'BORN FREES', NEGOTIATING THE TERRAIN TOWARDS SELFHOOD AND WELLNESS: A LIFE ORIENTATION PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study was contextualised within the Life Orientation subject of 'Self in Society'. It acknowledges that the present time is uniquely significant in South African history as the generation of youth leaving school are now considered 'born frees'. This generation is considered to be free from the first-hand trauma that was experienced in the past; they supposedly live in a society free from the shackles of apartheid, and enjoy equality and human rights that affect their entire well-being. 'Born frees', it appears, are still negotiating the journey towards a new identity and freedom. The sample size was nine Grade 11 female learners who attend an urban school in Gauteng Province. The school was purposefully chosen because it had a good track record of class attendance and the learners are proficient in English. Questions revolved around the multiple aspects of self and well-being in society. Focus group sessions were held after which six of the learners completed a questionnaire with open-ended questions based on the sub-topics. All ethical considerations were observed. Findings revealed that these youths are in fact traversing a far more complex political, social, psychological, spiritual and economic landscape than that captured in the phrase 'born frees'.

Keywords: Born free; self in society; Ubuntu; ambitious; equality; human rights

INTRODUCTION

According to UNICEF (2003), South African children born after 1994 are known as 'born frees'. 'Born frees', also known as the 'Mandela generation', are currently between the ages of 20 and below (Fieldworker 2014). Although South Africa attained democracy in 1994 and despite the fact that the first generation of children born after apartheid are now graduating from school, findings from this study indicate that participants are still negotiating the journey towards a new identity different from their parents. After 1994, the South African government began the process of developing a new curriculum for the school system in a democratic country. Life Orientation (LO) was introduced to make a difference in the lives of a new generation of learners. The impetus for this learning field came from international and national research which highlights the need for life skills programmes that prepare learners for life in the complex and dynamic context of the 21st century (WHO 1999; WHO 2003). This context is significant as it highlights the vision that education needs to be developing individuals who are able to make informed choices, take care of the environment, practise responsible citizenship and lead healthy and productive lives. In light of this, 'LO focuses on the development of self-in-society, and this encourages the development of balanced and confident learners who will contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy, and an improved quality of life for all' (Department of Education 2003, 9). Research in the subject of LO focused more on the implementation of the curriculum and the outcomes covered by the subject (Prinsloo 2007; Van de Venter 2008; Christiaans 2006). Furthermore, Magano (Magano 2011; Magano & Gouws 2010; 2011) explored the teaching of LO regarding the emotional, social self-concepts of adolescents and the kind of teacher who teaches the subject LO. Aspects of body image, self-esteem, self-awareness and assertiveness were also covered in the studies by Magano (2004) and Manzini (2012). The current study investigates how adolescents' lives are shaped and influence their choices and actions, constrain or enhance present and future possibilities, and the challenges they face in their transitions towards adulthood.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the study focused on black female adolescents, the authors used an integrative lens of a bio-ecological theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner and the Ubuntu theory. It is widely acknowledged that the self does not develop or exist in isolation but within a complex structure of society and the interrelation factors. Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory was utilised as the main lens underpinning this study (Bronfenbrenner 1979; 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006). This theory postulates that any understanding of identity and selfhood must by its very nature acknowledge the multiple proximal and distal factors which interact with and affect the individual in order to be relevant to the realistic life situations of learners. At the micro level, these include factors such as the personality characteristics of the individual as well as parental and family

