as insiders have a significant advantage over those deemed as outsiders (Sands et al., 2007: 355). For insider researchers, gaining access to research participants is a considerably easier affair. They are also better equipped with the cultural knowledge needed to create a relaxed environment and ask the type of questions that allow the interviewees to participate in a comfortable manner, producing rich and detailed data. However, the same cannot be said for outsider researchers, whose questions could often be construed as unwelcome or intrusive (Sands et al., 2007: 355).

There is one advantage though to being an outsider researcher that insider researchers often fail to meet. According to Sands et al. (2007: 355), participants more readily accept outsider researchers as people set out with the intent to learn something new about a culture they know little about. As a result, the researcher is granted greater access to uncovering the often taken-for-granted meanings their participants use in their everyday lives. Insider researchers normally do no share this feature, and the consistency in the social positions they share with their participants often means that these mundane meanings remain taken-for-granted during their interactions (Sands et al., 2007: 355). It is specifically for this reason that this study openly embraces the fact that there is a cultural and racial divide between myself and those who participated in the study.

Yet, to truly reap the benefits of being an outsider researcher, I had to be able to bridge the gap between my own social reality and that of my participants. This study thus employed several guidelines for cross-cultural interviewing that are identified and discussed by Sands et al. (2007: 368-369). The following recommendations emerged as the result of their analysis of several cross-cultural interviews with African American women who had converted to Islam:

- ***Transparency:*** From the outset of my communication with the research participants, I maintained as much transparency as possible regarding the research project. When first contacting the respondents I stated in full what the study aimed to achieve and the pertinent themes that were to be explored. This was reiterated prior to each interview and carried through into the interviews, by the need to clarify the purpose of certain questions. The participants were also encouraged to voice any concerns regarding the questions asked, the themes explored during the interviews, and the handling of subsequent data.

- ***Incorporate choice:*** As mentioned, this study attempts to facilitate the data collection process by creating a comfortable and relaxed interview environment. This was achieved by giving the participants the option to choose where and when they felt comfortable conducting the interviews. This was a particularly important feature of the data collection as all the participants are young professionals with busy schedules. Additionally, the option of choice was also extended into the interviews as participants were given the preference to not answer questions that made them uncomfortable, or to request that the audio recorder be switched off at their choosing.

- ***Timing and ordering of personal questions:*** Given the study's phenomenological focus, it is inevitable that personal questions featured as part of the interviews. Prior to and during the course of data collection, I frequently held informal conversations with acquaintances who themselves are young Black South Africans. It was during these conversations that I learnt which themes and types of questions might potentially be perceived as inappropriate by the participants, and how best to introduce them during the interviews. Furthermore, sensitive questions were reserved for later in the interview process, after the appropriate rapport was established.

- ***Personality and style of interviewing:*** The often contrasting social positions between researchers and their participants create the need to remain thoughtful of the style in which an interview is conducted. In order to create a collaborative atmosphere I steered clear from treating respondents as carriers of data, and I

approached each interview as the site of a co-operative dialogue where the respondents were regarded as my colleagues in the construction of knowledge. The interviews thus mirrored a personal and conversational style of data collection.

- ***Acknowledging differences:*** In addition to giving the participants the opportunity to express their concerns, I also set out to voice my own concerns regarding the cross-cultural context of the interviews. Prior to commencing each interview, I made transparent the fact that as a White male, my own experiences and perception of upward mobility in central South Africa may be vastly different to that of the participants'. Yet I assured them that these differences were precisely what fuelled my interest in the study. The hope was that in doing so, the participants would be more perceptive to illuminating and sharing aspects of their everyday lives that they usually take for granted.

- ***Joining where there are commonalities:*** Although this study embraces the differences in social positions inherent in cross-cultural interviews, Sands et al. (2007: 369) points out that researchers should not ignore the advantage in identifying the similarities they have with their respondents. Therefore, regardless of the differences between myself and the participants, I frequently pointed out some of the commonalities we share in our life stories. These commonalities were built upon not only to establish greater rapport, but also to emphasise the experiences that were unique to the participants' narratives.

- ***Opening up space for pain:*** Cross-cultural interviews evidently provide a space for respondents to discuss aspects of their lived experiences they would otherwise not usually share with interviewers of the same race, culture or gender. One of these taken-for-granted aspects is the experience of misconception, discrimination and prejudice based on individuals' categorical ascriptions. It is especially important to include these kinds of experiences in a study such as this, where the goal is to explore the identification of individuals who belong to a historically disadvantaged group. An aspect carried throughout all of my interviews was thus to allow the participants the opportunity to narrate

their own stories of these experiences. In cases where the participants were willing to share this kind of information, I remained sensitive to their experiences and treated their narrative accounts with the utmost respect.

3.2.4. Interview questions

3.2.4.1. Types of questions

Qualitative interviews are, amongst others, built upon the assertion that researchers pose questions which are then followed by a response from a respondent. However, posing a question does not always result in an inevitable answer. A researcher also cannot guarantee that the provided answer will fall in line with the question that was put forward. How questions are answered largely depends on the type of questions asked. In social research we generally find two types of questions posed by researchers, namely closed-ended questions and open-ended questions (Royse, 2008: 183).

Closed-ended questions are the type of queries that usually limit the respondents' responses to short, concise answers that merely provide a factual declaration, or aim to confirm or invalidate a statement (Roulston, 2010: 10). In a study such as this, where the focus is on gathering rich in-depth accounts, closed-ended questions are generally avoided. This is not to say that closed-ended questions are entirely unusable to the qualitative researcher. When it came to the questions posed in this particular study, closed-ended questions were used sparingly and merely served to clarify my understanding of certain preceding statements made by the participants (Roulston, 2010: 12).

The vast majority of my questions were posed as open-ended questions. Compared to the inhibiting nature of closed questions, open-ended questions are posed in a purposefully broad manner so as to provide the respondent with the freedom to generate detailed replies related to the researcher's topics of interest (Royse, 2008: 183). Depending on how the participants answered these questions, I also made use of probing questions, which essentially involved asking follow-up open-ended questions that expounded in further detail various statements made by the research

participants (Bryman, 2012: 223). A notable aspect of probing questions is that interviewers should take care to formulate their follow-up questions in the same terms used by the interviewee. I thus avoided introducing words into the conversation that were not used by the participants so as not to 'pollute' or change how their stories were told (Roulston, 2010: 12).

Although the onus of open-ended questioning is to pose questions that are broad enough to stimulate in-depth conversation, I was always cautious not to ask questions so vague that they caused unnecessary confusion (Roulston, 2010: 12). The use of open-ended questions combined with frequent probing was especially beneficial when it came to maintaining the type of conversational interaction that is favoured in individual interviews and focus group discussions.

Concerning the type questions asked in the interviews, this study makes use of what James Spradley refers to as 'descriptive questions' (1979: 85). Descriptive questions are aimed at producing an account of people's experiences with a specific phenomenon. Spradley subdivides descriptive questions into *grand tour, mini tour, example, experience,* and *native-language* questions (1979: 85).

- *Grand tour* questions provide the interviewee with general, open-ended descriptions of particular activities, events, objects, people, or places. Questions, such as, 'could you describe your time at university? encourage participants to "*ramble on and on*", creating a broad verbal depiction of the noteworthy features of the context of their experiences (Spradley, 1979: 87).

- *Mini tour* questions are designed to probe some of the more isolated features of experiences overlooked by grand tour descriptions. These questions are similar to grand tour questions, except they break down the experience of a macro phenomenon into smaller detailed experiences. For example, the question: '*tell me about the challenges you faced at university*' isolates a smaller experience from the initial description prompted by '*could you describe your time at university?*'.

- ***Example*** questions provide further specificity of a recounted event by simply asking the participant for an appropriate example, e.g., '*can you give me an example of the challenges you faced?*'.

- ***Experience*** questions ask participants to describe the experience of a prior stated event, e.g., '*could you describe the experience of graduating?*'. Spradley (1979: 89) recommends asking experience questions after a number of grand tour and mini tour questions have been asked, as participants often have difficulty in answering them. My use of experience questions were thus appropriately introduced after the interviews had progressed for some time.

- ***Native-language*** questions encourage participants to use or define terms native to their cultural position when describing their experiences. Native-language questions are used when the researcher wants to find out about a native cultural term used to describe something, or when the researcher inquires about the meaning of a native term. For example, the term coconut (defined in section 2.5.2.1. as Black South Africans who are regarded by other Black South Africans as sell-outs for adopting various aspects of White South African culture) was explored in the one-on-one interviews and the focus group discussion in order to explore the different meanings the participants' have of this term.

All of the aforementioned questions, namely closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, probing questions, and descriptive questions were combined to create dynamic semi-structured interview schedules. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer conducts the interview with the aid of predetermined questions that cover a range of different topics of interest. Semi-structured interviews are flexible in nature and do not require that questions be asked or answered in any specific manner. This allowed me to constantly adapt the order in which questions were asked in order to preserve the conversational flow of the interviews, while maintaining the study's main topics of interest (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011: 103).

3.2.4.2. <u>Translating thematic questions into dynamic questions</u>

For the sake of cultivating a conversational style during the interviews, it was important to draw a clear distinction between thematic questions and dynamic questions. According to Kvale (2007: 57), thematic questions relate to the epistemological aims of a study. That is, they are the foundational questions that produce the knowledge a researcher aims to generate from his or her project. The problem with thematic questions is that they do not translate well in the context of interviews, as they are often loaded with theoretical concepts that are not part of the research participant's everyday language. Thematic questions thus often elicit confused and meaningless responses from the respondents as they quite simply do not understand what it is that the researcher is asking of them. In a narrative study such as this, where the goal is to collect rich and lively responses, one cannot take the risk of putting the participants in a situation where they are unable to answer a question because they are unfamiliar with the theory that underlines the study. The thematic questions that drive this study were thus translated into dynamic questions prior to the interviews.

Dynamic questions are more suitable to preserving the interpersonal relationship between the researcher and his or her participants, and aim to stimulate a positive interactive setting that is conducive to the participants providing rich and varied accounts of their experiences. These questions are short and to the point, and do not contain academic language, thus making them easier to understand and respond to (Kvale, 2007: 57). When it came to conducting the interviews, I was sure to never provide the participants with direct thematic questions. Instead, I translated my thematic questions into dynamic questions both prior to the interviews, as illustrated by the interview schedule in appendix B (pp. 185-187). Thematic questions were also dynamically translated during the interviews to suit the context of the conversation with each research participant.

3.2.5. <u>Data analysis</u>

In the beginning of this chapter, I highlighted the importance of narratives and the act of narration as 'carriers' of individuals' identities. I thus adopted a narrative approach known as the narrative practice approach in order to understand how this study's participants identify themselves in regard to their experiences with upward mobility. The aim of the narrative practice approach is to analyse how individuals construct their identities in the process of telling their personal stories. According to Bamberg (2012: 103) there are three analytic 'dimensions' in which individuals narratively navigate their identities, namely 'agency', 'sameness versus difference', and 'constancy and change across time'.

3.2.5.1. <u>Agency</u>

The first order of experience discussed in chapter 1, the interaction order, highlights the dialogical interaction that takes place between social actors who communicate with each other on the basis of the social positions they occupy and their ascribed social categories (Jenkins, 2008: 42). The type of communication that occurs in this order implies that because individuals are identified according to their social position or social category, there are certain roles attached to their identification that they are expected to adhere to. In order to explore this order of experience, I focus on how my participants negotiate what Bamberg (2012: 106) terms the agency dimension in their narratives. Like the individuals in Jenkins' interaction order, the agency dimension similarly focuses on the 'speaking subject' as an embodied agent, present in vivo and in situ within society (Bamberg, 2012: 106). As such, individuals as speaking subjects have to navigate the agency dilemma in their personal narratives (Bamberg, 2012: 107).

Using discursive devices from their collective's narrative repertoire, speakers situate themselves relative to their social positions in one of two ways: either as a person-to-world direction of fit or a world-to-person direction of fit. In a world-to-person direction of fit, speakers may use discursive repertoires that indicate low agency and portray themselves as having little to no bearing on the world they experience. On the other hand, a person-to-world direction of fit sees speakers using discursive repertoires that indicate experiences of high agency. Instead of being the ineffectual recipient of

worldly cues, high agency speakers place themselves as "*agentive constructors*" that are in control of their situations (Bamberg, 2012: 106).

By focusing on how my participants navigated this dilemma in their narratives, I was able to find themes that indicated the type of roles that are associated with their social positions, and whether these roles are externally imposed, i.e., through interaction with others, or whether they stem from the participants' self-understanding of their social positions.

3.2.5.2. <u>Sameness versus difference</u>

The second order of experience explored in this study is the institutional order, where the emphasis lies on group identification and identification through social categories (Jenkins, 2008: 43). The associative narrative dimension used to highlight the institutional order in this study is sameness and difference. According to Bamberg (2012: 104), just as discursive choices highlight a speaker's relation to society, so too do they signal a speaker's relation to other people in society. For example, when speakers use categorical ascriptions of any kind, such as those of race and class, they affiliate themselves (implicitly or overtly) with people who are also identified according to these social categories. When reflected upon, these discursive devices (e.g. 'us' and 'them') often allude to the temporal or spatial affiliations speakers have to those people who occupy different categorical ascriptions, thereby illuminating the boundaries that frame their sense of individual and group identification (Bamberg, 2012: 104). Discursive devices may thus indicate whether speakers view themselves as unique to others in certain situations, or whether they regard themselves as members of a collective group.

Bamberg further notes that although speakers may explicitly voice their affiliation to a collective, their affiliation to others is usually only hinted at, making the focus on discursive practices all the more important to exploring group identification (Bamberg, 2012: 105). In this case, researchers may draw upon a number of discursive choices that indicate sameness or difference to others. For example, boundaries of sameness or difference may surface through speakers merely describing themselves or others according to certain attributes; or through the act of explaining one's own or others' behaviour.

Bamberg's concept of sameness and difference makes it possible to identify and explore my research participants' sense of group identification without having to bluntly ask: 'what groups do you consider yourself a member of?'. By keeping in mind the presence of discursive devices that indicate sameness and difference in my research participants' narratives, I was able to explore the role that categorization plays in the construction of my participants' sense of group identification.

3.2.5.3. <u>Constancy and change across time</u>

The final order of experience within the life-world is the individual order. With regard to identification, the focus in the individual order is the subjective interpretation we all share of being unique individuals in relation to other individuals, groups, social positions and social categories. Dealing with such a highly subjective form of identification usually proves to be problematic because the manner in which individuals identify themselves may be drawn from any number of potential sources, limiting the exploration of this form of identification to the "*psychoanalysts couch*" (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 17). Exploring the self in a sociological setting thus requires one to take into account the social aspect of individual identification. Jenkins (2009: 70) thus proposes that individual identification be explored from the standpoint of the self as embodied in individuals who are qualitatively situated in society.

According to social constructivists, the social world is marked by constant change. For Bamberg (2012: 103), this invariably means that we, as thinking and speaking selves, mirror this change in the need to successfully navigate constancy and change across time in our narratives. Also known as 'diachronic identity navigation', the change across time dimension focuses on how speakers narratively situate themselves within an ever-changing world. When narrating their life stories, individuals face the dilemma of having to situate their sense of self within this ever-changing world. They do so by positioning their sense of self along a narrative continuum that contrasts no change at all on one side, with unceasing and sporadic change on the other (Bamberg, 2012: 104).

Where individuals place themselves on this continuum is indicated by discursive choices that describe certain events and moments as prompting significant

qualitative transitions into later moments, or when describing moments that prompt a discontinuity in change. Discursive devices may also indicate whether change is experienced as a sudden incident or gradually over time (Bamberg, 2012: 104). The question here is not whether the speakers have changed throughout their lives or to what extent they have changed. Instead, the focus is on how speakers narratively negotiate the dilemma of balancing no change at all with constant change in their stories (Bamberg, 2012: 104). A large focal point of the data analysis was thus to illuminate and explore how the research participants narrate their stories of upward mobility by specifically paying attention to how they narratively situate their sense of self in moments that link the past to the present, and the present to the possible future.

3.2.6. <u>Reliability and validity</u>

As the body of work related to narrative inquiry grows, so too does the issue of ensuring the quality of the knowledge it produces. Conventional science adopts reliability and validity as the yardsticks for evaluating the quality of research. These two measures of quality are commonly associated with the positivist paradigm, where the ultimate objective for research is the quantification and generalization of results. Reliability refers to a study's capacity to produce the same results time and time again when applied to the same object of inquiry (Cargan, 2007: 233). Validity on the other hand, is the extent to which a study accurately measures the reality of the phenomenon under study (Bryman, 2012: 390). Validity is further distinguished between internal validity and external validity. Internal validity is concerned with whether a study has truly excluded all possible hypotheses that may explain the object of study, and external validity refers to the degree to which a study's findings can be generalized across the population from which a research sample was drawn (Bryman, 2012: 390). Although rooted in their respective cultures, the stories told by the participants are unique to each of them and were further influenced by my own culturally prescribed ways interpreting them. Understandably, the ontological and epistemological assumptions of this type of research do not lend well to orthodox concepts of good quality research (Halloway & Freshwater, 2007: 112).

However, for any research project to be regarded as having contributory value to its discipline, it has to follow certain criteria for safeguarding quality (Dunleavy, 2003:

27). Even though the concepts of reliability and validity might stand in contrast to the inherent nature of qualitative methodology, this study remains obligated to ensuring the presented findings are truthful in their representation of the participants' social realities (Elliot, 2005: 22). The overall measure of quality I used for this study was to achieve what Polkinghorne (1988: 176) refers to as 'verisimilitude'. According to the SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry, verisimilitude refers to the extent to which the information presented by a study reflects the "*appearance of truth or reality*" (Schwandt, 2007: 313). As interpretive research delves into people's subjective experiences, it naturally repels conventional notions of scientific rigor. Acquiring verisimilitude thus becomes a fundamental aspect when presenting the findings of my research (Polkinghorne, 1988: 176).

