Exploring the dualisms of 'belonging':

Young women's performances of citizenship in Cape Town

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Under the supervision of Prof. Desiree Lewis

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of
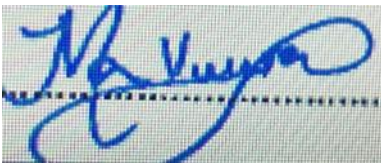
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Compulsory Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Date: 30.11.16

Acknowledgements

"[A]s we insert the self, from the inside, [we begin] to explore how an 'entangled becoming' is constitutive" in post-qualitative research" (Jackson and Mazzei, cited in Lather 2014: 5).

Thank you very much for sharing of yourselves and for embarking on this journey of exploration with me, Reneé Titus, CJ De Long, and Melissa Lawlor.

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My family and my sister-friends, thank you for believing in me and encouraging me to keep pushing- to move forward enthusiastically and confidently.

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Natasha "Spirit" Brown, my sister-friend. Thank you very much for your care and presence in my life. When my spirit was dampened you always encouraged me to take rest and to know that the universe has already conspired to meet me at my point of need.

*

Prof. Lewis, thank you for showing me that it is possible to tap into the avenue of 'going against the grain'. To go my own way, especially when circumstances appear to be grim. This has allowed me to foster within myself a stronger, activist spirit. I wish to always remain critical of a world that operates along with subjugation, deep-rooted inequities and paper-rights.

"I want to live the rest of my life, however long or short,

with as much sweetness as I can decently manage,

loving all the people I love and doing as much as I can

of the work I still have to do.

I am going to write fire until it comes out of my ears,

my eyes, my noseholes- everywhere.

Until it's every breath I breathe.

I'm going to go out like a fucking meteor!"

~Audre Lorde.

Abstract

My research involves a nuanced exploration of 'citizenship', through examining the liberatory potential of young women's use of social media and performance of embodied subjectivities in the post-Apartheid imaginary. By tracing expressions of self, specifically women's highly imaginative efforts to represent what selfhood means to them and how it shapes their realities, I question conventional understandings of civic participation.

The forms of communication and self-expression that many young women in Cape Town pursue are often considered apolitical, frivolous or trivial. By comprehensively exploring self-expression as a participant, I show that it is often richly but complicatedly politicized. My analysis is based on four women's narratives and meaning-making processes, although my methodological approach involves detailed attention to my own location and interactions with participants.

Guided by feminist explorations of the relevance of standpoint theorizing, I seek to understand the various visual and textual ways in which a small group of young women in Cape Town is currently making sense of their social identities, understandings of freedom and potential as social actors. I also draw on methodological work that questions the tendency, even among many feminist researchers, to reduce the knowledge of their participants to manageable data. In so doing, my aim is to try to make sense of the content and forms of young women's knowledge making on their own terms.

Contents:

Young Women's Performances of Citizenship in Cape Town: Exploding the dualisms of belonging

Introduction

My initial source of interest, and the foundation of my exploration of young women in Cape Town, was to explore their performances of citizenship in terms of their complex responses to models of femininity that prescribe and define citizenship. I was interested in deconstructing the confining dualities of resistance and compliance and, in so doing, questioning the dualism that has dominated many South African explorations of popular culture and politics[1]. Through discourse analysis of performances and representations of the body, I planned to analyze the complex and vernacular ways in which young women are creating distinctive strategies and languages for expressing political engagement. I became especially interested in how young women have focused on inscribing and representing their own bodies in ways that uniquely articulate ideas about their sense of belonging as well as their sense of being racialised, classed, gendered and sexualized. My growing interest in social media, dress and body marking and alteration was shaped by my sense of the centrality of these 'languages of the self" for many young women as well as for myself.

'The woman question' is a phrase that is connected to the latter half of the 19th century when social change and the questioning of the fundamental roles of women in industrial and developed countries became prevalent. It is argued that 'the woman question' was ignored for generations within the scope of analyses of the class structure of society. 'The woman question' only became a matter of importance for social and political theorists when women and the feminine became threatening to bourgeoisie stability. In today's society, the philosophical notion has been linked by scholars as relating to more than just class: 'the woman question' intersects with socialization and psychological, interpersonal and socio-institutional factors as well. The political, social and economic sectors also characterizes the professional role of women and affects social and sexual liberatory dynamics in society as well. According to Jo Anna Isaak, 'the question of woman', "has become the motif in the discourse of postmodernism. […] '[T]he question has returned like a glitch in the discursive practice. The 'repeat' centers around the discussion of hysteria which has returned, not as the subject of a medical discourse, but, appropriately for postmodernism, as a question of representation" (Isaak, 1996: 182). In line with this, 'young women'[2], are positioned in an era of postmodernism and at the same time, post-feminism.

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[1] McClintock, (1991); Erasmus (2001); Nuttal (2004); (2012); Lewis, (2012).

[2] I refer to 'young woman/women' interchangeably as a social category to highlight that difference is a constitutive, productive and ongoing force of great significance to understanding dynamics around social identity. I contend that the category, 'young

'Young women', I perceive here as a very particular generation of women. These women were born in the era of Apartheid and were of school-going age (seven or eight years old) in the early, post-Apartheid period. This constitutes an interesting position in terms of citizenship in democratic, contemporary South Africa as well as in line with the theory of 'belonging' in the new South Africa. The contemporary multicultural democracy encompasses the spirit of an 'imagined community' which exudes an unraveling or untidiness of difference in terms of race, sex, class and sexuality. The entanglement of these factors influence 'young women's' citizenship struggles and their personal, political and psychological perforce ushers in efforts to belong in a new dispensation.

Young women's individual struggles intersects with the broader cultural and political struggles which feminism confronts. These struggles surface in the need to share experiences and what constitutes the everyday experience of a young woman's existence. The willingness to share creates subtle channels of connectivity amongst women and the open dialogue creates a cross-exchange of feminine psyche, and interconnectivity through sisterhood. I took to showing solidarity with my participants, by deliberately integrating a questionable-style of quoting my participants by not adhering to prescribed convention of conventional coding in qualitative data interpretation and analysis in order to physically amplify, through this dissertation, my audacious voices by representing my participants words set in boldface, in an effort to represent the performance of embodied subjectivities in the post-Apartheid imaginary. Furthermore, I wanted to emphasize how significant a researcher's epistemological/ ethical and methodological set of choices are to mobilize new forms of thinking around the 'knowing' subject. My method of setting my participants words in boldface, was done in order to show that the narrative form or structure does some of the work of performing the subject.

My conception of 'young woman and young women' emerged within broader contextualizing of the universal understanding of 'wild woman' and 'wild women sisterhood' associated with one of Clarissa Pinkola Estés's best-selling books. It is Estés's (1996) *Women Who Run With The Wolves* that offers modern psychological theory and literary analysis based on Jungian theory. She is also infamously known for her efforts in turning to music and poetry compositions of storytelling for the cultural location of 'wildness'. Through Jungian theory, Pinkola Estés (1996) highlights the importance of the individual psyche in the quest for wholeness. She draws on the Jungian notion of the collective unconscious, cognitive and analytical psychology to derive that collective consciousness is parallel to psychic instinct. It is this theory of 'belonging' that co-emerges in the contemporary, multicultural democratic and imagined community of 'young women'.

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woman/women' may counter the wave of research that is enmeshed in Enlightenment thought which tends to reduce young women to un-knowing subjects.

Wildness, as coined by Pinkola Estés (1994: 3), is based on the new lexicon for describing the female psyche through what she calls "psychic archeological digs" into the female unconscious embedded in a passion, creativity and timeless themes of knowing, self-definition, self-expression, emotional awareness and authenticity- all these factors amalgamate as a radical need for 'real-ness' and pleasure-seeking. In line with this, Rosalind Gill a feminist cultural theorist best known for her work on media studies and the representations of gender expresses that "[…] in contemporary media- young women live through a discourse of 'can-do' girl power but at the same time, their bodies are sexualised and objectified yet, young women are also presented desiring and active. However, young women are also subject to social policing and "hostile surveillance that has no historical precedent" (Gill, 2007: 26-27) within the sphere of post-feminist media culture but, also within the physical and spatial arena of the everyday experience of social dynamics, plane of the contemporary age.

Feminism and neoliberal individualism are important factors linked to young women's participation and citizenship, particularly in regards to feminist redefinitions of citizenship. Rosalind Gill (2007) proposed that the notion of post-feminism has become one of the most important in the repertoire of feminist cultural analysis. She outlines that there exists little agreement about what post-feminism actually is, and the term is often used contradictorily. Gill (2007) argues that the term is frequently thrown around in a rhetorical capacity however, it begets analytical attention. Therefore, Gill (2007) fashioned a concept that can be used analytically, particularly within cultural studies. Moreover, Gill (2007: 26) proposed that post-feminism could best be understood as a 'distinctive sensibility', which intersects with various interrelated themes. These include the notion of femininity as a bodily property.
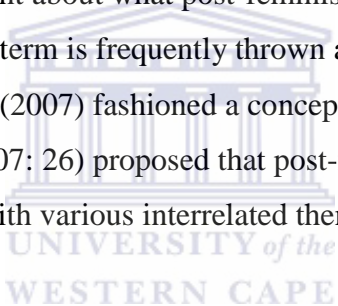
Aside: tapping into the wild woman running with the wolves conception (Pinkola Estés, 1996) is Melissa in this Facebook profile picture of Melissa posted on the 26th of August 2011, which coincides with the fact that, within the contemporary sphere of post-feminist media culture,

what is evident are elements of a sensibility of post-feminism. Melissa does not self-identify as a feminist but she has a strong sensibility of neo-liberal individualism.
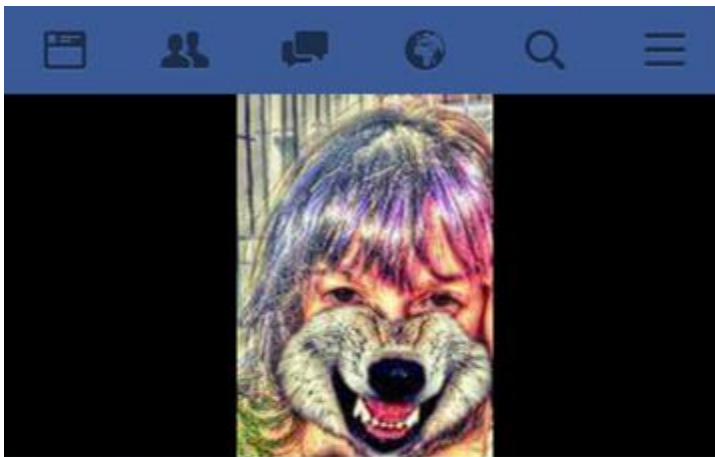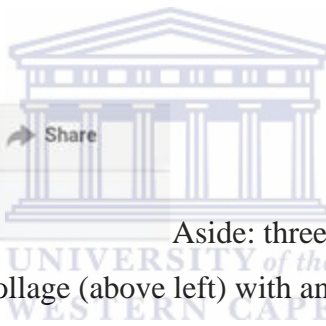
Aside: three years after the initial collage, Melissa offers a psychedelic rendition of the first collage (above left) with an evident wild-woman, sentimentality but the warped imagery takes a distinctly psychedelic form with its bright colours and bizarre distortion- which is contrary to the traditional archetypical, feminine representation of women and the accompanying prescribed social role and behaviour for young women. Reverting back to Pinkola Estés's (1996) notion of 'psychic archeological digs' relative to the female unconscious and the embodiment of creativity as a gateway to 'knowing' actors of self-definition, self-expression, emotional awareness and authenticity is of particular importance to Melissa's two photo-collages. Melissa appears to enact a two-fold approach to self-expression: her radical need for a deep sense of authenticity and pleasure-seeking through psychedelic music and art.

I interpret both of Melissa's photo collages as a show of individualism, choice and empowerment through the 'wild woman' ideology. Both images represent a virtual-world expression of Melissa's body. I was (and remain) convinced that the seemingly frivolous, irrelevant or purely self-indulgent strategies of self-representation warrants academic attention. Academic focus could contribute significantly to understanding emerging forms of public participation and engagement among young women who seem to have little or no obvious interest in organized political engagement or affiliation (Wetherall & Potter, (1988); Reischer & Koo,

(2004); Van Wolfgutte, (2004); Wegenstein, (2006); Lewis, (2011)). Here, my participants' unique voices are unlike those of the post-feminist and pop feminist rhetoric. Popular culture and social media are mobilized by young women through a post-feminist sensibility. This is further expressed through young women's unique forms of 'knowing' and 'resisting' authoritarianism.

Claudia Mitchell, Relebohile Moletsane and Kathleen Pithouse (2012) articulate in a chapter titled, *Reconfiguring dress.* This can be seen in their words: "[d]ress, we know, plays a central role in the literature and art of South Africa […]; [it] also dominates the landscape of everyday life in many different ways […]" (Mitchell, et al., 2012: 3). The authors suggest that we look at clothes critically in relation to its connection to framing personal narratives on a micro level. Clothes, when considered in this light, are essential to the construction and performance of "personal and social identities" (Mitchell, et al., 2012: 3). This is highly relevant to the self-representation of my participants because the question of rigorous methodology is dealt with through emotive, descriptive and innovational methods. Moreover, ethnography is placed at the centre of the politics of knowledge production in this case.

Neoliberalism can be understood as a social phenomenon of universal technology and capitalist machinery utilized in social transformation (Ong, 2007: 3-4). The neoliberal understanding of governmentality came to surface not through the naming of neoliberalism but rather through my participants self-expressions which de-emphasizes traditional liberal doctrines which inadvertently sought to seek progress by more pragmatic and understated methods which operates within the social sphere. Gill (2007) draws attention what she calls an, "important synergy between post-feminism sensibility and neoliberal ideas in popular cultural discourses: […], it is women who are called upon to self-manage and self-discipline. To a much greater extent than men, women are required to work on and transform the self" (2007: 26-27). Furthermore, Gill (2007) interrogates the very nature of neoliberalism through systematic questioning of whether neoliberalism is always already gendered and if women are constructed as its ideal subjects (Gill, 2007: 26-27). Gill (2007) recommends further exploration of the intimate relationship as necessary to illuminate the subject of post-feminist media culture as well as, contemporary neoliberal social relations (Gill, 2007: 26-27).

It is participatory research with women who are my peers and who express themselves in similar ways to mine that led me to rethink my original aim of 'making academic sense' of my participants. I initially believed that efforts to explode the dualities of belonging and paying attention to the ambiguities of the resistance/ agency dualism would ensure my open-minded and flexible efforts to listen to the voices of my participants. The effort to listen to and integrate the voices of my participants into this study, I thought, would be an adequate counter to the wave of research that tends to reduce young women to unknowing subjects whose responses within studies enmeshed in Enlightenment thought are engulfed in hierarchical ordering, empiricism and rationality.

I drew on Susan Hekman's knowledge (2010) which outlines that researchers' consciousness around the pursuit of objective knowledge as prescribed by traditionalist empiricism can be beneficial to counteract predominant and prevailing social ideals around class and gender differences (Hekman, 2010: 95). Traditionally, the social perception is that "women cannot be the subjects [and] they also cannot be actors in the social scene [of society]. Women who cannot create a social life [automatically] cannot constitute knowledge or reality" (Hekman, 2010: 95). I felt that embodied subjectivities constantly show a movement of back and forth contestation in expressions of agency and self-definition that often elude neat categorization as expressions of being, either conformist or rebellious.

As I became increasingly immersed in the intricate aesthetic, political and discursive processes of young women's self-styling through, for example, communication, interaction and general re-articulation of what the freedoms of post-Apartheid citizenship mean to young women. I became progressively more uneasy about my role as an interpreter and definitive knowledge maker. Despite the seeming openness of my topic, what remained firmly in place was the separation of my 'expert voice' from the voices of the participants. I grew more and more uncomfortable with what Alecia Jackson and Lisa Mazzei have described as "mechanistic coding, reducing data to themes […]" (2012: 6). I began to realize that even as I claimed to see young women as developing their own ways of making sense of about their bodies and their worlds. I was implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, assuming my superior authority to translate these expressions into 'real' analysis.

My study, therefore, focuses on ways in which my evolving research process allowed me to communicate with my participants regarding the cultural implications of their self-expression. American philosopher, John Dewey (1915), articulated that: knowledge-making is an experiential process of education. Being in the process of experience holds the potential for meaning beyond itself (Dewey, 1915: 91). To me, Dewey's point catapulted a need to highlight my own process of knowledge-making via my own social experience and integrate that experiential knowledge production into this study.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) provide insight into how they make sense of theory in their project which centres around a conventional qualitative interview. The authors draw on six poststructural philosophers; Derrida; Spivak; Foucault; Butler; Deleuze and Barad to "plug into" the common data set and concepts (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012: 10). The authors postulate that, "[p]lugging in [means] to produce something new is a constant, continuous process of making and unmaking. It is the process of arranging, organizing, fitting together" (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012: 10). The goal is to produce a "different typology" via what Mazzei and Jackson (2012) call "a diffractive reading" which is "not about what is told or experienced- it is about the ways in which what is experienced is formed in the intra-action between the material and discursive" (Lather, 2014: 4-5). I have striven to do this with my one-metre installation and mannequin exploration of creative and visual

methods for exploring identities. As I go on to discuss later in this study, I aimed to bring my own activities as a vernacular artist[3] into conversation with those of my participants, realizing increasingly that the conventions of much academic research would limit my engagement with my participants. As I show throughout, artwork in the form of every day forms of self-expression, self-representation or body marking have been important alternative languages through which I undertake my research and develop my analysis.

My interest in innovative, qualitative research that avoids the pitfalls of reinscribing the interpreter's authority was deepened by my focus on young women's use of social media platforms. As a frequent user of social media myself, I am aware of the importance of these media to a young woman's effort to express herself in ways that are, to her, a freedom of creative expression. A freedom that exemplifies a shift from the patriarchal, authoritarian and other overarching voices that usually influence what a young woman is allowed to say and how she says it.

The virtual world intersects with the material world and how we express our multiple, and often contradictory, selves on a daily basis. Social media and creative methodology coupled with exploratory participant observation became my tools for undertaking this study because these tools are part of the social world young women engage in: an extension of our embodied subjectivities.

Generally, many of the contemporary social media platforms we engage in, despite their being embedded in consumerism, allow us "enormous scope to script and rescript [our]selves, through photographs, images, and text. [T]hese expanded versions of the self, circulate in the public sphere as richer and more meaningful versions of the women [we] are believed to be" (Lewis, et al, 2013:57). The prescribing of secondary status social roles and submissive behaviour for young women in the material world is resisted via young women's use of social media and performance of embodied subjectivities in the post-Apartheid imaginary. A new focus for my research arose from rethinking the usual meanings of the concepts self-identification, empowerment, creativity, and exploratory participant observation. I gravitated increasingly towards immersing myself in the research process, allowing insights about the research to manifest themselves and to avoid directing the research process in order to arrive at clear-cut conclusions.

Previously, I had intended to treat creative expression as texts requiring my analysis. With this train of thought, I became increasingly committed to immersing myself in creative methodologies, and reflecting on the research process rather than instrumentalising the research for a tidy analytical result. In many ways, I chose to conduct

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[3] As an individual who does not recognize myself as a formally, trained artist, I engaged in exhibiting self-taught, functional art. Focusing on clothing and aspects of day-to-day life through, a one-metre installation of mixed media in an effort to actively explore creative and visual methods as attached to self-expression and self-representation. I presented the installation to my participants in order to plug into the informal and creative as a more organic avenue of interviewing- striving toward a more open-dialogue, open-ended making and unmaking of the largely abstract and philosophical concepts I was confronted with, in exploring identities.

my research through using creative platforms that are central to the ways in which I usually express the most intimate aspects of myself in an effort to communicate meaningfully to others. I have therefore sought to connect my non-academic expression to my academic work.

I drew on Sandra Harding's (1993) *rethinking standpoint epistemology.* It was Harding who brought into being, feminist standpoint theory. Inspired by Harding's insights, I "put myself in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter" (Harding, 1993: 74). It proved useful in my journey to, as far as possible, break down hierarchies of power inherent in the subject-researcher paradigm. According to Sandra Harding, "[o]bservers do not change the world that they observe, but refusing to strengthen the notion of objectivity leaves reflexivity always threatening objectivity rather than also as a resource for maximizing it" (1993: 74-75). Harding's (1993) sentiment is what prompted me into asking myself two questions: how the notion of objectivity can be adapted to become more useful in my contemporary attempt to understand social relations and how objectivism naturalizes knowledge-limiting values and interests which shape and uphold a conventional science that maintains a safe distance between researchers and the researched. By asking these questions, I started to understand that I had to strive toward embracing a methodology in contrast to empiricist methodologies. Therefore, I immersed myself in the idea of embracing standpoint approaches to break away from strict scientific rationality as much as possible. This immersion is done in order to hear and engage in different kind of interactions with my participants based on how they make their bodies talk, within an informal dialectic.

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[4] From left (2013): representation of our styles and personalities. (1): me, plain black t-shirt, spiked neck piece, and three badges, around consciousness raising- GMO's, anarchy and feminism. (2): A reflection of Melissa's inclination towards nature, I used mud, twigs, leaves and shells to reflect her embodiment of nature. (3): a reflection of Nandipha's elegance and sass- which is shared by Reneé, too-See image below.
(4): Feminine goth dress I created using lace and velvet material, to reflect Zoe. Both Zoe and Nandipha helped me with my background information, for this study. (5): fur, colour, and fun- I used an array of material and some glitter to reflect CJ's joyful personality.

Aside: Reneé's style reflected via installation- third from the left (3): above, in the footnote. A photo taken at our photo shoot. Posted on Facebook on, the 20th of June 2014 by Reneé.

The images above left and right: show a one-metre long interactive installation I created to present to participants. It also represents my tapping into visual and creative methodology in exploring 'body talk'. Representing Erving Goffman's (1959) "front-stage theory", I hand-made the structure as well as the outfits (except one- the first on the left which represents me. Thus, I used my own clothing) (Goffman, 1959: 112). The wires and computer bits above the frame represents the cyber connection which initially linked us all (the internet primarily, Facebook. This connection was seen as forming the foundation of this study. A music attachment provided an element of sound that embodied the representations of the young women as they presented themselves to me. I introduced this after the first round of interviews at the very beginning stage of my research in response to the vague responses I received. I came to realize that there are limitations when one is dependent on only words. In seeking to establish connections, and sharing more of myself shared with my participants, I ended up exposing more of myself. My participants, in turn, shared more of themselves. I found that the resulting assemblage became a more meaningful mode of communication.

The picture above right- illustrates Erving Goffman's (1959: 113) "backstage theory". I inserted an invisible pocket (like an invisible zip found on garments) on the back part of the installation which acted as an information pocket to allow observers to delve into further observation 'uncovering' more than meets the eye (that which we present on the surface as indicated on the front part of the installation). The contents reveal narratives captured by photographs of what I call our 'inkography'. This term reflects our tattoo biographies and some personal information such as name, age, favorite colour and nickname(s). This is a practical exhibition of that which cannot be seen at first glance. First, I applied purposive sampling to gather participants. Thereafter, probing was executed in order to gain further insight from participants about themselves. Ultimately, however, my methodological process became increasingly intuitive and was guided by my ability to communicate with

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particular participants and by their openness to engage in communication about shared emotional, political and cultural experiences, rather than in 'my research project'.

The images found directly on the back surface of the installation are representative of places, sounds, tastes and sensations found through touch of that which is characteristically Cape Town. This is what constitutes the collage of sensations: the local world that we as participants are immersed in. This helped me gain a better sense of direction in terms of comprehending my research question. It differs from the first phase of sampling and selection of participants I executed. This sampling was based on more technical procedures of snowballing and later purposive sampling. I made an increasing effort to draw out people I felt would communicate confidently and creatively. Therefore, I drew from my Facebook newsfeed whoever 'spoke' to me through their statuses and mobile uploads, thereby exhibiting their own sense of style- tattoos and fashion. It is these interesting elements and their 'voiced' opinions which I wanted to engage with further.

The mobile exhibition stood as a three-dimensional representation of "[…] the bodies that we cultivate[d] [and] are ultimately indexes and expressions of the social world [we] inhabit" (Reisher and Koo, 2004: 298). John Tagg is a distinguished professor of art history with a particular interest in cultural theory and criticism the power of representation. I drew on Tagg's (1988) chapter, "The currency of the photograph" because it outlined the intersections of power and photographs (1988: 1). Inspired by Tagg's (1988) train of thought, I first gathered photographs and informal conversations with my participants to get to know their sense of style. I did this with reference to "a semiotic analysis of photographic codes" which are held in place by a Foucaldian emphasis on the "power of discursive practices" (Tagg, 1988: 22). In the process of developing this installation, I increasingly realized how important photographs and images were in my own processes of knowledge making and, in my personal efforts to understand myself and my world, to articulate my hopes and desires. I also felt that, as I attracted participants, both the participants and I began to form a community of like-minded people speaking a common language. I remain convinced that no formal academic efforts, however meticulous or rigorous, that involves orthodox research gathering and methodologies, could have allowed me to find the participants I did. Neither would formal academics have allowed me to pursue the multi-faceted and multi-media conversations we eventually had.

Inspired by the liberatory potential of young women's use of creative self-expression, social media and their performance of embodied subjectivities in the post-Apartheid imaginary, I had to "[…] 'imagine forward' troubling a scientificity that claims that objectivity is not political, empiricism is not interpretative, chance can be tamed via mathematization, and progress equals greater governmentality" (Lather, 2014: 8). The tendency of science to cognize our micro material world experiences through calculable intuitive truths and grand narratives is problematic because our social and material world realities are not based on a one-size fits all, blueprint. The

nuanced understandings of young women's creative transformation of the traditional understanding of citizenship does not fall into the neat ordering of empiricism. In line with this, art and politics in the twentieth century, is explored by Lev Kreft, professor of aesthetics, a politician and former member of Slovenian parliament.

Lev Kreft (2012) drew comparisons between art and life through his conception of capitalism and art as productions of temporality. Lev contends that the philosophy of aesthetics, of the every day includes the themes: sensuality and sensitivity which could be viewed through a prism of meta-aesthetics (Kreft, 2012: 120). Aesthetics and logic are usually binary opposites but, Kreft's (2012) train of thought around viewing art as that which disturbs reality by activating the imaginary in order to create a different material world. Inadvertently, Kreft's knowledge sheds light on how popular culture and social media are mobilized by certain young women in their expressions of vernacular art which is redefining the face of citizenship (Kreft, 2012: 120). Through Kreft's (2012) conception I was able to understand 'contemporaneity' as an orientation in a space enveloping "that which is assembled together" (Kreft, 2012: 120). In other words, my participant's creative expressions of self were to be comprehended as being embedded in, and responsive to, contemporary popular culture. Moreover, agency can be understood as a collaged machinery of reconceiving citizenship- through a process of, creative introspection and self-expression by young women.

Viewing aesthetics as the creative output of sensitivity and sensuality in, vernacular, every day expressions of nuanced redefinitions of citizenship enabled me to, feel my way forward in the sense that I had to learn to acknowledge my complicated standpoint and become acutely aware that I needed an "integration of feeling/knowledge rather than the split between the abstract and the emotional" (Christian, 1990: 42). This integration of both feeling and knowledge implies that I had to make great efforts to remind myself, throughout the process of undertaking this study, to integrate the rational alongside the emotional.

The separation of the emotive and the rational to me represents an artificial social construct that has been instrumental in maintaining traditional, patriarchal science and accompanying patriarchal-styled knowledge. The complex and intersectional nature of social life and traditional qualitative data analysis is scrutinized by, Alecia Jackson and Lisa Mazzei, both experts in educational studies and social research writes: "[f]eeling the affect, what 'happens' in the event and our sense-making of it blur[s] as researchers are positioned otherwise. Folding texts into one another, a flattening of subjects and objects occurs in a sort of differential becoming. This engagement reconfigures the world and how 'we are becoming as researchers'' (Jackson and Mazzei cited in Lather, 2014: 5). Patricia Lather a leading researcher in qualitative research, feminist methodology, feminist policy analysis and gender and education posits: a social science that is engaged and acknowledges the complex and political value of not being sure (2014: 5). She insists that as researchers we should allow deconstruction to

work alongside messiness, contingency and ambiguity (Lather, 2014: 5). Lather (2014) tries not to be consumed with reading and writing and draws inspiration from Rosalind Krauss, an American art theorist who is known for her unusual, diaristic writing style postulates that: the digital medium is entangled with observation and experience. Krauss proposes that the digital medium is a language that is vernacular, technological, social, political, natural and scientific in nature (Krauss, cited in Lather, 2014: 7). Krauss writes theory through personal narrative based on the aesthetic experience of our material world guided by the imaginary. She argues that the post-modern media culture now stands in place of modernism's intentionality and compulsion toward the unexamined (Krauss, cited in Lather, 2014: 7). Krauss postulates art critical writing as: an exercise in self-reconstruction. Theoretical explication "[…] disappear into this narratives [individual experience and intimate meaning and its] commitments to the art of the present" (Krauss, cited in Lather 2014: 7). I felt a deep sense of urgency to find ways to feel my way forward by, relying less on rational thought and more on emotional articulation and in that way I strove to use data to think with theory and avoid thinking for my data (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013: 261).