structures; at the meso level, these include issues of schooling, teachers, peers, religious and community structures and the interrelationships between them; at the exo level, these include factors of parental employment and stressors faced outside of the direct context of the learner; at the macro level, these include the larger dynamics of race, class, cultural beliefs, norms and societal values. Framing all of these levels and systems is the chronosystem which is the chronological and developmental time periods and related factors in a person's life (Bronfenbrenner 2005). The authors used Ubuntu as a lens in understanding the wellness of 'born frees' and how they negotiate selfhood and wellness in society. The theory of Ubuntu is better explained by Mkhize (1998) in Nussbaum (2003, 3): a person is defined in reference to the community. Furthermore, Mbiti (1991) asserts that it is the rootedness of the self in community that gives rise to sayings such as 'motho ke motho ka batho' meaning it is through others that one attains selfhood. The authors investigated how the black female Grade 11 learners negotiated meaning in attaining selfhood as 'born frees' in society using the two theories. The use of Ubuntu theory is further supported by Asante (2011, 2) who asserts that 'in an African context a person gains his or her meaning in the midst of community'. Mwamwenda (1995) explores the African model of the self and highlights that, in distinction to the independent self valued by the West, Africa emphasises the interdependent self. One of the implications of this is that great concern is given to significant others in all considerations. These youngsters do not develop in isolation. Therefore, the two theories of Bronfenbrenner and Ubuntu served as ideal lenses for the study.

RATIONALE

A study by Langa (2010) examines the complexity of identity and masculinity of adolescent boys in Alexandra Township. Utilising a feminist poststructuralist approach, a study by McKinney (2010) examines how black female learners in post-apartheid South Africa utilise active agency in both acceding to and resisting their discursive positioning in previously white schools. Another study by Gaganakis (2006) argues that 'though race is a significant feature of Black girls' identity, socio-economic and class-related factors emerge as the most significant feature of self-definition' (2006, 364). From these perspectives, identity is viewed as a discursively constituted, fluid and often contradictory construct (McKinney 2010). Gaganakis (2006) adds the further insight that identity is reconstructed as a result of varying places, social processes, socio-historical periods and local contexts. One could imagine that the discursive process is made even more complex and dynamic given the developmental stage of adolescence, the multiple influences and factors involved at this stage. These factors include school demands, parental requirements, peer pressure, issues related to career decisions, emotional and physical changes and so on. Numerous studies on identity, adolescence and schooling have been carried out in the South African post-apartheid context as well as in the broader context (Dawson 2002; Jacobs 2011; Rooth 2005; Soudien 2001; Swartz 2009; Theron & Dalzell 2006; Theron 2008; Thom & Coetzee

2004). Furthermore, there are some studies that have examined the LO curriculum from various angles such as the view of the learner and the methodologies of the educator (Christiaans 2006; Jacobs 2011; Magano 2011; Rooth 2005; Theron 2008).

However, few studies have provided a context for the voice of an adolescent to be heard in describing their understanding of internal capacities as well as the influence of proximal and distal contextual circumstances. Against this background, this study seeks to contribute in filling existing gaps in this research field. Moreover, this study explores the views of the adolescents in describing their understanding of internal capacities as well as the influence of proximal and distal contextual circumstances, how these influence their choices and actions, constrain or enhance present and future possibilities, and the challenges they face in their transitions towards adulthood. The aim was to bring insight to the subject of self and context and relevance to the LO topics based on learner perceptions in order to enhance the value of the LO subject. Ultimately, this understanding could serve the goals of greater self-understanding, increased life skills and well-being inherent in the concept of 'born frees'. The research question was: How are 'born frees' negotiating a terrain towards selfhood and wellness?

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study followed an interpretive design paradigm. The method was qualitative in nature and the approach was a phenomenological research strategy in which the researcher explores and attempts to clarify the meaning of a phenomenon, namely the selfhood of 'born frees' as experienced by participants in a study (Creswell 2009). The study was embedded in the interpretive paradigm in that it acknowledges the subjective viewpoints of the adolescents in this study and sought to elicit and understand the essence of the constituent structure of the phenomenon of self in society (Creswell 2007; Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Merriam 2009). Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Johannesburg research office.

Sampling was purposive and there were nine participants, all in Grade 11. Participants were willing to communicate easily in English and share opinions in a group setting. All participants were either 17 or 18 years old and lived in townships or urban areas within the vicinity. Most participants came from relatively low socio-economic sectors where income was dependent on one employed person in the family with an extended family dependent on that salary. In three of the cases mothers were employed in what one could define as a secure position in a 'good job' (e.g. administrator, manager and teller). The majority of the learners (7) were from single parent homes while the minority (2) came from a household with two parents.

