

Schooling & Identity

A window into children's experiences
of integration
& why it matters so much

Lecture plan

- Fish Hoek schools: sites of integration?
- Young people's language and identity
- Children's mobility:
 - How much?
 - Where?
 - Challenges
 - Why important?
- Shared spaces: Where? What is possible?
- Where can we make a difference?

Identity...

I pulled into the parking lot to pick up Karen from college in Muizenberg on our way to a meeting. She was wearing a particularly colourful hippy outfit today, and very happy to be free of the ill-fitting maroon school uniform she had been wearing until recently. When we drove off she noticed I was playing a CD by India Arie –a young black Motown R&B singer- and exclaimed: “Oooh I love her!!” She asked me if she could select her favourite song and punched in nr 4. She pushed up the volume and started singing along: “*Brown skin, you know I love your brown skin, I can’t tell where yours begins, I can’t tell where mine ends ...*” and I am sitting there chuckling to myself ...this is a white Christian girl from Boksburg?

Context

- Research in 2005 at formerly 'white' state schools in Fish Hoek
- Schools have increasingly diverse student population, about 20% 'non-white' at Fish Hoek High, many from OV and Masi, some living in Fish Hoek and other formerly 'white' areas, fees R7000/year, can apply for exemptions
- High school: quite a progressive school ethos: cultural diversity and non-racism; Primary less so...
- Many young people feel Fish Hoek to be boring, backward, 'Grannyville', and aspire to connecting to lifestyle and people 'over the mountain'
- Teachers positive about diversity and integration but also 'silence' around issues of racial categories, prejudice and discrimination
- Dept of Education: classify learners according to racial categories – track transformation, resistance from teachers

Integration?

- Mainly seen as issue of language (English) and adapting to ‘the system’

Grade 9 teacher:

“I think socially they [the Xhosa speaking children] struggle a little bit because when they are out of class they will only speak Xhosa because they are comfortable with it; they will only have Xhosa friends. It’s hardly a train smash but I do think it isolates them a little bit... [at Senior High] I think they have adapted. They are the same kids but **they have gotten used to the system.**

IG: Do you see any difference between black children from Masi or those living in Fish Hoek?

There is a difference in coping, because if they are living locally they would have gone to Fish Hoek or Sun Valley primary...their English is quite strong. **It’s a language thing where they can cope better and they are used to the society.** Kids from Ukhanyo Primary [in Masiphumelele] they come here and they are learning in a third or second language and they struggle. And then they also have to adapt to a different system, to a majority white kids, to being a minority...it’s frightening for those children. We try to put in a couple of things to assist them and it’s slowly working” (The school offers extra English classes and the possibility of a Xhosa-speaking councillor).

Racism

Grade 9 teacher 1:

“I am impressed with the lack of it [racism]; the amount of cross over and how comfortable people are with each other. A lot of people are good friends, best friends across different groups and stuff...there’s racism, there’s negative stuff around...but overall I think it’s pretty good”.

Grade 9 teacher 2:

“...you see they haven’t grown up with it, they’ve been born into ...when Mandela was freed they were 3 years old. The racism that does come out I think, is from their parents, they don’t get it from each other because they don’t know it.”

'Us' and 'Them'

Grade 11 teacher:

“[T]he majority of the kids at this school are white. When they talk about ‘us’ they really mean it, they mean everyone in the class, and then they talk about ‘them’ when talking about black kids. I think that’s just because of numbers; if it were the other way around they would be more aware and question what they were saying. What’s distressing is that the kids won’t ask a black child that comes from Masipumelele...white kids won’t have a personal conversation but will make sweeping comments about what people are prepared to accept in Masi. And they don’t think of asking [their classmate] what’s going on...”

IG: But I don’t think they really make that connection.

TP: No they don’t because as far as they are concerned that kid is not the same as the rest of the people in Masi”

Identity and language: speaking about diversity and integration

- Older generation use discourse of 'culture' to address diversity, caution around using racial classifications
- 'Culture' often seen as barrier to people understanding, mixing
- Younger generation: "It's made a big issue by the older generation, not by us"
- Topic of apartheid is everywhere in school curriculum but "it is not our reality", and often creates animosity where there was none
- 'Race fatigue' , emphasize same-ness among friends and peers
- Many other ways of identifying themselves and others (according to religion, class, style, interests)
- Conventional racial categories often do not 'fit': examples of 3 respondents
- At same time use of politically incorrect racialised language, humour