Sandra Harding, an American, feminist philosopher of science(1986) and Donna Haraway (1988), who is also a distinguished American professor is infamously associated with her work around the history of consciousness and feminist studies, both critiqued the traditional role of science and the hierarchies of power that accompany the authority of science and its, effects on standpoint theory. Thereby, insisting upon a rethinking of standpoint theory. Haraway (1988) responds to the assumption that science is purely objective with what she calls "situated knowledges", which can be interpreted as, an embodied subjectivity which embraces an intermingling of the subject and the object (Haraway, 1988: 575). Haraway argues that: when feminist objectivity is put into practice we are able to gain "knowledge potent for constructing worlds less organized by axes of domination" (Haraway, 1988: 585). Both theorists suggest that the inherent inequities within the subject-object paradigm within science should be deconstructed within feminism.

Kirsten Blakely (2007) works from a feminist post-structuralist perspective to challenge positions of objectivity, the status of positivism, and "the possibility of accessing truth" (Weedon, 1999, cited in Blakely, 2007: 2). It is Patricia Hill-Collins's (1997), *Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited': Where's the Power*?, that I found especially valuable. Hill-Collins, is a social theorist who has researched widely around issues of race, gender, class, sexuality and citizenship. She is also a former president of the American Sociological Association Council and known for her contribution to black feminist thought. Her reading of standpoint theory translates as an interpretive framework "dedicated to explicating how knowledge remains central to maintaining and changing unjust systems of power [.] To ignore power relations is simply to misread standpoint theory- its raison d'être, its continuing salience, and its ability to explain social inequality […]." (1997: 375; 376). What is central to feminist standpoint theory is experience as a method of

scientific enquiry from the vantage point of women's experience: a reality that is contrary to the material world and reality of men (Hill-Collins, 1997: 376).

Susan Hekman, post-modern feminist and professor of political science was critiqued by Hill-Collins (1997) who argued that Hekman's handling of groups as an entity made up of individuals is a misreading of standpoint theory. Hill-Collins in response to Hekman's misinterpretation of standpoint theory, emphasizes that women must be acknowledged as individuals "with their own reality" (Hill-Collins, 1997: 376). Consequently, I realized that, by way of this study and the process of seeking to create new knowledge, I needed to deconstruct and unlearn the very foundations of my undergraduate and post-graduate theoretical understandings.

As far as possible, I wanted to avoid an a priori approach to research and therefore found it necessary to embrace a researcher-participant position. The role of the researcher is one with a dual purpose: a participant observer and a reflective practitioner who strives to explain the epistemology of practice (Lacono, Brown and Holtham, 2009: 39). Blakely (2007) stresses the importance of researching the researcher, a subject made possible by problematizing the relationships between theory and the experiential. What is revealed is that the space created between theoretical and experiential knowledge allows for new questions, ideas, interpretations, and challenges to foundational sociological concepts regarding methodology, research and theoretical approaches to knowledge, truth claims, subjectivity, and representational practices. Reiterating this perception is, Michelle Fine, a professor of social psychology and women's studies articulates: "[s]uch space is an important arena for the disruptive voices of feminists (Fine, 1992 cited in Blakely, 2007: 2) to interrogate and transform academic and research sites of knowledge". Furthermore, Blakely (2007) argues that women must be the subject rather than the object (other) of analysis.

Blakely's (2007) argument is one of the arguments that made me realize how easily I could fall into the trap of viewing my participant's as mere subjects for my analysis. This realisation sparked in me an urgent need to develop a different kind of communication that could facilitate valuing the voices of my participant's in different forms. The various forms of communication I refer to are songs, clothes and self-narrated 'hashtagged' captioning of mobile uploads on different platforms on social media. My commitment to immersing myself in my research process required me to put at the forefront honesty and integrity.

Laurel Richardson (1993) is an American sociologist known for her work on qualitative sociology, who engages critically and ethically with the connected ideas of aesthetics, authorship, authority, and validity. She encourages researchers to practice "writing from ourselves" so that we become "fully present in our work; more honest and more engaged. (1993: 3; 11). In line with the notion of 'writing from ourselves', Norman K. Denzin professor of sociology, cinema studies and interpretive theory and Yvonna S. Lincoln, a methodologist and higher education professor express that, exploratory research is that which expresses originality of mind and

critical judgment in the creation of testing one's own living theories of one's own learning through practice and reflections (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011: 733). It is the bringing together of action, reflection, theory, and practice, in participation with others in pursuit of a practical exploration of the research question.
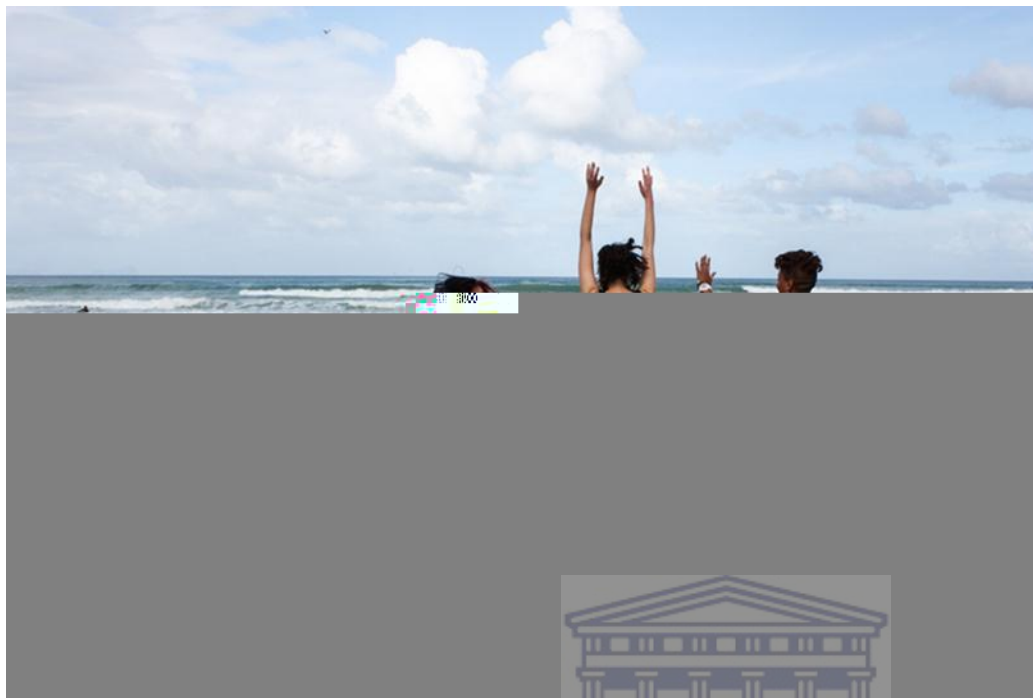
Aside: photograph is indicative of my role of researcher. I am looking back at the world and my experience thereof (photo of our focus group session at Muizenberg beach. Photographer: Natascha E. Bracale). 10th of May 2014, Muizenberg beach.

Apart from the image above being a visual illustration (of the kind that is often seen in conventional research), the purpose of this photograph here is intended to convey the in-depth participatory journey, we explored together.

My response to participants relied heavily on creative modes of expression because these are the modes that both my participants and I feel passionate about. My response, therefore, allowed me to strengthen the insider status I have with my participants by way of our shared interests, our gender and our age. I incorporated Amelia Jones's (1988) conceptualisation of 'feminist duration'. 'Feminist duration' is a philosophical understanding that centers around feminist ideas, struggles and passions and how these are transmitted and endured across time and space (Jones, 1988: 1-21). According to Sandra Harding, "[o]bservers do not change the world that they observe, but refusing to strengthen the notion of objectivity leaves reflexivity always threatening objectivity rather than also as a resource for maximising it" (1993: 74-75). Similarly, in *Muddying the Waters: Coauthoring Feminisms across Scholarship and Activism* (2014) Richa Nagar, professor of women, gender and sexuality studies focuses on muddying bodies of theory and genres of writing. She turns the gaze upon herself via methodological reflection and in that way makes herself vulnerable in a radical sense; her research practice

becomes an object of scrutiny so that a collective reformulation of collaboration and collective dreaming can occur across institutional, geographical and sociopolitical borders (Nagar, 2014: 22). Co-authorship, belonging and citizenship, as conceived by Nagar are imperative to troubling dominant meanings prevalent in both the social world and within academic scholarship, too. Co-authorship in this study means that my participants contributed by offering me text (quotes), photo's, memes, songs, videos, poems and any other multimedia source of information which they felt was relevant to contributing to fleshing out what we as young women understand by belonging, freedom, democracy and other areas related to citizenship.

Urged by a desire to be critical and deconstruct the formal interview style, I drew on Laurel Richardson's (1997) questioning around fields of play intersecting the academic life. She analyses the potentiality of de-disciplining academic life via application of the sociological imagination to the act of writing (Richardson, 1997: 1) She inspired me to become troubled by the notion of representation and 'giving voice': which Richardson articulates in her chapter four titled, "Writing legitimacy", therein she focuses on marginalized participants and potentially rewriting the self through contemporary ethnographic practice (Richarson, 1997: 147). I then became more interested in integrating organic conversation and being less rigid with interviewing and dynamics. Through pre-existing connections and a shared interest in body art and self-expression, solidarity started to emerge between my participants and me.

Melissa Lawlor and I know each other from high school. A meeting of minds developed and blossomed in the art classroom. Melissa transferred schools and we lost touch. A few years later, we reconnected via Facebook. We only met again in person at our group photo shoot. This was about a decade after our last face to face interaction.

Similarly, Claudia Joy De Long (CJ) and I met at high school. We started and finished the course of our secondary level of education together. The next major milestone we shared was being present at each other's 21st birthdays, which was significant because it was socially perceived as a rite of passage or a marker of our reaching of the next phase of life as adults. We kept in touch, met up infrequently and engaged in leisurely activities together over the years after high school. We often archived these memories by uploading mobile-camera produced photographs on Facebook.

Reneé Titus and I met at the University of the Western Cape. We shared an interest in Women and Gender Studies and often frequented the same social circles. Later on, I became a participant in her Honour's thesis. These affiliations flourished over the three-year lifespan of this study.

Aside: (from left): CJ, Reneé, Melissa, and I. Our first photo was taken at 11:00 am by photographer Natascha E. Bracale, taken at Muizenberg station on the 10th of May 2014. This was a year after our initial cyber communication. This also marked the first time CJ, Reneé and Melissa met in person.

This study was guided heavily by the expressions of my participants which was often derived from conversations on Facebook and Whatsapp, or during our casual group sessions which took place in the urban setting at- a train station, the beach, Muizenberg parking lot and at coffee shops.

According to Jackson and Mazzei, "interview methods in interpretative qualitative enquiry oblige researchers to 'center the subject" (2012: 8). What this means is that, a researcher's authority is decentered and the researcher can actively deconstruct crises of representation and the disembodied voice of objectivism: authenticity surfaces as objectivism (Jackson and Mazzei, 2008: 299). Contrasting with this, the authors', "methodology-against-interpretivism disrupts the centering compulsion of traditional qualitative research; [their] project is about cutting into the centre, opening it up to see what newness might be incited" (2012: 8). The authors wish to focus on transparency in qualitative research as a means to work against conventional coding in qualitative data interpretation which manages participant voice and systematically validates inferences via the expert re-voicing of the participants' contribution through methodological control (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012: 8). Jackson and Mazzei (2012: 8) acknowledge and accept the centeredness of interviewing practices and do not give up on the interview as a method. This is made clear in the words:

> "A recognition of the limits of our received practices does not mean that we reject such practices; instead, we work the limits (and limitations) of such practices. […] [W]e accept in our research, and in the conversations with the women in this study, that the data are impartial, incomplete, and always in a process of re-telling and re-

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membering. The methodological implications of this view are that we, as researchers, question what we ask of data as told by our participants, question what we hear and how we hear (our own privilege and authority in listening and telling), and deconstruct why one story is told and not another" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012: viii-ix,).

Like these authors, I do not reject the interview method. Although, like them, I seek to use it in ways that reveal an understanding of its context, how it functions as discourse and performance rather than as straightforward evidence. My data is therefore eclectic and includes text from interviews as well as photographs and Facebook posts that I turn to as situated knowledge rather than as evidence for my 'findings'.

Below: photo of our focus group session at, Muizenberg Historic Railway Station. Photographer: Natascha Bracale.

I distinctly remember that after our face-to-face meeting that occurred concurrently with our group photo shoot, CJ posted a joyful status update later that day. She honed in on our celebration as individuals and as [young] women even though we met as a group. We had the opportunity to speak one on one between individual shots. The experience was fun in the moment and even more meaningful after we received the final shots. We were able to unpack memories attached to more than just the captured moment and beyond the surface. We were able to trace clothing and hairstyles as attached to a story. I felt that, after this group photo shoot, a deeper sense of solidarity started to emerge amongst us.

Chapter One: Young Women's Participation and Citizenship

Feminist Redefinitions of Citizenship

My introduction proposes that the spaces for self-expression that young women have found elude more conventional forms of political involvement. Many feminists have shown that narrow definitions of citizenship often exclude the inventive and dynamic ways in which marginalized subjects become active political agents. In what follows, I will review these feminist debates and provide a foundation for considering young women's creativity as a political intervention and non-traditional expression of citizenship.

Young women's participation and citizenship is an area that has been extensively explored in traditional social science and policy research. Shireen Hassim, professor of politics has contributed extensively to research focused on gender and feminist politics in South Africa. In her (1991) work entitled, *Gender, social location and feminist politics in South Africa*, she stated that:

> "[c]itizenship in South Africa has always been a politically charged notion. In South Africa's new democracy women's agency must continue to play a central role in defining women's effective citizenship. Viewing women's politics through the prism of feminist debates on citizenship reveals the key relationships of power and authority that shape political participation and social inequality. Citizenship debates also illuminate the ways in which democracy itself is defined" (1991: 66).

The gendered character of citizenship was something that was overlooked by abstract theorists who focused on democratization, in South Africa the situation seemed to be amplified by the second-class representation of a citizenship role that women were prescribed to fulfill. In line with this Germaine Greer, infamously regarded as one of the most influential second-wave feminists of all-time, who does not believe in censorship of any kind. Her book *The Female Eunuch* (1970)*,* is a clear example of her disregard of censoring information which can be perceived as offensive. The title of her book is a reference to castrated males (1970: 1-23). Greer applied this definition as a brash statement about women's socio-political second-class position in society provides an historical outline of the oppression women have endured and she goes on to trace how this historical subjugation of women affects women in contemporary society (1970: 430-432).

In articulating many young women's experiences in South Africa, Glanis Changachirere (2011), a feminist from Zimbabwe, explores what it means to be a young woman living in the Southern African region. She comments on the elite nature of the women's movement evident in this geographical zone and argues that "this movement has assumed an elite form that has privileged the urban woman more than those in marginalized geo-localities. As is the norm, the young women in these marginalized communities are the most affected […] by systematic discrimination" (2011: 46). This notion of participation has become central to work on women in citizenship

because it has seemed to mark the ways in which women actively respond to received and formal measures for claiming citizenship from their positions of marginality.

Andrea Cornwall, Professor of Anthropology and International Development and former Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Equalities and Diversity at the University of Sussex claims that "participation has become development orthodoxy" (2013: 1325). Economic injustice is rife for the marginalized individual, this is especially true for young women in marginalized communities who continue to, live in poverty. Participatory development has presented a "promise of inclusion, of creating spaces for the less vocal and powerful to begin to gain more rights" (2013: 1325). The promotion of democracy and gender equality includes the challenge of addressing the marginalization and exclusion of young women from important decision-making processes in local and national government institutions. Cornwall (2013) proposes that we need to throw out wider questions of citizenship, rights and governance in exploring citizenship in the ways that other feminists, such as Nira Yuval-Davis, Professor of Gender and Ethnic Studies at the University of London has published widely in the area of intersectional nationalism, racism and citizenship. Respectively, Farida Shaheed, a sociologist, independent expert, special rapporteur in the field of cultural rights and human rights council resolution has contributed extensively to promoting and protecting cultural rights and the rights of the most marginalized.

Women, many of the critics argue, are the most likely to lose out by finding themselves and their interests marginalized or overlooked in apparently 'participatory' processes. Echoing this, Farida Shaheed in, *Scratching the surface: democracy, traditions, gender* considers, citizenship and the nuanced belonging of women. She proposes that we rethink the "single homogenous concept of 'citizenship'" (2007: 23). Her suggestion which was made a decade ago is still relevant. If we are to adhere to Shaheed's call, then we could potentially broaden the scope of the traditional understanding of citizenship to include feminist attempts at redefining citizenship to include the liberatory potential of young women's use of social media and performance of embodied subjectivities in the post-Apartheid imaginary.

Shaheed's study revealed that women expressed less interest in "exercising decision-making in community or state processes than in decision-making power over their own lives. The personal every day is where citizenship gets defined on a day to day basis" (2007: 33). The every day and the accompanying dynamics of gender-division is said to lock women in particular, out of "negating- the rights and entitlements, technically due to its citizens, by virtue of their citizenship" (2007: 33). I interpret Shaheed's aforementioned in my personal struggle as a young woman who finds formal citizenship inaccessible and prescriptive. I found my feelings echoed by the women who undertook a journey of exploration with me. CJ articulates this through her photo-collage below:
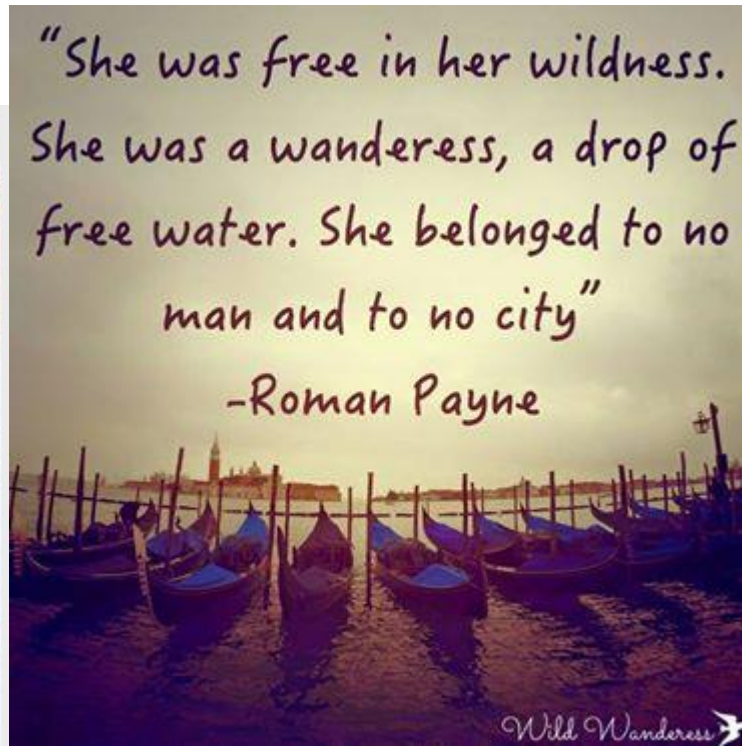
Aside: (left): CJ's Instagram selfie, taken on the 13th of May 2015 in Paris, France and shared on Facebook. Captioned: **"I realized there was nothing I could do but go… and so I WENT".** This statement I draw on to support my personal struggle as a young woman with formal citizenship being inaccessible and prescriptive. In turn, the inaccessibility of formal citizenship also reflects the broader cultural struggle and political struggles that feminism confronts.

(Right): Posted on Facebook by CJ on the 27th of April 2015 captioned, **"Happy Freedom day all! #free #livelife #zerolimits** CJ's sense of wanderlust has expanded over the years- which eventually led up to her deciding **"to take the huge step that would change my life forever"**, CJ shared with reference to her move to Thailand. She shares that she has made a deeper connection with herself and her capabilities which has been much more fulfilling than the depressive unfulfilling status quo in South Africa that left her feeling emotionless. CJ proclaimed- **"did I ever think that life as I knew it would cease to exist? The simple answer, 'NO'"** (25th of October 2016, Facebook messenger).

Shirin M. Rai is a political scientist and Professor in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick who focuses on research pertaining to women and the state. She highlights how important it is to rethink empowerment through alternative frameworks of analyzing democratic politics. Rai (2015) proposes that alternative frameworks of analyzing democratic politics can be found in: studies on the grammar of politics and performance (2015: 1179)[5]. Rai (2015) draws on performing politics/ politicizing performance in order to highlight the dilemmas of performative citizenship (2015: 1179-1182). Rai (2015) perceives citizenship as a splendored thing: a marker of belonging, an aspiration of participation and a key element through which the state brings into being the citizen and regulates her life within its borders (Rai, 2015: 1179). She declares that citizenship is also something performed and reconstituted- via popular struggles on

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[5] See: Rai and Lievesley, 1996; Fine and Rai, 1997; Partpart, Rai and Staudt, 2002; Rai and Reinelt, 2014.

local and global stages, as well as through the law, both national and international (Rai, 2015:1179-1180). Rai shows that the focus on performance can provide a more nuanced approach to the study of citizenship. Her ideas inform my efforts to show how young women draw on creativity and new avenues of public participation.

Public Participation and Creativity

Howard Morphy, is a distinguished Professor of Anthropology who has through his research made a significant contribution to the understanding of Aboriginal art in Australia. He is also known for introducing a new graduate degree in interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research at, the Australian National University. Respectively, Marcus Banks is a Professor at the University of Oxford and regarded as, a leading figure in the field of Visual Anthropology.

Even though Morphy and Banks are internationally based, and editors of, *Rethinking Visual Anthropology* (2011) in a book that covers a large spectrum of visual representation. The book has significantly influenced the tone and focus for this explorative study. In line with this, I drew on Rick Rohde, accordingly. Rick Rhode of the University of Edinburgh is an expert in Historical and Cultural Anthropology. He has been a member of several research teams based in Southern Africa and also became the co-investigator in a cross-disciplinary arts and humanities research project, which contributes to his long-term field experience. Rohde (1998) calls 'ethnographic revision', a process which involves making subjectivity, photography and ethnography explicitly visible within the study (1998: 188). Determined to build on the knowledge dispersed by Rohde, I was drawn to a co-authored web article by Edward Segel and Jeffrey Heer (2010) titled, *Narrative visualization: Telling Stories With Data.* Edward Segel is a Professor of History and Humanities at Reed College in Oregon and his central professional interest is diplomatic history. Jeffrey Heer, is a computer science and engineering Professor at the University of Washington. He is known for his work on information visualization and interactive data analysis.

I drew on Edward Segel and Jeffrey Heer's, (2010) narrative visualization method in my consideration of how to approach stories that embedded participants' knowledge. The narratives conveyed by the visual brought to surface many aspects of subjects' lives and their careful interpretation of these life stories. The dispersing of images throughout this study is reflective of the importance of the image and imagery to the creative process of constructing narratives and inserting a voice within the public domain. Endeavoring to delve deeper into understanding visual and creative methodology, I was drawn to the work of Claudia Mitchell.

Claudia Mitchell, is a Professor at McGill University in Canada. She is also an Honorary Professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in Durban and her area of specialization is Integrated Studies in Education. Researchers such as Claudia Mitchell's (2008) have highlighted the importance for the academic researcher,

postgraduate student and experienced lecturer alike, to expand the repertoire of being and doing. She achieves this by employing visual methodologies such as drawings and photo-voice. For Mitchell, (2008) this involved the researcher acting as photographer. The implication of this was that the researcher was working with not only photographs but also an array of media including cinematic texts, video production, material culture and advertising campaigns. My approach is similar to that of researchers such as Mitchell in seeking to use the range of texts that enhance participants' scope to express themselves.

Consequently, an important element of my incorporation of visual methodologies into this study pertained to the inclusion of selfies which participants frequently use to represent themselves. As suggested in the introduction, the aim was to avoid simply using photographs as data for reflecting a researcher's definitive interpretation. Rather, I wanted to focus on the participants' own processes of self-expression and knowledge-making and bring those to the surface through this project.

My participatory observation made extensive use of visual approaches including drawings, collages, photo-stories and video documentary/ narrative, all of which helped me to delve into exploring a fuller range of our sensory experiences and self-reflections (Mitchell, 2008). In line with this, art critic, curator, Professor of visual art and rector of Malmö Art Academy, Gertrude Sandqvist, proposes that thinking through the visual may be the very operation of "translating between different types of orders, methods, materialities, and clusters, which provokes a new and creative way of understanding and developing new thinking" (2012: 206). This aligns with Lather's notion of 'getting lost' has a dualistic meaning. The notion stands as: a way of knowing and a means of creating new knowledge (2007: 3-4). Creative methodology is undertaken by Lather to reveal new possibilities for methodological reflection. She uses herself (this includes her physical body) and her previous work with women in order to explore the breaking down of the subject-object paradigm within a framework of feminist methodology. The subject-object paradigm is just one of many ambiguities that Lather (2007) explores.

Lynn Fotheringham, a lecturer in Classics, at the University of Nottingham, draws on Lather who "argues for scientificity that is about imperfect information where incompleteness and indeterminacy are assets" where participation in feminism, representation, methodology, and postmodernism is key (Lather, cited in Fotheringham, 2013: 3). The longstanding difficulty with scientific objectivity and ideas around rationalism which researchers face are hidden, in the neutralisms that science prescribes for researchers. The problem with neutrality is that it results in detachment of interrogating conventional, taken-for-granted ideals around subject-object relations. Moreover, when researchers do not critique the notions of the objective, the opportunity to do research differently, is lost. Lather argues further: " […] in the complex ecology of qualitative research in the present moment, the task is to move beyond the capture of a narrow scientism where qualitative research is reduced to an instrumentalism that meets the demands of audit culture, to move, rather, toward inventing

practices that do not yet exist" (Lather, 2014: 8). I did not want to hastily develop a study following arbitrary standards within the prescribed timeframe for composing a Master's dissertation for my own benefit with the overall accolade of being awarded a degree. It was imperative for me to allow myself to foster a space within my study for authentic and ethically produced knowledge; to allow young women to speak for themselves about how they perform as political subjects. In the same way that my creative processes drew responses from participants, so did their responses prompt my own rethinking and cognitive shift.

Clay Holroyd is a Professor from the University of Victoria in Canada who specializes in the field of Psychology. He has a vested interest in research on cognitive control and decision-making processes. It is Holroyd's view that "[p]articipatory creative methods are approaches to research where participants are invited to express themselves in non-traditional ways, such as making a physical object or collage, or sharing an experience" (2013: 1) was also important. Creative methodology within research is important because it allows the traditional subject-object binary to be deconstructed and in that way, participants do not exist as mere subjects but actually get to partake in research. In so doing researchers and participants form a collaborative relationship and begin to counter the wave of research that tends to amplify the expert voice and constrict the voices of those participating in the research. Oftentimes unknowingly rendering the participant self-knowledge as supplementary material alongside the, definitive knowledge the researcher.

It was CJ's playful, spontaneous process of performance of self-expression through creativity, which led to my being prompted to respond creatively to CJ's visualizing of what she wanted to convey. She, in turn, captured my presentation in a photo-collage as displayed below. This interchange of imagery and performances of creativity is what opened up the gates of dialogue in an informal way. In simpler terms, our interchanges became more of a comfortable process of unveiling bits of ourselves for our own empowerment and pleasure, rather than a painful task of dissecting parts of ourselves.

Aside: CJ's Facebook profile picture, uploaded on Facebook on the10th of January 2013.

Aside: a photo CJ tagged me in, on Facebook. On the 1st of June 2013. Captioned **"Thx Monique, so chuffed"- CJ.**

Above left: participant CJ's selfie which she uploaded in her mobile upload photo album on Facebook inspired me, as a participant to explore and express participatory creative methodology and together we shared a creative interchange in dialogue and creativity. Thereby deepening the data collected by providing a richer, more colourful, fun collaborative exploration of identity and self-expression.

Above right: a collage created by Claudia Joy. Illustrating object biography- of CJ's selfie (above) created by me. A participatory creative methodology was the gateway for revisioning or operationalizing abstract theory around identities and performances.
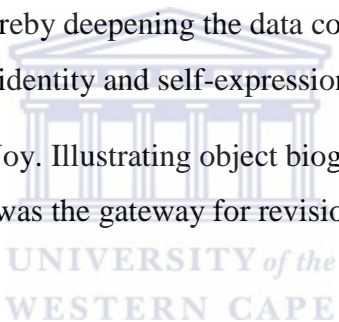
I draw on the knowledge of Louis Cohen, Emeritus Professor of Education at Loughborough University in the United Kingdom and his colleagues and his two co-authors compiled a very successful volume of books under the title, *Research Methods in Education.* Of particular interest to me was the background information this book provides which is immersed in contextual, theoretical and epistemological tools for research. Lawrence Manion, a former Principal lecturer in Music at Didsbury School of Education at Manchester Metropolitan University, co-authors the aforementioned book. Keith Morrison, a Professor of Education at the Inter-University Institute of Macau, also shares co-authorship of the aforementioned reference volume.