In the case of this research project, verisimilitude is maintained by taking personal reflexivity into account. Personal reflexivity forces the researcher to become aware of the adverse impact of his or her presence throughout the research process (Hennink et al., 2011: 19). Considering personal reflexivity, I was always aware that my own biographical history may be completely different to that of my research participants. As a white male, I have little to no idea of the types of situations encountered by Black South Africans and how these situations are experienced. Therefore the likelihood of personal bias resulting from my own historical origin is something that had to be taken into account. In order to maintain reflexivity, I employed the phenomenological concepts of 'epoche' and 'bracketing'. Epoche involves identifying the personal judgments and opinions that may bias the data analysis and data collection process. Once these aspects are identified, they are cast aside through bracketing. It is often assumed that the ultimate goal is to approach the phenomenon and the data from a value-free point of view (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2014: 92). However, because of my involvement in the research process, it is impossible to deny that the data presented is entirely free from personal bias. Ultimately, the knowledge produced tby the research project was given life through my own interpretation of the participants' experiences. The process of epoche and bracketing merely ensured that the most obvious biases, such as those rooted in my own upbringing, are buffeted.

3.2.7. <u>Ethical considerations</u>

Although ethical considerations are present in every form of research, the role of ethics in qualitative research takes on a pronounced character due to the closely relational nature of the data collection process (Hennink et al., 2011: 63). Qualitative research methods are specifically applied to explore the feelings, emotions, and meanings that underlie people's experiences. The subsequent data that is produced is often highly personal in nature, and charged with the potential to harm those involved in the study (Hennink et al., 2011: 63). It is therefore essential that researchers follow the applicable steps in order to ensure their participants' safety.

No deception was used at any stage of the research process. From the outset of the project, research participants were made aware of the aims of my study and the subject matter that was to be covered within the research project. Participants were also made aware that the interviews were to be recorded with an audio device. Before any of the interviews, participants were required to sign a letter of informed consent (Appendix A) that indicated their willing participation in the study. Participants were allowed to withdraw statements made during the interviews or remove their contribution to the study all-together. They were also free to exit the research at any time they chose to do so and care was taken to avoid any physical harm.

A particularly important ethical consideration maintained in my study was ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants. These two terms are often used interchangeably, but the ethical issues addressed by them are reasonably dissimilar. Confidentiality refers to avoiding the disclosure of data that has been produced between the researcher and the research participant (Hennink et al., 2011: 71). Researchers are obligated to limit who has access to the interview recordings and the resultant transcripts. Complete confidentiality is often impossible to attain in qualitative research, as findings are frequently supplemented with direct quotes from the interview process. In light of this, I ensure that there is no identifiable information that could link the recordings, transcripts and research findings to those who participated in my study (Hennink et al., 2011: 71). All names presented in the research findings are in fact pseudonyms.

3.3. <u>Conclusion</u>

In this chapter I discussed the chosen methodology and the methodological techniques that were involved during the operationalization of this study. With regard to the chosen methodology, the narrative practice approach is identified as being the most applicable to the study. The onus of the narrative practice approach, in conjunction with collecting participants' life stories, is to focus attention on how the research participants respond to questions in order to explore how they situate their identities in their narrative accounts. Research participants' narratives are acquired through one-on-one phenomenologically based interviews and focus group discussions, which are mediated with the aid of semi-structured interview schedules. The audio recordings from the interviews are then transcribed and analysed using three analytic guidelines specified by the narrative practice approach. I also discussed the importance of establishing rapport and the guidelines which are followed to bridge the cultural and racial divide that may present itself between researcher and research participant. Finally, I discussed such aspects as the measures used to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants, and the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

Chapter 4: <u>Presenting the findings</u>

Analysing the raw data that emerged from the data collection process mainly involved applying Jenkins' (2008) three dimensions of experiencing the life-world, and Bamberg's three dimensions of narrative identity to the participants' narratives. In this chapter, three sections are presented which correspond to each of the three forms of identification as conceptualised by Jenkins (2008). In the first section (4.1), I discuss the institutional order of experience, which includes the research participants' experiences with regard to the identity processes of categorization and group identification. The second section (4.2) presents the interaction order of the research participants' daily lives by describing their identities as emerging through the processes of self-understanding and role expectations. Section 3 (4.3) includes the individual order of experience, where the participants' individual identities are analysed as emerging in relation to their perception of the life-changes that have occurred since having achieved upward mobility.

As this study is built upon the philosophical foundations of interpretive research, the findings presented in the following pages reflect my personal interpretation of the collected data. Yet, it is important to note that the phenomenological foundation of this study requires a certain amount of transparency to illuminate the decisions made during the course of analysing the raw data. My presentation of the findings thus makes use of an ethnographic approach to data presentation known as 'impressionist tales' to highlight my personal experiences with the interviews, and to provide a general understanding of why certain themes are found relevant to this study.

The idea behind impressionist tales is based upon the impressionist art movement that occurred in the West during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Impressionist painters, such as Renoir, Monet and Van Gogh attempted to capture special moments of the world as seen from their own unique perspectives, forcing viewers to become active participants in the interpretation of their painted scenes (Van Maanen, 1988: 101). Impressionist tales aim to do just that by drawing the reader into the experience of doing research through stories told in the first person perspective of the researcher. The goal is to allow the reader to see and hear specific moments in time from the perspective of the researcher, and to highlight

different moments that are found relevant to the research project (Van Maanen, 1988: 102-103). At various points throughout this chapter I thus include my own perspective of moments that I feel may have influenced my interpretation of the participants' stories.

The findings also feature the use of 'thick descriptions' to illuminate the social reality of the participants' everyday lives. Thick descriptions refer to portraying each participant's experiences in a manner that surpasses a mere superficial depiction of an experienced phenomenon. The intent is to uncover the brute being, and the mundane meanings that shape the way in which the participants of this study make sense of different life experiences associated with upward mobility and identity (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010: 7). Researchers use thick descriptions to describe the situations of individuals' experiences in a holistic manner that includes such important contextual information as the social setting, the cultural values, and the emotional tone that underlies the situation under consideration (Ponterotto, 2006: 540-541). I therefore make use of rich and detailed verbatim quotes from my interactions with participants, which aim to provide the readers of this dissertation with a glimpse into the subjective sense-making processes that underlie the participants' experiences. As much as I intend to provide my own interpretation of the data in the findings, the goal is also to present the data in such a way that it remains open to the interpretation of the reader.

4.1. <u>The institutional order</u>

This specific chapter in the presentation of the findings, focuses on the research participants' institutional order of experience. In the institutional order, the experience of identification is focused on two different forms of identification, namely categorization and group identification. Although categorization and group identification are dealt with separately in this chapter, they are not necessarily exclusive to each other, and often intersect at various moments in the participants' narratives (Jenkins, 2008: 43).

4.1.1. <u>Categorization</u>

Persistent racism and racial inequality in South Africa today goes hand in hand with the racial categorization of South African citizens during the apartheid era. One of the fundamental goals of my research is to explore the attitudes and experiences that young and upwardly mobile Black South Africans have with regard to racial categorization, and to delve into their perceptions of the role that racial categories play in their day-to-day lives. The first aspect in exploring the research participants' perceptions of categorization involved uncovering the barriers to upward mobility they view as associated with being categorised as Black in South Africa. When this topic was initiated during the interviews, I was careful not to include certain words (inequality or poverty for example), that would channel the participants' responses in a particular direction. The following theme thus illuminates some of the major obstacles the participants subjectively perceive as hindering Black people's upward mobility in South Africa.

4.1.1.1. "It's tough for us Africans to find our feet*"*

The first and most prominent challenge discussed during the interviews was the obstacle posed by racial inequality. In the following response, Charles raises a perceived dichotomy of wealth between White and Black South Africans. On the one hand, White people are described as having unlimited access to the economic resources needed to attend university and achieve gainful employment. While on the other hand, Charles sees Black people as struggling to achieve upward mobility because of a distinct lack of economic resources, which places them at a significant disadvantage when it comes to fulfilling academic responsibilities:

> *I don't have the luxury of leaving school and going to work on one of my father's farms. We have to… We have challenges that White people don't have. We have very many days at university worrying about: "Eish what am I going to have to eat?". While the White students don't have those problems. We have to study with bursaries while his parents pay with cash. Whatever Black man is successful, he is deserving of it. Because I know he didn't get it on a silver plate. It's a fact. We have things to worry about that White people*

don't have to worry about. I have to worry about getting to class, while he is driving a BMW. I have to worry about rent while his parents bought him a flat.

Although Charles was the only participant to openly state that Black people are at a disadvantage to Whites because of racial inequality, the deleterious effects of economic disparity in the lives of upwardly mobile Black South Africans resonates throughout each of the other participants' perspectives. A statement made by James strikes a particularly sensitive chord with my own experiences, and illuminates just how damaging financial insecurity can be to those who already have to deal with the challenges inherent in achieving upward mobility:

James: *I was first* [to go to university] *so it was that fear I felt that made it difficult. Sometimes I couldn't study because I had that fear and I couldn't concentrate.*

Michael: *What was it that you were afraid of?*

James*: I didn't want to fail. I know my sister and brother look up to me and I didn't want to fail because I want them to succeed, you understand? And it was so expensive my grandmother had to help me pay for registrations and all that. So I couldn't fail. I had to keep working hard for all of them. It was that kind of fear you understand? There weren't any role-models to follow so I had to do it by myself.*

The topic of financial insecurity often naturally drifted into the perceived opportunities available to young Black people who aim to 'make it' out of a life of poverty. The narrative of available opportunities highlights one of two routes out of poverty: one may either choose the 'quick route' of working class occupations, or one may choose the 'long route' of dealing with the sacrifices of going to university:

Piwe: *And you know I started having these thoughts of where do you want to see yourself after grade 12? Do you want to see yourself working a nice job, working at… because the nicest job we thought at that time was maybe being a policeman. It's a quick access to working, and quick bucks. I remember my cousin was already a policeman by that time. And he used to come home with*

nice cars and all those things, and you're thinking, ja, he has it you know? So the options were minimal. It was either going that route, or studying extremely hard.

From my own experience, the decision to attend university was invariably associated with the rewards it could bring later in life. My family had the financial means of assisting me to pay for my studies, which essentially made the decision to attend university a particularly easy life-choice to make. From my own understanding, it is therefore justifiable to say that the research participants' decisions to attend university was greatly affected by access to economic capital. However, what soon becomes apparent is that the participants' decision to attend university was not solely based on their access to economic capital, but was also influenced by their access to cultural capital. According to James' personal experience, Black people who live in townships do not have access to the type of information needed to make an informed decision about attending university:

It's the financial thing we spoke about just now. And if… I am part of the RAF and we had a meeting a few weeks ago. We go to Black people in the location and we tell them about the different ways…like the ways they can get to go to university and the help that's there for them if they choose to do so. You know, it's not just that they have to suffer to pay from their pockets. There's a lot that can be done for them. And that's one thing about people in the location. They don't have access to that kind of information. Most of the young people don't even know how to apply for university. I was one of those people that struggled because I didn't know where to go or who to talk to. I mean there is internet in the location, but you have to book your time at the library and people just don't bother. Even when they do get to use a computer it's all just about Facebook and Twitter and these things. So it's that I think. That kind of information doesn't make it in the location very easily.

Other than broadening this study's knowledge on the challenges faced by young and upwardly mobile Black people, James' statement uncovers a mundane aspect of my own experience with going to university. As I had the privilege of attending a former Model C school, I was inundated with information concerning the choices available to potential university students. The decision to attend university was often also dealt

with as an unquestionable expectation after matriculating. In my own everyday interactions, the question of '*what would you like to do after school?*' was far more rare than '*what are you planning to study after school?*'.

The lack of information mentioned by James also features prominently in Piwe's experience of applying to the School of Medicine at eh University of the Free State. Not knowing that the applications for medical school had closed early in the previous year, Piwe travelled 200kms from Kroonstad to Bloemfontein without any idea of what was required to register at the University. All he had with him was his matric certificate and the dream to become a doctor. This very nearly cost him his future in the field of medicine:

> *And you can imagine when you get to medical school and you know that you didn't apply, but you go with such confidence you know? That, "let me try". And if I didn't try I wouldn't have been here today. Because they told me at first it's impossible. The Dean told me this is crazy, this is madness. Because I actually asked for the Head or the Principal. I didn't even know there were deans there. So they took me to the Head of the School of Medicine, Prof. Van Zyl. And I got there and I said: "Prof., I've come from so far. I brought my grade 12 certificate and what do you say Prof? I want to study medicine". And he's like: "Jisslike boet!"* (loosely translated as: '*oh my goodness son!*'). *He took me to Mrs. Roussouw, the administration woman, and she's trying to comfort me saying: "You passed well, but there's still some next time". And I started pouring out like: "If you know where I come from". And to see how God works, 2 days later they called me, the very same people who said it was impossible, they called me and said: "Listen, there are two students who cancelled, and we didn't consider the list. We actually considered you first". And they considered me. They called me in, I studied medicine, and here I am today.*

Piwe and James further describe young Black people's upward mobility as significantly hindered by what they perceive as an apathetic attitude towards going to university. James briefly alludes to this in an extract from his earlier statement:

Even when they do get to use a computer it's all just about Facebook and Twitter and these things.

According to Piwe, the apathetic view towards higher education is not just the result of teenagers' preoccupation with social media, but a dangerous indication of a culture that discourages interest in higher education:

People who are already at the tertiary level; those are the ones who are aiming for top jobs in South Africa. The ones who read in the articles about shortages of accountants, chartered accountants… But I think the ones at the bottom, they just know about what they read in the Daily Sun. Those articles about the "tokoloshie who ate my baby". And not to poke fun, but that's all they know about.

In the prior statement, Piwe contrasts between two types of Black people: the upper-class Black people who read articles concerning important issues that he views as having a real impact on their daily lives; and lower class Black people who indulge in sensational working-class tabloids, such as the Daily Sun, which according to Piwe, has no value in terms of broadening their prospects for upward mobility. Piwe frequently identified himself during our conversation as someone who started off at the bottom, but who was able to achieve upward mobility because of the ability to transcend a lower class mentality that revels in an elementary lifestyle. It is this type of 'simple' lower-class habitus (Boterro, 2005: 149) that he, and a number of other participants voice as a major deterrent to young Black South Africans' decision to choose the path of attending university as a means out of poverty.

Although I could understand how a contrast in class habitus may hinder a young Black person's upward mobility, it was only when Piwe continued to discuss his own experience of contrasting class habitus' (Boterro, 2005: 149) that I was truly able to appreciate the courage it takes to look beyond perceived established norms. The setting of Piwe's following story takes place at his professors' dinner table:

When I went to the Steinbeck's family I saw how at the dinner table the child can ask her father a difficult question and say: "But daddy you don't know it". I was like: "Wow!". And they were just having a conversation, and in the

conversation his daughter asked him about some political question and the father was like: "Um wait a minute…". And then the child was like: "But you don't know it, just admit". And I was like: "In my house, I would get a smack right there". I would never even dare go to that danger area. We call it a red zone. You don't even go there!

A 'red zone', in this case, refers to any established norm associated with Black South African culture that cannot be overlooked under any circumstances. Apart from not displaying any form of dissent or expressing the idea that an elder might not possess knowledge about an issue, another particularly tenacious red zone in Piwe's house was the decision to go to university, which his stepfather stood firmly against :

Michael*: You mention that red zone where you don't even doubt what your parents say. It must have been quite a difficult decision then for you to say you were going to study despite your stepfather being so strongly against it.*

Piwe*: It was huge. Believe you me, it was huge. I actually… I didn't want to come study actually after we had a breakdown. I told my mom I'm not going the night before. That morning, while I slept, my mom came to my room and said: "Listen, here's R80. Go". And I left without him knowing because by that time he was not awake. So I left without his blessings. So I went against completely what he wanted and I went against the tradition, the pattern of family in our culture. Because before you leave anywhere you need to ask you know? I'm leaving, do you give me your blessings? So I went completely against that. And I think, serving a great God, that is what he wanted me to do. It was difficult. And even there on my journey, the most fearful thing was what if I don't get the results? What shame am I going to have when I go home? They're gonna say I told you so and he'll even desert me. He's gonna say: "Listen, you're not my own, get off!". It was a battle, but I did it.*

Piwe is the only participant to have experienced resistance from his family because of choosing to go to university; and it should not be said that it is a phenomenon shared by many young Black South Africans. However, what Piwe's story highlights is an ideology shared by many of the participants that different red zones associated with South Africa's lower classes create a class habitus (Boterro, 2005: 149) that

prevents young Black people from looking beyond working-class occupations as a way of achieving upward mobility. According to sociologist Annette Lareau (2003: 3), Piwe's experience mirrors the differential culture of raising children that is exemplified in the contrast between working-class and middle-class parents.

In Lareau's (2003: 3) view, middle-class parents raise their children through the process of 'concerted cultivation'. In the style of concerted cultivation, middle-class children are encouraged to develop a firm sense of entitlement, which is cultivated through a direct, almost constant involvement from the parents. Middle-class children are thus instilled with a natural confidence when it comes to interacting with adults. Working-class parents on the other hand, mostly raise their children through the contrasting process of natural growth. Children raised through natural growth are given ample freedom to develop their own selves without the constant involvement that characterises middle-class upbringing. However, the lack of concerted cultivation has the added effect of establishing clear boundaries between adult and child, which children are often discouraged from crossing (Lareau, 2003: 3).

The salience of race in the area of central South Africa is another issue raised whilst on the topic of the challenges faced by upwardly mobile Black South Africans. Keketso, for example, describes the experience of racialism at the University of the Free State as a "*culture shock*":

> Keketso*: I never approached life on a black and white basis at all…maybe once in a while. But at the University of the Free State you got the culture shock.*

> Michael*: You mentioned that culture shock at the university. Can you maybe expand on that?.*

> Keketso*: Well my first school… which is in Natal. We were also very secluded. I don't know. We never even spoke or considered race. At SMS* [Saint Michael's Girl's School], *ja, it was something you knew, but honestly speaking we were very well integrated. Extremely well integrated. When I got to the university it was the first time that I saw the split, and it was very shocking for me.*

Charles's experience of racialism also occurred when he first moved to Bloemfontein from De Aar, in order to study at the University of the Free State. For Charles, the experience was so pronounced that during our conversation, he associated it with the type of racialism that was present during the apartheid-era:

Charles: *To be honest with you…I can't remember… I was born in 1984. Which was still in the apartheid era, but I can't recall any act of racism from where I come from. I can remember having White friends. One of my friends, his father… his grandfather was a doctor. The doctor in town. The only doctor. And my grandmother was working for them, she was a domestic worker. And I can remember going to their house in the afternoon, playing with them, swimming with them; him coming to the location, playing with us, and we never knew anything about this apartheid. But when I came here I actually saw what apartheid was like.*

Michael: *What do you mean you saw what apartheid was like?*

Charles*: It's like… the White people in Bloemfontein they have a very, very good* [strong] *sense of being superior. You notice it everywhere. You notice it in shops, you notice it in the street, you notice it whilst you are driving. It's just like they… how can I put it? It's like they have a total disregard for other races.*

Following Charles' statement, I explored whether or not he views racialism in central South Africa as a hindrance to his ambition to establish his own law firm. His response, a booming "*definitely!*", immediately produced a "*why?*" on my behalf, which through the audio recording seems more like a nervous reflex to his sudden, sharp reply:

It's like we dark skinned people are more open to criticism than your White counterparts. And even when you do something good you don't get recognition for it. Whilst when the White guy does something good he's being applauded for it.