Ambiguity of racial identity/classification

- Darren (17 years old, lives in Fish Hoek with family, moved from Woodstock): considered 'coloured' by conventional classification, but gets labeled as a 'wannabe white' by his (white) friends. He is resistant to this allegation, but is also resistant to be associated with what he calls 'common coloureds' and agrees with his friends that he doesn't 'act coloured'
- Francis (19 years old, now lives in Fish Hoek, father in Masi, mother in Khayelitsha - Summer Green): considers herself an African (not as a racial category) because her mother is Tanzanian and her father South African. She resents the label 'black', yet sometimes finds herself not being able to avoid using the term 'black people'. She speaks English, kiSwahili and isiXhosa, her father's mother tongue, but does not really identify with 'being Xhosa', most people in Masiphumele consider her an outsider because of her accent: she is "leaning towards white"; "coconut"; "model C girl".
- Konrad (17, lives in Sun valley with family) does not classify himself or others as anything, never spoke in any kind of racial terms. He looked white to me but his surname and some family pictures gave some clues otherwise. It was however inappropriate to ask him about any racial classification of himself or his family and in any case more interesting that he did not.

Virginia (17, lives in Sun Valley with parents, father priest in Ocean View):

V: "I am white! In my dad's family up the tree there's coloured people but my mum's white, my dad's white, I am white.

IG: Just out of curiosity, if there's coloured people in the family when does this change? When do you change from coloured to white?

V: Uhm... I don't know...it's just somewhere in the family, like my dad's father's brother is...my dad's father, he looked a bit coloured, and then his brother looked major coloured, and he has a coloured wife, and a daughter that's coloured. I don't know it's just like in the family... I don't know the real background.

IG: Is that something that's important?

V: No it's nothing, I don't mind, I have other colours in me, it's interesting".

‘acting a colour’

“So what is a ‘black’ person supposed to be like then? How is a black, or coloured...or even white supposed to act?” (Francis, 19)

“The ‘coloureds’ at school walk with a bounce like in American movies, speak loudly, use a mix of lazy English and kombuis Afrikaans, are disrespectful towards teachers and think they are cool but generally act very immature and uncivilized” (Darren, 17)

“I made friends with [gesturing apostrophes with her hands] ‘the coloured people’, that’s when I got classed as a wannabe, a ‘C.I.T.’ and all that. Now that I have a white boyfriend I get comments from classmates that I have ‘gone back to white’. My coloured friends tell me to ‘take off my high shoes’, and say I am ‘acting white’ again” (Virginia, 17)

- C.I.T. Coloured-In-Training
- Top Deck chocolate that’s half black, half white
- Coconut black outside and white inside
- Half-a-naartjie in between, ‘not an orange and not a naartjie’
- Model C girl from predominantly white model C schools

Barriers and opportunities

- Language: no satisfactory way to speak about diversity
- Geography: still segregation, unfamiliarity, friends at school but no visits/staying over
- Structural inequality, poverty, limited mobility
- ‘Integration’ is one-directional, towards middle class system (adapt), and from Masi and OV to FH, not other way around
- Young people are eager for opportunities to meet, seems to happen most through church youth groups, sports and OIL
- In our research:
 - “ I have a few school friends from Masi, and have come in the car to drop them off. But this is the first time I am actually sitting in Masi...usually I feel scared when we drop friends off at night and all these people are wandering about in the streets. But now that I am here it feels so much nicer and livelier compared to Fish Hoek, where the streets are really dead!” (Leanne, 17, ‘Tri’)



'Blind spots'



DUR MAP OF
Romitje Road

MRS PHUMELLE
LOCATION

CLINIC

KFC
CHICKEN
BEAGER

Ziyanda

HALL

LYHOFF

SNAKE
Park

SUNSHINE

KENSIE
School

Café

SUNSHINE

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Who is mobile & why?

- Fish Hoek: rely on parent lifts, safety-related fears, want to go 'up the line'
- Ocean View: shop in mall/Fish Hoek, some visit relatives in Cape Flats but travel is 'costly'
- Masiphumelele: most mobile, journeying is part of life, desire to be in the action
- Result: socialising within same socio-economic and cultural groupings

Why is it so difficult to be mobile? (1)

- Transport costs
- Perceived/actual barriers to entry (sports clubs, targeting of services, NGOs plus external interest & investment)
- Local media reproducing negative images and labelling 'us'

It creates a negative impact on the community because they're **not looking at what the community is good at, they just looking at what the community is bad at**, all the bad points. And I mean you cannot judge a community by what it does badly. I mean there is a balance between the two... But they just continue on running bad press releases over and over and over again. And **it's such a negative vibe because no-one wants to come into the community, and then there's no interaction**, it's like you isolated, you an island, nobody wants to go there. (Charney, grade 11 discussion on 'community', Ocean View)

And one of the things, I can compare the community to a person; if you always concentrate on the negative of the person then they will actually break down because nobody's actually recognising their potential or highlighting their good points. And the same thing with the community, if you every time you hear bad news you going to say 'Ag I might as well just leave and stop trying to do good' or whatever, and the people might just start collapsing and that's why I think the majority of the people lose hope in actually trying to become a community together because of what they read in the newspaper. (Nicola, grade 11 discussion group on 'community', Ocean View).

