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Ikasi style and the quiet violence of dreams: a critique of youth belonging in post-Apartheid South Africa

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Drawing on empirical data from two recent research studies in post-Apartheid South Africa, this paper asks what it means to be poor, young and black, and belong in a society that has suffered debilitating and dehumanising racial subjugation, actively excluding people from citizenship, and how poverty serves to perpetuate this exclusion. It examines the notions of citizenship and belonging and asks what are the meanings and markers of both in a country like South Africa. It focuses on alternative modes of belonging adopted by young people – in this case dreaming and adopting what they term *ikasi style*. The paper then shows how structural and symbolic violence are complicit in silencing the dreams and aspirations of poor youth, before expanding Ramphele and Brown's notion of 'woundedness' to consider its implications for citizenship and belonging. It concludes with modest recommendations regarding how this state of affairs might be redressed within educational and policy contexts.

Introduction

During Apartheid in South Africa, as both a social body and state structure, the nation was designed with the explicit purpose of excluding the black majority of the population. This resulted in the exclusion of 80% of South Africans from any sense of citizenship or belonging – national, political, social, sexual, cultural and emotional (Barbalet 2007). After Apartheid laws were repealed in 1994, one of the most inclusive constitutions was installed and South Africa was re-envisioned as the 'Rainbow Nation' (Tutu 1994) boasting 11 official languages, sophisticated affirmative action regimes and the extension of full citizenship to people of all backgrounds. Nearly 20 years later – despite the promises of a 'New South Africa' and the public displays of togetherness at events like the 2010 FIFA World Cup held in South Africa – inequality and the spatialisation of poverty persist (Wilson 1994). South Africa currently rates as the eighth most unequal society¹ in the world, with 21% of its population living on less than \$1 a day (Zegeye and Maxted 2002) and 47% of the population existing below the minimum living income level (under ZAR600 or \$75 a month). Of those who are described as poor, using the Apartheid racial classification system, 93.3% are black, 6.3% are coloured, 0.4% are Indian, and 0.1% are white (Statistics South Africa, reported in Armstrong, Lekezwa and Siebrits 2008). In the 'New South Africa', overcoming past racism and enduring present inequalities constitutes the experience of

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being South African for the majority of black South Africans. At the same time this extreme inequality frustrates the actualisation of citizenship rights and prevents the development of a sense of belonging for the most disadvantaged segments of society – most of whom are black.

Inclusion in the collective is an integral part of the process of becoming, of subjectification (Ong et al. 1996). Through integration into social and economic systems, an individual becomes a social agent who is active in the processes of defining both the collective and the self. Poverty is associated with alternative methods of subjectification that exist in the place of normative social inclusion. This paper will examine the ways in which black township youth, living through the experience of exclusion, engage with the process of subjectification to gain access and agency in their immediate social environment and the larger South African collective. Through the data presented in this paper, we argue that they do so through two primary means. Firstly they aspire to upward mobility, considered the post-Apartheid destiny of free South Africans, by employing the normative narrative of potential and elevated personal goals. Secondly they achieve this mobility (if it is not available by conventional means) via what the youth term *ikasi style* (Swartz 2010). *Ikasi* is a colloquial isiXhosa term meaning township, similar to the hood, ghetto, *el barrio*, *banlieue*, slum or *favela* found elsewhere in the world. *Ikasi style* refers to the ways in which youth rationalise their participation in behaviours which are not socially acceptable in order to attain markers of belonging by alternative means. This style comprises violence, sex, alcohol and substance abuse as well as music, recreation, fashion and other diversions. Youth explain that it is this style that forms the setting of township life, the foundation of township identities, and serves as a ‘moral ecology’ (Swartz 2010) adapted to the realities of poverty.