Charles continues his motivation by illuminating a story from his own life, which he feels is something shared by many young Black professionals such as himself:

Like for some time ago I took some initiative with something the previous candidates did not do. I told you we're doing deeds, ne? It's transfer of property. And they've been struggling to get this certain property that belongs to the Dimitrious [family]. *They've been struggling to get this property registered since 2011. And when I started working on that I noticed where the problem is. So I decided to actually go to Infrastructure. It's in the Department of Mangaung* [Municipality]. *But it's very far. It's there in the location. Now we can claim petrol for when we go outside of the office. Now I sorted that problem out, that problem that they've been struggling with since 2011. I sorted it out. I got the letters that they've been trying to get for 4 years now and they could finally proceed to transfer the property. But the problem was it was far. It was almost 30 km* [away]. *But never-the-less, I sorted out this problem in one day that they've been trying to sort out for the past few years. But for them all they could worry about was the petrol. While the White guy just goes and takes a certain document and puts it in someone's post and then he gets applauded for it. These are the types of things we Black professionals have to endure. That's the reason why most of us when… most of us, we decide to do our articles here, we do everything that we still have to do and then we leave. I'm not saying it's difficult, but it's tough for us Africans to find our feet here in Bloemfontein because of… most of your big firms is White owned. They still White owned.*

Taking Charles' story into consideration, one may point out that regardless of race, anyone who claims back a seemingly large sum of petrol money from their company would be criticised, even if it meant securing a lucrative deal for that company. However, according to Charles story, it is an incident that is invariably steeped in a perceived division between White and Black. I am not in the position to make claims as to whether or not the type of implicit racism described by Charles is actually present in the firm where he works, or in Bloemfontein in general. Yet one thing remains certain; in Charles' perception, racialism is an aspect of South African society that continues to affect the upward mobility of young Black people. His

understanding of the impact of race is only fortified in his interactions with other Black people who share his occupational position:

> *We are a lot of article clerks who work together, and on a daily basis we speak to each other about our working conditions, and it just seems to me that it's in all firms that it's like that. The thing is that they can't do things like they did it 20 years ago. So they're just doing it now incognito.*

The topic of race continues in the following theme, which focuses more on the research participants' opinions of what it means to be labelled as a young and upwardly mobile Black person in South Africa.

4.1.1.2. "*Can't I just be someone that's working towards a goal?*"

From the outset of posing the question of what it means to be labelled as 'Black and upwardly mobile' in South Africa, most of the participants expressed a certain degree of bitterness at being categorized as a Black person. Ntombi's following response bares a sentiment shared by many of the participants in their response to the question of racial categorization:

> *Can't I just be someone that's working towards a goal? Do I have to be a Black student that's upwardly mobile?*

Posing the question of racial categorization seemed to annoy a number the research participants. However, the agitation that was quite audible in their voices signalled that this particular theme was worth exploring, even though I often felt that doing so might alienate me from the participants. I thus decided to probe why it is that they felt so strongly against their race being made salient. A particular moment that stands out in this regard is when I posed the following statement to Veronica:

> *Something I've realised speaking to young Black people is the aspect of… I don't want to be seen as Black…*

I had hardly finished the sentence when Veronica, who was otherwise withdrawn and rather soft spoken during our conversation, suddenly claps her hands and shouts *"Yes!".*

Amohelang and Ntombi both provide responses that point towards stereotyping as the primary reason for Veronica's response:

> Amohelang: *For me it has never been… I've never pulled the race card. And I don't even want to entertain any such thoughts, because I think people's judgements get clouded because of that. It's just… my colour doesn't define who I am.*

> Ntombi: *I don't see colour, but I recognize how I might be treated, or how people might treat me because of colour. Race just happens to be the main thing in this country, but it's not the only thing. I'm colour blind, but I realize what that means for certain people if they're Black or White…. what some of their perceptions might be.*

Referring to Amohelang's and Ntombi's responses, the participants' antipathy towards having their race made salient may well be seen as an attempt to avoid the negative stereotypes that have historically been associated with being categorized as Black in South Africa. This is indeed a sentiment that is repeated during most of the interviews. Veronica for example, mentiones during our conversation that when she goes to the shop or the 'laundromat', she often gets the impression that people are thinking:

> *Ja, that's just another shady Black girl. Maybe she's here to steal something or whatever.*

Sizwe notes that he prefers not to have his made race salient during interactions because of the apartheid ideology that Black people are inferior to Whites:

> *I've never thought of myself as inferior or Black. So I don't carry the luggage of the past with me.*

And Ntombi emphasises the more contemporary stereotype that upwardly mobile Black people are often seen as undeserving of their positions because of the quotas set out by affirmative action policies:

I wouldn't want someone to hire me just because I'm Black... just so that they could look good in terms of their statistics. I want to get in there for my work. I want to get there because I've actually done the job and I've done it properly and I've earned it.

The idea that Black people are undeserving of their success because of affirmative action is a tragic by-product of South Africa's attempts at rectifying racial inequality. In my own experience of interactions between White people, the term '*it's because he's a quota*' is almost always attached to a Black person's achievements, regardless of what that achievement may be. I was awakened to just how inflammatory and subversive this ideology can be when James mentions the scepticism he has of his own worth when he receives praise from White people where he works:

James: *Um ok… It's not like the people… the White people there don't treat me differently. They have always been very kind and open to me. So I can't say they cast me aside or anything, you know? Mr. Stevens has always been very professional and he treats me like he does with all the other employees there. But you get this thing where… If I speak to some of the White ladies, like the reception ladies, in the kitchen, they will say: "Oh you speak so lovely. Because you know, I can speak Afrikaans quite well. And it's like they're saying to me: "Oh you speak Afrikaans well for a Black man", you understand?*

Michael: *I see what you're saying.*

James: *Ja. And like when I started there I won an award, which is like a candidate attorney's employee of the month award (laughs). It's a cash bonus of R1000. And I think: Are they giving this to me because I was dedicated and I earned it, or is it because they have to because I'm the only Black guy there?*

The former statements, that were made by Veronica, Sizwe, Ntombi, and James with regard to racial categorization, clearly point to the type of mundane negativity that Mtose (2011: 325-328) associates with racial categorization in contemporary South

Africa. Their statements may also provide a good motivation as to why so many of the participants prefer not to be labelled as "Black", especially when in the context of being interviewed by a White researcher. However, there is another aspect of racial categorization that emerged during the interviews that uncovers a form of stereotyping that runs much deeper than the superficial wounds caused by typical racist stereotypes; it is the idea that upwardly mobile Black people do not deserve to be regarded as members of the social positions they worked so hard to achieve.

During the interviews, the participants frequently made the point of reminding me that they see the world through colour-blind eyes, and that they prefer not to classify themselves in racialised terms. Keketso was especially adamant to drive this point home a number of times throughout our conversation. However, she also made it very clear that even though she prefers not to make race a salient part of how she interacts with people, the risk of being seen as the 'other' in an occupational position that is dominated by Whites remains all too real. Almost every page of the transcribed conversation with Keketso is littered with emotive notes that indicate the humorous outlook she has on life. Yet, when she relates the following story (her mother's warning about thinking too highly of herself), the tone stands out as uncharacteristically serious:

> *This is what she said to me recently: "Don't forget you're a Black person. It doesn't matter how highly you think of yourself. It doesn't matter how good you are. Those people will still see you as a Black person. So keep that in mind".*

I probed Keketso's statement by asking her whether she agrees with her mother's view. Her following response signalled a fundamental shift in our conversation, which may or may not have made a large impact in the content of her stories. Where Keketso was initially reserved about the topic of racialism, her ability to comfortably express her own perspective seems to lend a racial tinge to many of her follow-up experiences:

> *It's the truth at the end of the day. You can't fight it, it's the truth. It's the reality of where we live. The fact that you're a Black person in the workspace will still come up because that's how you are seen to the rest of the world, you know*

what I mean? Outside of my mind and my crazy world that's how I'm seen. It doesn't matter. I could be a workaholic and go crazy here, and be the best attorney in the world, but to everybody else I'll be the best Black attorney, you understand?

With Keketso's perspective in mind, I delved deeper into some of the research participants' past experiences where they possibly felt alienated on the basis of their race. Sizwe tells a story which, according to him, has become a private joke amongst him and other Black colleagues who work with him in a predominantly White, Afrikaans speaking law firm. The setting of Sizwe's story is a meeting in which their CEO introduces the measures their law firm will be taking to increase its BEE exposure in the future:

So we're sitting in the boardroom. Then the CEO, our CEO, mister van Wyk, mentions the fact that I'm the only Black associate… which I was totally oblivious of (laughs)*... One of the key things that they're going to focus on in the new year is empowerment. After the meeting, Leon, one of the senior associates says to me: "Sizwe, I didn't know you were Black"* (laughs)*. So I turn to him and I say: "Neither did I, Leon"* (laughs)*.*

Keketso shares a similar, yet more poignant story, which takes place during a formal event to celebrate her promotion, and to welcome her onto the board of partners in another prominent White, Afrikaans speaking law firm:

Just after I was promoted to an associate, that *was 2 years ago, the managing partner sort of makes a speech to welcome you and blah blah blah. And his speech was about a book that said what Black people said and what White South Africans say. And I was like, what does that have to do with my promotion? And I found it extremely inappropriate.*

Keketso's story is given more credence as an example of isolation when she describes the coping mechanism she uses to adapt to situations she feels might lead to a similar experience:

I've had to adapt to going to these…what we…well what we as Black people know as racist restaurants and things like that. Or places where you are the only Black person (laughs). Now-a-days there's like a rule. They say you're going here and I say: "Ok, how many other Black people are going? None? No I'm not going"….The disadvantage comes in because there's a lot of older White gentlemen. They really don't know how to react, and they don't know any Black professionals to have something to compare to. Therefore your coming in is a whole new experience for them".

In the above statement, the experience of being singled out on the basis of her race has led Keketso to label and avoid all restaurants, where there's the risk of a similar incident occurring, as *"racist restaurants".* This narrative, of avoiding situations where one would be singled out in terms of race, is repeated in my conversation with Charles. The primary difference between Charles' and Keketso's stories is that Charles did not experience racial isolation first-hand. Instead, his decision to not attend a similar "*racist*" function (as Keketso terms it) is based on the experiences of other Black people who have been in a similar situation:

We're having our end year function now on the 5th of December and… oh ja, this other… we also have a department upstairs, but it's mostly people from ABSA. Because we're doing a lot of transactions for ABSA. There is also a few African people. And this morning I had to go around with a list of people who's going to attend the function. And all of the non-Whites said they're not going. And I asked them: "Why?! This is my first time I'm going to be with you guys. I don't know what's happening here". They said to me: "No, don't go, because you will feel very uncomfortable. The White people mingle with the White people and the Black people mingle with the Black people". So I think at my place of employment I'm… I'm gonna have an incident I just as yet haven't… I'm just waiting for it to happen.

The stories of racial categorization told in this theme differ somewhat in the significance they have for the teller. For some, being labelled as Black imposes negative stereotypes that are hard to shake off. For others, having their race made salient merely serves to drive home the idea that they will always be considered outsiders in a space that is still dominated by Whites. Underneath their stories, is the

profound wish that their achievements, and even their failures, remain detached from their race in the hope that they will one day be afforded the freedom to construct their identities without the negativity that surrounds being categorized as 'Black'.

4.1.1.3. "*They think you see yourself in a certain way…You think you're better off than they are*"

In the previous theme, the focus is on the research participants' experiences with being categorised by White people on the basis of their race. In this theme, the focus is shifted to the participants' experiences with being categorised in terms of their achieved class status by those Black people who are from the research participants' perceived class of origin. As the research participants have achieved upward mobility, they are identified by others on the basis that they own a certain set of qualities that are required to occupy their achieved social positions (Bourdieu, 1987: 13). The aim was thus to explore the participants' perspectives of how upwardly mobile Black South Africans are categorized by other, less fortunate Back South Africans.

In this case, the narrative that underlies most of the participants' interactions with Black people from their class of origin is the experience of a certain loss of connectedness and even a degree of estrangement. When asked about how she is received by Black peers who have not achieved the level of upward mobility she has, Veronica replies:

> *Well, some see you as an inspiration, or role-model or whatever. And others see you as a sell-out… I guess with regards to the whole getting your degree thing, they think you see yourself in a certain way… You think you're better off than they are.*

A "*sell-out*" in this case, is a derogatory term often used to refer to someone who has betrayed their origins in favour of gaining something in return. In order to understand why this stereotype is associated with the mundane categorization of upwardly mobile Black South Africans, I probed the participants' understanding of what may cause an experience of estrangement between themselves and less fortunate Black people.

Amohelang's experience with estrangement began with name-calling at school. She notes how in high-school, her achievements were often overshadowed by the harsh criticism she received from other Black students because of her achievements:

Because I was achieving more in the classroom and on the sports field, you were a coconut or a slum, instead of the other things that they were doing.

The above quote mentions two terms that provide valuable insight as to the understanding of why this experienced estrangement is present in many of the participants' narratives. According to Amohelang, 'slum' is a popular term in KwaZulu Natal used when referring to someone from a lower social standing who lacks culture or refinement. The other term, 'coconut' is, as mentioned in the literature review, a term that is commonly used to refer to Black people who act 'White' or who adopt White South African values to the detriment of their native culture. According to the participants, the most direct identifier that leads to Black people being labelled as coconuts is their accent. However, during my interaction with Amohelang, I could not perceive any part of her accent that would indicate this as the reason for being labelled a coconut. It is possible that because I grew up around other White South Africans, the presence of a White South African accent in the way Amohelang speaks may have gone unnoticed because of being overshadowed by what I perceived to be a predominantly Black South African accent. Thus in my interpretation of the above extract, Amohelang was labelled as a coconut and a slum not because of how she speaks, but because her level of achievement at school was higher than most of her peers'.

I probed Amohelang's perspective further to explore whether she experiences the same type of animosity today now that she has achieved upward mobility into a higher social class. I also aimed to understand her perception of why higher achievement would precede such negative categorization amongst fellow Black people. Her following response illuminates an important facet in this regard, namely that her current occupation indicates a higher class position in the eyes of others, which makes her the subject of negative stereotyping from less fortunate Black people:

Ok, the most common profession found in Black people is teaching. Law is something of a high stature. So most of our parents, either the mom or one of the parents is a teacher or both were. There's two relationships you can have with the lower-class, it's either the whole hate relationship, where they will just throw stones at you and they're just negative or whatever… Or two days later of hanging out with them they're like: "Oh you're not that bad, you're actually a nice person". And I'm thinking like: "Why?". And they're like: "No, we thought you think highly of yourself and all that". I mean, if you're going to be "hoogmoedig" [proud] and pompous and you know: "Look, I'm a candidate attorney!". Clearly you're going to get that. What I've found has always happened with us or with me in a way… I can say something that a girl in a lower bracket can say, but it would be interpreted differently. If she says it: "Oh no, she cares". But if I say it: "Oh, she thinks she's better than me". Whereas she has a right to say that. It would change at another level, but you find that there's just too many negative people.

As Amohelang continued with voicing her perspective, the stereotype raised earlier by Veronica, that upwardly mobile Black people are sell-outs, is given a richer meaning in Amohelang's own perception of other Black people who have achieved upward mobility:

The way things are happening: Everyone…they're living this life of German cars, the mansion, the lifestyle, the everything. And it's quite sad because some people actually… some people lose so much touch with themselves that some don't even go back home or some aren't even proud of who they are…or aren't proud of the homes that they come from. You'll find somebody living in Sandton in a mansion, but then their parents are still living in a small four room house or a shack or whatever.

Piwe's narrative illuminates his own understanding of why it is that young Black South Africans, who are identified as upwardly mobile, are so often negatively categorized by less fortunate Black South Africans:

I think there are people who portray that. But they are not sell-outs per se, but people who forget. I think for me, with the connections that I have, with the

community and consistently seeing and visiting people… people recognise and they appreciate. And when you pass through the location you stop your car in the middle of the road and you greet everyone. And you make sure that they still remember you as that child who was running around the streets during Christmas asking for… we call it 'happy'. You're asking for biscuits. We used to have plastic bags and then we would run to each and every house and we would ask for cakes, homemade cakes, and they would give us, you know? And the families… the houses that like you the most, they'll give you a lot. So those memories are still there and why don't you still be the same person? Even if you are driving a BMW across the street. But I think some people tend to have this change of mind. It's like they got a heart transplant and a brain transplant. They are a new person. But it's not all about that. Even as much as you learn good things from tertiary institutions, you still need to anchor where you come from. So there is a tendency of educated young Blacks to deviate and completely deviate.

According to Amohelang, the acquisition of items associated with wealth, such as luxury German cars and big houses (i.e. a lifestyle that contradicts that of less fortunate Black people still living in poverty), is the underlying cause of the negative connotations associated with successful Black South Africans. Piwe's above response not only supports Amohelang's understanding of why upwardly mobile Black South Africans experience estrangement, but he also illuminates why the acquisition of wealth would be regarded as a sign of 'selling out'. Piwe emphasises that estrangement from less fortunate Black people cannot simply be explained by pointing to a difference in affluence. Instead, the schism between the two classes occurs because those individuals who have achieved upward mobility are seen to have changed in the eyes of those they have 'left behind'.