Why is it so difficult to be mobile? (2)

- Fear around safety
- Habit (passed on through generations)
- A middle-class culture of 'activities' for children
- Fear of acting different, getting ahead of neighbours...attracting mockery, denigration, witchcraft affecting the whole family

What results from isolation?

- Perpetuation of stereotypes of others / of 'us'
- Fear
- Ignorance of what daily life entails; what do we share? how do we differ?
- Social networks bounded by class / physical space (introverted, self-feeding)
- Children's reactions vary: Not seeing...to fascination of 'others'
- Enthusiasm to meet & frustration around where, how?

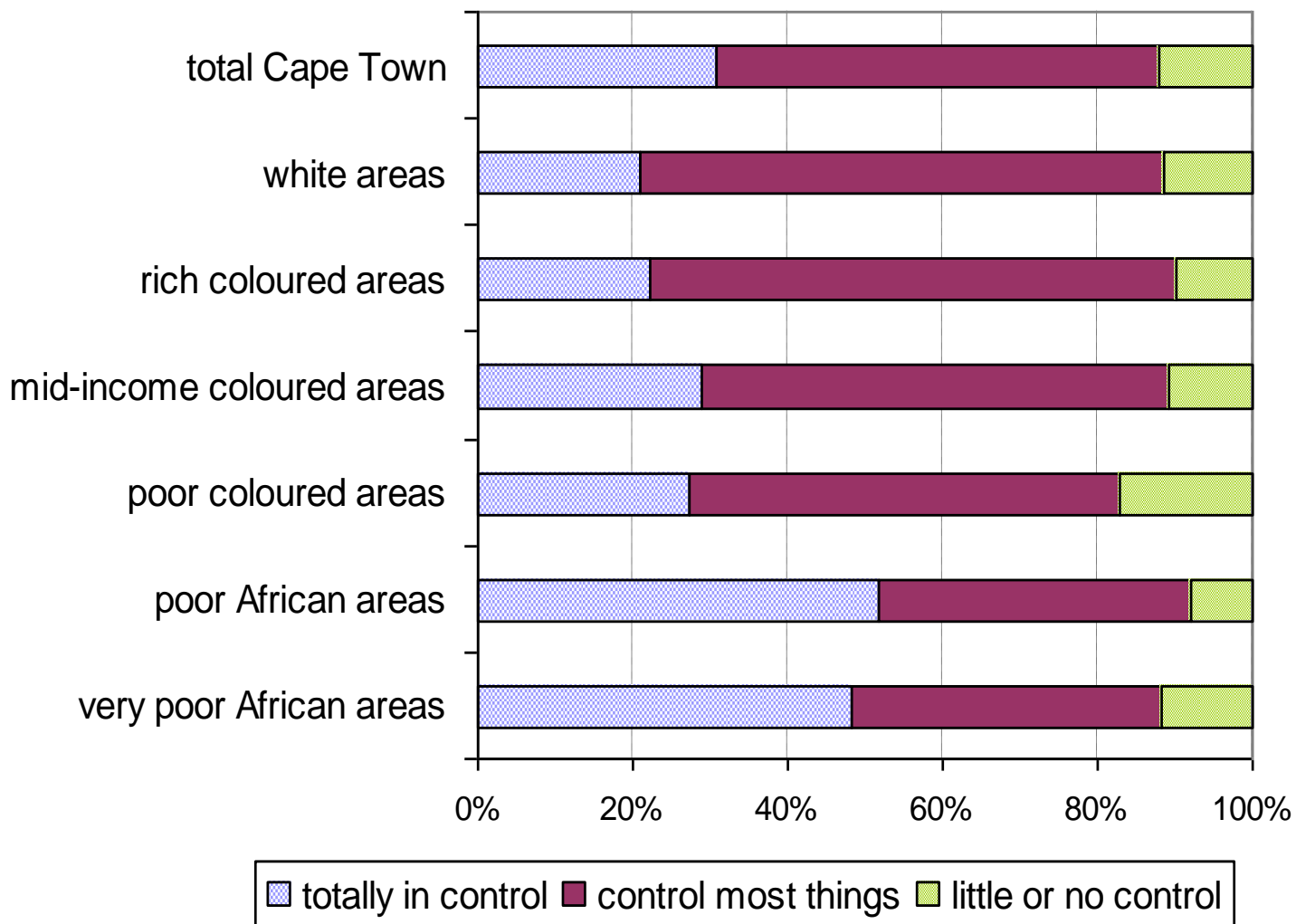
Consequences for child well-being and emerging society