Reverting back to the examples above pertaining to CJ's creative self-expression, aesthetics is not being used in what Cohen et al., (2011) describes as the broad Kantian sense of a theory of judgment that combines pleasure with disinterest. It is conceived in the sense of aesthetic-as-language (Cohen et al, 2011: 528). Aesthetics presented in the examples above can be linked to performance strategy argued to present a form of contemporary feminist activism in South Africa. Illustrating this is Yvette Hutchison, teacher, historian and theatre researcher was born in Durban and studied there, as well. After attaining her position as Associate

Professor of Drama in South Africa she moved overseas to delve further into her research and lecturing endeavors; at some later time, she joined Warwick University as an Associate Professor. Hutchison's work around African theatre and performance, and its relationship to history, memories and contemporary identity construction in post-Apartheid South Africa stands as a resource and archive of, South African performance with particular attention paid to women.

Social Media and Public Participation

Social media and public participation are integral components of popular culture which form the milieu wherein young women's personal struggles and broader cultural struggles operate. Angela Mc Robbie, Professor of Communications, feminist and British cultural theorist has written extensively on media, gender and identity relating to social media and public participation. Symbolic and aesthetic material is developed and enveloped in what often seems like a frenzied process of cultural production (Mc Robbie, 2005). This intense process of cycling cultural meanings often marks, in my view, an absolute engagement with the social. Youth cultures, in whatever shape they take, become an embodied investment in society. It is in this sense that they can be viewed as political. One rather clichéd way of putting this is to say that they make 'statements'; but these statements take different shape under different historical conditions (Mc Robbie, 2005). Attention paid to this performativity is what Mc Robbie believes to be an essential component of the study of subcultures. Guided by Mc Robbie's (2005) insights, it seemed to me worth both repeating the exercise of looking at subcultures and taking this analysis further and in a slightly different direction.

As a result of my above observation, I took particular interest in a Master's dissertation by Ira David Sternberg, who focuses on Political Science at the University of California. Sternberg (2014) who draws on an article in, *Feminist Africa* entitled, **"**Exploring New Media Technologies Among Young South African Women" (Lewis, Hussen and Van Vuuren, 2013). He draws on the article to highlight the fact that new media forms provide a space for freedom that rarely results in direct political commentary or resistance. In turn, I drew on Sternberg's (2014) study to explore the 'political importance of youth expression under contemporary conditions. Sternberg (2014) notes the impact of social media signifying a change and challenge to paternalism, thereby suggesting that the South African operates mechanically under the guise and pretense of knowing what would be good and proper for its citizens (2014: 55-56). His description resonates with me as a [young] woman involved in the exploration of social media and creativity among [young] South African women. However, I was troubled by the fact that, for Sternberg, patriarchy and its coercive power remained unnamed. Sternberg's (2014) case study research design reflects a methodology of much prescribed and dominant work on gender and citizenship revolving around working from a public policy and development angle. It overlooks the imaginative, the

sensual and the liberatory character of new media forms which young women tap into in finding and expressing their voices.

I was impelled by Reiter's (2013) highlighting of debates around qualitative methods at the time[6] in order to demonstrate that exploratory research has a rightful place in the Social Sciences. Reiter (2013) believes that in order to live up to its potential, exploratory research needs to be conducted in a transparent, honest, and self-reflexive way (2013: 6). He further expands on this by outlining that it needs to follow a set of guidelines that ensure its reliability which lends credence to my approach and how I took to administering the study (2013: 6). Reiter (2013) argues that exploratory research, if conducted in such a way, can achieve great validity and it can provide new and innovative ways to analyse reality. In most cases, exploration demands more from the researcher than confirmatory research, both in terms of preparation as well as in terms of willingness and ability to expose oneself in actively trying something new. It also requires the courage to engage in a critical and honest self-reflection and critique, which could potentially lead to propelling the exploratory potential of research to greater heights.

I found it necessary to draw on how Sternberg (2014) ruminated on what the authors he cites noted. It is specifically the point that intense forms of consciousness-raising and reflection are often much more pronounced than overt political alignment or participation in social media that interests my study. He states that, "the carved out spaces allow for communication, which can lead to 'consciousness raising' and ultimately stimulate political action" (2014: 56). He goes on to propose that, "the challenge, however, for women and young people, is the culture the authors attribute to South Africa, where the young are expected to defer the old" (Sternberg, 2014: 56). It was important to me, by way of this study, to explore how the societal expectation of us having to respect our elders affects our civic participation. In order to do this, I had to strive to create a space, through this study, to represent the world from the lens through which we [young women] view and experience our social world.

Bernd Reiter is a Professor of Comparative Politics at the University of South Florida, his scope of interest includes citizenship, democracy, racism, participation and exclusion. Reiter (2013) proposes that we, as researchers, need to dissect to analyse by pulling apart words from the reality they refer to and, as exploratory social scientists particularly, we should focus on the reality, not the words (2013: 2-3). This we see evident in the words: "This means, in most cases, that we need to look for indicators that tell us something about the reality represented by a word" (Reiter, 2013: 6). As researchers we cannot simply allow ourselves to take the utterance of a word, at face value or accept what we know it to mean to us, personally. This, Reiter articulates as being fundamental to understanding the dialectics of citizenship (2013: 1). For this study, it was important to

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[6] Gerring, 2001; George & Bennett, 2005; Brady &Collier, 2004, Mahoney & Rueschemeyer

flesh out how the young women who have participated in this exploratory study have been socialised into a culture in which deference is characterized by submitting to another's wishes, opinions or governance out of respect. The culture to which Sternberg (2014) inadvertently alludes is patriarchy. bell hooks, author, feminist and social activist who is infamously known by this pen name and her refusal to capitalize her name. Her refusal is characteristic of the radical visionary perspective she embodies. Actions speak louder than words and her refusal to capitalize her name, speaks volumes about belief that her writing should be focused on, not the fact that she writes. hooks's essay titled, "Understanding Patriarchy"(2007) outlines that: blind deference to patriarchy deeply affects participation and citizenship. Women's participation, self-identification and citizenship become particularly distorted by domineering force of patriarchal masculinity (hooks, 2007: 3-5).

According to bell hooks,

> "[...][m]ost men never think about patriarchy—what it means, how it is created and sustained. Many men in our nation would not be able to spell the word or pronounce it correctly. The word 'patriarchy' just is not a part of their normal everyday thought or speech. Men who have heard and know the word usually associate it with women's liberation, with feminism, and therefore dismiss it as irrelevant to their own experiences" (hooks, 2004: 17).

It is these hierarchies of power that participants complicatedly articulate and allude to. It was my aim, to explore their allusions as fully as possible, that led me on my complex methodological routes. The naming of the word 'patriarchy' has proven significant in this study dealing with our internalized, social and conventional, understanding of citizenship.

Carole Pateman, member of the British Academy, feminist and political theorist explains that, "feminist theorists insist that a repressed problem lies at the heart of modern political theory- the problem of patriarchal power or the government of women by men" (Pateman, 1989: 2). Therefore, we need to make more of a concerted effort to highlight the notion that, traditionally, the social perception of nationalism is synonymous with what Anne McClintock (1995: 260-261) identifies as, male citizenship. Anne McClintock is a Harare, Zimbabwe-born, feminist scholar who published extensively on sexuality, popular and visual culture, race and nationalism.

McClintock explains that generally, nationalism implies a second class citizenship for women: "[w]omen are all too often figured as mere scenic backdrops to the big-brass business of masculine armies and uprisings [and] [n]o nationalism in the world has granted women and men the same privileged access to the resources of the nation-state. So far, all nationalisms are dependent on powerful constructions of gender difference" (McClintock, 1995:261). This is the inescapable reality that we face on a daily basis and therefore we turn toward social media as a gateway to an alternative expression of public participation to shift from the dark,

unfavourable, formal politics overarching our lived realities. It was Mary Hames, an activist, scholar and Director of the Gender Equity Unit at the University of the Western Cape, who has an interest in the South African political climate as well as women's and sexual rights who had contextualized the reality of an unfavourable political environment back in 2006. She articulates that "[…] 'paper rights' have not yet been transformed into 'substantive rights'[…]" (Hames, 2006: 1325). Hames (2006) postulates that institutionalized rights are not accessible to all. The marginalized, in this instance, young women are made conscious through their lived realities that democracy is entangled with substantive rights; and that, difference is a constitutive and productive force which is inextricably linked to patriarchy. This reality is a crucial influencing factor on why and how we, young women draw upon nuanced and alternative gateways to public participation.

Sternberg (2014) does not delve into the extent of patriarchal control in its dominating presence and very real effects of the ongoing struggle that women continue to face in their contemporary expressions of the self. The creative engagement that [young] women have with social media, to reimagine their civic space and participation, attests to the transformative nature that social media offers. The challenge that I confront, along with many women and feminist activists, is to name the forms and manifestations of power that so deeply and pervasively affect their lives.

Desiree Lewis, feminist and Professor of Women and Gender Studies based at the University of the Western Cape has been instrumental in developing feminist intellectual networks within the Western Cape, South Africa and Africa. Her interest and contribution to work around popular culture and deep-rooted feminist scholarship has been a major academic influence on, my academic journey. Lewis (2004) notes that, attention to popular culture and social history in particular "opens up ostensibly self-evident […] forms of women's lives as fertile sites of self-expression, cultural creativity and political rebellion (2004: 2)". It is by confronting these so-called 'soft issues' that we are enabled to learn of the intersectional nature of public-private divide and its politics relevant to the ongoing systemic and structural violence incited against women.

Clare Cummings, and Tam O'Neil, (2015) compiled a rapid review of evidence for a learning and evidence project on women's voice and leadership in decision-making for the Overseas Development Institute, based in London. Cummings and O'Neil presented this, international study a year after that of Sternberg's (2014) and the authors also draw on Lewis et al (2013) to highlight the examples of studies which suggests that interaction amongst young women via social media "can encourage girls [and women] to become more engaged as citizens (2015:13)". Cummings and O'Neil (2015:13) also state that "[d]igital ICT may be an effective tool for **increasing women's and girls' political consciousness** by enabling them to access different sources of information and ideas and facilitating their ability to express their own ideas and react to information access". Moreover, the authors contend that "digital ICT's [information and communication technology] can expose

women, girls and their communities to alternative representations of women and gender roles. This can progressively change social attitudes towards women and girls, and their own personal aspirations (i.e. increased power within)", (Cummings and O'Neil, 2015: 13). Cummings and O'Neil's (2015) findings highlight how women and girls' use of ICT's increases their power and voice.

According to Patricia Lather, "[t]he demand for feminist research to be centered by such concepts as 'empathy', 'voice' and 'authenticity' has been central for the movement away from [the traditional]" (2009:19). I not only empathize with other [young] women but also experience what the authors such as Lewis and Shewarega (2014) highlight in their presentation of the related obstacle to women's public participation. The authors draw on Linzi Manicom's knowledge around pedagogic theory.

Manicom, is a Professor in the Women's Studies department at the University of Toronto. Lewis and Shewarega (2014) articulate that Manicom "confronts ways in which women are constructed as gendered subjects, and how gendered public participation- for both women and men- is naturalized within entrenched racial, class and heteronormative structural relations" (Manicom, cited in Lewis and Shewarega, 2014: 14). I also drew on feminist aesthetics to transcend the norms of value and quality embedded in conventional, formal, reductionist thinking around the definition of citizenship. By "[e]nacting the embodied method of autoethnography, I have learned to believe in myself when a story moves into my body and grows stronger with critical self-reflection, even if- and especially when- it causes my body to transgress into the dance of an academic heretic" (Spry, 2001: 727). Below, is an illustration of what can be considered as an example of a "postmodernist memoirist to better examine the plurality of codes that create our multiple selves" (Slater, 2005 cited in Neyman, 2011: 34). I became a participant when CJ shared content via social media with me. This is illustrated below.

BEING TENDER AND OPEN IS BEAUTIFUL. AS A WOMAN, I FEEL CONTINUALLY SHHH'ED. TOO SENSITIVE. TOO MUSHY. TOO WISHY WASHY. BLAH BLAH. DON'T LET SOMEONE STEAL YOUR TENDERNESS. DON'T ALLOW THE COLDNESS AND FEAR OF OTHERS TO TARNISH YOUR PERFECTLY VULNERABLE BEATING HEART. NOTHING IS MORE POWERFUL THAN ALLOWING YOURSELF TO TRULY BE AFFECTED BY THINGS. WHETHER IT'S A SONG, A STRANGER, A MOUNTAIN, A RAIN DROP, A TEA KETTLE, AN ARTICLE, A SENTENCE, A FOOTSTEP. FEEL IT ALL – LOOK AROUND YOU. ALL OF THIS IS FOR YOU. TAKE IT AND HAVE GRATITUDE. GIVE IT AND FEEL LOVE. –ZOOEY DESCHANEL
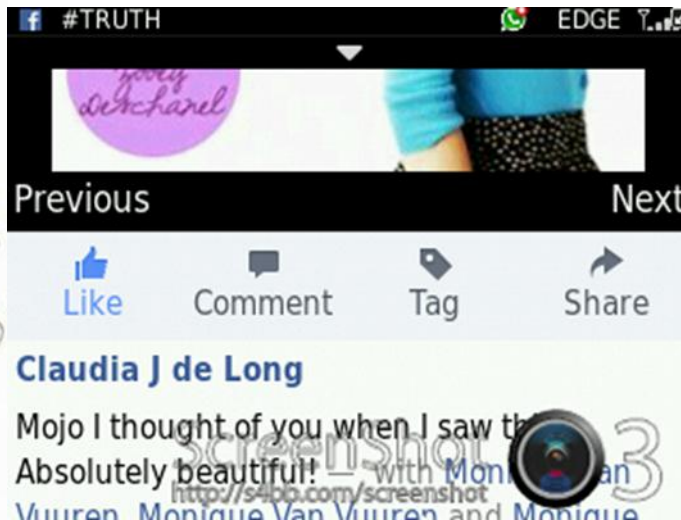
Aside- (left and right): CJ, posted to my timeline on Facebook on January the 18th 2015. Referring to me by my nickname, "Mojo". She tagged me in the meme, "lessons from Zooey Deschane"- popular culture figurehead. Claudia Joy (CJ) captioned the pic: **"Mojo I thought of you when I saw this. Absolutely beautiful!".**

The aforementioned, thought-provoking picture resonates with me as a reminder that just because patriarchy has pathologised our bodies and emotions, this view should not be interpreted as ultimately defining our identities or realities as women. According to Audre Lorde, the "[d]ifference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged. As women, we have been taught either to ignore our differences, or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than as forces for change" (1984: 111-112). Difference is an ongoing constitutive and productive force linked to patriarchy. By activating emotional openness and expressiveness we create alternative narratives to the predominant, grand narrative of patriarchal masculinity-that being immersed in the conception that showing emotion is a vulnerability that must be avoided. The significance of a: phenomenological and interactionist view of self is what is entangled with emotion as a lived experience (Denzin, 1985: 223). The image draws on the emotional attributes of human nature to be reconsidered as something of beauty and strength. In sharing this post with me, CJ has significantly expressed a nuanced form of consciousness-raising. This stands as a reflection of what is usually not named in everyday face-to-face conversation but frequently shared over social media. Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre, Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia who specializes in Educational Theory makes reference to John Caputo, an American Professor of Philosophy, asking: "[w]hy do people fear for difference when 'dissensus' [difference of opinion] stirs the pots of democracy?"(2002: 27). Adams St Pierre expresses that the National Research Council report is just one example of attempts to "marginalize certain epistemologies in order to discipline and control science She implies that there is an attempt to reduce it and to 'centre' it"

(2002: 27). I interpret this as a call for researchers to mobilise our minds around these oppressive tactics and her encouragement to not let such matters go by ignored and unanswered. I interpreted Audre Lorde's (1984) conception of difference as a complex intermingling of solidarity and interdependence being particularly relevant to Lather's (2009) recommendation that, as a social scientist, I should ensure that empathy is enacted within my research.

Interdependency, or what I perceive as active collaboration, between women participating in this study then, in line with Lorde's (1984) train of thought around viewing creativity as a gateway for a self-governance to exist in our performances of self-representation; wherein passivity becomes recalcitrant. In, hooks's *Theory as Liberatory Practice, Teaching to Transgress* (2004) there is a discussion in pain that states that, "[i]t is not easy to name our pain, to theorize from that location […] to chart new theoretical journeys" (1994: 74). Theorizing from a standpoint of pain is not easy but it is necessary because "[i]t not only enables us to remember and recover ourselves, it charges and challenges us to renew our commitment to an active […]. There is no one among us who has not felt the pain of sexism and sexist oppression, the anguish that male domination can create in daily life […] (hooks, 1994: 74). Patriarchal masculinity is the overarching power that mediates all social dynamics iniquitously. The creative methodologies enacted by way of this study are an attempt to bridge the blunt and two-dimensional ways that young women's participation has been explored in South Africa.

Shireen Hassim, Professor of Politics, at the University of Witwatersrand drew on an extract of a statement on the Emancipation of Women in South Africa that was delivered a year earlier, in 1990, by the African National Congress (ANC). It stated that:

> "[g]ender oppression is everywhere rooted in material base and is expressed in socio-cultural traditions and attitudes all of which are supported and perpetuated by an ideology which subordinates women… Patriarchal rights, especially but not only with regard to family, land and the economy, need serious re-examination so that they are not entrenched or reinforced" (Hassim, 1991: 65).

Twenty-five years after Hassim's (1991) publication of the extract in her work *Gender, social location and feminist politics in South Africa*, her sentiment stands as a testament to how inaccessible gender equities in South Africa still is, particularly for young women. These same young women turn to the creative and imaginary avenues for a space to perform informal, nuanced and imagined versions of citizenship and, in that way, articulate a civic voice. Yvette Hutchison's (2016) work on *aesthetics of South African women's embodied activism: staging complicity* is particularly pertinent to my study because it illustrates a radical shift from the most facile work done on citizenship of former decades. Living history is explored via the individual's performance alongside virtual encounters and embodied participation. Hutchison (2009) presents what she calls

'living history' as the individual's performance alongside virtual encounters and embodied participation (Hutchison, 2009: 209).

The image above is illustrative of the current virtual encounters and embodied participation of our day-to-day experiences with politics as women. The image is a screenshot of a trending meme, or unit for dispersing cultural ideas or practices, on social media posted on the 9th of November 2016 that depicts Donald Trump as the newly elected President of the U.S. I found this image particularly pertinent because a few young women Facebook friends shared this meme and I found it floating in my Facebook newsfeed. It resonates with me and this study too. Donald Trump, in this meme, is groping Lady-Liberty. The statue of a liberty is an embodiment; an inanimate symbol of freedom to people globally. This speaks to the contemporary trending, civic voice and public dialogue around the issue concerning bigotry, racism and sexism that is attached to the current political climate.

The aforementioned meme is suggestive of the discontent and fury expressed over social media about the current political climate we live in. The U.S election result has had me ruminating over just how important civic engagement is and how politics affects everyone. The meme is also an indication of how significant the imaginary is in dismantling what we know, the taken-for-granted truths, naming misogyny and symbolic violence inherent in patriarchy. The imaginary opens up new possibilities to depressing realities; it enables us to believe in better for ourselves and to re-envision and rebuild new, imagined democracies. Hutchison (2016) traces a relationship that links the psychic, symbolic, legal and aesthetic as multiple modes of performative and

self-representative ways of being a political actor via the aesthetic and imaginative sense of citizenship. Hutchinson's latest projects look at how aesthetic choices affect performative engagement and memory work in the African context. This is connected to my concerns in the sense that the creative space tapped into by young women enables dreaming up new possibilities and beliefs in ourselves, thereby defying the stronghold of formal civic participation.

Emma Cox holds a doctorate in Drama, Theatre and Dance, and works at the University of London. Her interest in memorialization and postcolonial politics is evident in her book titled, *Performing Noncitizenship* (2015) therein she highlights the performance of non-citizenship or 'irregular' citizenship as a cornerstone idea in contemporary Australian political and social life, to the extent that it has become impossible to even imagine what Australia means without it (2015: 1-4). Can the groundwork laid by young South African women who tap into the imaginary- and the creative, be considered as a bedrock of contemporary South African political and social life?

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Chapter Two –Methodology, Participation, and Research

Reflections on Unlearning Research Expertise

As explained in Chapter One, my research has increasingly been driven by a keen interest in embroidering. This is a journey, with my participant's through fashioning channels of communication that academic work is often cynical about. This journey involved an intricate process of exploratory research. The journey, therefore, involves the bringing together of action, reflection, theory, and practice with others in pursuit of a practical exploration of what constitutes young women's sense of belonging.

As I journeyed deeper into the exploratory study with my participants, I became aware of how much I value the everyday artistic processes, representational practices and use of social media which constitute important facets of young people's self-definition as well as their civic participation.

Aside: a nail palette I constructed in 2013. A physical manifestation of a creative exploration of nail art, as described by my participants in our semi-structured interviews.

I was so determined to explore what has been trivialized, that I delved into an exploration of the fashion of nail art[7]. In 2013, I created a canvas inspired by CJ and Nandipha. I hand-decorated each nail to form the frame of

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[7] This nail palette presentation, was accompanied by another creative exploration- the tracing a friend's photo-diary- journey.

the canvas in a concerted effort to creatively grapple with what was presented to me by CJ and Nandipha[8]. It was informal, creative explorations such as this that enabled me to tap into grounding and unearthing the meaning of the creative in everyday experiences and as self-representative vestiges of citizenship.

Jean McNiff, professor of educational research and Jack Whitehead, honorary professor in education describe participatory action research (PAR) as that which originated in the 1940s with social psychologist Kurt Lewin's insistence that the production of knowledge is always political (McNiff and Whitehead, 2000: 5-12) . By combining feminist research's critique of androcentricism with participatory research's emphasis on participation and social change, feminist action research (FAR) provides a powerful approach to knowledge creation for social and personal transformation (Maguire, 1987 cited in Mc Niff et al, 2003).

While there have been many elaborations of participatory and feminist participatory action research, I have remained keen to approach methodology and method in less technical and more intuitive senses. I did this in order to reveal how participants develop languages and communicative strategies for creating and sharing ideas about their social, cultural and political worlds and how they are located within and contest these.

[8] Nandipha agreed to participate in the initial stages of this research. Later on, she opted out of the study. Nandipha and I came into contact with via snowballing, in 2012. We communicated via Blackberry Messaging (BBM) and the photo she constructed of herself is apt because it was created via a BB app of her imagined and brought to life on a BB billboard. Framing her face.
(Above right): my interpretation of her style- an object biography exercise to encourage open-ended conversation. In 2013 Nandipha opted out and then, Reneé joined the explorative study. I learnt through trial and error that snowballing was not a suitable avenue for me to engage in. Purposive sampling became my focus after conducting some artistically engaging in other background projects. Such as actively engaging with an array of feminist communities on Facebook. One of which is, a Page called Everyday Feminism. In 2014 I started chatting with a young American woman, Medley Byers who partook in what she called an Artivist exhibit (an informal engagement of art and activism) in an exhibit called Art Bodies.

I shared with her about my interest in installation art and the installation I presented to my participants. She shared that when she first learned of the *Art Bodies* project she immediately thought of it in terms of her own body and that, for the past few years, she's been learning more about the body acceptance movement which has affected her self-image, profoundly. Furthermore she shared that she was in a journey accept herself as she is, and that the project in a way showed her how she had taken the power to reject other people's preconceptions and choosing her own identity. This made me think of my own body and how I've unknowingly been engaging in artivism through my extensively tattooed body, as an act of social disobedience. In the same year, I came into contact with Laree Pourier when I was tutoring WGS at UWC. Laree was an exchange student at the time, studying social justice and fine arts at Marquette University in Wisconsin was the first participant with whom I conversed with about women's expressions of citizenship. Our conversations is something I treasure and therefrom formed a 'digitised' friendship bound by our common feminist heart connection. It was through her that I learnt about the Radical Self-Love Movement.

Aside: after our group photo-shoot in May 2014, I edited the photo on the 5th of May 2015. It was my creative attempt to actively trace my personhood. It became indicative of the style of PAR I started to engage in on social media. Particularly, Facebook.

The following poem is an example of the engagement of what I articulate as an alternative artivism. The picture above is an illustration of my body art, which I posted along with the poem below. I shared this with my Facebook friends and offered my tattoo autobiography in order to open up the lines of communication around the meanings of body art:

Redefining my bodyhood

My body,

An embodiment of bone, blood, and flesh.

A systematic entity;

Socialised,

Synthesized,

Sculpted,

Scrutinised by social scripts;

Suggestive, submissive proscriptions.

Birthed, on African soil in an era of apartheid.

      Living now, in a democratic state.

Clad in hues of browns, yellows, black and white,

A mixed pallet of colours; I revel in my diasporic identity.

Still, a part of me feels displaced,

Undefined and seemingly untraceable.

I am, an intersectional being,

A product of an amalgamation of faces, races and places.

Colonized, constructed via bio-determinist definitions,

"Coloured".

Branded as Blackness,

Afrikan by Choice.

Determined to Deconstruct the projection of the neo-colonial project.

My mind screams-

Genes and Feens!

Awakened mind,

Yet I find that my body is unable to escape-

Bio-politics;

Racialised and Biologised Predispositions of Gender.

TRACING my HER-itage,

Ushered, and

Othered.

My portrait, immersed in

Wom(b)manhood.

Womb, womb

wombmanhood

(Re) negotiating, re-inscribing the social scripts, thrust upon me

Upon my skin-

Expressions of the freedom which dwells within

(Re)producing,

The marking of this body.

Reclaiming my body,

The Self-Regulating struggle continues,

The struggle is real.

42
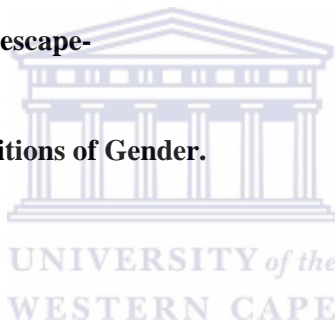
The poem above is entitled, *Redefining my Bodyhood.* It stands as an experiential and corporeal understanding of identity. It expresses how my body is embrangled in controlled, predetermined and external factors that is unconsciously internalized and out of my control. I suggest that the skin I was born in; linked to overarching macro social institutional proscriptions of gender, race and class, transfuses my identity. I trace within the poem a physical manifestation of my emotional realization or awakening. Each tattoo marks an emotional milestone in my life and an invented re-scripting of the social codes thrust upon me. I embody- a patterning, decoration or configuration that I control and which does not control me. Initially, my very first tattoos on my wrists came about as a means to reclaim my body. This was an unconscious response at the time when I was experiencing the trauma of having been raped. After those two initial small tattoos, the purpose for my body art became a vested interest in the self as my personal celebration of living and a representation of my ink-evolution. The trauma my body had endured made for me perceive my body as grotesque and tainted. Tattooing was a way of me re-imagining my definition of muliebrity. This was a remaking upon the body; and a making visual of an embodied narrative. In essence, this came to be a performance of memory upon my skin.

The need to theorise personal experience and performativity as well as the intersectionality of site, location and personal identity is characteristic of Cape Town-born, South African artist Berni Searle's work. Searle works with video, film and photography in her production of installations which express narratives relating to memory, place and history. I drew on two Master's theses to better understand Searle's body of work. Adelé Adendorff's (2005) Master's dissertation in visual studies titled, *Nomadic figurations of identity on the work of Berni Searle* focuses on Searle's search for alternative figurations of identity. In line with this, Emma Taggart's (2007) field of study was, fine art and she produced a Master's dissertation titled, *Corporeal identification in selected works by Berni Searle.*

Both theses respectively, highlight that Searle's body is her artistic tool in her act of reclamation. The subjective is considered symbolically and physically through Searle's visual exploration of her body and her identity; perceiving identity as a category as inadequate because it does not chronicle individuals of mixed heritage. Therefore, Searle's work strives to locate herself and the marginalized subjectivities within the framework of post-Apartheid South Africa. Identity is put forth as fluid and possessing a quality of mutability which is hidden in the nooks and crannies of dichotomies (Adendorff, 2005: 4-5). Searle's art may also be perceived as forms of play in the form of multiple medias- visual, corporeal and spatial -- which, at first glance, are visual descriptors but, through analysis, these become constitutive. This is the same as how the locatedness of friendship as a transmitted form of making a narrative became embodied through research within this thesis and amongst 'young women' as participants within and beyond this study.

Richa Nagar's (2006) *Playing with Fire*: *A collective journey across borders* inspired me to feel my way forward and to 'wear my heart on my skin' to make myself as vulnerable to the study as my participants were (2006: 22). In order to avoid the subject-object relationship (Ben-Zeev, 1989; Gallagher, 1992; Hamilton, 1999), I drew on Nagar's methodological success in *Playing with fire* (2004). *Sangtin.* Awadhi means "solidarity, of reciprocity, of enduring friendship among women" (Nagar, 2006: xxiii). In many ways, this study over the three-year period has shown me the invaluable richness and depth that results from truly valuing others' knowledge.
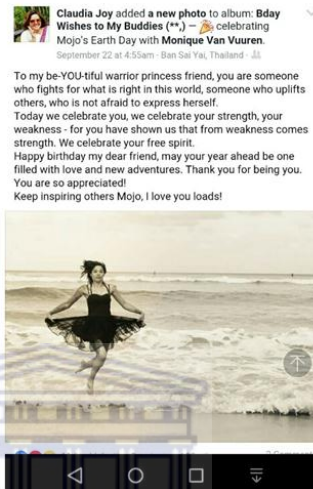
Aside: (left): a Facebook group post of the 19th of May 2014, at 1:30 am. We delved into exploring and expressing self-representation at our group photo shoot. (right): in 2016 a stronger sense of group solidarity emerged- compassionate well wishes celebrating Reneé's birthday in January this year was expressed by CJ and again, she extended well wishes, on my birthday, in September.