At the same time, those who are excluded from belonging to the South African collective and marginalised from the rights and benefits of citizenship are integral to the concept of the nation since it is in opposition to their very exclusion that the nation and citizenship are defined. Employing Mamphela Ramphele’s (2009) language of racial wounds and Wendy Brown’s (1993, 1995) concept of ‘wounded attachments’ and ‘states of injury’, this paper shows how the behaviours of township youth in the midst of persistent poverty perpetuate the denial of dreams and exclusion from the hope-filled South African nation. Their behaviour represents simultaneously the symptoms of South Africa’s wounded racial history and present, and the yearning of the South African nation to unite a divided national body.

Researching township youth

In exploring these themes, this paper draws on two recent empirical studies conducted by the authors. The first study (Swartz 2010) explored the moral lives of *ikasi* or township youth. This largely qualitative study drew on the knowledge, values and experience of 37 black youth aged between 14 and 20 for 16 months with subsequent follow up visits. Although the study focused primarily on the moral influences in these young people’s lives, in this paper we concentrate on the ways in which these youth address structural realities, and imaginary and real life possibilities. The second study, that by De Lannoy (2008), investigated the educational aspirations and decision-making of young people in a similar setting. This project explored educational choices and broader identity-building processes in which 20 young adults aged between 14 and 22 were regularly interviewed and followed over a period of two years.

We begin by considering the relationship between poverty on the one hand, and the nature of citizenship and belonging on the other. In such circumstances it is relevant to talk about poverty as a form of structural and symbolic violence which both excludes but paradoxically also includes young people within the national citizenship project.

Citizenship, belonging and poverty: the misrecognition of structural violence

Lauren Berlant (2000) identifies two conceptualisations of citizenship in modernity. The first is as a bundle of constitutional rights and responsibilities defined and guaranteed by membership in the state and submission to its power. The second highlights the constant struggle of marginalised persons to expose the violence inherent in their exclusion and the social origin of the state. The latter highlights differential access to the benefits of citizenship experienced according to race, gender, sexuality and so on. Like Berlant's agonistic vision of the democratic process, other definitions of citizenship are founded on public participation, in community life and decision-making, as well as other contributions to the collective (see for example Rosaldo 1994, 402; Delanty 2002, 64). To be unable to participate directly in the functions of the collective, or to be dependent on others for social access or even subsistence, is to be excluded from full participation as a citizen (Swartz 2010). Therefore, we can conceptualise the experiences of township youth as being formally members or citizens of the political nation of South Africa while simultaneously excluded from the rights and benefits which that status is meant to confer.

When such exclusion from the full benefits of citizenship occurs in the midst of poverty, important materialist and post-modern questions are raised. Possession of property has historically been the Western and colonial basis for citizenship since it signified access to capital and the means of economic participation (van Gunteren 1994) while also denoting cultural markers of privileged belonging; those of white men born and educated under the right conditions (van Gunteren 1994). Certain populations' subservience in political regimes and systems of production reinforces the poor's marginalisation from the rights and benefits associated with belonging and citizenship (Wilson 1994). In this context, socio-economic disparity and class and race-based oppression are mutually supportive in shaping such exclusion.

In the African context poverty cannot be said to be rare when over 50% of Africa's population were formally categorised in 2005 as extremely poor and living below the \$1.25 a day World Bank benchmark (Wroughton 2008). However, the insidious and cumulative effects of poverty are seldom made explicit when speaking of citizenship and belonging. Robert Chambers (quoted in Zegeye and Maxted 2002, 7) describes five dimensions of poverty summarised as: (1) lack of income or assets to generate income; (2) physical weakness due to malnutrition, disability or sickness; (3) physical or social isolation due to marginal location, lack of access to goods and services, ignorance or illiteracy; (4) vulnerability to any kind of shock or emergency and the risk of falling deeper into poverty; and (5) powerlessness within existing socio-economic and political structures. These aspects of poverty mutually cause, overlap and are complicit with exclusion from the rights and benefits of citizenship.