The instruments: The focus group interview questions covered several topics. These include self-awareness, self-esteem, self-development, power relations and gender roles, participation in exercise programmes, life roles, changes towards adulthood, decision-making in general and regarding sexuality, recreation and emotional health,

community, culture, society and significant influences. Participants were also requested to complete a questionnaire with open-ended questions. Questions covered aspects of self and they were given to the girls after the focus groups in order to triangulate data.

Data analysis: In analysing the data collected from the focus groups and questionnaires, the researcher utilised the steps recommended by Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2007). Interviews were transcribed and colour coding was used to identify codes with similar meaning; thereafter a pattern of categories emerged. These categories were further grouped into clusters of similar meanings. This can be referred to as the process of identifying substantive connections and building a picture which is both clearer and more complex than the initial impressions (Henning *et al*. 2007). From these categories the researchers further grouped data into clusters of similar meanings and collapsed them into the following themes:

Themes from questionnaires	Themes from focus group interviews
• Self-awareness based on values • Self-esteem: support from teachers and parents lacking in support • Support of friends viewed as positive regarding body image • Emphasis on gender equality, rights and a sense of independence	• Self-awareness: negative influences of significant others • Self-esteem: complexity of relationship with mothers and friends • Western ideal body image appreciated • Dissonance with traditional African views

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the study shed light on how the learners understand the construct of self and society.

Self-Awareness

There were positive aspects of parental influence regarding self-awareness. Participant A said: 'My mom influenced my awareness'. Research shows that parents play a significant role in influencing their children's values, traits and choices (Magano 2004). It was clear from the findings that, in general, the Grade 11 participants displayed an insightful level of self-awareness when they responded to the question of how they understand what self-awareness is. They valued hard work and wanted to change their circumstances and awareness.

Participants expressed the following views:

Participant B: When we're alone my mom talks to me but when a man is in her life she turns on me. I'm not honest with her.

Participant C: I trust myself.

Participant D: I want to get matric because I am the only one in my family to have attained this.

Participant E: I want to be a good businesswoman and assist people.

The above expressions by these participants of valuing independence signify that they feel that they are responsible beings. This is reinforced by the current tough economic and living conditions for many of them, particularly financial stress (even in cases where a parent is working). The learners valued hard work and were aware of inner potentials, they were also assertive.

Ultimately, acknowledgement also needs to be made of the African conceptualisation of intelligence as broader than the Euro-American one. In African and Western countries, intelligence in its ideal form includes both cognitive and social processes. For example, Serpell (1993, in Nsamenang & Tchombe 2011, 71) clarifies that intelligence among the Chewa of Zambia is understood in terms of four indigenous constructs, namely wisdom, aptitude, responsibility and trustworthiness. These adolescents had wisdom since the values that they learnt from their homes made them display self-awareness and plan their lives in a positive way. They had plans to obtain Grade 12 and to become businesswomen, despite being raised by single parents.

However, there were also negative influences on the self from significant others. The responses below point out those negative expressions that affected the self.

Participant F: My mom is trying to live her life through me. I fight a lot with my mom.

Participant G: My mom doesn't hear or validate me.

Participant H: My mother does not understand if I ask her why if she instructs me to do certain things. She says I think I am wiser than her. I try to explain how I feel she gets angry.

Participant I: I don't want to be bottled up.

The response of Participant F clearly shows that the learner realises that she must have her own sense of self and not live according to her mother's dreams. It is evident that the learner has a sense of freedom of choosing who she wants to be and not living according to what her mother dictates, hence a 'born free' not bound by what the parent enforces. Participant G sounds as if she has a cry for approval or acceptance from her mother. For Participant H, it is clear that she has no approval of expressing herself; her sense of freedom is being challenged. Participant H also expresses her wish of being free and not being controlled by her mother.