- 'Where I live' is key to shaping identity
- Imposed identities (OV: 'tik monsters' 'going nowhere'; Masi: 'the future is yours')
 - Two options: Live up to it / reject it (Each produces pressure & fails to take account of more complex realities)
- No practical 'bodily' knowledge of other places, or styles of neighbourliness
- No lines of communication
- No vocabulary to talk about differences
- No means of identifying common experiences, generating mutual support, or standing up for their ideals or even their basic needs
- Detachment from any decision-making that affects their lives
- No solidarity amongst the young...pre-requisite for social change

‘Integration’ carries enormous importance

- Knowledge is at the crux; ‘head’ knowledge and ‘body/heart’ knowledge
- Huge gaps that remain invisible: Young people do not know what they do not know
- Discourses of the future: e.g. “personal effort will produce success” “there’s no point trying”
- Unwittingly setting themselves up for failure; hit the first hurdle and fall flat

Figure 10.1: Control over life, by neighbourhood



Where are the shared spaces?

- Shopping mall, Fish Hoek high street & beach: in same zone but limited interaction
- (Some) churches & development initiatives: aim to foster integration, even demand it
 - Structured, with limited ‘hanging out’ time
 - Tend to pre-define what young people want and need, and how best to provide
 - Challenged by different cultural styles

Most 'services' missed the mark... and closed. So what works?

- Variety of activities, ways to be creative/active
- Shows, competitions, exhibiting talent and raising self-esteem
- Strong leadership, able to engage with school/home challenges
- Value children's contributions, participatory decision-making

What happens when young people traverse old boundaries?

- Quickly see misconceptions
- Humour, confidence & eager to ask more questions
- Friendships, social networks, new possibilities (internal confidence & real human capital in the form of people to observe, and ask)

Libraries: Hubs able to draw from wider community

- Long opening hours
- Walkable
- Information resources for all ages/stages
- Informed adults, older youth able to guide incoming youth (in mother tongue)
- Tutoring and mentoring

Where can we make a difference?

- Challenge media stereotyping and question uninformed assumptions about 'communities'
- Resource positive adult-child interactions
- Seek spaces where all can meet & dialogue
- Facilitate wealthier children's entry to poorer areas
- Identify & help to bridge the knowledge gaps
 - Lap-reading
 - Tutoring
 - Careers indaba

Resources

- South African Child Gauge, annual publication from UCT's Children's Institute (www.ci.org.za)
- Monitoring Child Well-Being: A South African rights-based approach (www.hsrbpress.ac.za)
- “On the Edge of the Table”: 16 life stories by Cape Flats youth
- Training : Participatory work with children
- Email me: Rachelgbray@gmail.com

Would you like to learn about working with children from Glynis Clacherty and Rachel Bray?



5-day course on participatory research with children

This course is an introduction to doing participatory qualitative research with children. It will be suitable for those of you have a research background who want to know more about working with children and for those of you who are working in the community but want to know how to engage children in simple research. The course will be experiential and practical with some theoretical input and plenty of reading material made available. You will also get a chance to practice some of the skills with a group of children. There will be a maximum of 20 participants (often divided into groups of 10) so that you can get personal attention and help with relating the information to your own work situation. The course will cover the following:

- What is participatory research?
- Why should children participate in research?
- Ethical issues in research with vulnerable children
- Looking at activities that are appropriate for different ages and stages of development – drawing, mapping, role play, storytelling, collage-making and much more
- Encouraging children to talk and asking questions in discussions
- Analysing information from children and with children
- Writing up the research
- Involving children in advocacy using participatory research findings

We can tailor the course content to suit the needs of participants with or without a background in social science. Between us, we can ensure plenty of opportunity for practical support in designing research for programme design and monitoring. And we offer input on theoretical approaches to those planning to conduct research with children for academic or policy purposes.

We are offering this course in two locations:

The first is in Parkview, Johannesburg from 09.30 Monday 14th March to 12.00 on Friday 18th March 2011

The second is in Kalk Bay, Cape Town from 09.30 Monday 4th April to 12.00 on Friday 8th April 2011.

Trainers

Glynis and Rachel are internationally recognised as experts in participatory research with children.

Rachel Bray has a PhD in social anthropology and has been doing research with children in South Africa, India and Nepal for the last twenty years. She specialises in involving children in the research process, and has trained new research teams made up of social workers, child activists, health practitioners and members of government departments.

Glynis Clacherty has worked as a consultant researcher all over southern and eastern Africa for the last 15 years. She has worked for organisations such as Save the Children, UNICEF, PLAN, UNHCR, Soul City. Most of her work has been with vulnerable children such as refugee children so she has particular expertise in doing research in an ethical way.

Cost of the course: R7000 (This includes course materials plus lunch and refreshments during the day). You will need to organise transport and accommodation if you are coming from outside either of the cities.

Please note that we will need a minimum of 15 participants in order to cover costs involved in running the course.

To book: Email Rachel at rachelgbray@gmail.com saying which venue you are interested in. We will send you a booking form and information about payment and accommodation options in the area.