In South Africa, Apartheid's systematic exclusion of black people from employment, health care, education and land has resulted in the impoverishment of the majority of the population [see Swartz (2010, 19) for a summary of Apartheid legislation]. Beyond these material effects are the emotional consequences of poverty and unemployment, including a loss of dignity and autonomy, of purpose and coherent

structure to life (Bourdieu 1965), of a sense of safety and the onset of feelings of hopelessness. Further, the combination of material and emotional conditions of poverty foment a people's lack of understanding of their rights, and the absence of a sense of belonging to their country. Furthermore, these effects of poverty can accumulate over generations. People deprived of their land in turn cannot make a living, educate their children, or contribute to the health of their community. The cycle continues as their children in turn are prevented from recognising their own potential.

Understood from this perspective, the technologies and legacies of Apartheid can be seen not just as a form of social exclusion. They represent forms of so-called *structural violence* which Paul Farmer (1996), for example, describes as the institutionalisation of social processes that differentially cause suffering through organising unequal access to social resources, such as rights, security, capital and bodily and mental integrity, based on markers of difference. In the period after 1994, when Apartheid legislation was lifted, a new inclusive legal South African government was introduced. Nevertheless, the progenetic² function of legislated inequality ensured that the effects of Apartheid remained and gave birth to new social problems, not least those of continuing inequality, poverty and insecurity.

Bourdieu and Wacquant's concept of symbolic violence is useful for understanding the process of internalising identity-based oppressions associated with poverty and such repressive regimes. Symbolic violence is 'violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2004, 272). Subjects in this model are aware and 'knowing agents' who, 'even when subjected to determinisms', have a role in structuring those outcomes (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2004, 272). Symbolic violence combined with the moral ecology of townships in Swartz's study shows how poverty in South Africa is constructed mutually by the persistence of Apartheid's social, political and economic structures, and by the tendency of a large group of subjects to accept the world as it is, engaging with their social environment in ways they are familiar with. In other words, 'their mind is constructed according to cognitive structures that are issued out of the very structures of the world' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2004, 272). Despite the repeal of Apartheid laws, poverty and inequality persist in part because of the internalisation of inequalities which still structure social behaviours. This perception of the internal coherence of differential privilege, produced by the exclusive experience of a world marked in this way, is reproduced throughout South Africa across all lines of race, class and gender. In the context of such structural and symbolic violence, South Africans' assumption of coherence within social, political and economic systems in effect enables the perpetuation of inequality.

This point is exemplified by the young people in the two youth studies who did not readily speak of their poverty or of the effects of Apartheid's racism. In Swartz's *ikasi* study, only when pushed and when asked to comment specifically on their environment (including unemployment and poor quality education and housing) did township youth's sense of material exclusion emerge. Even after excessive cajoling only half of the youth spoke of racism or poverty. Indeed, few young people made an explicit connection between Apartheid and their present socio-economic circumstances. Views such as 'Apartheid hasn't affected my life. I live in a freedom world now. I will have a house like yours if I work hard' (Nonkiza, young woman, age 15) were common with youth seeing hard work and education alone as the key to achieving socio-economic mobility. There was almost no evaluation of the inferior quality of township education and the lack of available jobs even for those who were able to

complete school. The majority of youth reflected Joules' sentiment about Apartheid: 'I don't want to live my life in the past' (young man, age 14), with little reference to how the past might prevent him from realising his future ambitions. When pushed, some conceded that Apartheid may be a distant influence in that 'it affects me because it affected my parents' as Joules commented, but very few made the connection between the legacy of Apartheid (unemployment, poor education, general poverty) and current social problems (substance abuse, violence and crime). Rather, current conditions are assumed to be coherent based on their ubiquity and most township youth seemed to accept the reality of their circumstances. Andiswa, a 15-year-old young woman, made an insightful but rare comment about Apartheid and its resulting poverty putting 'an end stop in most of the things that I want to do'. She had wanted to attend a good suburban school rather than a poor quality township school.