Self-awareness and preoccupation with self-image increase significantly during this time, in part because of cognitive-developmental advances at this stage. According to Mead (1934), the self is a social construction resulting from the incorporation of the opinions of significant others. Such reflected opinions are internalised as one's own opinion of self, one's global sense of worth as a person (Harter, Stocker & Robinson 1996).

The findings above indicate that the parents of the 'born frees' do not understand the lifeworld of their children and how they reason. It clearly shows that the two

generations of parents and 'born frees' experience life differently. In the African context, a minor cannot question an elder (UNICEF 2003). Even though the parents do not understand why children question certain issues, the 'born frees' are protected by the African Charter on Children's Rights which attests that culture is dynamic and should be sensitive to changing conceptions of harm (Zimba 2011). Although the African Charter on Children's Rights protects the rights of children ('born frees'), there are criticisms that the Charter did not infuse the African culture into its articles. This is supported by Kaime (2009, 21) who asserts that 'the OAU subscribed to the ideals that the 1959 UN Declaration enunciated. At the same time, the African Children's Declaration gave political force to an otherwise particularistic account of children's rights which did not have an African cultural foundation'. South African adolescents are familiar with the South African Constitution (1996) and the Bill of Rights which give them freedom of expression even though they know that parents or elders do not like that.

Self-esteem, the importance of supportive friends and teachers and the complexity of relationships with mothers

Findings suggested that there were some participants who had low self-esteem due to negative feedback from significant others who surround them. For example,

> Participant A: My mother always puts me down.
>
> Participant B: My self-esteem is low and depends on what others say (about me).
>
> Participant C: Yes, I find it hard to fit in and be accepted and I am self-conscious.
>
> Participant A: Some others think we are young and know nothing.
>
> Participant B: It is disrespectful to express yourself honestly with your elders. I want to be free with my mom.

Parents were generally seen as not supportive towards the self-esteem of participants in this study. In addition, parents were critical of participants, thinking that they are young and know nothing; whereas participants thought they need to express themselves freely with their parents, and that may be seen negatively by their parents.

Only one participant, Participant F, identified the positive influence of a teacher.

> Participant F: Teachers taught me self-belief – I used to care what others thought about me but I've learnt not to care.

Teachers do play a potentially important role in building learners' character and self-confidence.

> With encouragement, participants identified a range of abilities and strengths.
>
> Participant A: I'm open to others and many people come to ask me for advice.
>
> Participant B: I don't get cross easily. I am positive about life.
>
> Participant C: I think logically; I budget well. I'm good at accountancy.

Participant D: I love talking; I would be a good radio presenter.

Participant D: My mom is a rock; she keeps us strong and I am a strong woman.

These statements from participants show that their self-esteem is positive. Participant D said that her mother is a rock and she is also strong. The figurative meaning of a rock may mean something that is very strong and she also says that she is a strong woman. This may also mean that her mother as a single woman managed to keep the family intact. Furthermore, the participant does not look down upon herself and she upholds the way her mother raised her.

Self-esteem is one of the central developmental concepts of adolescence, although the process for developing good self-esteem starts from early childhood (Lerner & Steinberg 2004). It is a perception of one's self and an attitude about one's personality building upon accomplishments over time. Responses from other people play a vital role in this process. Familial and social opinions are critical factors in the development of self-esteem during adolescence (Arslan 2009). Self-esteem has also been directly connected to individuals' social networks and what they hear about themselves from others (Myers, Sweeny & Witmer 2000). Teachers played an important role in teaching self-belief. Friends who consulted with Participant A enabled her to see her strengths and abilities. The network structure that the 'born frees' established clearly links with an African philosophy of Ubuntu and collectivism (Mbiti 1991; Nussbaum 2003).

Body image of adolescents

Participants expressed a sense of honesty with friends and felt that they could be open even when it was difficult. The sense of honesty and openness, which is a reflection of current society, was pervasive in how participants spoke about and perceive friendships.