Claudia Joy with **Reneé Titus**.

30 Jan at 11:18am •

A very happy birthday to the funkiest chick I know and met at this photoshoot, **Reneé Titus**, blessings on your birthday... I should have known you are an Aquarius, coz no one do how we do... Lol! Mwah.. Better put on a pair of shades hun, because your year ahead is going to be a bright one!👇💯😁👆

Aside: a screenshot of CJ's post to Reneé's Facebook timeline on the 30th of January, 2015 at 11:18am. CJ tailor-made this for Reneé from a photo of our group shoot, expressing a compassionate amity.

Claudia Joy added **a new photo** to album: Bday
Wishes to My Buddies (**,) — 🎉 celebrating
Mojo's Earth Day with **Monique Van Vuuren**.

September 22 at 4:55am · Ban Sai Yai, Thailand · 👥

To my be-YOU-tiful warrior princess friend, you are someone
who fights for what is right in this world, someone who uplifts
others, who is not afraid to express herself.
Today we celebrate you, we celebrate your strength, your
weakness - for you have shown us that from weakness comes
strength. We celebrate your free spirit.
Happy birthday my dear friend, may your year ahead be one
filled with love and new adventures. Thank you for being you.
You are so appreciated!
Keep inspiring others Mojo, I love you loads!

Aside: CJ used one of the photographs taken at our group photo shoot and customized this birthday message which she tagged me in, on the 22nd of September 2016 at 4:55am in her Facebook mobile uploads album on, Facebook. Therewith archiving the memory which she created, for both of us to share and reminisce upon, later in life.

Influenced by Nagar (2006), the journey of moving across the borders of social spaces and institutions became a priority for me as I struggled to achieve her objective in her work with others. I resonate with Nagar's objective to trace her embeddedness alongside her participant's in a shared journey of research through narrative she presents as memoir, autoethnography and manifesto (Nagar, 2006: 107-108). She explains that participants and researcher collaboratively explore duty, desire and the politics of interdeterminacy: "[w]e mix and blur creative, academic, and journalistic writing to critically explore […] interrelationships among women's empowerment […] and the politics of knowledge production" (Nagar, 2006: 22). Nagar outlines strategies that are available to reimagine, recreate and reclaim: "previously colonized and appropriated knowledges" (2006: 108). Nagar's delineated self-moderating process aligns with my interest in young women's unique forms of knowing and resisting authoritarianism (Nagar, 2006: 22). The year, 2016 was a significant one for the course of my study because CJ and Reneé both left South Africa. No longer able to touch base physically, I was therefore prompted to start posting in our Facebook group again. After almost a year of being inactive on our Facebook group,

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engaging instead directly with each other via Facebook messenger/chat or privately via Whatsapp or Instagram, I felt a deep sense of gratitude to the group for that they contributed over the years. I see how much we have shared and how much my participants have allowed me to grow. Their open-mindedness enabled me to truly embrace an exploratory study.
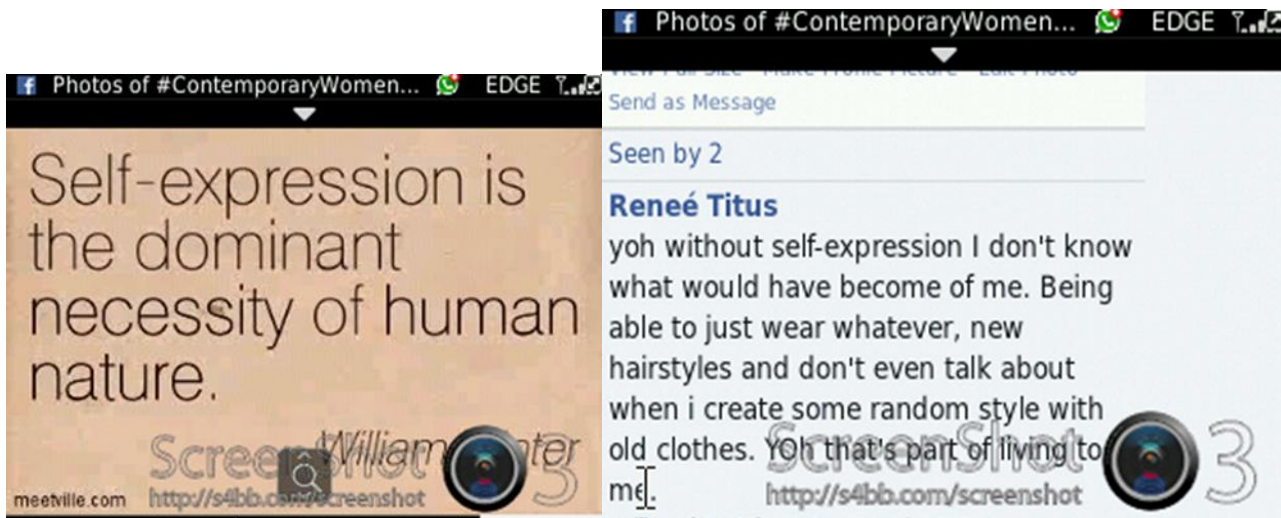
 Aside (left): posted on our Facebook group on, the 10ᵗʰ of July 2012 at 11:24 am. (Right): posted on our Facebook group on the 12ᵗʰ of July 2012 at 13:08.

The screenshot above left- stands as a testament to the opportunity of growth that my participants and this study have afforded me. I have in grown leaps and bounds from what started as a text-book approach to research (setting deadlines in an imposing way). My tone and structure in the image, to me now, is authoritative. This image elicits a memory of me being a fresh-faced student, unknowingly imposing a top-down approach to my study. The screenshot on the right- is proof of my attempt to engage in an informal tone and look at nicknames as a conversation starter and icebreaker. It was the year of 2012 when I got my feelers out and started to throw myself into fieldwork.
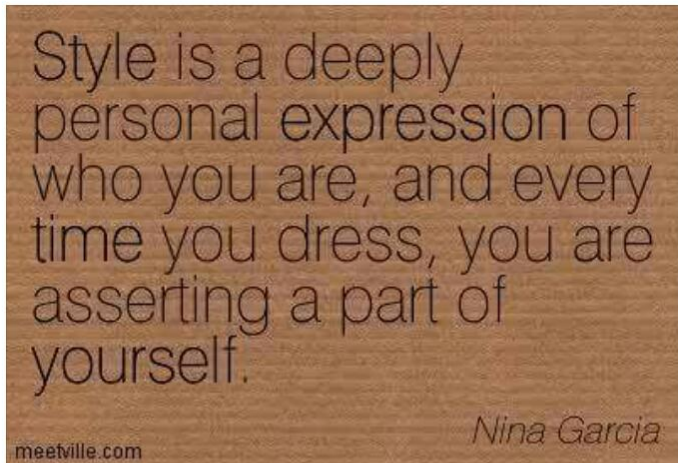
Aside (left): posted on the 6th of July, 2014 at 11:55pm in our Facebook group. (Right): posted on the 7th of July 2014 at 16:32pm in our Facebook group.

The screenshots above were posted on our Facebook group two years later, on the 6th of July 2014. In 2013, I officially started my data-collection and I took a different approach to my initial style of communication. Instead of expressing wordy statuses, I opted to post picture quotes and then explored Reneé, CJ and Melissa's thoughts around the images. This allowed me to be less imposing and allow a space for their voices to be amplified. It became a fun way of opening up a conversation rather than mechanically collecting data. Below is a screenshot of more of our Facebook group interaction. This was a year later in 2014. Reneé articulated even more of herself and it became evident that a strong sense of group solidarity started to emerge (see below).

Style is a deeply personal expression of who you are, and every time you dress, you are asserting a part of yourself.

— Nina Garcia

meetville.com

👍 Like   💬 Comment

👍 **Reneé Titus**

Seen by 2

Reneé Titus
That's how we do.
Unlike · 👍 1 · More · May 19, 2014

Monique Van Vuuren
yes, I feel the same. as I get older the more at peace I feel with myself. I think that my style has a lot to do with how I feel. I experiment but overall, I think I have a specific style which I like. I steer towards a grunge look. I used to be super femme and matchy-matchy just before high school and during high school years. when I felt darker, that marked a significant change in my personal style, choice and expression of self. as my body changes, fluctating weight gain, weight loss, weight loss; also plays a role in the kinds of clothes I choose.
Like · More · May 19, 2014

Unlike · 👍 1 · More · May 19, 2014

Reneé Titus
Sometimes I like to put on a show, more for myself than others but other times I do me in track pants and T's. That's just how I do. Free to be who I am with no restictions. Those days where I cared about what people think are long gone. Now I just do me.
Unlike · 👍 1 · More · May 19, 2014

Above are screenshots illustrating a further shift from formalities. This is when I started to open myself up increasingly to where the interactions led. I had to become less focused on analyzing, coding and manipulating data to suit my needs and I allowed the exploratory process to happen as organically as possible. Later on, I followed up in person, over breakfast at a coffee shop, on Reneé's conception of style and how it relates to her self-representation. She shared that:

"When I was a child I had no choice in how I dressed 'cause my mother dressed me but as soon as I was a teen I just did my own thing. I would cut up my clothes and make improvements to it to make me more comfortable. I soma use to tie dye my jeans and be the only one with a jean like that because it was my creation. I was more of a introvert back in the day. Today people won't believe that I was like that" **Reneé** (13th of November 2015, 12:23, Café Classique, Westgate).

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Similarly, CJ and Melissa interacted with each other on Facebook In 2014, and not via our Facebook group, CJ commented directly onto one of Melissa's mobile uploads and this is depicted below.

Above (left): Melissa uploaded this pic of herself on Facebook as a profile pic, on the 7th of August 2015 . Above (right): a screenshot capturing CJ's commenting on Melissa's photo on the same day-: **"free like a bird".** I liked this interaction. Literally, clicked 'like' on Facebook. This was not done via interviewing methodology, this was just free-flow interaction I came across in my Facebook newsfeed.

Practicing creative collaborative social science: amending feminist in-depth interviewing

Traditionally, the practice of feminist in-depth interviewing highlights awareness of the nature of one's own relationship to those being interviewed. The types of interviewing runs along a continuum from informal to formal. Initially, I set out to conduct semi-unstructured interviews aligned with an interview guide of a purposive sampling (Hesse-Biber, 2007). After I drafted my plan in my mind's eye, I started to become acquainted with the women on social media. It then became clear that I needed to draw on Richa Nagar's (2014) approach to deconstructing the meaning-making process of traditional in-depth interviewing practice.

I became conscious of the depth of a vocabulary that was not purely academic through a methodological stance that granted me access to what was detailed and personal. I also learned to think about how knowledge is produced collaboratively and through communication.

Nagar describes this as a "collectively produced methodology in which autobiographical writing and discussions of that writing became tools through which we built our analysis and critique of societal structures and processes, ranging from the very personal to the global" (Nagar, 2006: 28). Nagar's blending of narrative based on standpoint knowledge as well as, methodological reflections are made possible through her insistence

upon engaging in intimate dialogue mediated through creative research methodology (Nagar, 2006: 22). I also had to be aware of what Nagar calls a "Blended but Fractured 'We' (2006: 35)". I had to become aware of this because I wanted to strive to begin to develop a responsible and ethical study which crosses socio-political and institutional boundaries. My journey with my participants did not lead us to agree about, for example, exactly what commodity culture means or how we engage with mainstream fashion. However, it did allow us to interact dialogically and express shared feelings and perceptions. This ranged from anger to pain, fear and joy. These emotions, we often realized, were vital to our making sense of our worlds and our embodied selves. Consequently, our varying "[…] accounts became the starting points for interrogating different meanings of […] privilege, oppression and for analyzing the personal dynamics in the autobiographers' own lives" (Nagar, 2006: 35). Engaging in self-reflection became a proactive tool for participants to engage with self-knowledge in performing as political subjects within the framework of the study.

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

Flower-Child
(noun)

: a young person, especially a hippie, rejecting conventional society and advocating love, peace, and simple, idealistic values.

Aside: Melissa's, Facebook profile picture uploaded on the 11th of December 2013.

"I'm like very hippy" –Melissa (26th of July 2013, 13:49 pm, Whatsapp).

Melissa's personality reflects her deep love and appreciation for nature. Her lifestyle choice, to live as a vegetarian, represents her love for trees, nature and animals. Her leg tattoo is a tree of life, which is telling of her belief that we as humans should embrace all living beings with compassion and appreciation of the circle of life. She believes that, through earthing or grounding, one can make direct, physical contact with the human body to the surface of the earth. She believes in having her body grounded but her consciousness high. This means that it is directed towards the sky.
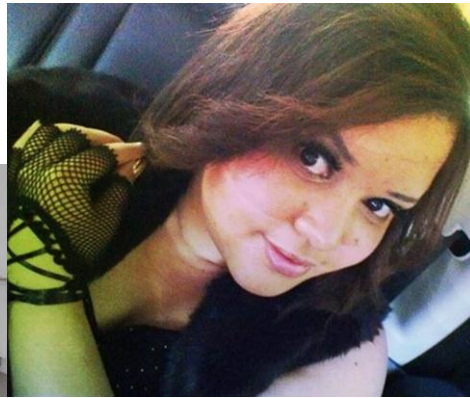
Aside: CJ uploaded on Facebook on, the 13th of December, 2013.

The images above illustrates CJ's inclination to tap into drama for liberation. The adaptation of drama as an outlet for self-expression, in the everyday frivolities of self-representation, is a significant marker of young women's self-expression. The shift in the philosophical understanding of drama, from formal stage performance to using the body in personal space conveys CJ's re-purposing of drama as lived experiences. To me, this conveys how young women creatively resist orthodox or common conventions by creating a space in the everyday for self-liberatory acts of representation. CJ is interested in activating a youthful vitality around creative self-expression as a gateway to accessing citizenship. Her youthful approach to incorporating dramatic self-expression in her life, to me, represents how [young] women's creative exploration of self-expression reflects a search for new promise and potential.

CJ is, **"wanderlust plagued, and a believer in love and peace"- CJ** (04th of August 2016, 16: 52, Whatsapp).

Furthermore, believing that humility can transcend the hard lines of race, class, nation and gender differences, CJ believes that her country is the earth. She also firmly believes that she is a citizen of the world and that one race exists: that being which is humanity. These ideas expressed by CJ can be defined as both esoteric and solipsistic within conventional academic context but, it is also significant in illustrating young women's unique articulation of knowing and resisting authoritarianism.
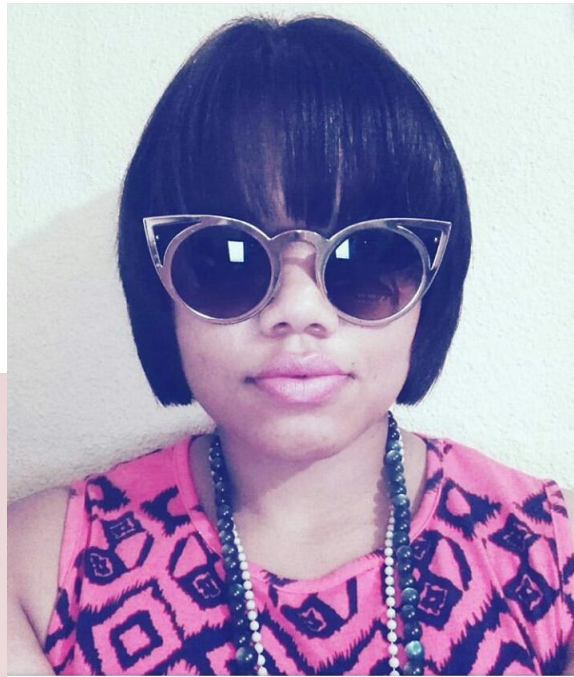
Above: (left): (https://goo.gl/images/vyWIKY). Above (right): Reneé, posted on Facebook on the 26th of August 2016.

Reneé is a woman who embodies feminism and that which is revolutionary. Her personality is a reflection of the belief that one cannot separate feminism and being a revolutionary from a profoundly personal exploration of one's lived experience.
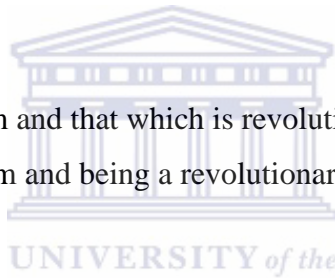
Together, we engaged in conversation, unpacking our differences and discovering ways to discover our shared beliefs. We spoke of our favourite music, scents, nicknames, and colours. We then progressively started scratching beyond the surface and shared stories of our childhoods, insecurities, fears, dreams and aspirations.

Mapping my own path: my researcher-participant position

In striving to map my own path as a social science researcher, I began by asking myself something that Kamala Visweswaran, has contemplated about the ways that a female ethnographer can confront her biases in representing her participants' struggle for self-representation: "[…] can I be accountable to people's own struggles for self-representation and self-determination" (Visweswaran, cited in Nagar, 2006: Introduction). Thereafter, I drew on Adrienne Rich's (1972) *When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision*, in which she expresses her reveling in being alive in an era of women's awakening consciousness. Rich articulates that this era is also disorienting for women because we are required to go outside of the boundaries defined for us by

common culture in order to define and claim our own voice (1972: 18-19). In, *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978* she writes:

> "[r]e-vision- the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction- is for woman more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society" (1972: 18).

The late twentieth-century essay by American feminist Adrienne Rich discusses concepts needed by women writers at the time to enable them to deconstruct patriarchal conditioning within literary aesthetics and history. Despite this, I found it helpful to incorporate Rich's (1972) conception of re-visioning in order to rename the aspects of women's experience (here, the expression of citizenship) which has traditionally been distorted by an overwhelmingly patriarchal point of view. Rich has discussed the need for women to engage in critical self-reflection in order to review the macro socio-cultural institutions and male prerogative which attaches to the political ordering of our lives.
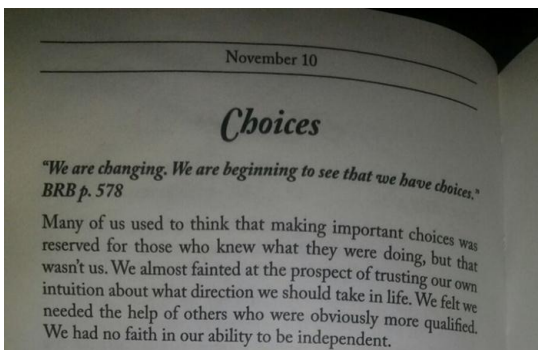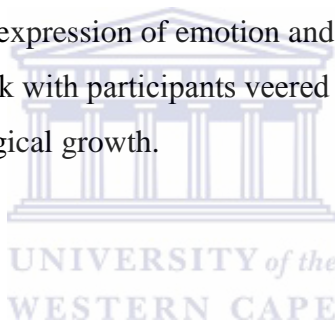
Compassion in social science

Tami Spry is a Professor of Performance Studies and she has, presented humane and beneficent texts on embodiment, autoethnography and performative writing as methodological praxis. Spry's (2001: 727) conception, that "critical self-reflexive analysis of my own experience of dissonance and discovery with others", as well as the fact that "reality is always and already a social construction", are two concerns that were important to my deepening consciousness of my emotional involvement in my methodological exploration. Susan Hekman, a Foucauldian feminist scholar, argues that in the pursuit of objective knowledge as prescribed by the forerunners of enlightenment thought, "women cannot be the subjects they also cannot be actors in the social scene. Women who cannot act cannot create a social life, they cannot constitute knowledge or reality" (Hekman, 2010: 95). Hekman discusses that Enlightnment-thought dictated that women were incapable of embodying subjectivity. It was important for me to resist what Harding terms as, "science as usual" (1991: 1) paradigm, and to turn my focus instead on the challenge of feeling. This has been described as a possibility in the following way by Kirsten Blakely:

> "Suppose we turn the focus inward […] suppose that we feel the research instead of just thinking it? For some this might be difficult to imagine, given the emphasis on detachment and not feeling in the dominant research methods of the social sciences" (Campbell & Wasco, cited in Blakely, 2007:3).

Blakely (2007) proposes that this might be something that people are already doing or have done, whether consciously or not. Traditionally, in research, the separation of the rational and the emotional is artificial; something that is not grounded in everyday experience but that has been useful in maintaining traditional patriarchal science.

It was vital for me to be aware of the emotional-rational binary and not reproduce it. According to Deutsch, (2008) "[…] empathy [as methodology] is important to understanding and reacting to historical processes. Empathy must combine both intellectual and emotional response, and must come from active engagement in thinking about people" (2008:1). Empathy is a prerequisite in research which aims to be ethically steadfast. Harrison (2000) argues that awareness of our emotional reaction to our environments, and how we act upon those emotions, is helpful because when we distrust emotions we disregard the very way we connect with the world.

Jane Ritchie et al, explores qualitative research practice and encourages researchers to engage in an exercise of "writing from ourselves" so that we become "fully present in our work; more honest and more engaged" (2003: 3-11). As discussed later in this study, the expression of emotion and an attentiveness to the emotions are crucial to "hearing" others voices. My work with participants veered increasingly towards our collective reflections on our emotional and psychological growth.

November 10

Choices

"We are changing. We are beginning to see that we have choices."
BRB p. 578

Many of us used to think that making important choices was reserved for those who knew what they were doing, but that wasn't us. We almost fainted at the prospect of trusting our own intuition about what direction we should take in life. We felt we needed the help of others who were obviously more qualified. We had no faith in our ability to be independent.

"We find that creativity that comes from exploration nurtures our souls and helps us to live more fully. We are finally happy being ourselves and would not trade our lives with anyone else" In, *Daily Meditations* Nov 10 (1991) http://m.facebook.com sent to me, by Reneé. Picture and quote shared with me via WhatsApp by Reneé (22nd of November2015, 12:00, Whatsapp).

Reneé: **"Self-love is about, doing it for myself. Sometimes people do it for themselves but do they actually really take the time to feel it? I made the choice to marry myself first"** (13th of November 2015, 12:00, Café Classique, Westgate).

Lorde speaks of change equating to growth in the words: "Growth can be painful. But we sharpen self-definition by exposing the self in work and struggle together with those whom we define as different from

ourselves, although sharing the same goals. For Black and white, old and young, lesbian… heterosexual [and bisexual] women alike, this can mean new paths to our survival" (1984: 123). The fact that feminist research and methodologies/ epistemologies evoke a deep consciousness of the centrality of the personal is an important notion to keep in consideration. Connecting the personal to the political meant that our collective biographical memory work allowed us to critically unearth memories- through pictures (Haug, 1992; Small, 1999; Bryant, 2007). This was done alongside exploratory-participatory reflective journal writing via what I can best describe as digital portholes. Here, the journal writing took on a new form, as displayed by the above image, in the creative exchange of personal information.

The creative exchange of personal information can be understood as the tracing of a collective journey of growth. The digitized portholes and snapshots of performances of selfhood reveal our understanding of self-love in order to transcend various constraints. Through our expressions of bodyhood, we begin to unravel the ropes of gender as a constraint. We began to characterize "becoming" as performing subjects.

Aside: (screenshot taken on 01st of November 2016, at 11:15): scrolling through Instagram I came across this immediately, I resonated with the message.

The image above speaks to what makes self-love, radical. Once we collectively realize that we are worth saving, and that lives are worth living, we will no longer be governable. It is at this point that we will be truly empowered to break through the prisons that have been built around us. My shared perception with Hook is that this 'empowerment' "is not in a wishy-washy non-profit kinda way, but in a truly powerful, smash-the-motherfucking-patriarchy kinda way" (hooks, 2013: 25). Echoing hooks' conception, Naomi Wolf asserts: "[…] a consequence of female self-love is that the woman grows convinced of social worth. Her love for her body will be unqualified, which is the basis of female identification. If a woman loves her own body, she doesn't grudge what other women do with theirs; if she loves femaleness, she champions its rights […]" (Wolf, 2013: 145). It is important to emphasize that self-love is a revolutionary offshoot of self-care.

Aside: a screenshot of a Facebook post by a page I subscribe to which was posted on the 27th of June 2016, 11:07am, *The Artidote,* Facebook.

The image above is what I found when I was randomly scrolling down my Facebook newsfeed which was part of the object biography we shared as participants. We take a radical stand by embracing self-love. It is imperative to our igniting of our imagined versions of freedom and democracy. It cannot be narrowed down as merely a 'buzzword' associated with self-care[9]. Rather, it must be understood as a deep refusal of imposed and prescribed ways of being and a radical effort to see, share and celebrate the self. In this sense, our explorations of feelings and our shared quest for self-love echoes the views of Gala Darling (2015), whose book *Radical Self-Love: A Guide to Loving Yourself and Living Your Dreams* expresses that radical self-love started in her bedroom and became a worldwide movement of inspiring women to fall in love with themselves.

The female body can be perceived as potentially grotesque, dangerous, hypersexualised and objectified but, at the same time it can stand to represent a site of powerful resistance to patriarchy. The female body can be perceived as a vehicle of defiance to deference. A young woman's body can be recreated through choosing to unconditionally accept her body and herself. A young woman's terms of choice is mediated by radical self-love, in an effort to break away from authoritarian regimes and institutions. A young woman homes-in on the spirit of

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[9] Self-care is a form of self-love and resistance. "In the activist community, the word *self-care* is thrown around in a sea of other buzzwords, like *radical, trauma, violence* and *patriarchy.* [It means, to] [i]ntentionally caring for your well-being and making attempts to love yourself despite insults and dangers against your being is a radical act" (Anderson, 2015: 1), see: www.stanforddaily.com/2015/05/21/self-care-is-resistance.

neoliberalism to mobilize and materialize a post-modern spatiality; in an effort to transcend predetermined -isms such as, class and particularly, race.

CJ:

"Race - to me this is not a big thing, I see everyone as my equal - be it black, white, indian or coloured - I am more interested in the culture of others - what I can learn from them. I still have so much more to learn, and that what life is about. The continuation of education; respect from human to human. Lack of selfishness and egoism" (23rd of July, 2013, 19:05, Whatsapp).

Melissa:

"Race, it's got so much to it. No one's the same yet I think 'cos of our colour and background and how we were brought up in our homes, race does play a part to who we are and how we think and puts us in boxes. It doesn't affect my life too much. I have friends of all kinds of races and religions and so forth. The only thing that bothers me is how some treat people differently 'cos of their skin colour but, that's where the boxes come in. We assume things about one another. If you're boxed as white, then the assumption is that, you have money, if you're boxed as black, then it's assumed that, you are poor. Or, whatever you were brainwashed to believe" (3rd of June 2014, 18:23, Whatsapp).

Recreating democracy imaginatively

According to Kate Barclay and Sarah Richardson (2013) performance can be seen as politically empowering for women. Rebelling can take the form of performance that refuses the social, political and cultural constraints of their every-day, lived experiences. Barclay and Richardson (2013) articulate that, writing has commonly been interpreted as a 'representational' form reflecting the self but not, actually constituting it. The authors argue that, increasingly, theories of performativity challenge this interpretation. As with a physical performance, the expression of writing should not be considered primary or fundamental. This is particularly significant as the verbalized expressions of participants in this study are not separate from other forms of expression such as how we present ourselves in the world, our visual images of ourselves.

The integration of written expression with embodied expression throughout this study is a reflection of the self, which defies the dualisms that usually hierarchize the body and the mind. It is also significant that the participants' self-invention and performativity through writing, visuality and various forms of "body talk" also refuses the artificial synthesis that is usually associated with social identities. As revealed in the previous

chapter, the young women participants often revel in a sense of fragmentation, dispersal, and incompleteness. This is reflected in CJ's post below:

Claudia Joy
14 Apr 2012 at 11:06am

Yes I have lots of tattoos and piercings, and u probably think some kind of demonic person... But I'm not, I am a person who is not afraid to express my individuality and wearing the "Me" lable with pride. If u r proud to be u, repost this

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ➤ Share

The image above posted by CJ on Facebook stands as CJ's public declaration of expressing her self-definition of the meaning of her body politic which speaks to anyone who may wish to copy and paste the Facebook status. This develops a distinctive form of political association and mobilisation. Her response here is similar to Reneé's more clear-cut observations of her identification and her ultimate embracing of a compound self. Reneé's energetic play with identities, as revealed in her selfies, are therefore conveyed in text that is similar to Claudia's refusal of binaries and fixed identities:

"[People perceive me as] a coloured girl who comes from Mitchell's Plain but, my family is actually mixed, *soma lekka*.

My father comes from Bophuthatswana. Apparently my great-great grandfather was an English man and he married a Tswana woman and that's where it started. Then my grandfather married a black woman, not sure which culture she was from but I know it's not Tswana. But that side my family's first language is Tswana. My parents never spoke their home language with me which was Afrikaans and Tswana because they didn't think it would get me far in life. English was our first and only language for a long time in my house.

So for the most part I'm black but not clear cut for some 'cause I'm light skinned but then to others my hips and light skin speak to the Tswana nature. I think if I was able to speak the language I would have led a different life, to some extent.