Piwe's perspective is firmly grounded in his own experience of achieving upward mobility and returning to his community of origin. Because of his achievements, Piwe is able to afford the type of class indicators pointed out by Amohelang earlier, such as a BMW and a house which, although modest by most people's standards, is a tremendous departure from the home he grew up in. Yet, despite clearly having made the transition into a higher social class, Piwe maintains a strong connection

with the people in the community where he grew up, and he still identifies strongly with the type of practices that characterise life in South Africa's townships. According to Piwe, the reason why he has not experienced the type of negativity that is present in Amohelang's story is because by returning to his community on a regular basis, and engaging with the people there in a way that shows his connectedness to them, he is essentially portraying an image of himself that shows that he has not abandoned his origins for something he views as better than what life in the township has to offer.

Like Piwe, James has not encountered any negativity on the basis being identified as someone who is upwardly mobile, and he similarly points to one's negative categorization as dependent on preserving the practices of life in the township. What is also of importance in the following excerpt is the idea that once young Black people become upwardly mobile they are expected to maintain, or at least find a balance between, the cultural practices of their social class of origin and the cultural practices of their achieved social class:

> *No these things happen. But like I say, these guys who call people 'coconuts', they look at… If I can say it like this. If I go to my friends and they think I have changed, they won't say I am a 'coconut'. They will just say: "Oh this guy has changed for whatever reason". This thing of 'coconuts' comes in because some Black people start acting like… they don't do the things they used to do when they were still living in the location, you understand? So it's these things of like only doing the White weddings. My friend Pumla I told you about earlier, he is only doing the White wedding. So for him, people in the location will say he is acting like a 'coconut' because why isn't he doing the cultural things, you understand? My grandparents are very cultural and traditional. They will be very heartbroken with me if I do things like that. That is why I did my initiation, you understand? Going to the mountain and that sort of thing. And it is important for me. I did it because I wanted to. I know it is something my people want and what I want in my life.*

However, although Keketso continues to practice certain aspects of African traditionalism, she still experiences a certain disconnect from Black people in the lower-class. Her experience of estrangement from other Black people takes life in

what she perceives as a lack of willingness on their part when attempting to socialise with them. According to Keketso's interpretation, it is the cultural division between the lower- and upper classes that causes her experience of estrangement:

> *It's not because I'm getting more than you or anything, it's more of a cultural divide than anything. Because as I've said, I've lost that. So that's where the differences came in. As a result, that's why I don't really socialize. But it's not like intentional on my end because I don't want to be friends with you. I find that they tend to stay away from me. I don't know if they feel I'm different, so they tend to stay away.*

In the above extract, the phrase "*I've lost that*" does not refer to the loss of Keketso's traditional cultural ties. As Keketso stated a number of times, she maintains and practices much of the traditions of SeSotho culture. In this case, the "*loss*" mentioned by Keketso is the loss of connectedness with the lower class that Piwe and James are able to maintain. Keketso's experience thus solidifies my understanding that, according to the research participants, upwardly mobile Black people face an immutable risk of being seen as sell-outs. They are only able to negate the otherwise negative connotations associated with upwardly mobile Black South Africans if they maintain frequent interaction with lower class Black people on the basis of shared practices.

4.1.2. Group identification

4.1.2.1. *"There's a higher responsibility that we bear"*

According to Brubaker and Cooper (2000), the sense of belonging to a group, i.e., one's social identity, may be classified according to three forms of group identification, namely commonality (merely having something in common with a group, such as values or beliefs), connectedness (having relational ties to members within a specific group), and groupness (having a strong emotional bond with a group and the members that constitute it). It is along these three forms of group identification that I explore the participants' social identities. In order to identify instances where the participants uncover their sense of groupness, I focused on the discursive devices they used when negotiating the sameness vs. difference dilemma

in their narratives. In this regard, the narrative of a perceived difference between the participants and less fortunate Black people, as grounded in their differential social positions, repeats itself implicitly and explicitly in many of the interviews. The idea that the participants view themselves as belonging to a different social group is especially salient in an extract from my interview with Sizwe:

> *Like I said, I identify really with the messenger, with the cleaning lady, Mme Pula. I give her the respect that is due to her. I feel we have a responsibility towards them. If I could do some pro-bono work I'd probably do it for them.*

Although Sizwe aims to clarify that he has a strong identification with Black people situated in lower classes, the phrase, "*I feel we have a responsibility towards them*" points toward an 'us and them' narrative that indicates that he does, however, see himself and less fortunate Black people as living in two conceptually distinct social spaces. This 'us' and them' narrative was frequently repeated during a number of the interviews. I thus attempted to understand the implication this divide has on the way the participants construct a sense of group identification in relation to other young and upwardly mobile Black people, and less fortunate Black people who have not had the privilege of achieving upward mobility.

Two contrasting narratives emerge with respect to group identification with other young and upwardly mobile Black South Africans. On the one hand, there is the narrative of a group identity that is based on relational ties with other upwardly mobile Black people, as exemplified in Sizwe's following statement:

> *Those are our friends. Those are the people we braai* [barbeque] *with on a regular basis. During weekends those are the people we hang out with. I mean, with them we talk constantly about making it, about success and how are we going to get there. And ja, it's a constant trying to brush off each other on the latest stuff to do. It's constantly on our mind. It's constantly what we're discussing".*

On the other hand, there is a certain sense of 'disidentifaction' with other upwardly mobile Black people that was especially salient during my conversation with Charles:

Your conversation with your middle-class people is not like your conversations with your other guys. I enjoy my conversations more with them than with the other guys. In your middle class people you'll have conversations like: 'Oh ja, I'm thinking of doing my MBA next year'. And those types of things. While with the simple guy I can talk about Pirates [the soccer team]*, and the guy who got shot last night and those types of things. You have your jive fancy talk here with your middle-class. That is why I'm saying I enjoy it more with those guys. And you don't have your wallet flipping and "I can buy a better thing than you". I don't have that with the people I grew up with.*

The topic of group identification became considerably more complex as I delved into the participants' sense of group identification with less fortunate Black people. Most of the research participants in this study stated an overriding sense of responsibility towards helping Black people who have not had the privilege to achieve upward mobility. This responsibility is the foundation upon which the participants construct a sense of identification with less fortunate Black people, and other upwardly mobile Black people in their narratives. The narrative of responsibility presented itself in various ways throughout the interviews. For some of the participants, the fact that they have achieved upward mobility is viewed as a potential lesson to other young Black South Africans that it is possible to escape the social constraints that have trapped so many of them in poverty. This perception was clearly defined in the interview with Ntombi:

Like for impoverished Black students, they'd be like: There's a Black person actually doing it. So for me it's like… do you really have to label me? But then it's not about me. For the other people that don't actually have the knowledge or the background, this is what they see. So that might actually be what pushes them to go into the world and strive for the best.

Other participants describe the need to directly contribute to the upward mobility of other Black South Africans. For example, when I posed the topic of personal responsibility to Veronica, she compared her need to make sacrifices in order to help other Black South Africans achieve upward mobility, to the willingness the anti-apartheid leaders showed in giving up their freedom for democracy:

Yes, and it's not just so much: Look I can do it. But also I can do it, so you can as well. And how can I help you do it? I would feel horrible if I turned into some 50 year old rich lady somewhere in Joh'burg or whatever, and not have contributed in any way to raising another young Black attorney or another young Black doctor. As they said with our Black leaders that went into exile, we should not now disregard them and think:Ag but they decided to get into the struggle. It is because of them that we are where we are. They suffered so that we can enjoy these liberties. So I guess I also feel that I should do the same. If I must suffer, that's fine. As long as some other young Black professional is going to benefit, then great.

Keketso also expresses the need to help those who are less fortunate. For her, the felt sense of responsibility emerges from perceiving intra-racial inequality in her everyday life:

I feel obligated to do it for my other Black people. If my life improves in some way I need to do that for other Black people. Because it makes me extremely uncomfortable, I must admit, when a Black person is supposedly well off, and I see other Black people that are struggling. I'm very uncomfortable about it. And I can see it is a racial thing, so I want you to know I see that. I can't just think of myself and move on. It bothers me a lot.

For Piwe, his sense of responsibility is embodied in a programme called 'U-Turn' which he personally established. U-Turn's primary task is to introduce South Africa's disadvantaged youth to the type of knowledge that will allow them to look beyond the constraints of growing up in poverty. As the face of U-Turn, Piwe frequently goes to township schools as a motivational speaker to preach the value of hard work, and to dissuade young Black people from falling into the poverty traps that plague South Africa's townships:

I challenge grade 12's, I challenge high school children. And I've got a program called U-Turn. It's all about change, it's about making that U-Turn to the right direction. If you are going this way, the way of teenage pregnancy, the way of HIV and AIDS, the way of drugs, make that U-Turn. And the U-Turn is you being a hard worker. It's you shifting your mind to say: "But

> *Piwe did it, therefore I can do it". And they can ask me what it was like for me to beat the odds.*

Ultimately, it is Sizwe's use of the term "*our generation*" in the following quote that indicates a strong sense of group identification with other upwardly mobile Black South Africans based on the responsibility of helping less fortunate young Black South Africans:

> *So we are conscious of our responsibility, or our generation's responsibility... There's a higher responsibility that we bear. We have to be the guys who bring something more than what our parents have been able to achieve… I think it's one of those things that one accepts. It's got to be done. I admire the generation that came before us because I think they really had it difficult. If I have to think of what my father went through…And it's a common thing. I mean if I hear from the next person as well they tell you more or less the similar story. They came from extremely poor backgrounds, so, ja, it's just something that we have to do. It's just something that we have to do, you know?*

As the discussion about this responsibility continued, the participants increasingly made use of discursive devices that illuminated a sense of group identification with both less fortunate Black people and other upwardly mobile Black South Africans. With regard to identifying with those Black people who are less privileged, the participants began eliciting their racial identities much more frequently than in the initial stages of our conversations. For Ntombi, who ardently maintained that she dislikes being labelled as Black and in fact does not consider herself as 'Black', the responsibility of acting as an example to other Black South Africans makes it easier to accept being racially categorized by others:

> *I know I'm Black, but I don't make it the centre of myself. I guess just because I happen to be Black, when I succeed it gets publicized or whatever. I hope not. Then I'd actually be recognized as a Black person who's actually going far. And then I'm like, look, you're recognizing me as a Black person, that's fine. I'll live with it because it's for other people. For the people that don't know it's actually possible.*

During the discussions on group identification, the issue of racial inequality seemed to linger in the background of the participants' statements. It was only when Veronica made the following statement that the intersection between racial inequality and group identification became a topic that was covered in subsequent interviews:

I understand that we're not supposed to have this racial class or whatever, but our people need so much more support than…I'm sorry…than your people.

The perception that the majority of South Africa's Black population is still trapped in poverty acts as a powerful catalyst in eliciting the participants' identification with all Black people regardless of class. This was especially evident when Charles conveyed his displeasure at what he perceives as White people's attempts to sweep the history of apartheid under the rug, ignoring the persistent racial inequality that continues to plague the country:

What troubles me the most about White people is the fact that they want to act like apartheid never happened. Like we must just forget about this thing of apartheid… Apartheid never happened to them… and we are supposed to be equal now. My parents have nothing and your parents have ten farms! Forget about it; we are equal!? That is the attitude. And I'm not saying we must always throw apartheid into people's faces, but we have 46 years of backlog against them. You can see what apartheid did still today. It's like an earthquake. We are still struggling with the aftermath of apartheid.

Once the theme of responsibility towards other Black South Africans was probed, it became clear that the participants' sense of group identification is extremely complex. Although a majority of the participants experienced some form of alienation from Black people in their class of origin, they none-the-less maintain a sense of groupness with them that is based on the commonality of a shared race, and an understanding of the inequality faced by Black people in South Africa. This can clearly be seen in the participants' use of personal pronouns such as "*us*", "*we*", and "*our people*" when referring to other Black people. Amongst the research participants, the established sense of groupness produces a felt sense of personal responsibility to helping those Black South Africans who cannot achieve upward

mobility. This forms the foundation upon which the participants' sense of groupness with other upwardly mobile Black South Africans is constructed in their narratives.

4.2. The interaction order

In the interaction order, the focus is on the roles that are associated with the research participants' race and class identities. In keeping with Jenkins' (2008: 18) definition of identification, this section pays attention to the internal process of identification in the interaction order, through the concept of self-understanding; and to the external process of identification in the interaction order, through the role expectations that are enforced through social interaction. In order find relevant themes which illuminate the research participants' identities in the interaction order, I paid attention to the manner in which the participants navigated the agency dilemma in their narratives. The first aspect of the interaction order that is explored in this section is the subjective process of self-understanding.

4.2.1. Self-understanding

Self-understanding refers individuals' unique subjective interpretation of who they are relative to their social positions. Upwardly mobile Black South Africans find themselves in a unique social position in the sense that they are part of a small minority of the country's Black population who have been able to overcome a number of economic and cultural constraints. In light of their unique position in South Africa's social hierarchy, I attempted to explore how they identify themselves relative to their social positions.

4.2.1.1. *"You're not defined by your circumstances"*

In the previous section, I briefly alluded to the topic of racial inequality as a foundation for the participants' sense of social identity in their narratives. As this subsection aims to show, the participants' perceptions of racial inequality in South Africa also serve as an influential source of how they make sense of their identities relative to their achieved social positions. An overwhelming theme with regard to how the research participants' view themselves, in light of the achievement of

upward mobility, is the perception that they occupy a social position that is shared by only a small handful of young Black South Africans:

> Veronica: *I understand a lot of Black people will not even accomplish this in their life-time so it shouldn't be something that I get big-headed about.*

This theme was also accompanied by a resounding understanding that even though the majority of South Africa's Black people remain trapped in poverty, it should never be thought that it is impossible to overcome their disadvantaged origins and achieve upward mobility. The perception that hard-work is the key to success is clearly reflected in both Veronica and Amohelang's interviews:

> Veronica: *I understand that to make it in this world you have to sweat, and your efforts will not always be recognised, but you just have to keep pushing… Even though during the hardship you don't see it… But years later for instance, that's when you see your little seed begins to blossom.*

> Amohelang: *Ok, the one thing I've learnt from them* [her parents] *is you're not defined by your circumstances; the fact that not everything is going to fall in your lap, you need to work for it.*

The perception of poverty as a surmountable obstacle is not a necessarily striking theme, given the research participants' backgrounds. What is surprising, however, is the enlivened stance a majority of the participants took against young Black people who they perceived as finding excuses not to put in the effort needed to achieve upward mobility. This sentiment is aptly reflected in the following statement made by Ntombi:

> *It is possible. Like if you work towards it, it is possible. So some Black students using the excuse: 'It's what apartheid has done, it's because of apartheid I'm poor'… I'm like: 'No it's not about apartheid. Just get up and work! And if you work hard you'll be recognized and you'll get where you need to go'.*

The source of this perception seems to be rooted in the view that the numerous upiftment strategies employed by the South African Government, such as BEE

initiatives and bursary programmes, has created an environment where there is absolutely no excuse not to achieve upward mobility. The most vocal proponent of this standpoint was Charles:

> *We can't expect our poor government to do everything for us. The government only has to make the opportunities. It is up to me to go out and take that opportunity. Sometimes I have sympathy for my fellow Black men who have been struggling, but I cannot have sympathy for somebody who is my age who is telling me: "Ja it is because of apartheid that I'm not working". We come from the same background, both our families were poor. My family didn't have more than yours, but I saw an opportunity and I took it! My family had to sacrifice a lot in order for me to… In order to get me where I wanted to be. Whereas your family didn't want to sacrifice! My father told me, when I went home once for a holiday, he told me there's no meat. He's not gonna buy meat. Because he can't be spending a lot of money for me to eat meat in Bloemfontein and then I expect to still go home and eat meat. So that is the sacrifices that he… Whilst he used to buy me new shoes every now and again, he would only buy shoes twice a year. So this thing of poverty, sometimes I look at it and I really feel bad for people who don't have it* [i.e success]. *But then I also feel not so bad for people who don't have it, but had the opportunity to actually get it.*

Later in the interview Charles recounted how he had applied for numerous bursaries for financial aid in order to pay for his studies, but his application was always overlooked. Therefore his impassioned response feels justified when considering all that he had achieved thus far in his life despite the challenges that he faced. Piwe illuminates a similar perception when he elicits a stereotype I have only ever heard muttered during interactions between White people:

> *I think it's in both ways. I think there are some people who are just lazy, and I'm a witness of that. But for the majority of the argument I put, I would say the government is not doing enough. In my opinion there is a lot that can be done. But there is a big portion of the community of young Blacks that are not willing to do anything. They just want hand-outs.*

Following some of the participants' perceptions of race as a major challenge to upward mobility, I specifically also paid attention to the perceptions of those participants who do not view their race as a hindrance to their upward mobility. Ntombi is a young student working towards becoming a chartered accountant, an occupation which is still largely dominated by Whites. However, according to Ntombi, her race has very little bearing on her ability to achieve success. Instead she refers to her gender as the most salient challenge to overcome:

> *Oh, the only one that might affect me is… since I'm a female… is when I decide to become a lecturer. Or even in the working place. But it's more that gender equality thing. Not just the colour of my skin equality.*

Like most of the participants I interviewed for this study, Sizwe maintains that he prefers not to make race an explicit part of his day to day life. According to Sizwe, his race plays little to no part in his ability to achieve upward mobility, despite the fact that his view contradicts that of his Black colleagues:

> *I've got Black colleagues who would be inclined to think of things differently and I always try to dissuade them from thinking in that way. Because you know it's an outlook that one has and if you have a different background and…I mean I can understand why people would think in certain ways.*

Amohelang, another participant who does not view race as a particularly salient issue in her life, even goes so far as to illustrate her perception that her race is exactly what helped her achieve upward mobility in the first place:

> *Being Black now I think was also one of the points that got me my employment. So it has never hindered me as such and it won't. But for me, being Black has actually opened a lot of doors. I won't lie to you. That's the honest truth. In my life being Black has enabled me to get into provincial teams, sports teams. Being Black has probably helped me with extra points to get into the university when they were choosing students to accept. I should actually be happy that I'm young and Black these days. I think it opens a lot of doors for you.*

Surprisingly, the participants' interpretation of racial inequality in South Africa paints a far more egalitarian picture than what I had initially been expecting. Although the participants all mention in some way that they have faced numerous obstacles along their journeys, none of them ever regard the challenges they faced as insurmountable for other less fortunate Black South Africans. Given that the participants in this study are specifically selected on the basis that they have experienced upward mobility, and have overcome a myriad of challenges in their lives, it is unsurprising that most of them share the viewpoint that any obstacle can be overcome. The research participants' narratives bear the sentiment that upward mobility for Black South Africans is not determined by external social forces, but by the personal will to succeed. With regard to the salience of race in South Africa, the research participants similarly do not view this as a particularly inhibiting factor in achieving upward mobility. Despite seeing South Africa as deeply unequal, the research participants all maintain the view that through hard work, it is possible to overcome any form of obstacle to achieving upward mobility.