Participant A: Friends listen without judgement and tell you how you look.

Participant B: I need to be honest, I also tell my friends how their bodies look like whether they are cool or not.

Participant C: I can express my feelings honestly with my friends because everyone's words are important and should be respected.

Participant D: I say what I believe in and what I see on TV is the ideal picture.

Overall, there was a sense of being competitive with other girls, of being conscious of looks and weight and of being sensitive to negative comments of significant others. Participants expressed very positive feelings about their body image when they were losing or had lost weight or were skinny. There is a clear perception of what type of body image is valued by society and there is a strong need to fit into that.

Participant A: I feel awesome about my body because I've recently lost weight.

Participant B: I'm confident because I'm losing weight; my brother says I'm losing weight.

Participant C: I'm confident about my body because it's small and suits my personality.

Only one participant was accepting of her more curvaceous figure but also expressed awareness that this was different to the norm. The participant also embraced her culture which upholds women who are fuller-figured.

> Participant D: I like my body because our culture wants girls to be curvy and I am. My mom says I'm fat and I eat too much. She doesn't validate me.
>
> Participant F: My mom always puts me down, sees the negative, compares me to someone doing better. She wants me to behave the way she behaved as a child and dress like she did, no I can't.

Negativity about the self was linked to participants feeling that people noticed the negative or reinforced a weak point such as being overweight. When participants articulated feeling positive about themselves this was based on self-acceptance.

> Participant A: People notice the negative.
>
> Participant B: People don't compliment.
>
> Participant C: I have come to accept myself.
>
> Participant D: It's hard to trust parents, easier to trust friends.
>
> Participant E: I'm happy with what God has given me.
>
> Participant F: Yes, feel good about being me.

In terms of body image, many participants felt quite negative about their bodies. They were concerned about being thin enough. One participant expressed positive feelings about her body and her 'African curves'.

> Participant A: I'm not thin enough.
>
> Participant B: I'm happy with my body.
>
> Participant C: I have an African body; it has curves.
>
> Participant D: I watch what I eat; I diet.
>
> Participant E: I don't like my body; I think I'm overweight and I always work on it.
>
> Participant F: I'm not happy with my weight. I'm too fat. My mom says I'm fat.
>
> Participant G: I think I'm horrible looking.

For example, as body mass increases during puberty, adolescent females may develop a more negative body image, especially in Western and Eurocentric countries where slimness is seen as an ideal body. This ideal body image is in turn linked to disordered eating and depression (Caradas, Lambert & Charlton 2001).

Interestingly, one participant emphasised that the African culture embraces a more curvaceous female shape as a desired feminine standard despite it being different from what is accepted as a norm for the 'born frees'.

Findings revealed that participants expressed conditional views of their bodies, i.e. they only held positive body image views because they were losing, had lost weight or were naturally skinny. In line with the current study's findings, a study by Le Grange, Louw, Breen and Katzman (2004) reports that black females (ages 15-25 years) achieve

scores equal to or higher on measures of eating disorder pathology compared to those of white and coloured females. It is significant that these 'born frees' may be more captive to the Western ideal of body image than ever before.

Research shows that societal pressures linked to body image develop within the context of increased globalisation, urbanisation and an evolving multi-ethnic school environment. This is where media images and peer influences undermine the protective barrier of traditional values. Both Caradas *et al.* (2001) and Mwaba and Roman (2009) suggest that eating pathologies transcend the boundaries of geography, socio-economic status and ethnicity. This raises the significant subject of self-esteem, body image and identity and begs the question of how free females are when they believe their self-worth is partially tied to being thin.

With regard to communication about sexual matters, participants expressed that they do not speak to their parents about sex. This is corroborated by research which emphasises that there is little interaction around this topic between parents and adolescents, with fathers in South Africa being particularly negligent (Koen, van Eeden & Venter 2011). According to Nwoye (2006), 'African people have a great love for children, (but) it is not for any kind of child. It is for the well-bred child' (2006, 14). It appears that this principle dominates the parents' requirements of the child. Therefore, it would be extremely difficult for the adolescent to be open about the fraught subject of sexuality which is laden with so many complexities in the adolescent years. These include such issues as first love and intimacy, subtle and less subtle forms of physical coercion, sexual desire, sexually transmitted diseases/STDs etc.).