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I believe I am black, it might have taken some mixing and because I come from Africa. My blackness comes from the way my blood has been mixed and I'm cool with that (if you put all the right flavours in a pot of food then you will have a *lekka* pot) and that's how I feel about who I am in the world. A *lekka potchie* made in Africa. I think this is crucial in accepting one's roots and understanding that love runs deeper than the colour of one's skin or culture that one comes from. However, in South Africa this is still a touchy subject after apartheid. My nickname [queen gabby] is a reminder that, I am the Queen of my life story" (15 July 2014, 20:32, Whatsapp).

It is noteworthy that Rene's proud insistence of hybridization speaks much more convincingly about the 'rainbow' metaphor that is meant to be central to contemporary South African democracy. Just like a rainbow, the South African multi-racial diversity is symbolic of a kaleidoscope of colours. Elaine Salo, Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations and of Women and Gender Studies has written widely on gender, identity and patriarchy.

Salo's (2009) work on the negotiation of personhood in post-Apartheid South Africa, prompts us to ruminate on the relationship between gender and temporality as these factors influence the meaning-making process and experience in the everyday. Post-Apartheid South Africa continues to be underpinned by deep fractures of race and ethnicity and it seems to be outside of official, party-driven or state-orchestrated discourse that democracy is imagined most forcefully (Salo, 2009).

It is also significant that Reneé's argument seeks to echo Zimitri Erasmus' effort to identify and name "colouredness" without falling back on essentialist categories. Zimitri Erasmus's (2001) *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town* reiterates the legacy of the 'coloured' positioning which demands acknowledgement of complicity "on the part of those historically classified coloured in the exclusion of and disrespect for black Africans. For many coloured people this complicity has meant a disassociation from all things African. However, with the construction of whiteness having been a colonial project, discriminatory and racist, the ethical imperative – necessary participation in a liberatory project – is that of affiliation with Africa" (2001: 7). In line with this, Elaine Salo's (2003) case study considered women's experiences on the Cape Flats within the scope of a post-Apartheid citizenship and what it meant for women living on the periphery of Cape Town. Reneé deconstructs the traditional association of 'colouredness', and a new meaning that speaks to a deeper engagement with citizenship through her performance, of an embodied self and speaks? through her verbal self-narrative.

Sarah Nuttal, Professor of Literary and Cultural Studies, has explored how entangled the urban environment is embodied in the stylizing of the self. She articulated the need to reformulate the way the local and global intersect in South Africa to understand the innovative and often still unchartered borderlands in which youth

cultures give voice to imaginative worlds for envisioning identities very different from those of a previous generation (Nuttal, 2004). Popular culture replaces church, family and neighborhood as the primary site where racial identities are forged. The criteria that define bodies, clothing, and culture as 'white', 'coloured' or 'black' are not constant but shifting as fashion and music tastes as well as city sites, undergo a series of metamorphoses. This is how South African women a part of this study define a sense of self in the 'new' South Africa. Moreover, in order to further understand what difference means or does in the present, I draw on the insights of Lynda Spencer and Pumla Gqola respectively.

Scholar Lynda Spencer 's areas of expertise include contemporary women's writing and popular modes of representation and interpretation in local cultural forms. Spencer proposes that a new, particular kind of young woman who occupies a very distinctive position emerges in the contemporary cultural plane of post-Apartheid South Africa (Spencer, 2009). This young woman is one who grows up with an intersectionality between cultures which fashions her sense of identity based on new forms of affiliation. In line with this gender and media focus, Pumla Gqola, is a Professor and feminist scholar who has published widely on women, patriarchy, gender politics and citizenship of post-Apartheid South Africa. She highlights that women's agency is embedded in a new, starkly different political practice which is rarely acknowledged as an active citizenship. This is based on the fact that that this new citizenship entails a personal relationship of individual experiences of struggles on a day to day basis which contravenes the traditional definition of citizenship (Gqola, 2001).

Apart from their visual responses to race, responses that often echo Sarah Nutall's (2004) claims about a post-Apartheid generation seeking to undo entrenched boundaries, my participant's often articulate two central strands in thinking about race among young South Africans. One is a disavowal of race's relevance: a belief that post-Apartheid South Africa creates opportunities for freely embracing and mixing whatever identities one chooses. While this might be thought to be naïve and a-political, it may suggest a passionately utopian desire for new worlds. The other trend, marked by the belief that, despite formal changes, race categories continue to structure San identities and relationships, also surfaced among participants. This Anticipates and echoes student #FeesMustFall (FMF) protests in the last two years.

Chapter Three:

Standpoint knowledge, creativity, and self-representation

This chapter focuses on how young women are responding to different kinds of oppressive messages. These include, but are not limited to, the authority of formal political participation, dominant discourses of femininity and gender and consumer capitalism. The chapter is concerned with identifying the range of young women's oppositional and restless responses in embodied and psychological ways. As will be showing, these often transcend, or complicatedly respond to, forms of oppression that are often neatly labeled (and therefore simplified) in research. My aim is therefore to describe and analyze the various neglected or trivialized ways in which many young women speak back to the overwhelming messages that seek to define them as silent or as the objects of others' patriarchal, capitalist or authoritarian inscription. Overall, young women's determination to pursue potential avenues for subversion and make the body and self-speak are what I am concerned with in this study.

Within me resides a deep-seated feeling of discontent that I believe I share with many of my participants, as well as many women who confront multiple forms in neo-colonial and ostensibly 'democratic' contexts. I am therefore drawn to feminist writers such as University of Witwatersrand academic, Danai Mupotsa. Her scholarly expertise includes the fields of Humanities and Gender Studies.

Mupotsa attempts to "articulate an unnamable rage within" which gives shape to a particular form of research ethics (2008: 97). A politics of rage requires the researcher to recover buried sites and forms of knowledge production by being open to and participating in sites of a knowledge making outside of institutionalized realms. These suppressed expressions and sources of knowledge provide unique perspectives on what Mupotsa terms: "the core of the messy, rotting world within which we live" (Mupotsa, 2008: 104). Mupotsa describes the unavoidable intersectional reality of, life. It was important for me to hone in on practicing social science from a standpoint of women in order to engage with standpoint theory as a site of political debate.

Feminists have long sought to explore knowledge around the value of, "standpoint". Feminist standpoint theory[10] highlights the importance of understanding society through the lens of women's experiences. Recent discussions of standpoint theorizing have increasingly focused on how particular groups of women, in line with, race and class, are distinctively situated and therefore develop different vantage points and standpoint knowledges. Patricia Hill Collins, a distinguished Professor of Sociology. As a social theorist she has widely examined issues of race, gender and class. Hill Collins's (1990) identifies a 'matrix of domination' as the

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[10] Term coined by American feminist Sandra Harding (2004), categorizing epistemologies emphasizing women's knowledge.

inscribed connectivity of oppressive social categories which includes race, class and gender. The fluidity of oppression affects multiple locations that inform in particular, women's standpoint knowledges.

Current understandings of feminist standpoints have also expanded on earlier views about what knowledge can entail. Abigail Brooks, Assistant Professor Director of the Women's Studies Program at Providence College has explored how knowledge and empowerment can be built through women's lived experiences. She indicates that what comprises women's experience has shifted fundamentally in the discursive practices of feminism in recent years (Brooks, 2007). Standpoint knowledge, or the acquiring of knowledge through the lived experiences of who are marginalized, in this study is explored as an offshoot of creativity and self-representation as mediated and integrated by memory-work[11]; as a performative, aesthetic expression of selfhood. Essentially, memories are linked to our lived experiences of the every-day. Memories are the arena that houses our performances of bodyhood, self-definition, creativity and ignited imagination (Nandy, 2015). I drew on Maria Jansson, Maria Wendt and Cecillia Åse's (2008) work entitled, *Memory Work Reconsidered,* which assisted in my understanding of the epistemological status of memories of deeply entrenched and naturalized power structures such as gender and national or communal belonging. These elements are germane to this study. The authors' assisted with my understanding of how different interpretative modes and practices in memory work can make way for comprehension and interpretations that are usually marginalized in conventional understandings of rational or legitimate knowledge-making[12].

In the course of considering how to position my participants differently, and how to avoid drowning out their perspectives, I started paying special attention to how young women's experiences are connected to their recollections of themselves, their immediate communities and their locations within the nation. Rather than seeing memory as simply composed of random elements of purely personal experience, I increasingly began to see the key significance of memory work to participants' interpretive understandings of both pasts and presents. Within these memories, they recalled a sense of pasts and presents in which they were situated in broader systems, relationships, and communities. My exploration of their "standpoint knowledges" has therefore turned to a combination of memory-work, contemporary feminist art theory, and creative methodology.

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[11] Developed in Germany by Frigga Haug. Progressively used later on, to challenge mainstream, conventional- research practices (Onyx and Small, 2001). Also see: Frigga Haug (2009) "memory work".

[12] See also: Niamh Stephenson (2003) *Living history, undoing linearity: memory-work as a research method in the social sciences.*

Claudia Joy with **Monique Van Vuuren**.
May 19, 2014 at 5:56pm · Facebook for BlackBerry ·

One is not born a woman, one becomes one. -Simone de Beauvoir

You and 1 other   3 Comments

Like   Comment   Share

Claudia Joy
I found it on Twitter straight after our chat, and I just had to share it!
Unlike · 1 · Reply

Aside: posted on the 19th of May 2014 at 17:56 pm on Facebook by CJ.

Above is a well-known quote amongst feminist circles. The screenshot is CJ's Facebook post which she tagged me in and represents a play on memory-work. CJ drew on our one-on-one conversation and continued the exploration and dialogue on her own via social media. This signaled to me that memory work reconsidered along the lines of a creative methodology is beneficial in opening up the flow of dialogue and broadening and deepening the exchange of knowledge amongst my participants and myself.

Moreover, the example above is indicative of how women often link a politics of rage to creativity and embodied knowledge. Too frequently, work on women and gender in South Africa is automatically associated with research that directly explores, for example, women's experiences of violation, their formal rights or their organized political participation. Far less attention is paid to how young women struggle to express their desires, sense of pleasures and hopes in ways that often have political underpinnings. As Mupotsa and Mhishi (2008) demonstrates, this area of research is often critiqued as being a frivolous, self-indulgent and irrelevant in terms of contributing definitively to the intellectual arena of development and 'serious' gender research. They show how so-called 'soft issues' pertaining to work on young women's gender and sexuality can be devalued.

In so doing, the authors also draw attention to a neglect of new forms of public engagement and political expression the views of Danai Mupotsa and Lennon Mhishi's, (2008) connect with my own interest in exploring freedoms for women more expansively. My previous chapter focused on the value of particular methodological approaches in exploring standpoint knowledges. This chapter deals mainly with the content of particular standpoint knowledges, and seeks to explore the creative, aesthetic, emotional and subversive meanings of these. I focus on three main areas, which describe the multiple and often playful ways in which women's agencies allows their bodies to speak. The three divisions are: "Body Talk", "Art Bodies" and "Selfies and Social Media Selves". These divisions are, in some ways, artificial since they reduce the connections among young women's subversive visual and written languages

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through creativity, representation, performance, and speech. However, the subheadings are used here to focus attention on platforms of expression that tend to be neglected as truly 'political', 'subversive' or relevant to serious research.

Body Talk and Self-Knowledge

The physical body can be perceived as possessing inherent knowledge of itself. In *Sexing the Body*, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Professor of Biology and Gender Studies investigated the development of scientific studies on sexuality and connects it to shaping social discourses on gender (2000). Dealing with the South African context, Nadia Sanger, an expert in the field of feminist theories and methodologies, describes the female body as a battleground (2009: 139). Global feminist literature has therefore concentrated on the pathologizing of women's bodies through "science", biological determinism and consumer capitalism. The pathologising of women's bodies under consumer culture meant that it was no longer science that systematically defined women's inferiority, but also commodity capitalism. Consumerism has pressurized women to accomplish beauty perfection through technology.

Nancy Chen, a Professor of Social Sciences and Helene Moglen, Professor Emeritia of Humanities, together explore cultural and psychoanalytic theories around the body. Chen and Moglen (2006) argue that the 21st century has marked a shift in how the female body is experienced. It is no longer the fixed entity it once was. It is now perceived as a project linked to technological, medical and artistic invention. Moreover, consumer capitalism has also positioned young women as the new consumer-citizens who are promised success through compliance.

Anita Harris, is a Research Professor specializing in issues of citizenship and globalization has captured in "Jamming Girl Culture: Young Women and Consumer Citizenship" (2004) how girls and young women negotiate unique feminist struggles in the context of consumer capitalism. Even though this research is based on the Australian context, I believe it has broader relevance in the context of global capitalism and many young women's locations within globalized media messages and mass consumption. Harris argues that:

> "The so-called 'individualisation and monetization of everyday life' has meant that key planks of
> citizenship, such as economic security and capacity for participation in civic life, are being eroded. Young
> people are newly obliged to create their own livelihood, and create their own opportunities for livelihood,
> and civic engagement is difficult to operationalize in the absence of robust structures for participation"
> (Harris, 2004: 163).

Although feminists have continued to stress how the female body is relentlessly inscribed by dominant messages, they have also identified its role in women's claiming of agency. As a leading feminist theorist on women and embodiment, Elizabeth Grosz argues that "the body […] exerts a recalcitrance, and always entrails the possibility of being self-marked, self-represented in alternative ways" (cited in Isaak, 1996: 195). Isaak's (1996) sentiment is translated in the unconditional acceptance of our bodies illustrated by my participants and I. Specifically, in our efforts to tap into and exhibit on social media often times, the recalcitrance we perform takes the shape of a rebellious self-love embedded in consciousness around authoritative control and overarching systems of power which usually operates invisibly and has power over our bodies. In developing Grosz' analysis of agency in relation to how women ambiguously respond to consumer capitalism, the notion of 'culture-jamming' is of key importance. Christine Harold, is a Communication Professor with expertise in rhetorical criticism. She explored the theme of pranking the rhetoric in culture jamming. Harold (2004) describes culture jamming as a form of activism or rhetorical protest. As my discussion indicates, young women often encounter consumer culture (through prescribed fashion, models of femininity or complying with messages about what their bodies should look) in ironic, satirical or overtly subversive ways.

Below, is an example of how one participant engaged forcefully with the tools of consumer capitalism (as markers of prescribed femininity) available to young women consumers. A superficial reading of this participant's use of her body might conclude that she simply accepts 'the norm'. Taken together, however, all the images representing her use of dress and body adornment indicate subtle ways of unsettling dominant scripts for young women. In this way, she unsettles femininity in ways described by Anne Bridget Ryan (1997: 280) who writes that "femininity emerges as another point of entry to the multiplicity of feminist subjectivities". Ryan's conception and "acknowledgment of contradictions allows space for consideration of multiplicity and has the effect of lessening the explanatory power of discourses of a unitary gendered subject […]" (1997:280). Femininity, as perceived by Ryan, is significant because it relates to individual women's intricate performativity and embodied self-knowledge. She also highlights the ways in which fashion can work subversively. CJ has stated that:

"Life is about breaking our personal limits and outgrowing ourselves to live our best lives" –CJ, (08 October, 18:45, BBM) and this statement is echoed in the way she uses dress and self-styling. Dress, in this study is not simply fashion but a diverse and thoughtful use of signifiers on the body surface.

Aside is CJ's selfie (17 December, 2015, Facebook) she captioned: **#nailsonfleek #browsonfleek #makeuponfleek #loveme**

'On fleek' as used by CJ above means, nice, sweet and slick. The colloquial term is linked to popular culture and it is universally understood. The term was highlighted by *People* magazine in 2003 but popularity really gained momentum in 2014[13]. The popularity was evident in social media. A search done of the hash tagged "on fleek" usage via Instagram indicated more than 86,800 posts by 2014[14]. This indicates that CJ's performance of body talk is connected to a larger public dialogue and 're-visioned' (Rich, 1972) civic participation and voice, which revolves around freedom of expression and the imagination activated in the social media space.

Jo-Anne Finkelstein (1997) highlights the significance of making conscionable the political aspect embedded in fashion as individual dress style. Finkelstein expresses that, "[f]ashion is not just a vestimentary overlay, a guise of fabric and style which covers and thus rewrites and reshapes the body. Instead, it is a new way of speaking the body […] the garment is continuous with the body and it becomes a cultural expression (1997: 159)". This means that fashion is manifested as an extension of the self through the integrating of styling as a cultural resource. We exhibit implosions of self-discovery and explosions of symbolic representations of self-reflexivity through our narratives of bodyhood.

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[13] Web page article: *What Does "On Fleek" Mean? A Brief Timeline of the Phrase that No One Really Understands, But Everyone Keeps Saying Anyway",* by Olivia Muenter. Retrieved from, https://www.bustle.com/articles/559402-what-does-on-fleek-mean-a-brief-timeline-of-the-phrase-that-no-one-really-understands. Accessed on 25 July, 2015.

[14] Web page article: *What Does "On Fleek" Mean? A Brief Timeline of the Phrase that No One Really Understands, But Everyone Keeps Saying Anyway",* by Olivia Muenter. Retrieved from, https://www.bustle.com/articles/559402-what-does-on-fleek-mean-a-brief-timeline-of-the-phrase-that-no-one-really-understands. Accessed on 25 July, 2015.

Above, is a screenshot of an Instagram and Facebook post shared on the 20th of April 2015 by CJ, The image came about as, a reward for CJ's support of beauty boutique called Glam5 which she frequented to pamper herself by having her nails and eyebrows styled (captioned in the selfie before this one- above). Glam5 rewarded her support by thanking CJ with a beauty photo shoot. She was granted the opportunity to include her best friend in the experience of the photo shoot. The focal point(s) which CJ dialogues through hash tagging is the iconography- the red boxing gloves contrasted with her gold peace sign emblem chain, thereby honing in on 'girl power' to highlight that she is a warrior in her own life.
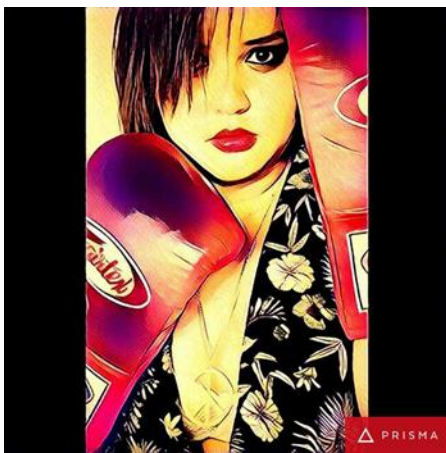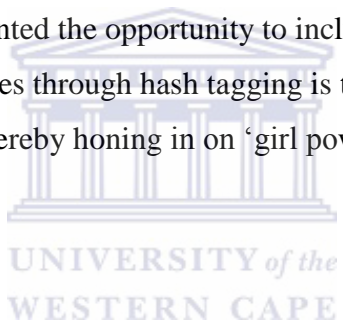
The image above is CJ's 2016 rendition of the photo shoot image above this one. She created this using *Prisma,* a photo-editing application, and shared it on Instagram and Facebook. This image and the one above it, illustrates a back and forth contestation between conforming and rebelling in response to the normative understandings of what it means to be a 'proper' woman or 'model' citizen[15]. Boxing gloves are usually associated with a masculine strength and a gold peace sign necklace worn with a flowery low-cut top is usually perceived as a display of femininity.

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[15] See also, Lewis et al (2013).

The image above is taken at the same shoot as the boxing gloves images posted on Facebook as CJ's profile picture on the 20th of April 2015 is contrasting to the image above this one- juxtaposing physical strength (the performance of boxing) with beauty and peace in a feminine way. The expressing of the dualistic nature of her self-representation, and also unpacking the hard-soft dualism, is not something only implicit in the ideology of strength within masculinity. In this image, CJ is pictured performing a softer femininity signaled through white lace- (traditionally associated with a wedding dress). In this instance, however, wearing it in a casual, informal manner and setting can be seen as an expression of her selfhood. She accessorizes with a flower headband, bangles, and hand-bracelet to convey a 'hippie' flower child message. She is opposing violence of oppressive messages through her display of femininity and, by so doing, she is advocating a nonviolent ethic. The image above captures a mirror-effect; CJ is pictured here physically exhibiting self-reflection. CJ shows that fashion and body talk can be a carefully arranged assemblage of clothing. Her message is of a complex defiance and self-awareness which is self-articulated through her dress. This becomes her politically-charged revisioned civic voice.

It is noteworthy that feminists have been very alert to the seductiveness of patriarchal consumerist messages. Showing how these messages position women oppressively in South Africa, Nadia Sanger's (2009), *New women, old messages? Constructions of femininities, race and hypersexualised bodies in selected South African magazines, 2003-2006* emphasizes the ways in which these messages can effectively deeply erode women's self-esteem and positive body images.

Participants sometimes experimented subversively or ironically with consumer capitalism, and at others were openly critical of its power. One stated:

"I'm getting really sick of shallow people and their small-minded thinking. Just because I don't look like what the media says I must look like, I don't get the time of day. I get brushed off like vermin. Even in the trance scene, parties have become a dressing contest to see who is the hottest. If you're not, then you looked down on. It's a joke. What happened to going to have a spiritual journey and connect with people? It makes me sad and angry how some people have turned parties into one massive silly dressing-up bonanza. Not to generalize, but media and society plays a part in it, too. So with that said, all you shallow sheep out there, open your fucking minds!"

--**Melissa** (22nd of May, 2014, 19:33pm, Whatsapp).

"So how I feel about today's media centred fashion, hate it, today's music played on the radio or what's considered 'cool' by masses, hate it. Hair, I want a style I like and sort of contradicts the usual bunch" –(Melissa, 22nd of May, 2014, 19:33 pm , Whatsapp). Melissa goes onto explain the photo above-**OOOH! I did it myself one night- Youtube and scissors! I've seen hair like a mullet-look. I Googled how to do it and then I took this photo! It's me in my punk-phase. We [as, people are] not one-dimensional, we have lots of different styles. Even with my outfits. Punk exposure opened up another door in my life because I'm like very hippy Listening to that type of music [punk/rock] at that time changed my style a bit"** (10th of May 2014, 10:20am, Muizenberg Historic Train Station).

CJ contributed a song, *flawless* – mash-up by Beyoncé Knowles featuring Chimamanda Adichie[16]. The title of the song speaks to the fact that, for too long, women have been classified as flawed occupants of the 'other' category. In 2013, when this study was first initiated, Beyoncé Knowles, American singer and entertainer collaborated with Chimamanda Adichie, a Nigerian-born novelist and TED talk presenter to create what I call a mash-up that characterized postmodern freedom. Beyoncé constructed the song called *Flawless* around Adichie's (2012), *We should all be feminists* TEDx talk (Wagner, 2015).

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[16] See: Adichie, Chimamanda, N. "We should all be feminists", http://www.youtube.com.

Verse 2 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
We teach girls to shrink themselves
To make themselves smaller
We say to girls,
You can have ambition
But not too much
You should aim to be successful
But not too successful
Otherwise you will threaten the man
Because I am female
I am expected to aspire to marriage
I am expected to make my life choices
Always keeping in mind that
Marriage is the most important
Now marriage can be a source of
Joy and love and mutual support
But why don't we teach boys the same? (https://youtu.be/FjBhJhn-y40).

While participants' responses to how they should to respond to the resources and messages of consumer culture varied, what was constant was a restless and highly personalized engagement with it. What is significant in exploring neglected expressions of agency through young women's body talk, therefore, is paying attention to what Griselda Pollock calls the release of an air of virtuality: this is the opening up of a space for potentiality- thereby making transformative power accessible to all who tap into it (Pollock, 1988). Griselda Pollock (1988) draws on Rebecca Walker's notion that feminism should not be washed away in waves. The basic concept behind (insert name's) position is that we should not be plotting feminism as generations of waves but rather see feminist work as a gateway to creative and radical citizenship.

The human body can be conceived as text connected to central facets of performance such as identity, gender, and sexuality. Our bodies are our orator's in the performance that is part of our 'everyday life. This is the "zone [that] contains the world within one's reach, the world in which we act so as to modify its reality, or the world in which one works. In this world, working ones consciousness is predominantly focused on the practical as opposed to idealistic" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 36). It is therefore pivotal to pay attention to the frivolity of everyday life and the accompanying performances of bodyhood. This is made clear in the words: "one's attention to this world is mainly determined by what one is doing, have done or what one plans to do. In this way, it is one's world par excellence" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 36). The term 'par excellence' is of particular significance to this study because it refers to the deliverance of an oration. An oration is usually a formal, lengthy, rather flowery and highly rhetorical verbal speech or writing. Contrary to the conventional understanding of the term, I propose that 'par excellence' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 36) can be linked to the bodily expression of style which young women exhibit as,

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unique forms of resisting authoritarianism.

Our eloquence par excellence is not a formal, wordy deliverance of a speech. Instead, it is the act of using every day, seemingly frivolous forms of creative expression through our bodies and, in that way, talking back with standpoint guided knowledge. The physical body relates to our subjectivities as women as well as our creative self-representation marked on the surfaces of our bodies. This is powerfully conveyed in Reneé's "body talk" below:
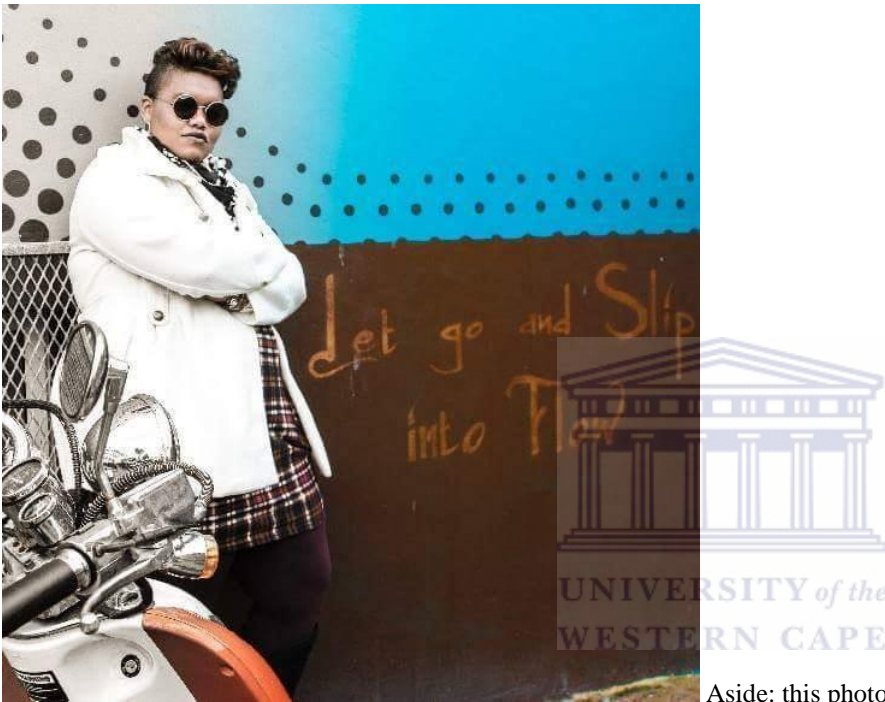
Aside: this photograph was taken at our focus group session in Muizenberg Historic Train Station's parking lot. Photographer: Natascha E. Bracale). 10th of May 2014.

The image above illustrates that, Reneé's dress and demeanor are stylized in accordance with the graffiti on the wall in Muizenberg at the train station. Here, she expresses freedom of speech without even saying a word. The writing on the wall, "let go and slip into the flow" is surfer lingo but, here applied to illustrate that iconography is linked to self-representation. We let go of the idea that what may be dismissed as simply fashion. We slip into the flow of dress being aesthetically and politically selected to refuse normative ideas.

Body Talk and the Emotions

A deep valuing of the self was central to participants' body talk and the following statement was a recurring element:

"As young women [and in fact, all women], we must place unconditional acceptance of our bodies at the top of our political agenda…" (Cullen, 2000:4). In doing exactly this, Reneé has expressed that- "**when things happen and I can't change it, myself physically, with like finance, moving out, out of the country (pause). I go to my hair and automatically it's like a new chapter in my life"** (13th of November 2015, 12:15, Café Classique, Westgate).

This 'going to her hair' that Reneé expresses resonated strongly with Melissa, CJ and I. Philosopher, Judith Butler's (1990), *the subversion of identity* suggests that we consciously turn to our bodies out of an awareness and concern for our marginal social and political standing and my participants and I shared several ways of reclaiming our bodies in gestures of expressing forms of self-love and acceptance.

Marked as an 'immoderately' tattooed young woman, the images below captures the physical process involved in the way I fashion my body to make it talk. My tattoo's stand as a creative performance and physical manifestation of my standpoint and involvement in body politics.

Above (left): a screenshot of a photo I uploaded as my profile picture on Facebook, in 2013 when I began this exploratory study.

Above: (right) and (below): A screenshot of my Facebook cover photo. Three years into this explorative journey and my inko-ography now covers the right-hand side of my body.

Aside: A zoomed-in version of the above-right.

I draw on Kirsten Blakely's (2007) Masters dissertation which helped me to realize the value of the emotions in relation to body talk. Blakely now has a doctorate in Sociology and Women's Studies and is a trained qualitative researcher. She contends that: our emotions and feelings which surface during the research process cannot be separated from the data. "They are, in fact, […] if you will, the data (Blakely, 2007: 3)". The deeply emotional investments that both my participants and I often made in expressing our valuing of our bodies was often extremely intense. This clearly indicated the personalizing of the political, and the unique ways in which the act of reclaiming one's body is, for many young women, simultaneously emotional and political. The topic of hair, as raised by Reneé, powerfully raised the connections between deep and often traumatic experiences of self-negation and participants developing the capacity to defy this through different positive ways of talking about their bodies.