4.2.1.2. *"They wanted their children to grow up and accomplish so much more".*

Another topic that is widely explored in this study is the motivation that underlies the participants' decisions in choosing higher education as a pathway to success. While discussing this topic, a cohesive theme emerged in a number of the participants' narratives which implies that their decisions to attend university are rooted in their parents' inability to follow their own academic dreams during the apartheid era. Because of the Bantu Education act (No.47) of 1953, the majority of Black South Africans, such as Charles' father, were limited in their ability to obtain anything higher than a primary school level of education. Yet, despite this limitation, Charles' father, who earned a living as an assistant train driver, continued to expand his knowledge of the legal profession by collecting and reading literature on legal matters. According to Charles, the dedication his father showed in continuing to learn about the occupation he was barred from achieving is what inspired him to obtain his LLB and become one of the very few individuals from his community to graduate from university:

Well I can't think of anytime in my life that I did not want to become a legal practitioner. Since the first day a teacher asked me at school: "What do you want to be when you grow up?". And I always wanted to be a lawyer. Basically it was an influence from… my father was um… in his youth days he wanted to become an advocate, but because of apartheid and poverty and things… but he never gave up on that. He had a lot of law books. He read a lot for a guy who only had a standard 3. He read a lot and I found him very intelligent. And I think that is what influenced me.

Although his parents did not explicitly pressurise Charles into going to university, he mentions in the following excerpt that he feels as if going to university was expected of him so that someone could break the cycle of poverty that has always been part of his family's everyday life:

I think for them it was a matter of: I have to do something for myself so that I could help the others to do something for them so that in a couple of years time the family will be better off than we were many years ago. We can't get out of poverty if all of us go to school, finish matric, and then go work in… for RDP or whatever government projects. So somewhere, someone somehow… someone has to start. I think I'm, if I'm not mistaken, I'm the first one to go to university.

Unlike Charles' parents, Keketso's parents had the opportunity to become teachers in a large Black settlement which is situated approximately 75km outside of Bloemfontein. However, as Keketso states during her interview, "*this was not the career they had envisioned for themselves*", and their inability to follow their own aspirations when they were younger motivated Keketso to also obtain an LLB at the University of the Free State:

Look, being teachers, that was not the career they had envisioned for themselves when they were younger. My father said that he wanted to be a psychologist. My mother wanted to be a lawyer, so I'm mini her. So I'm living her dream right now. So she's really received it well, like she enjoys discussing cases with me.

There are instances, however, where the participants' noted how their parents had a much more 'hands on' approach with regard selecting the academic courses for their chosen occupations. Never-the-less, the initial decision to study remains within the participants' self-understanding that because they had the opportunity to study, they were expected to achieve more than what their parents could. Veronica's parents, for example, are also educators in a small town situated outside of Bloemfontein. Veronica also makes reference to the idea that the limitation placed upon her parents during apartheid is an important aspect in why she decided to go to university:

> *Obviously with both my parents being Black and both being educators they wanted their children to grow up and accomplish so much more.*

However, Veronica's parents had a much more direct influence in what she decided to study. Veronica initially wanted to study performing arts in order to become an actress, but at the stern request of her father she promptly decided to study law:

> *So I had no option obviously. I had to go to school, but in the last 2 months of my matric year I was left with 5 options and it was either accounting, engineering, and I can't remember the other…oh it was performing arts, which my father was against. And I don't remember the last. Then it was just law. So the reason why I went into it, I didn't really think it through…I took drama at school for like 10 years and I enjoyed it and I did really well and so I figured, why not become an actress? But obviously my father was against that…Not that they weren't happy with it, but not as a profession.*

Veronica's experience is mirrored almost exactly in Amohelang's narrative:

> *I've always been a sports girl so I actually wanted to study something in PR or sports management and my parents would have none of that. And then my dad actually wanted me to become a doctor and that's not what I wanted. So I thought: Why not do law?*

The emergence of this theme reflects a fundamental aspect of how the participants interpret their identities. By identifying themselves as occupying a more privileged

temporal space in South Africa's narrative of inequality, a number of the participants have adopted the assumption that they are expected to achieve the type of success that was once withheld from their parents. This expectation is not necessarily externally enforced, but comes from their own subjective interpretation of what it means to be a 'free' young Back South African.

4.2.1.3. "*Because of that you can go into the space which is traditionally White people's space*".

According to the literature review, one's ability to become upwardly mobile hinges on the ownership of four types of capital, namely economic capital, cultural capital, symbolic capital, and social capital (Jenkins, 1992: 85). In the previous section, I illuminated the participants' perceptions of overcoming the challenges posed by two of these forms of capital, namely the financial challenges inherent in lacking economic capital, and overcoming the negative social capital that has historically been attributed to being categorised as "Black" in South Africa. In this theme, I discuss the participants' perceptions of cultural capital as a noteworthy asset in their experiences of achieving upward mobility.

By far the most important form of cultural capital discussed by the participants is the importance of learning to speak Afrikaans. However, seeing as none of the participants speak Afrikaans as a first or even a second language, they frequently noted the difficulty they face with a language that continues to dominate workspaces in central South Africa. Amohaleng notes:

> *One thing that has been… not a problem, but an area of concern for me is the language. I mean for any Black child who comes from the rurals* [i.e. the rural areas of South Africa]*, they'll never adapt or they'll never adjust. Because even now I'm struggling because all of our work is basically in Afrikaans.*

However, the participants also make reference to having access to other forms of cultural capital which makes it easier to circumvent the disadvantage of being unable to speak Afrikaans fluently. Keketso mentions during her interview that she developed a pronounced White South African accent while attending a primarily English speaking girls' school in Bloemfontein. According to Keketso, it is her "White"

accent when speaking English that was the saving grace that put her ahead of other Black people when applying to be an attorney at a prominent Bloemfontein law firm:

Do I think I would have gotten ahead if I didn't sound like this? No I wouldn't have. You know there were those people that got like the Morris Bobbitt awards, the super cum laude and crazy suckers that just studied. There were Black people like that. I just never happened to be one. But I'm able to talk to people. I'm able to get my point across.

I probed Keketso's response in order to understand why she felt her accent gave her such a significant advantage. Her following response implies that occupational mobility in her firm rests on the ability to successfully integrate with White colleagues, which is made easier for her because of the accent she developed while attending a former Model C school:

There's a Black and White split, but then there's also the… we prefer you because you seem to be a more educated Black person type of split. You'll get the same professional, somebody with the same qualifications as I have in this firm, but because maybe they didn't go to a Model C school, they're not able to integrate.

Sizwe similarly believes that his ability to integrate with White colleagues, on the basis of being able to take part in various events, is what has allowed him to cement his occupational role in another predominantly White Bloemfontein law firm:

I've played rugby. We played here in '97. We camped at Grey College and our team was quite good. So the fact that I played rugby and I could play rugby for the attorneys in the Fichardt tournament, which only happens every 15 years, and it happened last year and… I understand because of that you can go into the space which is traditionally White people's space. It sort of endears… not endears as such, but it tells people, listen I also want to be here and I want to be part of you. I want to be part of it.

This theme implies that competence with aspects of White South African culture is tremendously important to the participants' self-understanding of what it takes to

achieve upward mobility. For Keketso, it's her White sounding accent that set her apart from other Black applicants when applying for a job; and for Sizwe, it's his ability to play rugby with his White colleagues which shows that he is willing to be included as a member of their occupational class. The common denominator in this theme is that the cultural capital the participants view as most likely to help them succeed, is not externally imposed by any means, but is subjectively derived from the participants' own positive experiences with expressing their competence with these cultural aspects.

4.2.1.4. "*I also accept that there are certain cultural rules that we need to abide to".*

As important as it is for the aforementioned participants to adopt aspects of White South African culture, a number of participants also discussed the importance of maintaining certain aspects of traditional African culture. All of the participants in some way mentioned the presence of African traditionalism in their lives. Yet for the following participants, upholding traditionalism is perceived as an implicit expectation carried in the eyes of significant others.

A common practice shared by young Black South Africans is to divide their weddings into distinct wedding ceremonies. For example, Piwe and Keketso both discussed having separate weddings that included both the traditional African wedding, and the more Westernised "*White wedding*". At the time of my interview with Piwe, he was in Bloemfontein with his fiancé in search of a wedding dress for their White wedding. The topic of his marriage was thus frequently mentioned during the interview, especially when Piwe discussed his connection with African traditions:

> *I'm doing a traditional wedding now, and that's why you sometimes hear me referring to my fiancé as my wife. We're married actually traditionally and we're completing it now on the 22nd of November. So we first started with that because we acknowledge our family, and we told them: Listen we're doing this because of you. We're showing you guys that we are no different. We're both doctors, but there's nothing… you raised us and made sacrifices, and we're acknowledging it. So we're doing that. And then next year for our friends and people we met at varsity, like professors, lecturers, people who are*

studying and working, we're inviting them to our celebration. Our White wedding. So we're still maintaining that. Our roots are still rooted.

Keketso also had a separate "*White wedding*", which is one of 5 ceremonies she discusses in the following excerpt:

My boss found it interesting that my marriage, I think I had 5 weddings. Because we had to have the Lebola, which is actually a wedding. Once that is done you're married customary, for us. So we had the Lebola, then after the Lebola there's the welcoming of his family to my family. And then you're super official. It doesn't matter what happens. If you divorce or what. After that ceremony I will always be the wife to his family, full stop. Then there was the civil wedding, a 'White' wedding. Then a repeat of the civil wedding in Lesotho, as well as an Islamic wedding. It's part of my culture, I actually believe in it. It's also important for us to show that we still care. My parents aren't that Christian. They believe in God and all that, but their culture is very important to them. And my husband is actually Muslim, so we did the Islamic wedding for him and his family.

In both Piwe and Keketso's stories, they highlight the importance of upholding the traditions their parents hold dear as a sign of respect. At no point did Keketso or Piwe mention that they were forced or coerced into conforming to these rituals. However, the manner in which they narrate their stories of balancing traditional and Western traditions indicate that it is a tremendously powerful expectation, even if it is implicitly fortified. The topic of traditionalism prompts James to recount a story that emphasises the continuing relevance of African traditions in contemporary South Africa, and how in certain contexts, Black people are required to negotiate between Western and traditional ideals:

Ja many people still do the cultural things. I know this guy who bought a new house and he wanted to slaughter a sheep there. It's like a blessing you see? When you slaughter a sheep at your house it's like you are offering the ancestors… like something to look after the house and keep the people that live there safe. But there was such a problem there because the neighbours didn't want him to do that there and they were very unhappy with it. He told

them before-hand. He didn't just pitch with a sheep (laughs)*. But they said no they don't want him to do that there. So he still did the ceremony, but he didn't get to do it at his house like he wanted. I think most Black people still do these things. But like what I see happening… there are more and more people my age that stop doing what their tradition tells them. And also because a lot of our people go to modern churches that tell them these things are wrong, you see?*

Unfortunately, I did not ask James whether he relates to the individual in his story, or why he felt that the individual was compelled to perform the ceremony even though it did not occur at his house as is traditionally required. However, based on the following extract from a statement presented earlier in the chapter, I am led to believe that the notion of respect for one's family plays a significant role in his understanding of the continued practice of African traditions as an important expectation to adhere to:

My grandparents are very cultural and traditional. They will be very heartbroken with me if I do things like that. That is why I did my initiation, you understand? Going to the mountain and that sort of thing. And it is important for me. I did it because I wanted to. I know it is something my people want and what I want in my life.

A crucial element raised by James is the idea that "*modern*" South African churches (i.e. more contemporary Christian churches) frown upon African traditionalism. Although this may be James' personal opinion, it does reflect a certain degree of incompatibility between African and Western religion that is present in Amohelang's narrative. When Amohelang studied at the University of the Free State, she was increasingly exposed to Christian worship, which did not necessarily feature as part of her upbringing in what she describes as a very traditional Zulu household. As Amohelang practiced more and more Christian practices at home, she felt that a schism had developed between her and her father. According to Amohelang's following statement, it is the tension between her and her family that reminds her of the importance of maintaining her traditional roots:

We're very much strictly Zulu at home, and I'm Christian as well, but there is that clash between Christianity and culture, but that has been cleared up in my family. There's no more issues. My parents know where I stand in my relationship to God and my Christianity, and they've respected that. And I also accept that there are certain cultural rules that we need to abide to and entertain. I'll take part in them, I respect them. I never look down on my background or my culture. I never looked down on our Zulu culture or ancestors or anything, but I humbly did it for him [her father] *to understand that, look, this is the path that I choose, but that does not necessarily mean that I don't respect you, or I won't… Like for example, if there is a cultural ceremony I'll go. It's not like I'll stay away or anything. I might just not take part in the finer details of it.*

Amohelang's story emphasises just how important maintaining African traditionalism is to both her and her parents. For Amoheloang, the respect she gives to her parents by participating in different aspects of their Zulu culture allows her to continue practicing aspects of Christianity in the knowledge that she can do so comfortably without having to fear their derision. The second time I met Amohelang, I was again reminded of how important maintaining traditionalism was to her when she quite proudly shared the traditional significance of the goat hide bracelet that was wrapped around her wrist.

4.2.2. <u>Role expectations</u>

The second fundamental aspect of the interaction order is role expectations which, unlike the subjective expectations derived from self-understanding, are externally enforced through everyday interaction with other social actors. In this section of the interaction order, I pay close attention to the participants' experiences with interacting with others on the basis of what is expected from their race and achieved social positions. While compiling this section, the boundary between self-understanding and role expectations proved to be problematic because in practice, the line that differentiates these two forms of identification is not clearly defined. Take Sizwe's understanding of the necessity for learning Afrikaans in the following quote, for example*:*

I had to brush up very quickly on my Afrikaans you know. They didn't have to tell me in so many words, but the clients that we serve here as well… So I've really had to brush up on my Afrikaans pretty quick.

In this instance, Sizwe's response may indicate the need to learn Afrikaans as rooted in his self-understanding of what is expected of his occupational position, which is supported by the line:

They didn't have to tell me in so many words.

Yet, one might also argue that this expectation is externally imposed because of his interaction with Afrikaans-speaking clients. Here I make reference to Sizwe's continuation of the aforementioned sentence:

…but the clients that we serve here as well…

In my own opinion, Sizwe's response would indicate that, to him, the importance of "*brushing up*" on his Afrikaans emerges from his self-understanding of what is required of him to maintain his occupational position. However, although his interaction with Afrikaans-speaking clients is the cue that informs his self-understanding of the situation, at no point in the interview did he indicate that this is a rule he feels has been imposed upon him. Therefore the participants' feeling that certain rules have been imposed upon them is what differentiates the themes in this following subsection from the themes discussed in the section dealing with self-understanding.

4.2.2.1. "*When I get home I'm very much an African*"

In the sections preceding this one, I make mention of the participants' perceived importance of acquiring competence with White South African culture, while maintaining a balance between African traditionalism and those aspects adopted from White South African culture. However, a narrative theme emerged which emphasises a level of precariousness experienced by the participants with regard to bringing aspects of African culture into their achieved class positions. During the interviews, the research participants frequently made statements that differentiated themselves between 'them at work' and 'them at home'. Initially, the distinction

between these two identities did not strike me as a necessarily important theme to explore. After all, there is a certain level of professionalism that is expected in the work place that requires everyone to conduct themselves in a way they wouldn't normally do at home. It was only during the analysis of the interviews that I was struck by Veronica's following statement which, upon reflection, proves to be a turning point in exploring the expectations which the participants view as associated with their achieved class positions:

> *When I'm at the office I understand it's very prim and proper and I speak a certain way, but when I get home I'm very much an African.*

The above quote emphasises something crucial to Veronica's understanding of her social position. According to Veronica, displaying African traits (specifically speaking like an African) in the work place is in fact considered to be improper. Ntombi's following experience with speaking with a Black South African accent mirrors Veronica's sentiment. However, where Veronica's perception may well be said to emerge from her self-understanding of the expectations in a White, Afrikaans-speaking law firm, Ntombi's understanding emerges as an externally imposed rule that is perpetuated in her interactions with other students:

> *What I actually came to realize is sometimes when you happen to speak as if you were at home, some people might call that ghetto. And then I'd be like: Hey, people are calling me ghetto! I can't be ghetto! So let me just speak more English.*

Ntombi's use of the word "*ghetto*" suggests that speaking with a Black South African accent is considered improper because it is inferior to speaking English with a White South African accent. In essence, it is a perceived ideology that places Black South African traits as inferior to White South African traits. This ideology is cemented in her interactions with other people who are quick to remind her that speaking in a 'Black accent' is considered improper to her social position.

During my conversation with Keketso, the topic of maintaining African traditionalism in her occupational class allows her to share the following story with me, which

sheds light on both a perceived contradiction between Black and White South African cultures, and the perceived superiority of White over Black cultural traits:

> *On Monday there was a judgement from the labour court where a lady had taken a month off because she felt the spirits, her forefathers and what not, did not want her to do anything. She took a month off to do the whole cleansing ceremony and everything. She just didn't tell the employer. She said she couldn't. And then he fired her. And then she took him to court and eventually it landed in the labour court and the judges found in her favour to say: "Look, we need to take into consideration people's cultural beliefs". And he* [a White colleague] *was asking me: "Don't I think it's crazy?". And I was like: "No, I don't"… We live in Bayswater, our house burnt down. I know the first thing my mother is going to have is a Mokete to firstly thank the forefathers that we all made it, and then get rid of all those evil white spirits that are still back there* (laughs). *And it's ok, it's something that's going to happen. And I also believe in it. Me, you know?*

The contradiction between White and Black South African culture in Keketso's story can clearly be identified by the Black woman getting fired because of her inability to inform her employer that she will need to take time off to perform a ritualistic cleansing. In my own opinion, the woman's inability to inform her employer that she will need time off is not because of any structural limitations, but because she perceived her White employer, for whatever reason, as being unsympathetic to her situation. The perceived inferiority of Black cultural traits, however, enters the scene when Keketso has to defend this ritual, which she herself practices, from being seen as "*crazy*" by a White colleague.