It is important to note that research shows that teenagers who communicate with their parents about sex are also more likely to discuss sexual risk with their partners, and are, therefore, less likely to engage in risky behaviour and to be involved with deviant peer groups (Perrino, González-Soldevilla, Pantin & Szapocznik 2000; Whitaker & Miller 2000). It is an interesting point that the traditional African view of becoming a woman is that a girl becomes a woman by having her own child (Mokomane 2012). Some participants expressed that they do not want to have children but feel that in many ways they are still treated like children in their homes and communities. An important question arises then concerning the choices that this generation of young females has in terms of defining themselves as African adults through the act of choosing to not have children.

Emphasis on independence and individualism, gender equality and significant influences on rights and dissonance with traditional African views

Findings showed that participants felt that men and women are equal and most felt that gender roles are not relevant. It should be highlighted that the majority of participants lived in female-headed single-parent homes.

> Participant A: Everyone is equal and has the ability to do anything they want.
>
> Participant B: There are no boys and girls roles.
>
> Participant C: We are all equal and free to be who we want to be.
>
> Participant D: We shouldn't rely on a guy.
>
> Participant F: My mother is always pleased when she finds me at home and she will say a woman's job is to clean and take care of young ones.

However, it is ironic that the main message that mothers give girl children is that they must stay at home and keep the house clean and look after the children. Where there was a father present, the relationship was not experienced as positive by the participant.

It should be noted that these participants exist in a predominantly Western culture where the values, behaviours and ideals perceived and desired are those of equality, freedom from constraints, independence and individuality.

> Participant A: The African way is to listen to your elders so I don't say anything. But I don't share my truth either.
>
> Participant G: All girls of my age at home have babies and they look down at me for not having, but I am not worried.
>
> Participant H: In the rural areas, girls just want a boyfriend but the boys just use them for sex.
>
> Participant I: You can't be honest with your parents because they'll hit you and tell you're disrespecting them.

Numerous authors in Nsamenang and Tchombe (2011) acknowledge the complexity of changing cultures and the pervasive effects of globalisation. The African child is viewed by these authors as caught between a Euro-American school system and diverse African cultural belief practices. This is perhaps graphically represented by the example of the adolescent attending school in an urban area and living with a grandmother in a shack with limited facilities of electricity and running water. As an instrument of cultural transmission, Nsamenang and Tchombe (2011, 7-8) are highly critical of the role of education in Africa. They view it as a vehicle of usurpation by Euro-American values and objectives that do not embody the African culture of Ubuntu and communalism.

The majority of participants in the current study openly expressed a sense of dissonance with their traditional culture, very often citing restrictive and dependent roles of females as disagreeable to them. Other research indicates that African youth are becoming increasingly detached from their traditional roots (Gouws & Kruger 2010; Roux 2006). It clearly shows that the age cohort of these female learners has their own way of perceiving how parents should communicate with them. In addition, they question the stereotypes that existed for years in the African culture of not questioning elders. Most importantly, there is a pattern of not conforming to the pattern that exists in society. For example, Participant G is not bothered by girls of her age who already have babies. This is a distinctive character among 'born frees' of being unique and not following the pattern. It shows a sense of independence and the ability to choose. This

can be interpreted as being 'born free' and not conforming easily. The question is how many follow this example of not having children early, while one is still at school. Since seven of these 'born frees' were raised by single parents, maybe that in itself was a lesson of seeking independence and pursuing education instead of being a parent while one is still a teenager. Participant D expressed it clearly by putting emphasis on equality. Another insight raised highlights the difference in parenting styles of black and white adolescents. Thom (1988, cited in Ferns & Thom 2001) argues that the parenting style of parents of black adolescents tends to be more authoritarian than that of the parents of white adolescents. Theorists argue that there is an indivisible link between culture and identity (Bronfenbrenner 2005; Holdstock 2003; Mwamwenda 1995) and that, in fact, culture creates identity (Constantin & Rautz 2003; Mascolo 2004). Culture can be construed as multiple beliefs and behaviours linked to ethnicity, language, religion and customs.