In what follows, I focus on the emotional, creative and political repercussions of Reneé's hair-ography[17] as a narrative that calls attention to how central hair 'management' is to controlling and pathologising women's bodies as well as the subjection to capitalist consumerism:

"My hair was always very thick and I had a lot of hair. So I decided I'm gonna cut it" –Reneé (10th of May 2014, 10:40, Muizenberg Historic Train Station).

"So I cut it myself and it couldn't go flat man. It was just standing and that time Pam Andrews came out with Pop Stars and then I was Pam again but I told them BUT I had the hairstyle before her but nobody wants to believe me. In high school I had problems at school because then, the teacher called me into her office one day and she was like- you need to *sort out* your hair. And I was like, what do you want me to do with it? So she was like, even if you need to go to the hair salon" (Reneé, 10th of May 2014, 10:40, Muizenberg Historic Train Station).

Reneé tells of her high school teacher who reprimanded her about her seemingly apparent lack of exercising restraint to manage her personal appearance properly. The teacher exhibited a level of control over Reneé's sense of self-expression and self-representation. Moreover, she represented a restraining force or influence that restricts self-command. The confrontation between Reneé as the student and her teacher, the older disciplinarian, has been engraved upon Reneé's memory. A decade after her high school experience, she still vividly recalls the incident. This indicates a great significance in the policing of women's bodies throughout the process of socialisation. This is something that resonated with me, too. At school level (primary and high school), the disciplinarians instructed us to groom ourselves to look 'neat' and obey the institutions code of conduct. Failure to adhere to the code would result in a student being disciplined accordingly. This sentiment spills over into different social environments such as work and church. I remember, at high school, I was drilled to be neat and molded to become a law-abiding citizen. The goal, as proscribed at school, was for us to leave high school and enter into broader society as 'model citizens'.

Nadia Sanger's (2009) research revolves around how hair shows how symbolically and politically charged it is for South African women in today's society. It also highlights that identity construction for black women is linked to dominant notions of desirability. The stronghold of identity and desirability constructed for black women is dominated by the expectation to 'tone down' and control their 'wild', 'unruly' and 'unmanageable' hair (Sanger, 2009). Sanger suggests that girls are socialised from a young age to be '(hetero)sexually' desirable inscribing and monitoring that unsightliness is managed in order to be appealingly beautiful. Sanger (2009) goes on to highlight that there exists an imminent message in this socialization around the construction of

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[17] Colloquial derivative of the words: hair and biography

desirability- one which is racist. Black girls and women are being force-fed prevailing cultural instructions that their natural hair, in an unmanaged state, is unnecessary and, indeed, unappealing. Therefore, the perception is that their hair should be disciplined (Sanger, 2009).

After Reneé shared the disciplinary narrative with me, she concluded that, **"the more freedom I get, the more expressive I become. When I finished school I realized how we mustn't be scared about what people's gonna say […]".** (10th of May, 2014, 10:50, Muizenberg Historic Train Station).

Reneé's statement speaks to the ways that women are defying both gendered and racialised prescriptions.
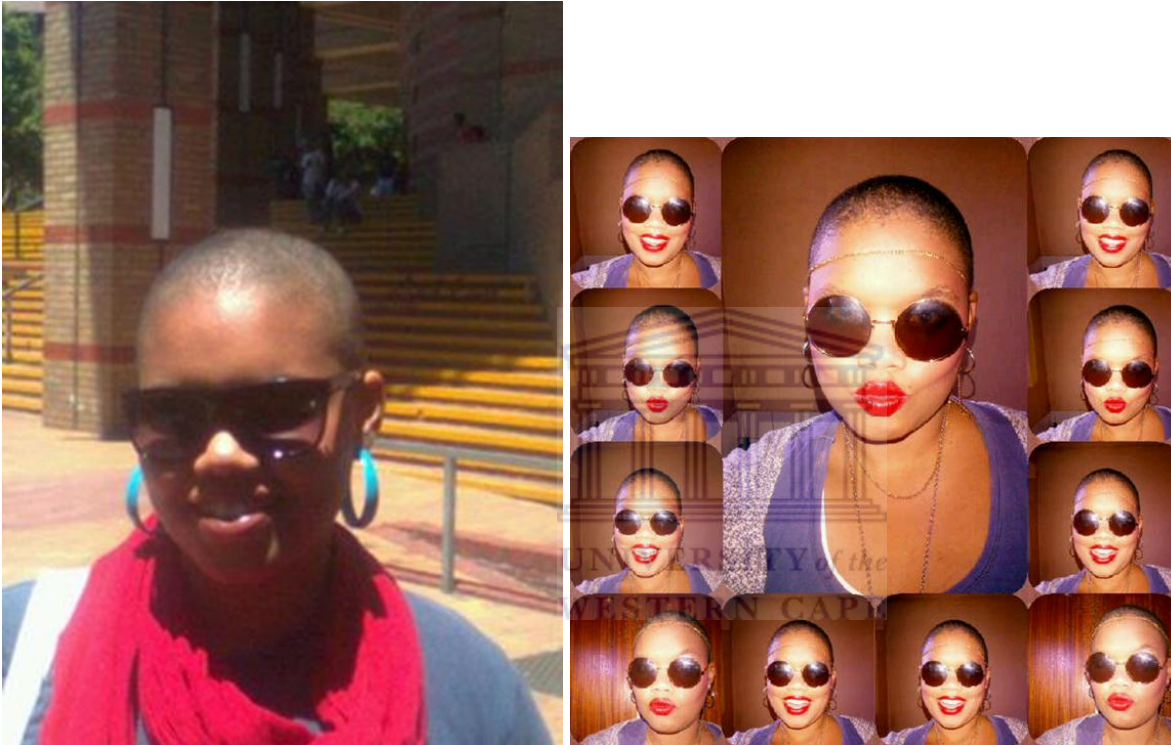
Aside (left): Reneé is pictured on campus, in front of the University of the Western Cape library. This is significant because in this educational space she is allowed to express an unrestrained sense of self-commanding style and creativity. (Right): an Instagram photo capturing Reneé's enjoyment of expressing her own sense of style. She celebrates her self-representational expression.

"The goal- express myself even if it's just hair. If something goes wrong it's not a train smash, there's always something we can do. Even when my hair was bald I said, it doesn't matter, I can go to Clicks and buy it.

I let go, girl. The thing I realized with hair, man. That I got over, thickness.

Thickness becomes a problem to certain people. You can work around it. You can buy some relaxer. And some people say it's not good for your hair, but it's been working for me. So why, you putting me down!

One way that I realize that I'm really over what people think. My mom wasn't into it at first. And I'm-like it's MY hair, and I'll do to it what I want. My mother's like, a lady is supposed to things in a certain way. Now I mos rebelled against that, all the years. I experimented with my clothes and my hair since high school, in the moment I feel it more but before and after, it's part of the process, a form of releasing" (Reneé, 10th of May 2014, 10:40, Muizenberg Historic Train Station).
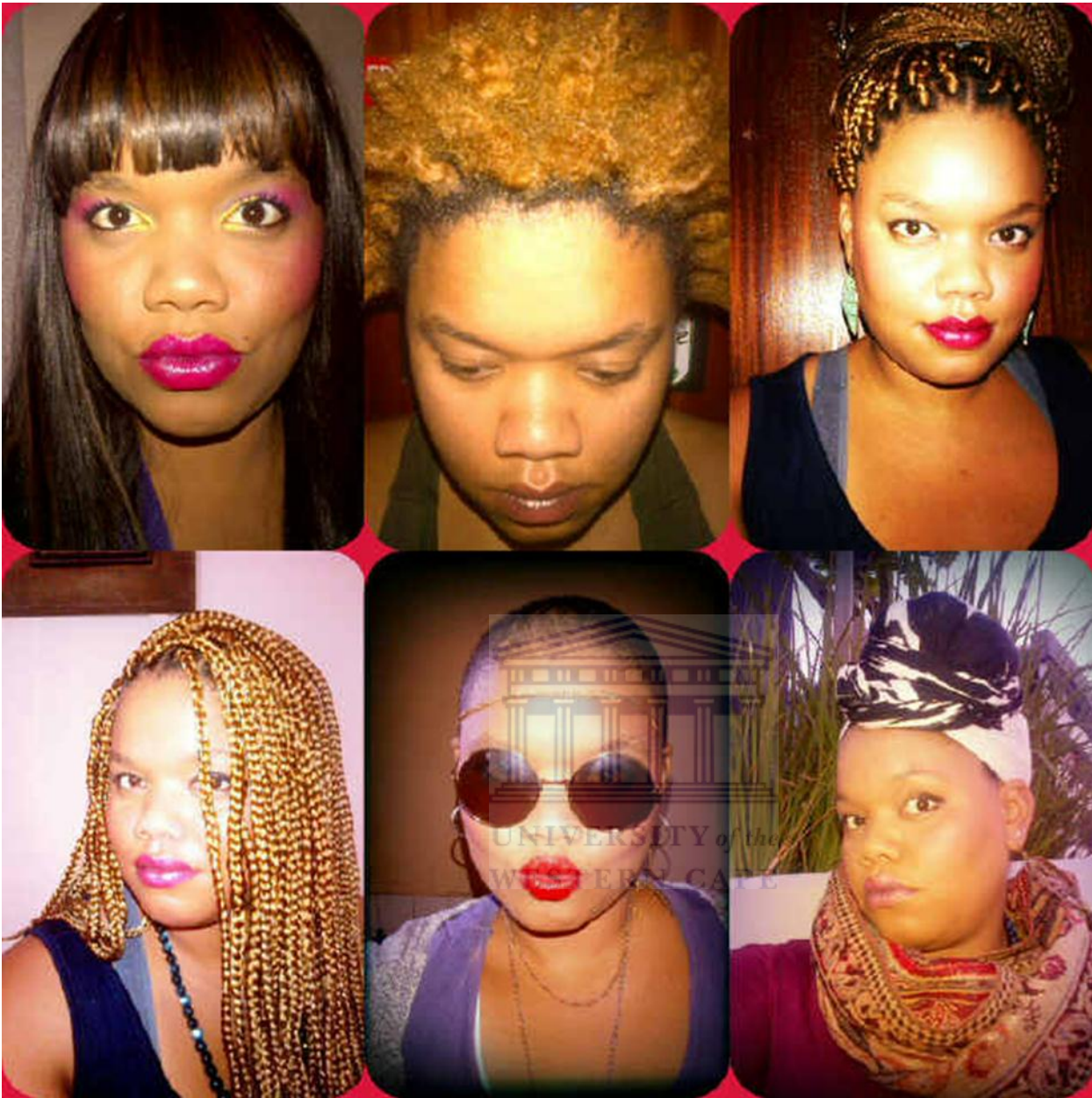
"I go through changes and so it is with my hair. When I shave it, it goes through stages/phases. It's never just a simple thing that my hair ends up in a certain way. Like when you planning in life. You study so that you can get a certain job. It's the same with my hair. I prepare my hair. Growth and development. Experiment, in that way. You see it, in the way that I express myself** (13th of November 2015, 11:00, Café Classique, Westgate).

"When you can't see the change happen, and things take too long to happen you get frustrated and shit, so I go to my hair and then I see the change. Sometimes, if life isn't working for me, then I let my hair grow and surprise me. Just to let me know that, I am still living" (13th of November 2015, 11:10, Café Classique, Westgate).

"Even my hair, when I shave it. There's something happening on the inside" – Reneé (10th of May 2014, 10:55, Muizenberg Historic Train Station). When Reneé is dissatisfied with her reality, and feels like she needs a new start. A clean canvas, to recreate her being Reneé turns to her hair].

"It's like every phase of life. You can't stay the same. It's like my style, something new is going to come from that" –Reneé (10th of May 2014, 10:55, Muizenberg Historic Train Station).

The seeming frivolity of every-day performances seems to lock women out of the serious domains of political engagement. Yet, to engage in body-talk here becomes a counter to this disparaging way of defining the playful, self-representation of young women. It is significant that other recreational or leisurely activities such as listening to music and adorning our bodies all become central as 'marking' the self through the performance of bodyhood.

Art Bodies: our self-inscribed iconography

The discussion of body talk above drew attention to more quotidian and less obviously "artistic" forms of body talk. My work with participants also encouraged me to value the enormous inventiveness that often goes into young women's aesthetic attention to "body talk". In the following subsection, I draw attention to the way in which women who do not see themselves as artists use vernacular art. I juxtapose my participants' creativity here with the creativity of progressive and feminist art.

Art historian, Amelia Jones (1988), describes art bodies as body art performing the subject. I adopted the term to describe our bodies as participants of this exploration in line with body art as said to be art made on, with, or consisting of, the human body[18]. Moreover, body art is also noted as a sub-category of performance art in which artists use to make particular statements[19]. I use the term *art bodies* (as opposed to body art) as a term in celebration of those who participated in this exploration: an active attempt to reclaim our bodies via our co-creation of a transcending of the traditional South African association of raced and gendered bodies. In illustrating this as an exhibition of contemporary African art, 'Body Talk' (2015) focused on bringing people into a discursive space asking people to think about the mobilization of the body. This was archived through the works of six artists, namely Zoulikha Bouabdellah, Marcia Kure, Miriam Syowia Kyambi, Valerie Oka, Tracey Rose, and Billie Zangewa. These artists represent a generation of female artists of the late 1990's whose focus on using the body as a medium of expression as well as a vehicle for activism was celebrated during the time (Guily, 2015).

Miriam Syowia Kyambi's (2011) *Fracture/Rupture,* a multimedia-installation/performance in particular, focused on performative acts[20]. These acts were expressing that these exist to seek a change in reality rather

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[18] Jones (1988) draws on artist Yayoi Kusama's execution of the body in self-portrait photographs as performance art and a particularized subjecthood as a woman enacting against the normative male subject and experience of life, Essentially, performing the body.

[19] See: Ana Mendieta; Lorna Simpson; Senga Nengudi; Zoulikha Boubdellah, Marcia Kure; Miriam Syowia Kyambi; Valerie Oka; Tracey Rose; Billie Zangewa; Zanele Muholi.

[20] Following the conception of Paul B. Preciado.

than to merely describe it. The artist uses her body as a provocation and a trigger (Guily, 2015). Many artists explore gender through representations of the body and by using their own bodies in their installations and creative process. This is an active engagement of transgressive imagery and feminist politics.

Aside: a Facebook profile picture of Melissa, uploaded on the 2nd of November 2014. She explained that, her self-inscribed initial 'hippie' description of self is contrasted and assimilated by her love for psychedelic (music/art) illustrative here (above and below- uploaded on Facebook as a profile picture on the 6th of November, 2014). Which is indicative of these images she describes these as 'distorted' or bizarre. Moreover, these speak to, dualisms of the self and creative re-visioning via artistic creations which arise from playing with photo applications.

"Creativity and art definitely have a positive role in my life, it has meaning, it's a way of expression. The pics reflect the bad patch I was going through, at that moment. These pics are distorted and weird and it made me feel free, sorta scary which was liberating" –Melissa (10th of July 2016, 18:02pm, Whatsapp).

The image above highlights CJ's tattoos. This image was taken by Natasha Bracale in (2014) and edited by me in (2016) to highlight CJ's tattoos. I edited and printed a hardcopy thereof as a farewell gift for CJ's departure from Cape Town. The photograph stands as a personalized item of memorabilia of our making of memories together at our group photo shoot. This specific memory was around the time after our photo shoot. CJ started posting on social media about her journey of tapping into creativity and self-representation CJ hash tags over social media included these: **"#selfworth #findingmyself #happinessfoundinme" CJ.** We hashtag self-love buzzwords as demonstrated in Chapter three. Which, in turn, can result in trending over social media which facilitates the kind of self-organisation that defines radical politics of self-love.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann articulate that aesthetic experience is rich in producing "[…] 'commutations' [which] take place between the world of everyday life and the world of play. [T]ransitions of this of this kind, inasmuch as [art as cultural markers of identity] are endemic producers of finite provinces of meaning" (1966: 39). Building on this notion, Jill Fisher's (2002) article on aesthetics involved in tattooed bodies proposed a conception of experiencing the world with, rather than through, the material body. Fisher (2002) suggests that the contemporary practice of tattooing is indicative of a relationship between power and physical and social practices. Her views echo the following speculation:

The photo of my tattoo (above) is linked to my conception of Maya Angelou's (1969) *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings.* Angelou's writing made way for my own understanding as a woman determined to access power through the transformative message that the narrative conveys. Angelou's (1969) *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* has been interpreted as a 'coming-of-age story': one which links to self-possession, self-dignity, and self-definition for and of a young woman. Her captivating writing, which developed new perspectives into multiple subordinated women's lives in a male-dominated society inspired the design of my tattoo and, in some ways, the narrative behind it, too. Angelou's writing infiltrated into my mind and has left a heartfelt and lasting impression on how to read various forms in duplexing ways. It also allowed me to recognise texts not solely as simple referent but also more seriously as form. Standpoint-based creativity informed my methodological exploration of memesis as interpretative practice in an intersectional field between biology and politics. This is true particularly within the scope of a young woman's biopolitical experience as vernacular art as well as, an analytic philosophy.

My sentiments around tattooing are anchored by a study by Jill Fisher (2002). Her investigation of body inscription relates the contemporary practice of tattooing as simultaneous and dualistically physical and social and cultivates a spirit that imbues multiple levels of constructed meanings (Fisher, 2002). She suggests that, on a global level, tattooing as a form of body modification can be interpreted as a form of resistance to, or perhaps a marker of, the body as a token of commodity culture. Contrastingly, Clare Craighead (2011) draws upon the South African context and the conception of 'monstrous beauty myths' to show how the commodification of

women's bodies also holds the potential for subverting the binary. She focuses on tattooed women's bodies as subversions.

My tattoo is a physical and metaphorical manifestation of the politics of my subjectivity as a [young] woman. The birds and the cage within Maya Angelou's poem are a representation of the dualisms of self that underscore my identity as a young woman living in contemporary Cape Town. The cage is illustrative of my awareness of the overarching macro institutional system of power and its overwhelming role in shaping who I am. My bodyhood constitutes a deep consciousness around freedom through an expression of the self through my body-talk. My bodyhood is also characterized by my deep-rooted sense of self-conceived sense of civic power grounded in self-love and dignity, as a woman trying to reclaim a sense of worth and space in a patriarchal world.

On the one hand, I am the bird situated in 'democracy' but still caged by the inaccessibility of realizing rights printed in the constitution but not translated in lived experience. Through my creative imaginary, and as physically expressed, I feel like I can access the means to spread my wings (metaphorically speaking) and take flight because the cage door is opened, as democracy exists. Only through the process of activating my creative imaginary and means of modifying the self, quite literally, can I begin to look beyond the cage. My tattoos reflect a personal attempt to creatively rescript and reimagine a space for liberatory freedom.

On the other hand, I am also the self or the other bird positioned at the highest point of the cage. That self is grounded in the teachings of feminism, which help me to believe in the possibility of channeling power from creative resilience to the captivity I feel of the overarching macro systems of power dominating my life. Emotion and affect are of key concern in the way we inscribe our bodies, whether it be dress, tattooing or through self-representation in general. We participate in a process that is not only cognitive but is profoundly embedded in feelings and emotions too. This is how, all at once, my participants explode the dualism of reason and emotion.

Desire

Desire can be perceived as the underlying factor informing the way that sight, that is seeing, looking and gazing, formulates a relation of desire in the way that power operates. The sexual impulses archived and transmitted through, towards and within our bodies relate to the immediate and apparent, but also something more, which I link to Audre Lorde's (1984) conception of the erotic. The erotic surfaces as a form of power and a resource by way of gendered narratives, which is embodied deeply in the female and is often unexpressed or unrecognizable as feelings or emotions. The unruly emotion, which characterizes desire, is not subject to restrain or regulation-a far cry from the demure qualities traditional femininity dictates. According to Rosalind
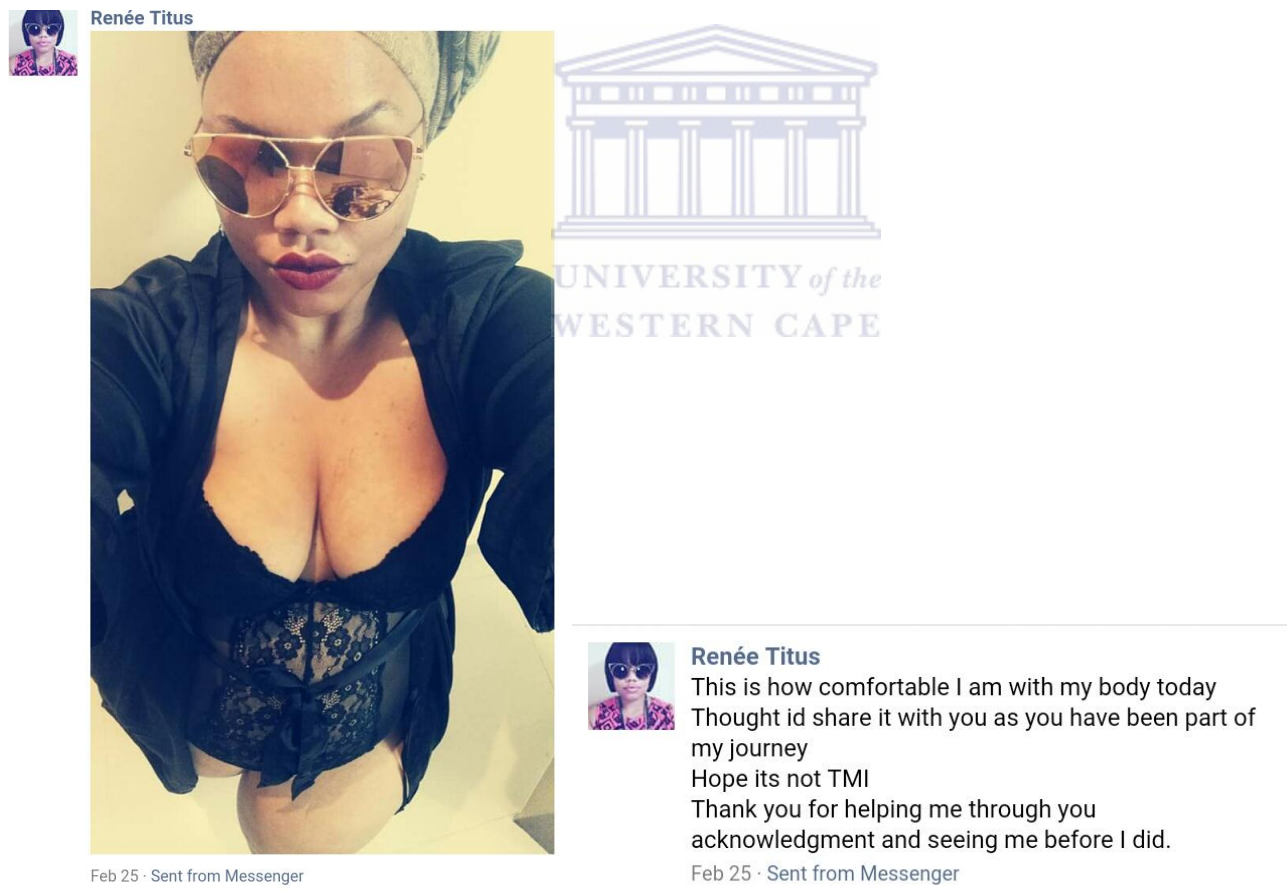
Gill, (2007) in line with post-feminist media culture, women's bodies have radically shifted from the site of being sexual objectification to desiring sexual subjects- in the past presented as passive, silent, objects of the media but contrastingly in the contemporary, women are obscurely objectified as active and desiring sexual subjects cognitively choosing sexual knowledge and practice as central facets informing a choice to, self-objectify in accordance with liberated interests to do so. Gill (2007) suggests that this self-representation of sexual object/subject dualism is operating concurrently in the performance of desire within the contemporary understanding of post-feminism and the modernization of femininity. Gill (2007) draws on what Hilary Radner has called, a new 'technology of sexiness' which places women outside of external, male, judging gaze-towards an internal, self-regulatory and more narcissistically-informed gaze based on freedom of choice and empowerment ideals.

The sexualisation of culture affects women's bodies as the site of femininity linked to a broader pervasive sexualisation of contemporary culture centered on femininity. According to Gill, "femininity as a bodily property- is one of the most striking aspects of post-feminist media culture is its obsessional preoccupation with the body. Traditional femininity dictates instead of caring or nurturing or motherhood being regarded as central to femininity (all of course, highly problematic and exclusionary), in today's media it is possession of a 'sexy body' that is presented as women's key (if not sole) source of identity" (Gill, 2007: 6-7). Femininity, the body, gazing and sexuality informs a relation, practice and structure pertaining to desire constructed on what and how we see. In line with Bibi Bakare-Yusuf's (2000) conception of the body as a situation, involved in a constitutive process of self-knowledge and identification embodiment of cultural creativity in self-representation and an important factor for counter-governmentality that operates by way of neoliberalism.

We, young women with maturing erotic knowledge, are beginning to move beyond the socialization based on patriarchy, deference, biddable and cooperative submissiveness which we endured and internalised for most of our lives. Below, Reneé and I turn the crippling, objectifying and sexualised gaze of patriarchy as deference upon ourselves in an intimate, visual and open-dialogue around desirability and turn the gaze upon ourselves for ourselves. I want to further unpack patriarchy as deference by referencing Bakare-Yusuf's (2000) conceptualizing patriarchy as a non-static, ever-changing force that dissolves and evolves in various shapes and spatiality via hierarchies of power. Patriarchy is fluid and therefore beyond determinist which means that loopholes are inherent in the operationalization of patriarchy. The loopholes could allow us to get out of the overarching, dominating system of power through productive forms of contestation (Bakare-Yusuf, 2000).

The personal struggles we confront revolves around the social perceptions related to the erotic, which taught us that from a young age that the erotic must for separated from all spheres of life except for sex. Our erotic power becomes a constrained by constructions of gender-roles and prescribed obedience, respect, social policing and

authoritarian powers locked in the utterance that is memory. All of this is encapsulated in the body or through the transmitted messages which we have internalized as codes of gendered and sexualised narratives that are embodied and inform our existence. Now, actively trying to deconstruct the memorized social scripts of identity located in dichotomies, we are attempting to operationalize the body as situational act of insurgency for reclamation against deference. This is the root of the social problem relating to the secondary-status of women, which persists in the face of democracy. We recognise the quality of mutability inherent in identity and the opportunity it creates in materializing our desire to be free in our own skin. The illustrated narrative below attempts to implement Dina Ligaga's a specialist in Media Studies based at the University of Witwatersrand explored 'virtual expressions' (2012), through popular culture to counter act stereotypes. To create online communities for the everyday expression and performance through the internet as, an alternative site of production in order to transform the way we read popular culture. Particularly, against the rhetoric of the so-called, developing nation status of our nation.

Renée Titus

Renée Titus
This is how comfortable I am with my body today
Thought id share it with you as you have been part of my journey
Hope its not TMI
Thank you for helping me through you acknowledgment and seeing me before I did.

Feb 25 · Sent from Messenger

Above (left): A selfie Reneé sent me on Facebook messenger, on the 25th of February 2017. Along with the message (right).

The image above is not just a selfie which Reneé shared, it is an act of reclamation of her body in a spatiality which is conservative and very strict about women covering up. Currently working abroad in Riyadh in public,

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an abaya (floor-length, black, nondescript robe) is the socially accepted attire. Women are also not allowed to drive. The fact that Reneé is tapping into the erotic is empowerment, in her geographical location. Empowerment, in her current social context can be perceived as, dangerous. Audre Lorde, on the embodiment of the erotic states: "I find the erotic such a kernel within myself. When released from its intense and constrained pallet, it flows through and colours my life with a kind of energy that heightens and sensitizes and strengthens all my experience" (Lorde, 1984: 59). The act of unlearning the prescribed social script of traditional femininity, and tapping into our wild and untamed identity, gives us the chance to become knowing beings confident and comfortable in our skin beyond the scope of biological predisposition and determinism in order to resist authoritarianism, albeit in subtle ways.

Monique Van Vuuren
You're a wonderful, beautiful being. Always were and always will be. You've granted me with so much nuggets of wisdom, all through your willingness to share. We, humans are never as different as we think. I admire your tenacity and ability to tap into self for growth. I am learning and continue to stand in awe, reflecting on the journey. *Joie de vivre*
Feb 25

Monique Van Vuuren
Doing corrections and thinking of you. Femininity as a, bodily property of empowerment.
Yesterday at 6:41pm

Renée Titus
You still typing more?
Yesterday at 6:44pm · Sent from Messenger
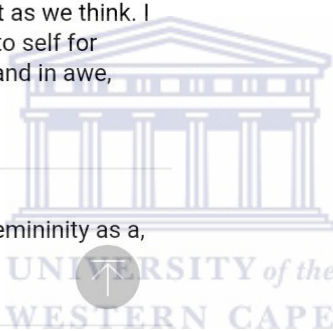
Aside: (top): my response to Reneé's selfie and message. (Middle): a message I sent Reneé on the 04ᵗʰ of March 2017 at 18:41 on Facebook messenger. (Bottom): Reneé's response four minutes after I contacted her.