As Keketso related the following story to me, she did so in a light-hearted tone that led me to think that although she understands that certain African traditions may seem out of place and even inferior to some White people, it is something she can accept as a humorous difference between the two races. However, as her dialogue continued, the humorous tone in her prior story became more serious as she recounted her own experience with the perception that White people in her achieved social class look down on Black culture:

As an example with the Sotho women, you know they wear shoeshoe's? It's our cultural dress… It's like that material. To us, the SeSothos, you wear that on special occasions. You don't just wear it every day. It's your traditional outfit. Whereas here they won't be so accepting. In fact one of the partners made a comment…they think it's clothes that are just worn by maids. They're like (in an Afrikaans accent)*: "Oh what are you going to do? Clean?" And you're like: "Dude, no!". "Just because the people that have them in your life happen to be your cleaners does not mean it's something that they specifically wear". You'll go to an African wedding, or a Black wedding, and I promise you, everybody will be in their traditional outfit.*

In the above story, the contradiction between White and Black cultural values is again perfectly clear in the older White partner's misunderstanding of the cultural significance of the shoeshoe. Although he might not necessarily have intended to explicitly make this cultural dress the object of inferiority, by referring to it as something "*just worn by maids*", he invariably did do so in Keketso's eyes.

South Africa's middle- and upper-classes have historically been reserved for the White minority. It has only been 20 years since the first democratic elections opened the doors to upward mobility, and the culture perpetuated within these classes remains to be perceived by the participants as 'White', for lack of a better word. This 'White culture' is interpreted as contradicting and even condescending those traits that are characteristic of Black South Africans, creating an environment of interaction where the participants, upon entering this social space, are expected to leave their Africanism at the door, so to speak.

4.2.2.3. *"They don't understand that you have to start somewhere".*

Returning to the research participants' relationship to those people who have not achieved upward mobility, a theme emerged that indicates a perceived expectation of affluence from those who the participants grew up with. For James, this expectation is experienced as a humorous banter between himself and his old school friends:

They treat me still the same I would say. I still visit all my friends I went to school with and we have stayed in contact, like with Facebook and Whatsapp and things. You do get these guys that think you have made lots of money which is funny, because they don't always believe you when you say it's not like that (laughs)*. They ask you about your house in the burbs* [suburbs] *and "where's the Mercedes?". And you like: "No Joe, I'm still riding the taxi* (laughs)*.*

When James' statement was probed, he delved deeper into the nature of the perceived expectation of wealth. In the following extract, James suggests that less fortunate people think of wealth and affluence as an automatic result of entering a professional occupation. However, as will be repeated throughout this theme, the research participants have just started their professional careers and have not had the opportunity to accumulate the type of wealth others have come to expect:

Michael: *Do people usually expect you to have made that type of cash by now?*

James: *Ja, they really do! They don't understand that you have to start somewhere. You don't graduate and boom! Now you have a nice house and a good job. Everybody has to start from the bottom, you know? And because I've just started working I don't have that much yet. It's going to take me time before I really make it.*

In my interview with Charles, I asked him to discuss some of the expectations he feels that are associated with the type of job he has now. Interestingly, although I opened the question for Charles to name and discuss any expectations he felt pertinent to the question, he only made reference to the expectation of wealth that was mentioned by James. For Charles, however, this expectation of wealth is frequently embodied in people from his community of origin asking him for money:

Michael: *Tell me now that you work… We've spoken about the expectations you had during your time at varsity, but what are the sort of expectations you have now that you're working?*

Charles: *Well I don't know. I'm the type of person who doesn't do the things that people expect of me just because they put that expectation on me. So I wouldn't know what they expect of me. But mostly I know that when you start working and people know that you are working and you come home they expect of you to be wearing fancy clothes. I know they're asking: When is this guy coming with his car? Because the other guys are having cars. Is he really a lawyer? It's not like on the T.V. And that is why people are expecting that, because they see things on T.V. and they think that's how it works in South Africa. And unfortunately it's not the case. Most guys who enter this field, the legal field, they have to work very hard to actually earn a good salary. Because I know my wife is in radiotherapy, and she is earning way much more than I do. So what the people see on T.V. about those attorneys is not what is happening. You work for like 5 or 6 years before you can buy a car. Especially here in Bloemfontein because the legal firms don't pay a professional fee, if I can say that. I think about going back to my home town. There is always this one guy who now and then would ask you for R20 and then you really will not have it and then he would tell you: "Ah I see. Because you are this* [successful] *person now, look at you".*

For Sizwe, the expectation of wealth is primarily rooted in his parents' expectations of the level of affluence he should have been able to achieve by now. Yet as Sizwe also mentions, his occupational title does not necessarily imply the type of economic prosperity his parents associate with his occupation:

I think the biggest thing which I've discussed also with my father is when you come from… you know it's not a racial thing, but when our parents come from… we're maybe the first generation professionals or the second, but my parents have the expectation that when you say you're training towards becoming an attorney they're thinking your first year you will be able to accomplish certain things financially and that's been one of the biggest things. And it makes you seem like you're incapable of managing your finances whereas you're really only getting so much.

Like Charles, Piwe's experience of this expectation is also personified in the frequent requests he gets for "*handouts"* from both his peers and his parents.

Piwe: *Almost 90% of the people that I grew up with have been left behind. There's very few. Maybe 5 out of all the people I met and grew close to that are successful. And I think it was just from procrastinating. And this thing of "there's still time", you know? So I left a lot of people behind. And some of them, when you go home, the conversation really… The conversations are very short. Because it's all conversations about what can you give me? Seeing as you're so successful what can you give me? And there's nothing to give them except to say go to school, or try to do something, you know? They cannot get hand-outs. Because at this stage, where I am I also have responsibilities.*

Michael: *Is that something you feel they expect of you?*

Piwe: *Ja, you almost feel obliged to do it. Because some of them they even ask you: "Man you're a doctor now. You can afford these things". I've even had to set standards for my parents as well, because my mother will have a tendency to say: "Ooh these couches, we've had them for so long". And I'm like: "They're still fine!". So you have to draw the line as well and say listen… yes you want people to… especially your parents… to feel like you are working to make their life a bit easier, but you don't want to take what they have away and bring new things, because then they will start demanding those things. If you started with a couch then it will be a bedroom suite. From the bedroom it will move to a kitchen set. So I told them: "Listen, you led me to who I am today. It's because of you. But that is more than enough". So it's like a rollercoaster. People in the community, parents, friends, everything."*

The topic of the perception of affluence proved to be a contentious issue among the aforementioned participants. During our conversations I felt as if they were making a concerted effort to tell me about their experiences of this expectation without portraying themselves in an ungrateful or cold-hearted light. This is especially true of Piwe, who adopted an almost apologetic tone when he was telling me about having to refuse "*hand-outs*" to his parents and his friends. I was thus frequently reminded by the participants that although they and others have placed them in a category labelled "successful", this in no way means that they have the economic resources commonly associated with their occupational positions. In all honesty, this was an

image I also had of my study's target population before I began with the data collection process.

However, as James remarks in the following excerpt, as much as there is an expectation for young and upwardly mobile Black South Africans to have acquired wealth, there is the risk that spending whatever wealth they may have accumulated may cause them to be judged by others:

> James: *I think there is this expectation that when you make it you must show everybody that you are successful, you know? You see it a lot with Black people when they leave the location. They start to dress flashy and move to the suburbs. But then they write off their friends and family that are still at home. And now especially because it's Christmas, you see like people buying themselves big plasma T.Vs. And Black people are competitive. Because you get a T.V, now I must also get a T.V. You can't do that. I know for me it's very bad to spend money on myself.*

> Michael: *How so?*

> James: *People will say: "But your sister is still studying and your grandmother is still living in a small house. So what gives you the right to spend that money on shoes or clothes". You understand? For you White people, when you start to make money you get to keep it. Black people have big families. You have to look after all of those family members. So I can't go buy a Jaguar and pay an instalment of R8000 a month. You can't afford it because there's so many people that need your money.*

According to James, the expectation of wealth and affluence is contradicted by the idea that many Black people simply are not in the position to be spending money on what he views as "*irresponsible*" luxuries, when they have large and still impoverished families to take care of. As James works in the insolvency department at a prominent law firm, he has first-hand experience of the dangers of assuming the expectation of wealth, which has played a prominent part in his understanding of the expectation of wealth among young and upwardly mobile Black people:

I think that's also a problem of Black people. They act like there is an expectation to spend money. This one friend of mine flies down to Cape Town to buy clothes. He flies to Cape Town just to buy clothes. And now he's getting married and he wants to spend so much money on a White wedding. And I ask him why, you know? It's not responsible. Black people can be very irresponsible with their money. That's also what we talk about in the RAF meetings. Another guy who I work with talks to Black people about managing their money properly because Black people think that because they have a little money they can spend it all. And now because I work in insolvency I see so many Black people lose their homes and cars because they buy above what they can afford. Even homes in the location are being taken away you know?

According to the participants' narratives, there is an expectation of affluence that is mistakenly associated with being identified as someone who has obtained a professional occupation. This perspective, which is rooted in their stories of 'going back home', reflects a tragic juxtaposition in their identities. On the one hand, they are expected by their friends and family to have acquired a certain level of wealth that is simply unrealistic at this early stage of their careers. However, eventually acquiring that wealth may mean having to face the risk of alienation if their identities become too far removed from that of their communities'. The importance of portraying an identity that is humble is thus a pertinent aspect of how the research participants portrayed themselves during the interviews.

4.3. <u>The individual order</u>

In the individual order, one's personal identity takes precedence as the primary interpretive framework for making sense of the life-world. As Jenkins states, the emphasis of this order is what goes on in the heads of individuals (Jenkins, 2008: 38). Rather than providing a psycho-social explanation of how my participants' minds work, I aimed to explore what goes on in my participants' heads by exploring their individual perspectives with regard to their experiences of upward mobility and class identity. Following Bamberg's (2012: 103) guidelines for exploring individual identity in narrative accounts, I have arranged the participants' perspectives according to the manner in which they negotiate the dilemma of constancy and

change across time in their narratives. The participants' perspectives are thus placed in one of three categories, namely no change at all, gradual change or sudden change.

4.3.1. <u>No change at all</u>

Given the capacity for upward mobility to introduce a vast range of changes to an individual's life, for example through the habitus of a new class condition or increased life-chances, I was surprised that a number of participants, namely Keketso, Veronica, Sizwe and Ntombi told their stores in such a way that emphasised the absence of change within their narratives. This is not to say that the mentioned participants have not experienced any change to their everyday lives since achieving upward mobility. However, the manner in which they narrate their stories does not organise prior events as leading to specific events in the present or in the possible future. This essentially constructs a narrative that, although continuous, does not feature any significant turning points that prompt transformation from one moment to the next (Bamberg, 2012: 104).

For the research participants whose stories fall under the narrative theme of no change at all, the experience of change seems to be dictated by whether or not they perceive any significant changes to have occurred to their lifestyles since having achieved upward mobility. For example, in her story of upward mobility, Veronica illuminates the perception that her current social position places her at a distinct advantage in terms of taking hold of the life chances that were absent from her parents' lives:

> *I do. I mean… I have so much more now than what my parents could have achieved when they were my age. Growing up they struggled, you know? I know they didn't always dream of becoming educators. They're happy now, but they still wanted us to go and do more with our lives because we can, you know? So to answer your question: Yes I do feel like I'm a step above. But not like… above them… But like, I've got so many more opportunities than they ever did. So it's in that sense that I feel like where I am now is in a much better situation.*

However, despite the indication that she views her current social class as qualitatively different to the one she grew up in, Veronica strongly suggests that she has not experienced any significant turning points that have altered her life's trajectory. Even when I attempted to inquire about the type of changes she experienced when she started working fulltime, Veronica made a point of describing the different ways in which she remains dependent on her parents for financial assistance:

> *Really nothing is different. My dad still helps me pay my rent and that's all really. Dad pays rent, I pay for the car, but that's it. The majority of my friends are still students so we still hang out at McDonalds. Nothing much has changed really.*

Veronica's statement is not necessarily remarkable given the fact that she is still a candidate attorney and does not earn the type of salary usually associated with being a legally registered attorney. What is surprising, however, is that even though a number of the participants have been promoted to much higher paid positions, the narrative of no change at all persists. Sizwe for example, who is in a much more senior position compared to Veronica, is equally reserved, and adopts a rather defensive tone when asked to discuss some of the significant changes to his life since he started working as a full-time attorney:

> *There are no drastic changes. I expect and I believe that there won't be should I make more cash.*

A possible reason for the emergence of the narrative theme of no change at all may be the importance that the participants place in remaining true to their origins. When given the opportunity to describe themselves, each of the participants mention in some way that they regard themselves as humble individuals. This was reiterated throughout the interviews, particularly when discussing subjects that touched upon the categorization and expectations of young, upwardly mobile Black South Africans. Given that remaining humble forms a significant aspect of the participants' identities, I am of the opinion that this compels them to tell their stories in such a way that highlights their continued connection to their class of origin. My perception is given

greater credence when I look back upon Sizwe's notably terse and possibly defensive response to the question of change.

4.3.2. <u>Gradual change</u>

Unlike the participants whose stories fall under the previous theme of no change at all, Amohelang and Charles' narratives openly reflect the perception that they have experienced a change in their class identity. However, because neither Amohelang nor Charles indicated any specific moments that prompted their understanding of having transitioned into another social class, their narrative accounts emphasize the change in their class identity as something that occurred gradually over time.

Amohelang for instance, when asked about the relative importance of education, notes how higher education has allowed her to transcend the poverty traps that keep many young Black women from achieving upward mobility:

> *It opened a lot of doors because I could have been one of those girls from the rurals, pregnant with another child at age 18, but I didn't want that. What kind of a life is that, you know? Why should I have to struggle like that to make ends meet if I don't have to?*

For Charles, the perception of having achieved upward mobility hinges on the type of responsibility he has towards his family. In comparison to his parents, who were the first generation in their respective families to obtain permanent jobs, Charles is not as responsible for the financial well-being of other family members. Although he still sends money to his parents on a regular basis, the relative financial freedom he experiences today serves as a stark reminder of the financial misfortune that is faced by less privileged people:

> *Definitely. Ja definitely. I think… my father told me once when he started working many years ago he was making R6 a week, but even then it was money he could live on…. I don't know. Social-wise I think I'm much better off than they were because I have much less commitments towards the family than they had growing up or starting to work. Both my mother and my father were the first ones to actually get permanent jobs in the families so they had*

to look after the whole family. So I think I'm in a much more comfortable position. I still send money home, but it's not like I have to work for my family like they had to do up until they had their own house and everything.

Both Amohelang and Charles narrate their stories in such a way that illuminates the perception that they have in fact transitioned into a higher social class. I hesitate to use the term "a better social class" because they too emphasise, in different ways, that they remain deeply connected to their class of origin. Charles, for example, notes how even though he is in a more advantageous situation, he remains connected to those he grew up with:

The guys I was with at school, they are still my friends. I never had better friends. If I can put it this way… I didn't go five steps up the ladder socially. I'm just in a better situation to what we were in.

4.3.3. Sudden change

Surprisingly, the experience of sudden change was only present in James and Piwe's narrative accounts. Similar to Amohelang and Charles' perception of change, James and Piwe also view themselves as having transitioned into a more advantageous situation to that of their class of origin. What sets James and Piwe's narratives apart from the rest, is that they view certain moments in time as prompting a change in their class identities.

For James, the fact that he could attend university and overcome the challenges of being an underprivileged student, means that he now perceives himself as belonging to a qualitatively different group of people. According to James, the defining moment in his narrative that indicates to him that he has made the transition into a higher social class, was the day he was formally sworn in as a practicing attorney:

I think it's because I could do something that not everyone has the opportunity to do. There are many people in the townships who can't go to university because of the money. I know many people who had to stop their studies just because of all the costs that kept adding up. So I feel like because I am one of the few people that could get a degree, I am in a better situation to others.

And the day I got sworn in in court was also very special to me. That was when I knew I'm going to make it. That's why it was so special to me to have my grandmother there with me on that day.

Piwe's following response, to whether or not he perceives his life as having undergone change since becoming upwardly mobile, implies that his experiences at university have opened his eyes to a different class condition. This class condition, which he has accepted as part of his personal identity, is illuminated in what he views as a set of household rules that are different to those espoused by his stepfather while growing up:

Of course. Your life changes. But as an African you never forget. My life changed of course. I've got a set of rules in my house, the one my wife to be and I are living in, and it's completely different to what we're used to being like at home. And I mean in the tertiary institution you learn lots of things. Good things. You meet friends, you meet people, you see people's houses, how people run their families, and that's good. So… But I'm still having a good relation with my folks. But in our culture, when a first born marries or moves out, and is independent, he becomes a man on his own. It's like if you go out as a nomadic man you're on your own. So there are boundaries that my father knows that I have.