It can be argued that these levels of self are particularly pertinent to the South African situation where cultural and religious perceptions of self include the collective and the relational (Holdstock 2003; Nsamenang & Tchombe 2011). Holdstock (2003, 288) makes the point that 'African…cultures entertain a view of the self as an interdependent entity'. The concept of the interdependent self essentially acknowledges that spiritually we are from the same source, and culturally this plays out in a highly interrelated nature of existence in African cultures in South Africa. Concepts of communalism and Ubuntu (the philosophy that espouses the common good of society as one of collectivism and humanness) are core parts of the concept of self in society. Some participants in the study found peers and teachers being helpful in that they praised them and that helped them to have a positive self-esteem. Collectivism is still embraced and 'born frees' embrace it and that is a positive element of Ubuntu. When the home fails to shape their self-esteem, the 'born frees' were supported by LO teachers at school and their peers. The teachers were acknowledged by participants with regard to self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

This study focused on the perception of self and the factors that affect this perception by the female 'born free' learner. It was contextualised within the LO topic of 'Self in Society' in order to create a link to the LO curriculum and pedagogy.

Responses from participants indicate that they have a complex view of self in society and that, in some instances, their freedom and identity in relation to it is still being negotiated.

It is posited that in order for the LO subject to be transformative in the learners' lives, LO teachers need to use an exploratory, discussion-based and reflective pedagogy in order to access the specifics of the adolescents' challenges, perceptions and beliefs. Issues around how to attain the status of adulthood in an African culture, a profound sense of responsibility towards extended family, struggles around self-esteem and

relationships with mothers are all relevant to assisting the young adult in attaining the internal and external status of a 'born free'. Western cultures place a great value upon individual rights and freedoms and such societies would define maturity in terms of an evolved sense of an individual self. But some other cultures value the needs of the larger community over any single individual. In such cultures, maturity is defined by the ability to prioritise the group's greater good (Nsamenang & Tchombe 2011). A study by Thom and Coetzee (2004) has identified that black adolescents in their study had attained a higher level of identity development than their white counterparts. Possible reasons given by the authors for this was the defining system of apartheid and the subsequent freedom in South Africa which allowed black adolescents to define themselves as black and to see himself or herself in a positive light (pride). Furthermore, there is now a plethora of black role models that the youth could look up to and use as mentors in South Africa.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Attaining the status of a 'born free' generation is an on-going process. Challenges on this journey include factors around defining oneself in a hybrid culture where parents are, in many respects, existing in a different culture to their children. Of great significance is that some of these females will, possibly, one day become parents themselves and they should be encouraged to gain insight into the factors that influence their sense of self. It is recommended that LO be utilised to explore these issues and contradictions and to examine how the 'born free' learner can define herself in a context strongly defined by different cultures and mores. Furthermore, while the learner may be 'born free', in many instances the society she is living in is not. The ramifications of apartheid continue to ripple through their families' lives. It is important to allow these young adults to examine the society they live in, their goals for a changed society and how they might, in various ways, achieve this in their lifetimes. This is strongly linked to the issue of careers and the great need for guidance expressed by the participants.

LO was established as a compulsory subject in order to create the framework and space for exploration around these life-affecting issues (WHO 1999; WHO 2003). If it can be used by the 'right kind of teacher' (Magano 2011), the young adult exiting the senior phase of schooling in South Africa can engage with the implicit and explicit factors that define him or her and can begin to attain the status of the 'born free' psychologically, emotionally, economically and socially. To attain wellness in a holistic way is when one's mind, body and soul are fully liberated and fully developed.

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