Aside: (left) an Instagram (IG) photo I posted on the 3rd of March 2014, I sent to Reneé via Facebook messenger; (below right): is the explanation I shared with Reneé for sharing the image. Traditionally harley davidson is associated with bearded, tattooed men. By me, a young woman being given the opportunity to represent the brand, may be indicative of the contemporary neoliberalist landscape in which we live (Ong, 2007: 3).

Our online communication strengthens our sense of solidarity but also materializes a visual, corporeal, virtual and spatial sentiment of sisterhood. Reneé's willingness to share the image of her body has made me aware of our shared desire to be free in our own skin. It is no secret that women's bodies have been isolated as objects of desire throughout time and space and across history. In this contemporary age, where capitalist's commercial focus taps into the beauty industry, sex sells. This is not anything new. We know this because we see it daily via post-feminist cultural media. I find myself troubled over the perceptions of a sense of wounded vanity. The image (above left) illustrates this. With almost half my body covered in tattoos, I consciously cover up as a means to bypass the autonomy-stripping quality of blatant stares, of shock and disgust and the usual conception that I am a nonsensical grotesque young woman. Oftentimes, I feel like my petite frame is presumed to have a matching miniscule mental capacity, too. In line with this, I have become an alluring object of desire due to my self-inflicted destruction, which I have pigmented under the skin.

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Unconcealed body art is synonymous with the act of looking but the accompanying objectification remains problematic. At present, women especially are drawn into trending fashion. Tattoos on women have become more acceptable and indeed more fashionable recently. In the less conservative world we live in today, size and design play a major role in what is deemed as pretty and enhances femininity (as dictated by societal rules). However, excessive amounts of tattoos are still frowned upon. Contrastingly, in the contemporary selfie-centered material world, a space and materiality of reinvention through the imaginary, is created, where body pride is normalized and celebrated. Operating alongside the post-feminist sensibility and neoliberalism is an important consciousness around self-love and the unconditional acceptance of ourselves; which intersects with the personal (the individual's personal struggle) and the political (broader cultural struggles that feminism confronts). The personal-political binary illustrates the messiness of –isms (difference based on race, sex, gender, sexuality and class) which are experienced often in amalgamated ways, on a day to day basis.

Below: Reneé's response to my image and message (shared with her on the 4th of March 2017, 18:45, Facebook):

Renée Titus
We reveal our growth in many different ways depending on where we at in life. After I took my pic I realized that I hid from being comfortable because of the way my body was directed by media and people. I was never really comfortable until I took that pic for 'me'.
5 minutes ago · Sent from Messenger

Monique Van Vuuren
Yes, exactly!!!! I relate to that entirely!!! Would you mind if I use your perception as a quote, please (just as is)alongside my pic. If you are comfortable, then I can use your pic, too. This is an incredible journey and it's all so interconnected, it astounds me how much I'm learning and you're central to the lightbulb moments and spurts of growth.
Just now · Sent from Mobile

Aside: 04th of March 2017, 18:50 and 18:55, Facebook.

Selfie and Social Media Selves

Previous sections in this chapter have explored the way that women talk powerfully about their sense of self through their bodies and about their bodies but the point of being heard requires an audience and a sense of community. By focusing on social media and the transmission of selfies, I show that young women often use performative and representational and interpretive views of their bodies within communities in my next analysis. While many forms of organized community-building might be seen as repressive and authoritarian,

young women are often deeply engaged with processes of sharing, exchanging and growing through the communicative platforms that the growth of new media has made available.

Ira Sternberg's Master's dissertation titled, *Influence of Social Media Stages of Democratization* thoughtfully expresses that "[a] key element in the rise of social media, from a female perspective, is imagery" (2014: 57). Desiree Lewis et al (2013) discusses the importance of images in today's technological world, both as a subtext of South African feminism and also an indicator of a broader political context. Images encode our experience as young women living in contemporary Cape Town. It is important to note that patriarchy has almost invisibly, via hegemonic practices, painted a picture which sketches men to be "more highly regarded than women and given greater power, access, money, opportunities, and presence in public life" (Johnson and Repta, 2011: 21). In my study, we use social media to sketch new counter hegemonic images and narratives for ourselves. Social media platforms such as Instagram is utilized as a space for artistic expression and one that houses a creative social movement projected from the self-created snapshots (Iqani, 2013).

Instagram photo by Renée posted on Facebook.

"I express myself through my face" Reneé. Reneé explains that when she expresses herself through her face and her hair, **"it's like a burst of energy releasing within me. When I feel life is just going one way, when I**

feel for a change. When I feel that I'm bored or, I'm not happy. Most of the times it happens when I'm not happy. Or there's shit going down and you can't make things change, the way you want it to change. You don't have power over outside forces, but you have power over yourself. You can make certain choices and you can try to control it and mould it from that way" (13th of November 2015, 11: 30, Café Classique, Westgate).

The centrality of playfulness, humour and fun stands in opposition of authoritative selfhood. Women here use play in creating an authority-free performance of self-representation. **"You can be so much more when you allow yourself to experiment with yourself. You must have fun"- Reneé** (10th of May, 2014, 11:15, Muizenberg beach).

Jo Anna Isaak refers to this as women's enactment of, "dismantling 'the house of language' through play, laughter or to use the term the French have recently reintroduced to English, *jouissance:* enjoyment, pleasure […] derived from the body" (Isaak, 1996: 2-3). The emotions attached to playfulness, humour and fun are important contributing factors to what Isaak calls "the revolutionary power of women's laughter (1996: viii). These emotions are usually sidelined in formal understandings of citizenship and forms of political agency.

Social media and the new-age self-portrait photograph 'selfie' are fundamentally important facets of self-representation that contribute to young women's artful construction of selfhood and body performance.
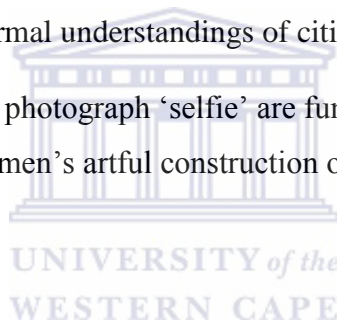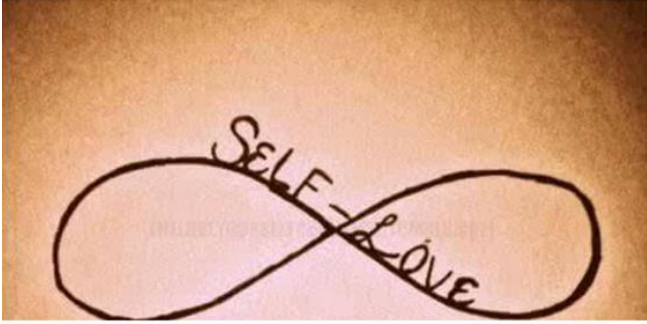
Monique Van Vuuren
12 May 2014 at 11:02am · 🌐

"A **#loveselfie** isn't a picture or a status update. It's an attitude of embracing, accepting, and valuing yourself, exactly as you are in each moment. It's being one hundred percent present with yourself. Try it"
~Amy Leigh Mercree.

all love begins with self-love

Above is, a screenshot of a Facebook post of 2014, shared in the wake of this study. It is demonstrative of how, as a [young] woman I use social media as a point of entry to amplify my re-envisioned civic voice, and call for counterpublic action. I communicate with other's (on Facebook) conveying an alternative sense of self and share publicly in hopes of deriving validity from my perceived sense of community, within the space of social media with likeminded individuals.
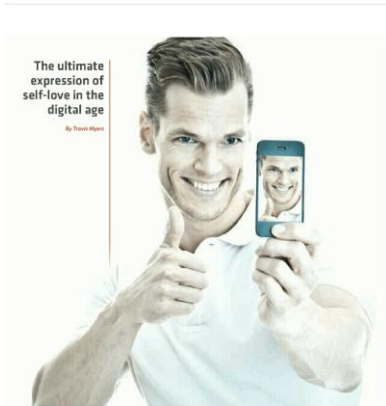
The ultimate expression of self-love in the digital age

#SELFIE

[21]

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[21] A caption of a blog post by Travis Myers, July 2014, outwords.ca/2014/issue-july-august-2014/ultimate-expression-self-love-digital-age

Pamela B. Routeledge (2013) explores the cultural meaning of the activity of taking selfies. She expresses that:

> "[s]elfies are pictures you take of yourself tagged with #selfie or just with #me. They are showing up all across social networks like Facebook or Instagram- often but not exclusively posted by women. As the numbers and frequency of selfies increase the phenomenon has garnered attention. […] Some view these self-created self-portraits as proof of a cultural – or at least generational- narcissism and moral decline. I, on the other hand, view them as a by-product of technology- enabled self-exploration" (2013:1).

Selfies form a part of the day-to-day activities young women engage in as a form of self-knowledge and self-expression.

Illustrative of the extent of infiltration of the selfie into popular culture, I integrated extracts of a song which Reneé, Claudia and I made reference to, albeit at different times. It is by Nina Nesbitt titled, *Selfies*[22] which further popularized the practice (taking selfies) in mainstream, pop culture:

Selfies

I strike a pose and tilt my chin […]
[…] 3,2,1 and I smile…
Taking pictures of myself, self, self
Taking pictures of myself, self, self
Guess I'm reaching out to be assured […]
Now you're telling me I'm vain, vain, vain […].
*But you don't feel my pain, pain, pain [23].*

Luis Blackaller (2008) suggests that the digital medium serves as a space that makes freedom of expression infinite, where interpretations and reinterpretations of content expressed in the digital sphere can take on tailored meanings and become tools of transformation transporting one from a state of being passive to being active. The aforementioned song serves as an example of how pop culture is impressed upon our daily life experiences and how we draw on these as vestiges of freedom. This song became a point of reference when Reneé, CJ and I ruminated over selfies as a mode of self-expression. Each of us, at different times, accessed the song via the internet. Some of us downloaded and shared, how our resonance with Nina Nesbitt's "selfie" song opened up a space of alliance formation potential among women. According to Luis Blackaller (2008), digital technology has radically transformed the way we communicate. This is a particularly important factor to

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[22] Released in 2014. See: ninanesbittmusic.com
[23] www.ninanesbittmusic.com

consider because it is, to a large extent, through digital technology that we gain knowledge, extrapolate it and express ourselves in cyber space and through nuanced performances of digital interactive art.
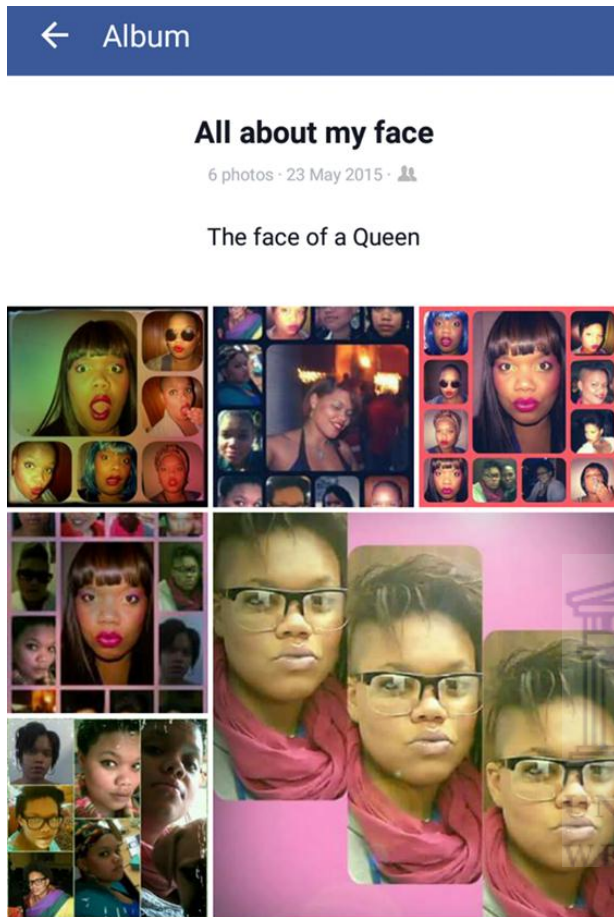
A screenshot of Reneé's Facebook album

Reneé discusses her expression of selfies "it feels like I always done it but, I never examined it, a lot. In the moment I feel it more but before and after, it's part of the process, a form of releasing" (9th of April 2015, 15:05, Whatsapp).

What Reneé refers to here as a form of release is the performative combination of identity and social media expression. The act of taking selfies involves a process of positive affirmation and release of self-doubt to allow for self-love emanating from the active process of self-reflection and empowerment involved in taking selfies.

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffman-Davis provide ways of analyzing this by focusing on the power of self-portraits. Their book titled—The *Art and Science of Portraiture*, suggests "the integration and harmony of seemingly opposing elements: the particular and the general, subjectivity and objectivity, the individual and the social context" (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman-Davis, 2002: 14). The authors contend that portraiture

differs from more standard ethnography "in its explicit effort to combine empirical and aesthetic description, in its focus on the convergence of narrative and analysis, in its goal of speaking to broader audiences beyond the academy (thus linking inquiry to public discourse and social transformation), and in its explicit recognition of the use of the self as the primary research instrument" (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman-Davis, 2002:14). The self is the device enacting a course of action- in this instance it is self-representation. The self is therefore proactive and instrumental to the meaning-making process.

(http://goo.gl/images/5r5Pj6)

The image above is an example of how a classic portrait, Leonardo Da Vinci's 'Mona Lisa',[24] is utilized in pop culture as the age-old dictum of 'a picture being worth a thousand words'. Here, portraiture differs from the standard ethnography (in this case selfies – in the second row- on the far right- as an extension of the bottom 2013 image) and achieves "its goal of speaking to broader audiences beyond the academy" (Lightfoot and Davis, 2002:14) The image went viral on social media as a reflection of public discourse and social transformation. Self-politicization comes to the fore here.

When CJ sent me the above image, it was circulating on social media profusely, just when my research was underway. The 2013 image is a pout selfie (pouting of the mouth) which has become a trend. The iconic 'Mona Lisa' smile is an example of culture-jamming in the contemporary and contrasted with the pop culture expression of 'the pout'. This new moment might represent solidarities and a shared understanding of gender and femininity but, at the same time, it might represent more than this.

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[24] Da Vinci, an artist mathematician, inventor and writer (1452-1519). The allure of the 'Mona Lisa' is mysterious identity of the subject (Atlay, 2011). Contrasting this is the contemporary emphasis on self-identity as characteristic of self-love and self-empowerment.

Chapter four: Becoming Self-politicised: Re-reading Young women's Citizenship in the Public Domain

In this chapter, I unpack the ways in which the standpoint knowledge explored in chapter three can be read as young women's distinct forms of public participation and engagement. A central concern of this study has been to present evidence of young women in a capacity of agency.

Esoteric political questions about liberation, independence and belonging are often explored by participants' everyday interactions on Facebook, their engagement with social media or their expression with certain forms of dress and self-styling. These activities might often be complicated by a disposition toward conformity and social acceptance. However, vestiges of freedom reside in rebellious, courageous and creative energy of the new languages that young women have developed. In exploring the political nuances of these 'new languages', this chapter deals with the following main subsections: "performativity, embodiment and selfhood"; "creating versions of democracy" and "the politics of the emotions".

It is Anne McClintock expressed that the notion of the imaginary raises a train of thought aligned with "fiction and make-believe, moonshine and chimera" (1995: 261). Yet, what is fictive can function as powerful messages in the public sphere. This is revealed in the notion of an "invented community," conveying "more powerfully the implications of labor and creative ingenuity, technology and institutional power" (1995: 261). This notion can be traced to this study's efforts in seeking to demonstrate the value of subjects' inventive and creative energies. Certain feminist activists and scholars have made significant efforts to question conventional, formal understandings of citizenship as aligned with women's prescribed gender roles and expectations of dutiful contributions to family and community. Literature by feminist activists and scholars have also persuasively demonstrated how every day, seemingly a-political, creative and vernacular expression constitutes vibrant efforts to participate as active citizens as well as to articulate unique and innovative understandings of freedom and democracy.

In the words of Bernd Reiter (2013: 6) "we can spend hours debating what 'democracy' or 'citizenship' *really* is – but, as Angela Ivancic suggests the nuances in the in contemporary performances of citizenship is indicative of, the ever-changing shift in what citizenship truly means. Ivancic expresses that, "participation of active citizens in democratic processes is not determined by a formally defined range of acts and attitudes […]" (2004: 127). There now appears to be a divergent and open process in which people constantly shape and redefine their identities. 'Individualization' is put forth as a pertinent component of becoming self-politicised, an individual's ability to adapt formal civic-participatory-mindedness has "become more and more important in this process [of

individualization]" (2004: 127). In tapping into nuances of citizenship relating to the reimagining of democracy, I utilized exploratory research because it opens up space for participants' voices and self-expression to be truly seen, heard and understood. My focus on aesthetic expression, in particular, has sought to create relatively neglected opportunities for seeing, experiencing and understanding the young women research participants with whom I have worked.

Performativity, embodiment, and selfhood

In discussing women's attention to the self and their individuated bodies, I have focused on the significance of self-love. This is not in the sense in which it has been popularized in liberal self-help and pop psychology but as young women's urgent need to validate the self in a context where their bodies and subjectivities are usually constructed by others. Young women's care of the self is often disparaged as evidence of their falling victim to consumer capitalist messages that they need to transform their bodies through consuming products. I have shown, however, that the self-care and sense of valuing the embodied self often demonstrates highly personal and often iconoclastic forms of care that are not prescribed by and that, therefore, transcend media advertizing, commodity capitalism of patriarchal ideology.

In stressing the value of radical care for the self, Tina Besley, a Professor at the International Centre for Global Studies in Education (2005)[25] focuses on truth telling and technologies of the self and brings relevance to the moral education of young people. Care of the self is seldom an explicit goal of education, except when sometimes appearing in curricula such as health, personal or social education. "Moral education" is also connected to authoritarian, religious, patriarchal and other dominant systems of belief that equip young women with the morality to conform to the status quo. Beyond this conventional notion of moral education, young women have turned inward in attempts to discover various forms of care of the self. Our turning inward has prompted us to recreate the textbook notion of self-care, jumble its meaning and force a new meaning out of the conventional understanding. We embrace an adapted version of 'self-care' in a radical form. This is best described as self-love which opens up as the gateway to our performance of freedom and democracy.

The significance of self-love is crucially connected to the motion of becoming self-politicised. Self-politicization has involved young women turning their gaze upon themselves (and turning inwards) in complex processes of refusing what is said about them. As demonstrated by my participants, attaching value to the body, adorning the body in particular ways and marking the body personally allows bodies to talk back to dominant myth-making. The body talks back in a process of self-politicization that is not narrowly reliant on, for example, political parties, existing radical ideologies or even more conventional expressions of feminism. Karen Jankulak

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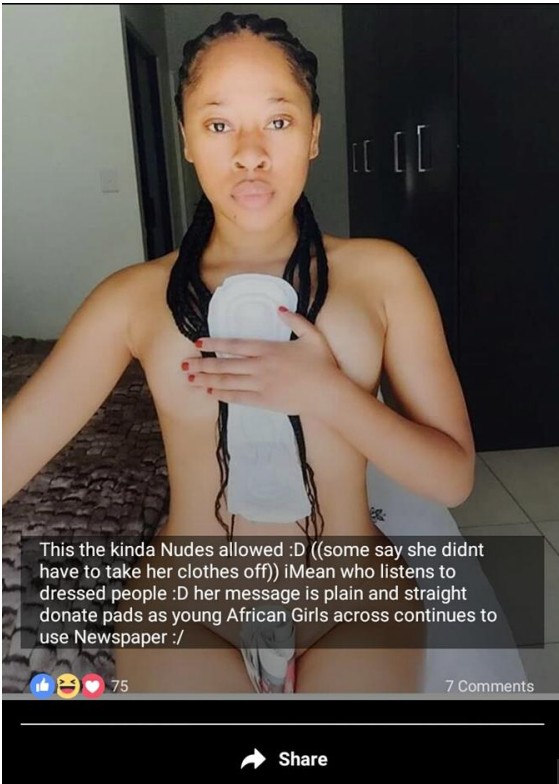
[25] Journal of Educational Enquiry

lecturer in Medieval Celtic History and Literature at the University of Wales, draws upon the notion of women as self-politicised through the conception of Mary Cullen's (2013) work. This is a profoundly political process and reveals "women as a politicized and assertive social category in their own right […]" (Jankulak, 2002: 710).

Cullen's work entitled, *Telling it Our Way: Essays in Gender History* (2013) is what inspired me to strive to go about my own way in this study because my participants showed me that through seemingly frivolous activities they are able to unlock the potential of women's complex political agencies. In line with this, Anne Bridget Ryan's (1997) doctoral thesis entitled, *Feminist Subjectivities: sources for a politicized practice of women's personal development education* offered insights into what 'doing' involved in her study. 'Doing' refers to seemingly a-political acts of performing politicized self-reflection (1997: 277). Thus, I wanted to go about 'doing' and 'telling' in tandem with my participants to reflect our self-politicized efforts (1997:277).

Politics of emotions

Rage, as noted in the previous chapter, has been crucial to my work with participants. Like other emotions, rage often eludes blunt research methods and tools even when these attempts to live up to the best of feminist qualitative research methods. In the course of interacting with my participants, rage has often complicatedly become entangled with emotions of sadness, pleasure and joy as we have shared journeys of 're-membering', self-revelation and self-affirmation. Working in the experimental ways that I have as a researcher-participant has allowed me to experience the value and relevance of these emotions and their centrality to discourses in the public domain.

Since my research began, such discourses as mentioned above have become increasingly important in the national public domain. Thus, the Fees Must Fall movement has been characterized not only by students' opposition to high fees and undemocratic present but also by young feminists' vigorous opposition to misogyny and patriarchy within the movement. Women students have used social media and their bodies to make their voices heard and an extremely powerful tool in these voices involve sharing and communicating feelings.

This the kinda Nudes allowed :D ((some say she didnt have to take her clothes off)) iMean who listens to dressed people :D her message is plain and straight donate pads as young African Girls across continues to use Newspaper :/

75   7 Comments

Share

Aside: (The comment in the photo is that of the person who first shared the image, not the woman in the image).

The image above was found on my Facebook newsfeed (on the 8th of August in 2016, at 11:11 am shared by a Facebook friend) as an offshoot of the Fees Must Fall movement. I immediately screenshot it to archive because it resonates with how young women are engaging in body talk over social media to raise consciousness around women's inviolable rights to their own bodies.

In joining the chorus of young women's voices, my own intervention took the following form:

Above is a screenshot of my Facebook profile picture uploaded on the 19th of October 2016. This sprung out of a need to express myself as a student resonating with the Fees Must Fall movement in so far as de-colonialisation goes but violent protests endangering the lives of other students does not bode well with me. The message written in red across my hand, "violence must fall", was written with red lipstick (a hyper-feminine marker of consumerist culture. I use the material available to me to activate a civic voice and engagement and that is my body). My response stemmed from a need to express myself as a student resisting what I see as being masculinized ways of asserting political power. Out of all the profile pictures I had since I created my account, people connected with this one the most with many sharing it on their Facebook profiles, too. I interpret this as a form of "inventing of community" of forging unity and affiliation around shared ethical and political beliefs. Participatory action is evident here through the "sharing" or distribution of this image. Here, body-politics is engaged with through standpoint knowledge for the amplification of the civic voice through social media.

Our body talk has echoed political energies in the national context in other ways. One example is the political that erupted over social media about Pretoria High School for Girls. It is significant that our deeply emotional reflections on hair echoed the depth of emotions associated with young girls' experiences in high schools. Our

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localized public engagement, therefore, mirrored a much broader public process in which girls, far younger than us, used available media to recall painful memories, identify their experiences of silencing and invisibilisation. In so doing, we became active political agents within the public sphere.

I drew on, *The Daily Maverick* [26](2016), because the link was shared by one of my Facebook friends and found its way on my newsfeed. The issue raised at this particular school illustrates a deeper social problem still affecting social life in South Africa. This, is not just a micro social issue about hair: it is about racism. One student's experience began trending on social media. She came to be known as the 'girl with the uncontrollable hair', thirteen- year-old, Zulaikha Patel [27]. She gave a speech in class about employment inequities in South Africa within the context of pre and post-Apartheid. Outlining the ills of apartheid as well as the role of trade unions in her speech, she had to report to the principal's office and was threatened with suspension.

Her parent's contested the suspension but the school's hair regulations were used as leverage against the student. The student and her family voiced their experience on social media. Their action resulted in a scourge of shares, hashtags and public dialectic around gender, race, and hair. At the start of this study, as part of my background research, the recurring theme I discussed was a reference to the India Arie's (2006) song: *I am not my hair*. In 2016, those words also resonated with many women, this time as a public dialogue hash tagged as- #IamNotMyHair. *Times Live*[28] reported that even Solange Knowles[29] "joins #StopRacismAtPretoriaGirlsHigh fight, she added her voice to the thousands of messages of support for the girls at Pretoria Girls High School"[30]. In 2014, before all the media attention on the local experiences of young women, Reneé reflected on her experience of personal hair management as well as management guidelines imposed on her by the authoritarian discipline she was met with in high school. Reneé's deeply personal testimony of her own experiences of hair management at school has therefore been echoed in young women's recent airing their frustrations, pain and distress in the public domain. Yet, the emotions associated with participants' expression and memories have not only been those of sadness, frustration, anger and pain. They have also been characterized by joy and a sense of triumph over the submission and compliance to authoritarianism which gave way to a newfound sense of intractability after matriculating.

Attempting to construct a woman-centred discourse to counter the overarching male-oriented institutionalization of language and thought processes Luce Irigaray (1985) draws on psychoanalysis to show

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[26] www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2016-08-30-pretoria-girls-high-protest-against-sacrificed-cultures-and-identities/

[27] www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2016-08-30-pretoria-girls-high-protest-against-sacrificed-cultures-and-identities/

[28] Online version of, *The Times,* a popular South African daily newspaper and an offshoot of *The Sunday Times.* See: www.timeslive.co.za

[29] Songstress Beyoncé Knowles's sister. An internationally acclaimed singer, in her own right.

[30] www.timeslive.co.za/entertainment/2016/09/01/Solange-Knowles-joins-StopRacismAtPretoriaHigh-fight

that harmful and negative views of women can be overcome only when they are exposed and, in that way, demystify perceptions of personal problems being individual failings. Airing personal stories of pain in the public domain is crucial to this cathartic process of redefining the source of the problem in the social (Irigaray, 1985: 34). In this way, personal storytelling about pain can become a triumphant way of overcoming personal pain. After Reneé shared the disciplinary narrative with me, she concluded that, *the more freedom I get, the more expressive I become. When I finished school I realized how we mustn't be scared about what people's gonna say* (10th of May, 11:45, Muizenberg Historic Train Station).

New versions of democracy

This subsection is linked to chapter Three in that it relates to the centrality of young women's creation of community around feeling freedom through joy, pleasure, and fun.
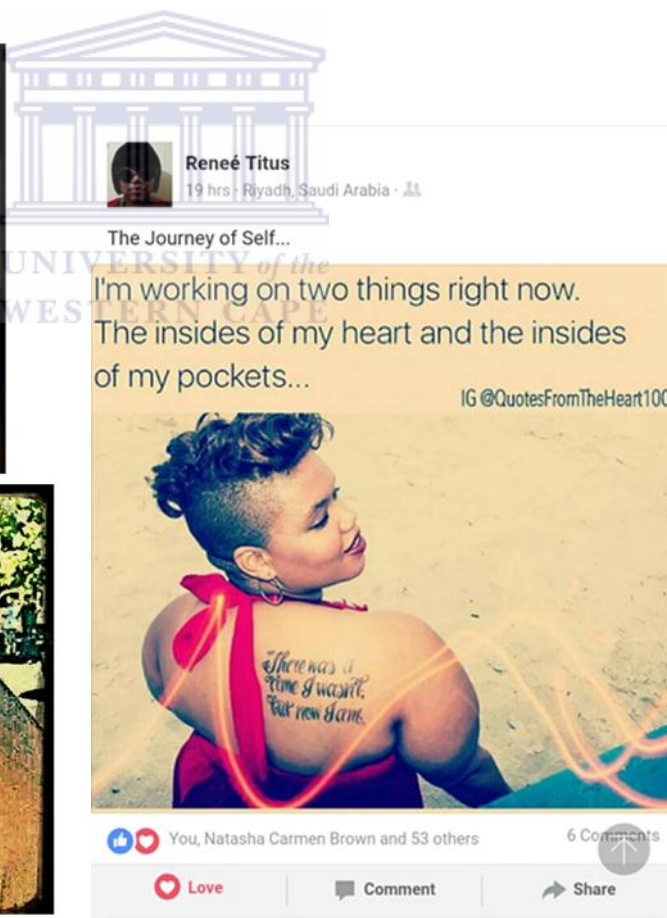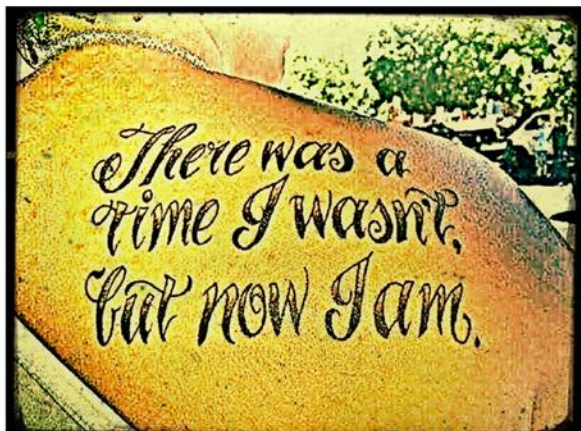
The image (left top), is a screenshot of Reneé's Instagram post (selfie) uploaded on the 22nd of September, 2016. (Above left- bottom), is a photograph from Reneé's Facebook mobile uploads of her tattoo which I edited and presented here as a collage as approved by her. Her tattoo is her life motto. It expresses, non-verbally, her opinion publically. This post marks the beginning of her journey of self-reliance while being uprooted and working abroad. Above (right) is an edit image by Reneé of a photograph from our group photo-shoot, which Reneé personalized and shared on Instagram and Facebook on the 17th of November 2016, thereby providing some more about her journey of self-subsistence, progressive development and love of self.