The presence of specific turning points in class identity is most pronounced during my interview with Piwe. Before becoming a medical officer, Piwe lived in extremely poor circumstances, which he felt would consume him "*like sinking sand*" had he not taken a proactive stance towards freeing himself from the bonds that keep so many young Black people trapped in South Africa's poverty-stricken townships. Taking the train from Kroonstad to Bloemfontein, without so much as an idea of what was required to register at the University, Piwe set in motion a chain of events that rapidly introduced exceptional changes to his life. I have kept the following excerpt from my interview with Piwe largely intact, as the story contained within aptly illustrates how each situation in Piwe's life led to another, contributing to his perception of his class identity:

Michael: *Tell me about the decision to start studying at varsity… What prompted your decision?*

Piwe: *Mostly it was… I want to bring change in myself and in the environment around me. Things at home were not nice. My circumstances… um… getting home and eating porridge and one vegetable, like a potato. And also just poor circumstances. You want it to change. The urge for me to change and also better my life as well. That was the drive above everything else. Even though I wanted to get inside, I wanted to be a professional, like a doctor. But I think one thing that drove me to the point of "this is not gonna change until I do something", was the circumstances.*

Although going against his stepfather's wishes, the motivation for Piwe to escape a "*life sentence*" of poverty ultimately enabled him to face the challenges of blindly heading to an unfamiliar city in hopes that the University there would grant him his wish of studying medicine:

I came here with the train. I remember the first time I came to Bloemfontein, because I never travelled anywhere while I was still at home. So I remember when I told my mother: "Listen I'm gonna go to school, but I don't know". Because you know I didn't apply for medicine to start with. And remember the closing date is in May the previous year. So I told my mom: "Listen I'm going. I got good distinctions, so let me go". She gave me R80. The train by then was R30 bucks. So I took the train from Kroonstad and I got in here at the train station and then I got off there and then I started asking around: "Where is the varsity?" And they showed me the tower, the Cell C tower there at the waterfront. So they said: "There, you are not there yet, but you are almost there". So they just said: "Take this road". They showed me the Nelson Mandela Road. So I walked to varsity, looking at that tower. And they said: "When you get there, you will see on your right-hand side the mall, Mimosa Mall, and then you know you are almost there. And then just keep on looking on your left. You will see first Grey College and then the varsity". And then when I got to the varsity I wanted the Medical School. And the security guards, they took me to Kovsie Health (the on-campus clinic at UFS). And I sat there for hours and then the doctor came and said: "We're opening a file

for you". And I'm like: "No! I want to register to become a student". And I had to go home to squat at another friend's place and come back the following day to just look for the Medical School. And once I found it then everything became clear you know?".

The phrase: "*And once I found it then everything became clear*" neatly sums up the perceived turning point that medical school played in Piwe's life. However, to me the most prominent turning point in Piwe's class identity, remains the moment he experienced the habitus of a different class culture when attending dinner at his professor's house:

When I went to the Steinbeck's family I saw how at the dinner table the child can ask her father a difficult question and say: "But daddy you don't know it". I was like: "Wow!"

Where many of the participants will point to this incident that Piwe experienced as an example of disrespect, to Piwe, it was the type of upbringing that will allow young Black children to escape the "*red zones*" that hamper their outlook on opportunities to succeed. And it is the aforementioned type of thinking that Piwe foresees himself promoting in his own household.

4.4. Conclusion

The emergence of successful young Black South Africans is a theme that has been covered numerous times in newspaper articles and television shows. As a South African, I have frequently read or heard the term "Black Diamonds" without putting much thought to the monumental effort it took many of these young Black people to achieve what they have. This study opened my eyes to something that will forever let me look beyond the typical "angry White" mutterings that often creep up with the image of the successful young Black South African. In my research participants' narratives is an intense sense of pride. Not because they are a minority among the Black population, but because of the obstacles they perceive as unfairly stacked against them.

The section on categorization illuminates a shared perception that young Black people are faced with much more than racial inequality. The fact that they have achieved upward mobility means that they now find themselves in a no-man's-land between White and Black people. Acceptance to either of these groups hinges on the perceived ability to find a balance between those indicators that show that they deserve to belong to both worlds. Underlying this balancing act is a profound longing for the freedom to define themselves without having to navigate the negativity that comes with external categorization. Yet despite seeing themselves as traversing a dangerous tight rope of negative categorization, there is a strong sense of group identification that is constructed on the need to uplift those young Black South Africans who have been less fortunate than they have. And although they often discuss the misfortunes of other successful Black people who have been scorned by their communities of origin, the participants narrate a strong sense of solidarity with other Black people which is based on their interpretation of the skewed nature of racial inequality in South Africa.

The participants' longing to identify themselves on their own terms also plays a significant role in their narratives as a powerful source of inspiration for their will to succeed. The vehement recall that "*you're not defined by your circumstances*" shines through as a desperate cry to remove the association with poverty that has been imposed on Black South Africans during the apartheid era. This narrative theme becomes more and more boisterous as the participants recount their interpretation of young Black people who fail to take hold of the opportunities given to them by the state.

I am constantly reminded that there is much at stake for these participants. Although they do not explicitly state the importance of cultural capital, the participants' narratives shed light on an implicit understanding that upward mobility is greatly affected by access to the cultural capital that is legitimated by White South Africans. However, the delicate balance between two class conditions shines through yet again as they describe the pitfalls of displaying the wrong kind of cultural competence in the wrong context. On the one hand, their achieved class positions require them to stifle any semblance of their class of origin, i.e. through the perceived need to not act "*ghetto*" or "*African*". On the other hand, they feel that

there is an expectation to adhere to the practices of their class or origin or else face the risk of alienation.

The relative importance of finding a healthy balance between the two worlds even seems to flow over into the participants' very own sense of self. Despite achieving so much more than most young Black South Africans could dream of, the participants perceptions of their class identities are narrated in such a way that the concept of change feels like a taboo. Even in instances where the participants conveyed a sense of self that illuminates the perception of belonging to a higher social class, they always do so in a manner that highlights their connection to their class of origin.

Concluding remarks

In retrospect, the epistemological needs of this study, which arise in conjunction with adopting phenomenology as my prevailing philosophical and theoretical framework, means that the use of a quantitative approach simply would not have afforded the opportunity to collect and present the type of findings presented in the previous chapters. The interpretive foundation of this dissertation, coupled with the various interpretive schools of thought highlighted in chapter one, formed a philosophical and theoretical framework that made it possible to conduct an engaging study on the internal and external identification of young and upwardly mobile Black South Africans. The kind of generalization which might be associated with positivist research is therefore sacrificed in order to provide a rich understanding of the subjective experiences that mark the research participants' everyday lives.

Ontologically, this dissertation is situated in the worldview in terms of which we perceive that reality is a subjective construct that emerges from the mind's capacity to make sense of experienced phenomena through the process of intentionality. Reality is thus considered multiple in the sense that it is entirely possible for two people to share the same world, but perceive two very different realities based on how they interpret their experiences of that world. Furthermore, the world is experienced as an intersubjective reality because of the vast amount of individual selves who continuously view the world from different perspectives. However, this does not mean that reality is completely fragmented across numerous individuals. According to the constructivist worldview, our perceived reality emerges from the daily interactions that take place between individuals. Reality is thus an invariably social phenomenon that is continuously evolving.

The aim of this study, as with any interpretive study, is to understand how individuals perceive their realities by exploring their lived experiences with specific phenomena. This dissertation is built upon the overall objective of exploring young and upwardly mobile Black South African's lived experiences with self-identification and identification by others. I achieve this by engaging with the research participants in a data collection process that is far more personal and involved than what is typically found with objectivist (i.e. positivist) research. Instead of objectively separating myself from the participants' lives, I interact with them in an empathetic way in order

to get as close as possible to understanding their experiences from their own unique perspectives. The epistemological position of this study thus understands the findings that are presented in the previous chapter as the result of a collaborative effort between me and the research participants.

To aid me in my subjective exploration of the participants' lives, I rely on a number of interpretive schools of thought that are specifically situated in the sociological interest of everyday life. The most prominent contribution to this dissertation comes from the theoretical foundations of phenomenology. The central tenet of phenomenological thinking is to explore the mundane interpretive frameworks that allow us to make sense of our everyday experiences of the life-world and to formulate a meaningful social reality. According to Alfred Schutz, one of the principle ways in which we construct a meaningful social reality is through interpretive frameworks known as the stock of knowledge, which are inherited through life-long socialisation. The stock of knowledge spans across generations of people who have experienced the life-world before us, and contains valuable knowledge with regard to how to interpret and react to perceived phenomena. Furthermore, the stock of knowledge is continuously emerging in our day-to-day interactions with others, and are particularly influenced by our unique biographically determined situations, as well as the stories told to us of others' experiences.

I attempt to explore how my participants interpret various experiences related to identification by focusing on the content of their stock of knowledge as influenced through social interaction and their unique biographically determined situations. During the interviews, I thus focused on moments where the participants' interpretation of certain events is profoundly shaped by stories told to them by significant people in their lives. Furthermore, the role of their biographically determined situations is also explored by taking into account the participants' own past and present experiences, and their motivation behind significant tuning points, such as the decision to go to university, for example.

The research participants' stock of knowledge is further explored by concentrating on how they interpret the presence of different 'objectivations' in their everyday lives. According to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, objectivations are aspects of our social reality that are shared by a multitude of individuals and groups regardless of

cultural upbringing. There are a number of objectiviations that constitute our everyday lives, such as various values or beliefs, as well as social concepts, such as racial or gender classifications. Although we perceive objectiviations to be corporeal reflections of reality, Berger and Luckmann maintain that objectiviations are the by-products of social interaction and therefore take root in human subjectivity. The only objective truths to objectivations are those we have attributed to them through our prolonged use of them in everyday life. However, regardless of the viewpoint that there is no objective truth to objectivations other than that given to them by us, they remain real to us in the perceived consequences they have in our daily lives. The objectivations explored in this study, namely class, race, and of course, identity are specifically related to the lived experience of upward mobility in the South African context. The aim is to understand the perceived role that these objectiviations play in the research participants' lives, especially with regard to how they affect the participants' identities.

The study's focus on the sociality of everyday life should not detract attention from the simultaneous need to emphasise the individuality of everyday life. The study's ontological standpoint understands the world as an intersubjective experience, i.e., it is experienced from each individual's unique perspective. It is true that multiple individuals' perspectives may be unified according to a shared stock of knowledge, but this does not mean that we should ignore the fact that no two individuals are the same and that we all have the capacity to view the world differently. This is the leading maxim that is also espoused in existential sociology. According to existential sociologists, human free will plays a powerful role in our perception of reality. At the core of our individual selves we find the 'brute being', an unpredictable amalgam of human emotions that makes our interpretation and reaction to the life-world equally incalculable. Although the aim of phenomenological research is to find unifying themes in people's experiences, existential sociology forces my attention onto each of the participants' experiences as reflecting perceptions that are unique to all others'.

Given the study's aim, it is important to identify the most salient aspects of South Africa's social environment that could have an influence on the participants' experiences of upward mobility and identification. This may seem to imply a

contradiction of sorts. On the one hand, the study's primary aim is to explore the subjective experience of upward mobility and identification, which is rightfully done through qualitative means. On the other hand, the aim to identify objective aspects of their everyday lives is better suited to a quantitative study. To amend the schism between these two aims, this study draws upon Bourdieu's concept of a social praxeology. According to Bourdieu, society exists in two 'moments'. The first moment involves identifying the objective social structures that constitute the participants' social environment. This is most effectively achieved through a quantitative approach to research (called social physics by Bourdieu). As the scope of my study is limited to qualitative research, conducting a separate quantitative study is logistically impossible. Therefore, in order to identify the objective aspects of the participants' lives, I provide a review of literature that specifically sheds light on statistical information regarding the upward mobility of Black South Africans. This is then followed by my study's own focus on the second moment of society, i.e., the participants' subjective experiences with the identified objective aspects of their everyday lives (called social phenomenology by Bourdieu).

With the dissertation's philosophical and theoretical framework in tow, I review the important conceptual themes that provide the foundation for exploring young Black South Africans' lived experience of upward mobility and identity. The forerunning concept in this regard is upward mobility, which is defined as the process whereby individuals or groups of people transition from a lower social class to a higher social class. The concept of social mobility implies that society is stratified according to a hierarchy of social classes, with the most privileged classes arranged at the top of what can be regarded as a pyramid of social classes. The least privileged classes are reserved for the bottom of the hierarchy. As the image of a pyramid might suggest, the top of the social hierarchy is reserved for a small percentage of a society's population, while the vast majority of the population is found in the lower tiers of the hierarchy. The hierarchical arrangement of a society's stratification differs according to each society. However, what became apparent while conducting the literature review is that South Africa's degree of stratification matches the typical view of society as stratified according to a hierarchy that places a few privileged groups at the top of the hierarchy while the majority of the population is found in the poorer, lower levels of the pyramid.

To fully understand the impact of social mobility on one's identity, the literature review provides a succinct definition of class that matches the dissertation's constructivist infrastructure. According to Pierre Bourdieu, society is stratified according to social positions that are constituted by varying combinations of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. These social positions or social classes, imbue their occupants with an interpretive framework, referred to as a habitus, which allows individuals to react to perceived phenomena in a manner that is fitting to the culture of his or her social class.

In everyday life, we are able to identify people who occupy different social classes based on a number of class indicators. According to Bourdieu, the most outstanding symbol of social class in contemporary society is one's occupational position. In the division of labour, our ability to acquire certain occupational positions depends largely on our capacity to acquire different combinations of capital. For example, in order to become a lawyer, one has to have the economic and cultural capital necessary to obtain a university degree. One's class position further imbues status in the eyes of other individuals. Therefore, once individuals have obtained a particular occupational position, their identification by others is accompanied by the social status that is typically associated with their achieved occupation. Although occupations do not constitute social classes in themselves, they do serve as powerful indicators of one's social status in the eyes of others.

In South Africa, some analysts identify five social classes that fit Bourdieu's culturally centred approach to class distinctions, namely the upper-class, the semi-professional class, the intermediate class, the core working class, and the marginal working class. These classes are arranged according to the level of education required to achieve occupations in each respective class. The upper-class, for example, requires at least a university degree to qualify for a profession, e.g., lawyers and doctors, whereas the working classes require high-school diplomas or less. The individuals chosen to participate in this study have all qualified to enter professional occupations that are considered part of the upper-class. As their occupations are found higher in the schema than that of their parents', the participants are suitably regarded as having achieved upward mobility. During the data collection for this dissertation, I therefore place a considerable emphasis on the

participants' perceptions of identifying themselves, and being identified by others on the basis of the social status that is associated with their achieved occupational positions.

However, one cannot undertake a study on identity in the South African context without taking into consideration the influence of race. In this dissertation, race is defined as a socially constructed concept that arranges people into racial categories based on physical characteristics, such as skin tone or hair type. Racial categories do not imply any significant difference between people other than the fact that they look different to each other. Racial categories are thus only considered socially significant because of the role that race has played in maintaining the privilege of one group over the other. This is especially true when one looks at the incidence of racial subjugation in South Africa's history.

In contemporary South Africa, the lives of upwardly mobile Black South Africans has been profoundly shaped by the intersection of class and race. During the apartheid era, Black South Africans were subjugated by the then ruling National Party (NP), which sought to maintain the White minority's political, economic, and social dominance. The NP's racist ideology was mirrored in the numerous forms of legislature that effectively relegated the country's Black majority to the lowest ranks of the country's social hierarchy. The vast majority of the country's Black population was relegated to menial labour, with the prospect of upward mobility completely hampered by the institutionalisation of ensuring White privilege.

With the African National Congress' resounding win in the first democratic elections of 1994, a new South Africa was ushered in with the promise to undo the injustices perpetrated by the preceding National Party. All institutionalised racism was abolished, and the flood gates that once kept all non-Whites trapped in poverty were finally opened through a number of transformative policies (e.g. RDP, GEAR, Affirmative Action and BEE). However, the expected flood of Black people achieving upward mobility, and climbing South Africa's social ladder has hampered in lieu of the skewed racial inequality created during 5 decades of blatant racism. There has none-the-less been a steady growth in the amount of young Black people achieving upward mobility thanks to the opportunities presented as part of the country's maturity into democracy. The aim of this study is to explore the lived experience of

these young and upwardly mobile Black South Africans in an attempt to understand how they identify themselves, and how they are identified by others.

The relative importance of the concept of identity cannot be overstated. Consulting three prominent works on the topic of identity, I provide a definition for identity that is befitting of the dissertation's constructivist framework. In this respect, identity is considered a fundamental aspect of the lived experience, providing each of us with an interpretive framework to make sense of who we are and who others are in our daily interactions. The most crucial feature of identity is that it is not an objective thing that we acquire at a specific moment in time. Instead, identity is an on-going process which evolves throughout our lives. The noun 'identity' is thus often interchanged with the verb 'identification', in order to emphasise the understanding that identity is in fact a process and not an objective thing. Another fundamental aspect of identity or identification is that it is both an internal and external process. Internally, our identities emerge from our own understanding of who we are, while the external aspect of identification emerges from our interaction with the social environment.

According to Richard Jenkins, we experience the life-world primarily from within three orders of experience, namely the institutional order (established ways of doing things), the interaction order (what goes on between people), and the individual order (what goes on in individuals' heads). It is within these three orders of experience that our identities take shape. In the institutional order, our identities emerge in relation to various social categories and groups. In order to explore this order of experience in the research participants' stories, I focus on two main aspects. Firstly, I explore the research participants' perceptions of what it means to be categorized as young, Black and upwardly mobile in South Africa. Secondly, I pay attention to how they construct their group identities with regard to the fact that they are now identified as belonging to a higher social class.

In the second order of experience, the interaction order, the emphasis rests on the identities that emerge during our interaction with others. An important feature of identification in the interaction order is that our identities are constructed hand-in-hand with the social positions that we occupy. Exploring the research participants' identities within this order of experience thus requires focusing on the interaction that

takes place between the research participants and other people on the basis of being identified as someone who has achieved upward mobility. The aim is to understand what the participants view as the most important expectations attached to their social positions. The internal aspect of identification is explored by uncovering the participants' own unique perspectives of what is required of them in relation to their social positions.

The individual order of experience focuses on the subjective aspect of our experience of the life-world. The prevailing form of identification here is individual or personal identification. This form of identification is explored by uncovering how the participants' narratively construct their sense of self in relation to the perceived changes that have occurred in their lives since having achieved upward mobility.

Although this dissertation forms part of an academic program entitled 'The Narrative Study of Lives', I cannot imagine exploring the aforementioned aspects of identity with anything but a narrative centred approach to research. Narrative research collects and analyses personal life stories in an attempt to uncover an interpretive understanding of people's experiences with specific phenomena in their everyday lives. Therefore, instead of focusing on one specific moment in time, narrative research looks at the experience of a phenomenon over a vast length of time in an individual's life.

As this dissertation focuses on young Black South Africans' lived experiences of upward mobility, it is imperative that I am able to identify individuals who can contribute to this dissertation's overarching objective. The research participants are thus selected for adhering to the following criteria: All participants are selected on the grounds that they have experienced upward mobility in relation to their parents' or main caregivers' occupational positions; all participants fall between the ages of 18 and 30; and all participants live in the Bloemfontein area.