Reneé taps into a combination of vernacular art and bodyhood. She documents the here and now of her body and the space she inhabits as a part of her self-reflective process of meaning-making in life. She expresses this sentiment by saying that: **"now, is where I try to be always".** Reneé refers here not only to the geographical conception of space but also 'now' as linked to a consciousness of living in the moment and living life to its fullest. The sentiment of living fully in the present also resonates with me as a performance of reclamation; that is a conscious act of rebellion because of the marginal position young women experience in social life. In this definition, we react by showing that we deserve to take up space and therefore try to make each moment count by living with purpose to celebrate being present in the world and living, 'in the now'.

Reneé's performance of living in the now is a proactive, creative, self-representing process of capturing her lived experience via her uploads over social media. Public participation is evoked by her sharing of her life's narrative which is composed of a series of standpoint based knowledge snapshots. She creates an open-dialogue by posting these snapshots of 'the now' with everyone who forms a part of her virtual world. Reneé's exhibit of moments and memories of her lived experiences in a transformative capacity is testimony to her journey of 'doing it for herself' linked to the aphorism, sisters doing it for themselves[31]. Each time I scrolled down my Facebook newsfeed or Instagram and came across Reneé's chronicles of her journey through life via creative expression, I admired her 'voice' as it is expressed so vividly through text and/or image. The chronicles she captures through social media denotes that, even through weaknesses, she became strong and that her experiences of fear makes her fearless and that her wisdom is gained through standpoint knowledge. Her creative process of self-reflection also becomes her civic voice for public participation which is of her own design.

"Art is an expression of self in the moment of now. Thus, I capture the moments as best I can. Motto-There was a time I wasn't, but now, I AM" –Reneé (22nd of September, 2016, Instagram).

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[31] An iconic pop culture song, "Sisters Are Doin' It for Themselves" (1985) by the Eurythmics and Aretha Franklin shift of consciousness and call to action- for the empowerment of women and sisterhood. See: https://youtu.be/nGdLgk1hKU.

According to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann what is 'here and now' presented to us in everyday life is the "realissium of [our] consciousness" (1966: 36). Our social realities of everyday life is organized around the 'here' of our bodies and the 'now' of our present (Luckmann and Berger, 1966).Our lived experiences relate to how the physical body processes and expresses practical knowledge. Osman Latiff (2016) confronts space and polity and more importantly how there exists a nexus between bio-politics, geo-politics and body politics which is pertinent to self-knowledge and self-representation. Through our bodies and senses we experience the world, bodyhood is attached to physical sites where we make meaning. Latiff's (2016) conception of the contemporary space as a landscape of otherness and a space of resistance reveals how women can challenge dominant discourses and 'frames of nothingness'. Reneé's life motto, **"there was a time I wasn't, but now I am",**[32] is especially revealing in linking her sense of physical to political presence. Women were marginalized by the systematic formulation of civic participation. Through creativity, Reneé and many other women are able - through determined re-invention – to self-identify as meaning-makers of their own lives. As a [young] woman, Reneé's uplifting motto speaks to the struggle to challenge the symbolic violence attached to our identities as women who have been born into a nation of subordination rooted in a patriarchal culture of systemic violence. Through our creative imaginaries, we as [young] women conjure up new dimensions of liberatory subversions of agency. The meme's (below) by CJ and Reneé illustrate this:
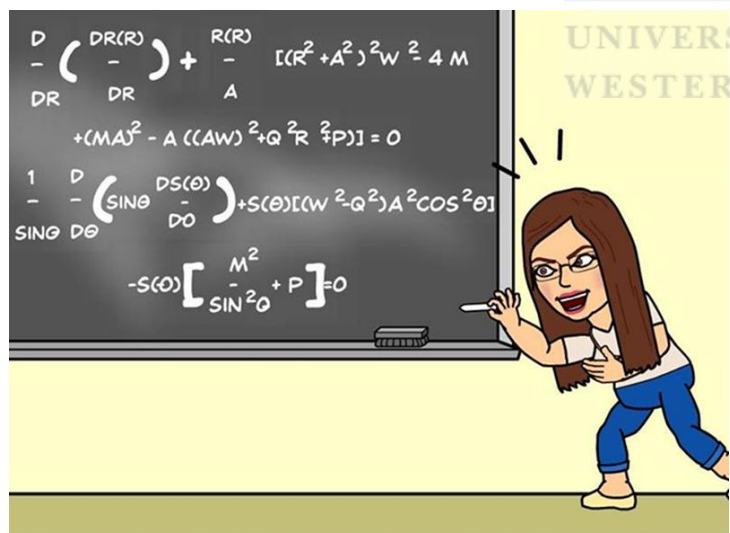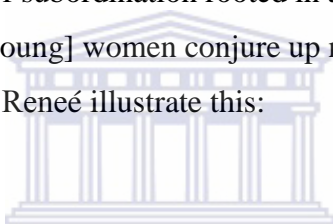
Claudia has done it. She's solved the universe.

Aside: uploaded on Facebook on, the 20th of November 2013.

Above, is CJ's creation done via the Facebook application *Bitstrips*. Her creation of this illustration is an example of what it means to, 'play with memesis' (Isaak, 1996: 3). Through memesis: an individual can

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[32] 17th of November, 2016, IG

transcend the conventional self and liberate the personality (Caillois, 1958: 19). CJ's meme (above) calls to question the very underpinnings of the natural state of gender via the lens of pure science and which is called into question here. CJ, herewith, breaks the traditional stereotyped gender association that science is of and for the reserve of men. This meme was shared on her Facebook timeline.

Aside: Initially shared Facebook by Reneé, first uploaded of the 6th of November 2013 by Renee, on her Facebook profile. At a later time, we engaged and it became integrated into the study.

In line with CJ's artistic expression of self, Reneé's meme, which is hash-tagged "in it to win it", stands as a creative expression of her enduring belief in herself and confidence that she can succeed in all she sets her mind to. This particular memory relates to year-end exams during her undergraduate studies.

Reverting to CJ's meme once more, there appears to be a play with memesis in order to negotiate and rebel against the problem positing that, via positivism 'only one truth' is said to exist. With positivism there is no place for feelings, memory and what is truly qualitative. Instead there is cause and effect, calculating, predicting and controlling human behavior. Feminist empiricism centers around questioning taken-for-granted concepts. The example here playfully refuses many of the core assumptions of positivism and 'celebrates the self' in ways that reject masculinist, and laboriously rationalist forms of self-affirmation because CJ is putting herself in the paternalist picture and, in so doing, showing discontent and a reflection of resistance through mapping her imaginary through what I conceive as a radical form of humour. Her subversion, involving new ways of conceptualizing knowledge production, also produces a new form of knowledge with an innovative potential to re-define and explain the self in relation to a surrounding world. This clearly shows how creativity in our meaning-making process cultivates self-awareness around transformation in self-representation as well as a confidence and belief in our alterative in knowledge-production.

Emily Zinn (2000) draws on Njabulo Ndebele's essay, "The Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Some New Writings on South Africa" (cited in Zinn, 2000: 246). Ndebele boldly called for South African authors to direct energies away from what he termed the 'spectacular' which is defined as the broad, dramatic presentation of the injustices of the apartheid system and to "redirect the ordinary" to focus attention on the everyday lives of the South African people, thereby producing writing that can "break down the barriers of the obvious in order to reveal new possibilities of understanding and action" (Ndebele, cited in Zinn, 2000: 246). Ndebele's views about the ordinary are important in valuing their relevance of playful and seemingly trivial expression that can articulate the political.

Rebecca C. Hains (2009) highlights that a connection between feminism as the women's empowerment movement and commercial politics of change exists. As a [young] woman, I still self-identify as a feminist at heart. At the same time, and like many participants, I am drawn to ideas about the inextricable connections between signifiers, resources and sites that feminists have traditionally been quite critical of. I am especially interested in Robert Goldman et al's (1991), *Commodity feminism* , which suggests how complicatedly young women navigate potentially oppressive resources (the internet, fashion, popular culture) in efforts to destabilize economic political and ideological power and how young women resituates themselves in existing worlds as powerful creators of meaning.

It is worth stressing a critique that was raised in the previous chapter, namely that women of the contemporary age receive empowerment messages aligned with feminism and then also live in a consumerist driven society where self-care is commoditized. Goldman et al (1991) establishes that feminist discourses have been rerouted in mass-media to be aligned with a rationale favouring commodity relations (1991: 348). Opting not to contest the legitimacy of feminist discourse as infiltrated by popular culture, advertisers have instead channeled key proponents of feminist discourse and attached it to consumer culture. Advertisers are said to compete at translating women's discourses into stylized commodity signs. The authors argue that even though, at first glance, it may appear as evidence of a new era of democratic cultural pluralism; the many faces of feminism which appear in women-focused advertisement media, these are just one aspect of a complex, multi-faceted internally contradictory hegemonic process. This stands as evidence of an ongoing dialectic between dominant and oppositional (Goldman et al, 1991).

It is Michelle M. Lazar's (2006), *Discover The Power Of Femininity!* that analyzes global 'power femininity' in local advertising is concerned with the articulation of an empowered/ powerful feminine identity. She identifies "popular (post) feminism as a media-friendly, consumer-oriented discourse" (Lazar, 2006:505). Moreover, she is agreeable with Goldman et al's (1991) sentiment around the advertising media and social advertising of this kind being "rarely genuinely progressive" in terms of women's empowerment politics (Lazar, 2006).

Nevertheless, she articulates that 'power femininity' "is a 'subject-effect' [loaning Judith Butler's notion] of a global discourse of popular (post)feminism, which incorporates feminist signifiers of emancipation and empowerment as well as popular post-feminist assumptions that feminist struggles have ended" (Lazar, 2005: 505). Consumer culture is presented as a celebratory facet of femininity as well as an outlet for self-aestheticisation.

To argue that I or my participants remain unaffected by these dynamics would be to force and analysis which I have been trying to avoid in this study. At the same time, I have tried to stress that many young women are actively, self-consciously and inventively searching for new ways of identifying power and empowerment and that these journeys are not simply evidence of their having been swayed by popular culture and consumer culture.

Their activity is connected to broader patterns in Cape Town. For example, in 2016, Rudi Geyser has photographed Cape Town's 'defiant women' via a series of portraits which features a select group of young women. His collection is titled, *Kwaai Girls* (cool girls in Cape Town lingo). Personal identities and Cape Town's subcultural movements are explored by Geyser; one of which is embodied by Laura Windvogel. Known by her pseudonym, Lady Skollie. She is a Cape-Town-born, fashion blogger, photographer, radio host and a visual artist who plays with sociopolitical messages in her artwork.

Geyser highlights through 'Kwaai Girls' the growing feminist movement in our country. According to Geyser, his intention "is for the viewer to get an insight into these supremely individual and real women […] I want them to ask questions about femininity and what it means to be a woman, particularly in South Africa" (http://inda.ba/10M27IM).This is the type of civic dialogue that young women tap into on Facebook and that resonates with this study and my participants' efforts to counteract traditional definitions of femininity.

Another example is offered by Sabelo Mkhabela who posted a piece on Digital Artist based in Cape Town. Obakeng Moroe, who celebrates women of colour, explains that: "[some] are just images of women with interesting looks that caught my eye […]. The true inspiration behind why I picked up the stylus is the excellent work by my friend and fellow illustrator David Tshabalala created with his, *Who Run The World?* Insta-bition[33]. I truly think women, more so women of colour, need to be celebrated more and admired for who they are, how powerful they are and can be […]" (http://okayafrica.BETA.com). Both Geyser and Moroe's illustrations of

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[33] (Portmanteau of "Instagram" and "Exhibition"). Created in 2014 to honour young women. Tshabalala's playful style created a friendly invite for the public to grapple with issues of identity and gender. Moreover, it stood as a commemoration for Women's Month- profiling young South African women as powerful markers of change- an active attempt to not get stuck on our past and struggles but rather to hone in on the present and future. Tshabalala's title can be linked to Beyonce's (2011) track: *Run the World (Girls).* Which had a particularly powerful impact on participants of this study and beyond. See: Rebecca C. Hains (2013) *The Significance of Chronology in the Commodity Feminism: Audience Interpretations of Girl Power Music.*

highly stylized women who through their style express messages of 'girl power'[34]-self-love, self-care and independent women. There seems to be much about these examples that is not simply an echo of strategic or promotable pseudo-feminism for mass consumption.

It is useful to refer to CJ's sense of herself in relation to more conventional notions of freedom and democracy in explaining how disparaged messages of "girl power" articulate a very clear sense of the subject's quest for independence and not conformity.

Aside: Photo created of herself posted on Facebook, on the 14th of May, 2012 by CJ (number 10 in a series of quotes. The name Pink Tide is that of, CJ's blog which she started in 2011), captioned: "The things that make me different are the things that make me- A.A Milne".

"I have my own opinion and that's why I don't like to follow the masses. I live my life in a way to avoid being a closed minded sheep. I've always been different but not just because I want to be, it's just how I am" –Melissa (25th of August 2013, 16:16:57 pm, Whatsapp).

Aside: left): CJ's original picture (shared on Facebook via Instagram (IG) on, 20th of July 2015) before the activation of her creative tapping into her performative artistic expression of self. (Right): IG photo shared on Facebook, on the 6th of August 2015) is what CJ describes as, **Insta** [gram] **hair** and **Insta** [gram] **eyes**.

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[34] Professional academics classify this as a "buzzword" pertaining to women's empowerment-individual power and freedom that a woman experiences.

Like those in chapter three, these images can be understood as part of the self-politicising process and renaming of democracy that young women often pursue in the form of text, visuality and self-representation. This envisaging of democracy is not a simple matter of complicity versus resistance which is a dualism that has dominated many South African explorations of popular culture and politics. Instead, consciousness-raising is important to this project as we must acknowledge how embodied subjectivities, with reference to race, class and gender, constantly show a criss-cross of back and forth contestation between conforming and rebelling/resisting.

As conveyed in the previous chapter, play is vital to this re-envisaging of the self and new possible worlds. Donna Haraway, a distinguished Professor Emerita in the History of Consciousness and Feminist Studies at the University of California, has explored long before social media identity play got off the ground, the possibilities for play. Via conceptualizing of a metaphor of the cyborg, which allows women to articulate a subversive process of liberation. Haraway described in, *a manifesto for cyborgs* (1985) which is a major shift in society. She expressed that "race, gender and class are in the process of transformation (1985: 173)". It is necessary to apply energy to becoming aware of how we deal with differences perceived or imagined. Our attitudes to differences are also inherited in our socialised understandings of race, class, gender and other -isms. This does not mean that 'othering' is less present in the digital world. On the contrary, I believe that this is undoubtedly why we need to strengthen our presence in that greatly contested realm armed with a consciousness of our bodies and embodiment.

In celebration of our union with machines, it is critical to keep in mind that technology has been an integral part of the construction and socio-historical positioning of identities. This ever-increasing digitized world around us infiltrates into our daily lives and indeed becomes an extension of ourselves or intertwined with our online presence in the form of avatars and our physical self. For us, the participants in this study, there exists an amalgamation of a back and forth intermingling of performativity as an embodiment and selfhood, be it in the 'real' or 'virtual' world (George and Bennett, 2005).

Aside: CJ shows her Insta(gram) piercing creation shared on Facebook on the 1st of November, 2015. Here, the imaginative allows her performativity without having to endure the pain of piercing her skin. It is a fun outlet to explore stylized expressions of the self.

Aside: A selfie which I uploaded on Facebook, showing my self-made lipstick (2015), a year later and I am creating my own hair colours (hair dye), no longer purchasing commercially. My small way of trying to oppose an overarching macro system or institutionalized forms of power over my micro positionality in, patriarchal society.

The possibilities of play explored by my participant's use of their bodies' surfaces, a play that Haraway (1985) links to the metaphor of the cyborg and a new postmodern feminism, is suggested in Zinn's (2000) *Rediscovery of the Magical: on Fairy Tales, Feminism, and the New South Africa.* The role of the power of the imagination, ties in with RuPaul's (world's most famous drag queen) conception: "[w]hen you become the image of your own imagination. It's the most powerful thing you could ever do" (Nicholson, 2015: 1). Echoing this is Joshua

Miller (2005), a Professor of Government and Law at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania who traces a connection between beauty and democratic power showing that at the crux of drag lies dress(ing) up.

 Aside: Mobile and Instagram selfies which Reneé shared with me, she playfully exhibits her creative flair of self-love.

The images above, capturing Reneé's exuberant creative flair, is what RuPaul hones in on. He states that, "[y]ou're born naked, and the rest is drag" (cited in Isaak, 1996: 195). According to RuPaul, drag is a rebirth.RuPaul further explains that "[i]t's the story of the hero with a thousand faces, and Superman and Buddha and Krishna. I always say this persona is my Superman to Clark Kent. And it's true for everyone, really. There's a hero lurking – thank you, Mariah Carey- in everyone*"* (Nicholson, 2015:1). Here, determined inventiveness informs everyday creativity and becomes transgressive performances of human experience. Playful, informal art production forms a part of the meaning-making process involved in self-representation within a capitalist consumer culture for young women- the interchange results in new social reconfigurations of femininity for women. This conveys an alternative sense of self in the contemporary which challenges complex forms of power than an earlier generation of women faced and, in some ways, may have found it more straightforward to be radical.

Chapter Five:

Concluding Reflections on Understanding Citizenship and Democracy

How can truly democratic participation ever be achieved through existing dominant discourses that privilege certain forms of political expression and knowledge, as well as rigid ideas about what constitutes 'the political'? Is it possible to challenge situations where standards for both identifying and evaluating what constitutes civic and political participation and knowledge-making simply reflect a reductionist approach? Is it possible to undo the tightly stitched exclusivist and elitist norms from the fabric of society today? Is it possible to strive towards a dismantling of the scope of narrow definitions attached to the notion of citizenship, described in chapter one, in order to facilitate a necessity of social scientists to seriously consider whole-heartedly looking beyond the binary when seeking to understand political behaviour, consciousness, and agencies? What forms of epistemic violence occur when we are required to neaten up and create linear, comprehensive, tidy, data from stories of the lived, social experience and use them instrumentally and in line with scholarly autocracy?

I have been troubled throughout the writing of this thesis. I was determined to understand the value of messy practices of inquiry in striving toward transgressing linear and dualist thinking (albeit in small ways). Lather's (1991) exploration of messy texts as an approach that does not ultimately lead us to abandon all attention to meaning but, makes our exploration of social processes so much more multi-layered proved to be invaluable in this project's exploration of exploding the dualisms of belonging. In drawing on her exploration, I have found that experiential texts are an offshoot of the fundamental logic of standpoint texts which are not only unruly, messy and unpredictable, but also the source of very rich meaning-making and knowledge production.

I had to interrogate and explore my space of personal standing within this study and the way I decided to go about it, which was in line with Lather's (1997; 1999) experiment. This is along the lines of the intermittent voices of the researcher/writer/participant in order to de-centre the objective of the traditional goal of producing a neat, hyper-rational representation of the voices and meanings I encountered. My goal was to unlearn systematic analysis of what I found convenient and manageable and try to unfathom and explore more comprehensive and difficult subject matter. I have only begun to scrape the surface of unlearning and have by no means truly 'discovered' an alternative to the dominant ways in which academic knowledge about others is based on selecting what is manageable and excluding what is not. At the same time, I believe that the effort to deal with "messy" complexity becomes increasingly important as marginalized groups struggle to resist complex forms of domination and silencing.

Growing literature especially that of feminists, points to a change in the nature of citizen participation and how it is shaped by the type of spaces it occurs in. It also reveals a small but growing group of researchers'

increasing sensitivity to how to understand this participation, especially among young women who are complicatedly inserted into neo-authoritarian contexts. These are marked by consumer capitalism and technological advancement that offer both possibilities and limits for transgression.

This study has sought to deal throughout with ways in which young women's self-definitions, creative expression and self-inscription of their bodies reflects a determined search for defiant forms of self-definition and belonging and also envisages individual personal and collective freedom. The aim of this brief concluding chapter is to reflect directly on how the participants have taken up the challenge of creating and inhabiting "invented forms of citizenship" as coined by Faranak Miraftab (Miraftab, 2004:1).

Faranak Miraftab, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning of the University of Illinois has contributed to scholarship around contested spaces and how it affects public action particularly within the context of the Global South. According to Miraftab two distinct categories of citizenship exist (2004: 1).Invited spaces are formalized structures existing within a conceptual framework designed for the political effectiveness of governance for the inducement of citizen participation. Invented spaces of participation stand in contrast to those state participatory, formalized spaces. It is an informal space where dominant notions of democratic practice is devised at ground level (Miraftab, 2004: 1-2). In line with Miraftab's (2004) conception, we are at once prompted into a rethinking of participation in terms of organically created spaces, those which women shape for themselves.

Laurence Piper, a Professor of Political Studies and Economic Management Sciences based at the University of the Western Cape combines intellectual forces with, Lubna Nadvi, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal with a doctorate in Political Science and expertise in International Relations, Women and Politics and Comparative Politics. Together, Piper and Nadvi (2010) trace the move in the literature of popular mobilisation in contemporary South Africa to the recent South African invented spaces of active citizenship. By considering how invited spaces are being tapped into by communities in order to engage the local participatory governance in informal ways, the authors argue that a 'disengaged-enraged dichotomy' comes to the fore within the South African political landscape (Piper and Nadvi, 2010: 212). They identify that there exists a tendency of civil society to disengage from, or become increasingly infuriated at, local government for the disempowerment of civil society as linked to the democratization process. In response to this, civil society is opting to fashion oppositional invented spaces to recreate the meanings and conditions of democracy.

This study was initiated before the student Fees Must Fall movement. A mobilizing comradery of a large number of young people has erupted with the Fees Must Fall movement and this has been affiliated with a growing consciousness of decolonization, feminism, intersectionality and a spirited quest for radical change.

It was important to show in this study how participants have often directly rejected the spaces, expression and vocabularies that are prescribed (that they have been 'invited' to take up) and have instead pursued inventive, imaginative and eclectic languages, strategies, spaces and resources for articulating their ideas. This rejection of 'invited' spaces is explicit in the views of one participant below:

"I have not really thought much about our government or cared very much about what happened at any election (after 1994). Living in South Africa, you tend to fall into 1 of 2 categories; first being active in knowing about what is happening in our country and what can be done to correct it, and 2nd, not really caring about anything and just living your life as best you know. I fell into the 2nd. Now, living in a new place (Thailand), with the automatic urge to know what is happening back home, I tend to read more news articles, which is opening my eyes to the current state our nation is in. For the first time in my life, I want a change for South Africa. South Africa is a young nation and it is in a difficult stage right now. This is the point where change needs to happen" –CJ (07th of August 2016, 15:00, Whatsapp).

CJ's statement to me is indicative of young people's growing interest in 'social change' and 'politics', a contemporary exhibition of the creative, tailor-made, nuanced, redefinitions of citizenship. I interpret CJ's physical relocation attached to her materialised physical and conceptual space and cognisance around **"living your life as best you know"** [35] as not political withdrawal, but a way of personalising ethical, moral and political ideas which create vestiges of freedom and indeed, reconfigure traditional perceptions around ways of belonging. I resonate with CJ's last sentence (above) too: **"South Africa is a young nation and it is in a difficult stage right now. This is the point where change needs to happen"**[36]. South Africa needs a new beginning. From the perspective of a [young] woman born and raised in South Africa, as it stands, formalized post-Apartheid democracy as I've experienced it is has proven to be more fictitious than an actualized, lived enabler of achieving an equity-driven, civic participatory liberatory space for all to access.

In terms of self-identification, embodied by CJ who is now living in Thailand, I see her enacting her own organically, invented participatory space via an intersectional embracement of what she articulated as being inspired by certain elements associated with as radical self-love and humanitarianism[37] but not in a stiffly mechanical neo-liberal sense.

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[35] (07th of August 2016, 15:03, Whatsapp).
[36] (07th of August 2016, 15:05, Whatsapp).
[37] An attitude or way of life centred on an individual's dignity, worth and capacity for self-realization (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2016).

As a [young] woman who has also felt alienated by available forms of political affiliation, political participation and membership of 'feminist' or 'progressive' collectives that are sometimes highly hierarchical in their structure, CJ's conception of **"just living your life as best you know"[38]** resonates with my own values. The various poly-vocal voices in this study can therefore be seen to constitute testimonies and expressions of invented citizenship that reflect bottom-up narratives, ideas, desires and registers, rather than those dictated by various forms of proscription and authoritarianism. As indicated in my interactions with participants, young women with strong desires to express themselves creatively and independently are often directly or indirectly disaffected by formal political spaces.

Certain community leaders as well as elders of local society dictate to young women (and often men as well) political strategies and ideals that might have resonated with them but have little to no bearing on young people's lives who inhabit very different worlds in comparison to the older generation. The authoritative figureheads embody in institutional governmentality- encumbering the burdens of repression- cognitively and physically limits young people's access to formal political spaces. In turn, young people experience a mix of distressed memories, thoughts and, indeed, impulses that give rise to anxieties around liberty and democracy. Yet, at the same time, the contemporary is a space characterized by an abiding interest of fusing in a non-homogeneous way the senses, repressed anxieties, the cognitive and access to social media and consumer resources in ways that amplify young people's often nuanced performances of citizenship. In line with this, Melissa articulates:

"I personally don't have much interest in our government and try to keep away from news about it as much as I can. It's all so negative and corrupt. I'd rather not be subjected to the banter going on about it. It doesn't really serve any purpose in my life at this present moment as much as people tell me that it does affect me. Talking about this got me thinking. When people talk about freedom- are they referring to the government, as well as our own?" (–Melissa, 11th of August 2016, 11:03 pm, Whatsapp).

Hyper-rationalised, overzealously narrated or extracted versions of women's experiences are a recurring pedagogical issue that reduces their actual voices. Through the multi-vocal expression and knowledge of a group of young women, this study has sought to identify and trace ways of 'coming to voice'[39] that many young women, often across racial and class divides, develop. Feminist scholars have highlighted across history the repressive nature of not troubling issues about who presumes power to understand whose voice matters and, in fact, what *voice* actually constitutes. As the work of certain recent researchers drawn on throughout this study,

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[38] (07th of August 2016, 15:06, Whatsapp).
[39] bell hooks' (2014) notion of 'coming to voice' being a revolutionary gesture and emancipatory invention.

the challenge of inventing citizenship is considerable since it not only involves rejecting what exists but also involves innovatively sifting through various elements of popular culture, mass media and associated consumer resources in the creation of new spaces of political and civil activity.

Consciously and unconsciously, notions of radical self-love and creative reimagining's are infused with women's performances of bodyhood and expressions of agency or citizenship. Re-visioning and tapping into creative avenues opens up the possibility for empowerment to unfold and take forward the reimagination of self and others in relation to performances of citizenship. A fairly uncharted and complex world comes to surface where creative social change and implicit differentiation reveals the dualisms of belonging present for [young] women and indeed our meaning-making, process and self-represented performances of citizenship. At the same time, self-love emerges alongside self-discipline. Self-discipline, in turn, emerges along with rebellion. The post-feminist and neoliberal teachings intertwine and become instrumental as a particular kind of performance emerges- one orchestrated by dualisms of belonging. The duplexed connection between post-feminism and neoliberalism is fashioned by popular cultural discourses and gender relations: it is within that restricted orbit that young women try to effect social change.

As demonstrated through this study, however, it is often creative and imaginative meaning making that conveys how complex the process of inventing new knowledge can be in drawing out responses from participants in striving to trace a paradigm shift. The contemporary is constructed through an ever-present continuum of dualities encompassing young women's performances of citizenship. Governmentality of the corporeal nature of citizenship is attempted to be re-made, via creative reimagining. Embroiled in the complex binarism of constraint and choice. Body politics are at the crux of the intersectional citizenship struggles- from object to subject, a source of power and freedom, inherently always unruly requiring discipline. Embodying both, empowerment and marginalization. Young women's unique displays of deference and defiance of authoritarianism in their; personal, political and psychological struggles, fuel the need to belong in a new spatial dimension; in striving to uproot the allotment of the secondary status of, young women.

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