Once the appropriate participants were selected, the data collection process could commence. In this regard, I make use of two forms of interviews, namely one-on-one phenomenological interviews, and focus group interviews. Phenomenological interviews allow me to interview the research participants in a manner that closely resembles an everyday interaction. The motivation behind this seemingly informal

approach to interviewing is to get as close as possible to the taken-for-granted meanings the research participants use to make sense of their everyday experiences of upward mobility and identification. The one-on-one interviews are supplemented with a focus group discussion, not only to explore the pertinent themes that arise during the one-on-one interviews, but also to add a richer dimension to the data collection process. During the focus group discussion, I also maintain much more of a mediatory role, creating an interactive environment where the participants are given more freedom to discuss topics that might not necessarily have emerged during the one-on-one interviews.

As I am a young White researcher, I find it necessary to be able to interact with my participants in a manner that foregoes whatever perceived division there may be on the basis of race or class. Therefore a crucial aspect of the data collection for this dissertation is to establish a positive rapport between myself and the research participants. In this regard, I make use of a number of guidelines identified by Sands, Bourjolly & Roer-Strier as effective mechanisms for overcoming cultural divisions. Furthermore, the data collection also requires that the participants are able to answer all questions without having to contend with confusing theoretical terms or jargon that they are unfamiliar with. Prior to conducting the interviews, I thus translated the study's theoretical questions into more dynamic questions that, when brought up during the interviews, closely resemble the type of questions one would encounter during an everyday conversation. Given that my questions cover a number of sensitive topics, it is also important to establish a positive rapport on the basis that the research participants feel that their true identities remain hidden. I thus take the appropriate precautionary steps in order to ensure that the findings presented in this dissertation can in no way be traced back to any of the research participants.

To analyse the data collected during the interviews, I make use of a specific narrative approach to research known as the narrative practice approach. According to the narrative practice approach, when we narrate our life stories we frequently do so in a manner that negotiates three dimensions of narration, namely agency, sameness versus difference, and constancy and change across time. Bamberg's narrative practice approach was especially chosen for closely mirroring the concept

of identity selected for this dissertation. For example, the agency dimension sheds light on the interaction order of experience by highlighting the way in which speakers perceive themselves relative to their social positions.

The narrative dimension of sameness versus difference is negotiated by identifying ourselves in relation to other people. Understanding how the participants' negotiate this dilemma thus provides the foundation for exploring their perceived sense of group identification. The final narrative dilemma identified by Bamberg is the negotiation of constancy and change across time. As everyday life is characterised by continuous change, speakers have to narrate their stories in a way that successfully negotiates the dilemma of incorporating change across time in their narratives. Exploring how the participants navigate this dilemma in their own narratives provides a glimpse into their subjective perceptions of how the transition from a lower class to a higher class has been incorporated into their sense of self. Another important feature of the narrative practice approach is the idea that when engaged in an interaction, individuals uncover much of who they are in the discursive devices they use when narrating their stories. In other words, how the participants tell their stories is just as important, if not more important, than the content of their actual stories.

With regard to presenting the study's findings, I arrange the research participants' experiences according to the three orders of experience within the life-world as described by Jenkins. This allows me to present the research participants' experiences in such a way as to illuminate the presence of identification in their narratives. The research participants' narratives paint a picture where the concepts of class and race intertwine and create a sense of unease with regard to achieving upward mobility.

My own view of the participants' collective narrative is that there is a delicate balance at play. On one hand, there is the newly achieved status of being part of the upper-class that requires the participants to act as "White" as possible in order to show that they are worthy of occupying a social position that has historically been reserved for White South Africans. On the other hand, there is the class of origin, where the expectation is to remain true to one's upbringing and not to flaunt one's success in the eyes of those who have not had the opportunity to achieve upward mobility.

However, these two classes never exist as separate realities in the participants' lives, but often intersect. At the point where these two classes intersect, the prevailing need to balance the cultures required to remain a member of their respective groups, becomes ever-more important. The research participants' experiences of interactions with people from both classes create the impression that they frequently face the risk of isolation within their achieved social class, and abandonment in their class of origin. Yet despite the perceived pitfalls of upward mobility, the participants' narratives are filled with pride of their accomplishments. As stifled as this pride may come across, it unifies their narratives and acts as the foundation upon which their identification with other upwardly mobile Black people, and less privileged Black people is formed.

The topic of race proves to be the most contentious issue in the research participants' narratives. Their experiences with race being made salient in their everyday interactions are told with a sense of anger at what is often perceived as an unnecessary consequence of being in the minority of Black people in what has historically been White South Africans' space. The research participants' negative perceptions of race are grounded in the understanding that their achievements and their mistakes are only considered in relation to being labelled as Black. Therefore, regardless of the accolade, they are constantly reminded that their achievements are only possible either because they are Black, or in spite of being Black. The research participants' narratives are thus punctuated with a longing for the freedom to construct an identity that is free from the constraints of the expectations associated with their race and class.

Although my study focuses on identification through both race and class, the topic of race seems to elicit the most vocal responses. Whenever the issue of racialism is introduced into the interviews, the pace of the interaction quickens, voices are raised and experiences are recounted without the need for mediation or prompting. Reflecting on the interviews, I am overcome with the sense that the experiences and perceptions presented in the findings are aspects of the participants' everyday lives which were waiting for an outlet. The word of thanks that I often received from the research participants for the opportunity to "*get that off my chest*" mirrors the weight of carrying these experiences. I do not doubt that the research participants have

shared their stories with other people in their lives. However, the response I received formed my own understanding that the research participants needed someone of the opposite race to finally understand what it means to be young, Black and upwardly mobile.

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SUMMARY

South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 signalled a fundamental shift in the country's social environment. The institutionalized racism that once subjugated the Black majority during apartheid gave way to legislature that aims to bring South Africa into a wholly new era of egalitarianism, the most striking result of which has been the steady influx of young Black people achieving upward mobility and making the transition into the middle- and upper-classes. The aim of this study is to conduct a phenomenological exploration into young Black South Africans' lived experiences of upward mobility (the transition from a lower to a higher social class) with the express purpose of understanding how they construct their identities, both subjectively and in their interactions with others.

Although there has been considerable interest in South Africa's Black Diamonds and Buppies (as upwardly mobile Black people are often referred to), academic work on the upward mobility of Black people has largely been limited to quantitative studies in the field of economics and market research. This study thus attempts to fill a gap in the academic literature by offering insight into young Black South Africans' subjective experiences of upward mobility and identity navigation.

The foundation of this study is guided by the philosophical principles of interpretive research. As such, the aim is not to provide an objective explanation of the research participants' experiences, but to explore how they perceive various experiences from their own unique perspectives. The research participants for this study are comprised of young, Black South Africans (between the ages of 18 and 30) who reside in the Bloemfontein area of Central South Africa. They are also specifically chosen to participate in this study because they have acquired professional occupations through educational attainment, which has placed them in a social position that is comparatively higher in the social hierarchy than that of their parents.

The data for this study is collected by way of one-one-one interviews and a focus group discussion. The ultimate aim of the data collection is to obtain data that gets as close as possible to providing a first-hand account of the participants' experiences with upward mobility and identity. This study therefore makes use of a narrative-centred approach to research, and the research participants' stories are analysed

according to an analytical framework known as the narrative practice approach. Rather than focusing purely on the content of the research participants' stories, the narrative practice approach also focuses this study's attention on how they tell their stories.

The findings presented in this study touch upon numerous aspects of young Black South Africans' lived experiences of upward mobility and identity, the most notable of which relate to the intersection of race and class in their interaction with others. Having made the transition from a lower social class that has historically been occupied by Blacks, into a higher social class that has historically been reserved for Whites, the research participants' narratives richly illustrate how the accomplishment of upward social mobility is intrinsically affected by the everyday social process of identity construction and the unequal distribution of economic and cultural capital.

As the dissertation's findings suggest, the transition into a higher social class is not without its hardships. Apart from overcoming the more recognizable economic obstacles inherent in achieving upward mobility, the research participants' narratives also shed light on transcending more implicit challenges to achieving upward mobility, such as cultural biases towards education, the lack of cultural knowledge needed to attend university, as well as the lack of cultural knowledge required to occupy a higher social class. More specific to the issue of identity construction, the research participants' narratives indicate that because of their achievements, they are identified as members of a higher social class, both by people in their social class of origin, and by those in their achieved social class.

However, the salience of race in South African society, coupled with the fact that South Africa's class structure has invariably been shaped by race politics, means that the research participants find themselves in a unique position that requires them to successfully negotiate the presence of two separate and often contrasting identities. On the one hand, is an identity shaped by African traditions and culture within the lower class, and on the other hand, is a higher class identity that requires adherence to White South African culture if the participants are to fit in with those in their achieved social class.

OPSOMMING

Suid-Afrika se eerste demokratiese verkiesing gedurende 1994 het 'n fundamentele verskuiwing meegebring wat betref die land se sosiale omgewing. Die ingewortelde rassisme wat voorheen die Swart meerderheid gedurende apartheid in onderdrukking gehou het, het plek gemaak vir wetgewing wat ten doel het om Suid-Afrika in 'n gehele nuwe tydvak van gelykheid binne te neem. Die mees merkwaardige uitvloeisel hiervan was die bestendige toevoeging van jong Swart mense wat opwaarts beweeg het in die oorgang tot middel- en hoërklasse. Die doel van hierdie studie is om 'n fenomenologiese ondersoek in te stel na jong Swart Suid-Afrikaners se beleefde ervaringe van opwaartse mobiliteit (die oorgang van 'n laer- tot 'n hoër sosiale klas) met die uitsluitlike doel om te verstaan hoe hulle dit persoonlik ervaar en hoe dit hulle identiteit rig, beide met betrekking tot hulle subjektiewe belewenis en hulle interaksies met andere.

Hoewel daar 'n beduidende belangstelling in Suid-Afrika se " Swart Diamante" en "Buppies" (soos wat daar gereeld na Swart opwaarts mobiele mense verwys word), is akademiese werk oor hierdie groep opkomende Swart mense grotendeels beperk tot kwantitatiewe studies in die ekonomie en in marknavorsing. Hierdie studie prober derhalwe om die gaping te vul in die akademiese literatuur deur insig te bied oor hierdie jong Swart Suid-Afrikaners se subjektiewe ondervindings van opwaartse mobiliteit en persoonlike ontwikkeling.

Die grondslag van hierdie studie word gelê deur filosofiese beginsels van interpretatiewe navorsing. As sodanig is die bedoeling nie om 'n objektiewe verduideliking van die deelnemers aan die navorsing se ondervindings weer te gee nie, maar om ondersoek in te stel oor hoe hulle sekere ondervindinge ervaar het vanuit hulle eie unieke gesigspunte. Die deelnemers aan die navorsing vir hierdie studie is saamgestel uit jong, Swart Suid-Afrikaners (tussen die ouderdomme van 18 tot 30) wat in die Bloemfontein-omgewing van Sentraal Suid Afrika woonagtig is. Hulle is ook spesifiek gekies om aan hierdie studie deel te neem aangesien hulle profesionele beroepe bekom het deur hulle opvoedkundige bekwaamheid, wat hulle in 'n sosiale posisie plaas wat vergelykenderwys hoër is as die sosiale posisie van hulle ouers.

Die inligting vir hierdie studie is bekom deur persoonlike onderhoude en gefokusde groepbesprekings. Die uiteindelike doel met hierdie inligting is om begrip te bekom en om so na as moontlik te kom aan 'n eerstehandse weergawe van die deelnemers se ondervindings van opwaartse mobiliteit en identiteit.

Hierdie studie maak derhalwe gebruik van 'n verhalende (narratiewe) benadering tot navorsing en die navorsingsdeelnemers se stories word ontleed ooreenkomstig 'n ontledingsraamwerk wat bekend staan as die narratiewe benadering. Eerder as om suiwer te fokus op die inhoud van die navorsingsdeelnemers se stories, fokus die narratiewe benadering ook op hoe hulle hul stories vertel.

Die bevindinge soos aangebied in hierdie studie raak aan talle aspekte van jong Swart Suid-Afrikaners se lewenservaringe van betreffende opwaartse mobiliteit en persoonlike ontwikkeling, waarvan die mees vernaamste verband hou met die raakpunte tussen ras en klas met betrekking tot hulle interaksie met ander. Die navorsingsdeelnemers se ondervindinge illustreer belangrike aspekte in die voortdurende ontwikkeling van Suid-Afrika se groeinde demokrasie, soos byvoorbeeld onderliggende tussen-groepverhoudings, rassisme en armoede.

KEY TERMS

Interpretivism

Phenomenology

Upward mobility

Class

Race

Identity

Institutional order

Interaction order

Individual order

Narrative practice approach

APPENDIX A: <u>CONSENT FORM</u>

I…………………………………….…………………………. (Full Name), do hereby declare:

I am over the age of 18. I agree to participate in a Sociology Masters research project entitled "Young and Upwardly Mobile: Voices from Historically Disadvantaged Groups" and that data will be collected from me in a one-on-one interview/ focus group discussion with a student researcher.

Michael E. Kok has recruited me for the research. He/she has informed me that the research explores the lived experience of upward mobility from the perspective of young Black South Africans living in central South Africa.

I understand that:

- I do not have to divulge information of a personal nature.
- The research topic is potentially provocative and I may be exposed to insights, information or viewpoints that could make me feel uncomfortable.
- My participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw personally, or to withdraw my data, from the research at any time.
- The student researcher pledges to protect my privacy to as great a degree as possible and to conduct the research sensitively, responsibly and ethically.
- I am free to approach the student researcher, or the project supervisor Professor J.K. Coetzee with any questions or issues related to this research and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.

I am satisfied that adequate steps will be taken to protect my privacy:

- The focus group/interview will be audio-recorded, but I will choose a pseudonym before data are recorded so my real name will not be on the recording, nor will it appear on transcriptions.
- This consent form will be kept in a safe place by the student researchers until they are handed over to the project supervisor Professor J.K. Coetzee. This will also apply to audio-recordings - once data have been transcribed, student researchers will be instructed to erase any copies of audio recordings.
- After the research is completed, data may be used for presentations or journal articles. However, information or data will not be traceable to me personally.

Signed
(Participant)……………………………………………………………………………………....

Date…………………………………Place……………………………………………………

Signed Witness 1……………………………… Signed Witness 2………………………………

APPENDIX B: <u>INTERVIEW SCHEDULE</u>

The data collection for this study made use of semi-structured interview schedules that allowed the interviews to be conducted in a way that closely resembled an everyday interaction. In order to achieve this, I approached each interview with a set of thematic questions, which were then translated into dynamic questions in order to suit the natural flow of each interaction. Although I carried the same set of thematic questions into each interview, the manner in which they were asked changed according to interaction with the research participants. In the table below, I illustrate how the thematic questions were typically translated during the one-on-one interviews and during the focus-group discussion.

<u>Thematic questions</u>	<u>Dynamic questions</u>
1. What are the research participants' experiences of identification in the institutional order?	
1.1. In terms of race	1.1.1. What does it mean to be labelled as young, Black and successful? 1.1.2. Does racial inequality still play a part in Black people's ability to achieve the type of success you have 1.1.3. What are the challenges Black people face getting the type of occupations you are in? 1.1.4. How do you feel White people view successful Black people like yourself? 1.1.5. How would being Black in South Africa hinder your success? 1.1.6. How often are you reminded of your race in the workplace? 1.1.7. Does racial inequality still play a part in Black South Africans' ability to achieve the type of success you have?

	1.2.1. How well do you identify with other young Black professionals?
	1.2.2. How well do you identify with less fortunate Black people?
	1.2.3. Tell me about the transition from your academic career to your professional career.
1.2. In terms of class	1.2.4. How do you think less privileged Black people see other successful Black people such as yourself?
	1.2.5. Tell me about the term "coconuts".
	1.2.6. What are some of the differences between yourself and less privileged Black people?
2. What are the research participants' experiences of identification in the interaction order?	
2.1. In terms of race	2.1.1. How important is it to you to maintain roots with the community you come from?
	2.1.2. What does it take to maintain a connection with the less fortunate Black people where you come from?
	2.2.1. What was expected of you during your time at university?
	2.2.2. In comparison to your parents' occupations, do you consider
	2.2.3. Tell me about the decision to go to university yourself as being in a better situation?
2.2. In terms of class	2.2.4. What do you think people expect of you now that you're working?
	2.2.5. What are some of the responsibilities you have now that you are working?
	2.2.6. Why did you decide to go to university?

3. What are the research participants' experiences of identification in the individual order?	
3.1. In terms of their perceptions of change	3.1.1. What social class would you say you are in and why? 3.1.2. What are some of the most notable changes that have occurred since you started working?

APPENDIX C: <u>RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION</u>

Pseudonym	Keketso
Age	30
Sex	Female
Occupation	Partner at a law firm
Parents' occupations	Educators
Area of residence	Bloemfontein

Pseudonym	Sizwe	
Age	30	
Sex	Male	
Occupation	Associate at a law firm	
Parents' occupations	<u>Mother</u>: Customs official	<u>Father</u>: Officer in the military
Area of residence	Bloemfontein	

Pseudonym	Veronica
Age	26
Sex	Female
Occupation	Candidate attorney
Parents' occupations	Educators
Area of residence	Bloemfontein

Pseudonym	Amohelang	
Age	27	
Sex	Female	
Occupation	Candidate attorney	
Parents' occupations	<u>Mother</u>: Teacher	<u>Father</u>: Office clerk
Area of residence	Bloemfontein	

Pseudonym	Richard
Age	28
Sex	Male
Occupation	Candidate insolvency lawyer
Parents' occupations	Richard's primary caregiver was his grandmother who is unemployed
Area of residence	Bloemfontein

Pseudonym	Ntombi
Age	20
Sex	Female
Occupation	Student
Parents' occupations	Ntombi's primary caregiver was her aunt who is unemployed
Area of residence	Bloemfontein

Pseudonym	Charles	
Age	30	
Sex	Male	
Occupation	Candidate attorney	
Parents' occupations	Mother: Corrections officer	Father: Assistant train driver
Area of residence	Bloemfontein	

Pseudonym	Piwe	
Age	28	
Sex	Male	
Occupation	G.P	
Parents' occupations	Mother: Domestic worker	Stepfather: Unemployed
Area of residence	Qua-Qua	