However, most youth, instead of blaming Apartheid or the government for their poverty, chose to say 'we haven't achieved yet' and 'our time is coming'. Although Thando (young man, age 19) was the only youth to initiate a discussion about Apartheid by taking and explaining a photograph of a billboard depicting struggle heroes, his commentary on its effect was scathing, explaining that references to past Apartheid were 'becoming an excuse for black people' not achieving. A very difficult conversation with Vathiswa, a 19-year-old township-schooled young woman who lives in a shack, highlights the muteness about poverty and structural injustice that was displayed by afflicted young people. During a long conversation, she continually avoided making connections between poverty and structural injustice. She persisted in describing proximal and immediate contexts (blacks not getting educated) rather than the distal influence of Apartheid-related injustices, because the immediate observable reality of poverty structured her experiences and is the frame through which she understood the world:

- Interviewer: What do you think of living in that shack in Khayelitsha Vathiswa?
 Vathiswa: I don't like it.
 Interviewer: And why do you live in that shack?
 Vathiswa: Because my mother have no money – to buy and live in the other house.
 Interviewer: And why has your mother got no money?
 Vathiswa: She's not working ... she didn't get the job.
 Interviewer: And why are there no jobs?
 Vathiswa: [long pause – hangs her head]
 Interviewer: Why do I have money and you don't?
 Vathiswa: Because my mother is not working –.

The refusal of young people in both studies to recognise the structural violence they face and their own acceptance of this violence indicate the crippling impact of symbolic violence on their lives. In contrast, the strength of their belief in their own ability to escape poverty, to reach tertiary education and find long-term employment, for example, reflected their optimism. Their persistence in thinking positively was worth noting. The danger it flagged is that of an unsustainable belief by young people in their own agency or as Thando explained, simply 'learn[ing] to live with it [their poverty]' so that it does not 'lower my self-esteem'. Such 'optimistic bias' (Chapin, de las Alas and Coleman 2005, 749), indicates a belief that these youth will have full access to the opportunities that are present in the 'New South Africa'. This view

was most observed in those whose youth has been marked by the very realities they hoped to avoid. Township young people's reluctance to acknowledge the limitations on their opportunities imposed by the legacies of Apartheid was both the method and result of their will to belong to the hope-filled future of the 'New South Africa'. This double-edged sword, of high aspiration coupled with slim chances of success, is what we term below 'the quiet violence of dreams' – a phenomenon that asks whether dreaming is itself a 'weapon of the weak' [recalling James Scott's (1987) classic treatise on peasant resistance] or a weapon *against* the weak.

The quiet violence of dreams

Youth is generally envisioned as a time for developing lofty ideals and high aspirations and expectations. The black youth in both empirical studies were no exception and had high hopes for the future. Despite their social context, young people in poor neighbourhoods are likely to express hopes and intentions of reaching tertiary education. This is supported in another recent South African youth study (Bray et al. 2010) where young people spoke of their lives with great hope for the future, for South Africa, their careers, and of desires to escape the township and help their families into better lives. As with our two studies, these youth spoke of being doctors, lawyers, pilots, musicians and accountants, and of having nice cars and good houses in the suburbs. In this sense, they express a will to belong to the South African social body through interaction with the notion of greater opportunity and mobility in the post-Apartheid era. Furthermore, South African youth believe in the possibility of maintaining total control over their lives. Contrary to the view that populations in situations of poverty globally have a lower sense of control, black South African youth related a feeling of agency that, while perhaps at odds with the reality of their circumstances, drew attention to their drive to be part of the 'New South Africa' with its promised era of opportunity beyond the township. In this regard, the high aspirations of township youth can be regarded as a form of resistance and a weapon against despair.

When youth in Swartz's study were asked to list their strongest life influences, 'education', 'dreams' and 'mothers' were the most commonly listed. The fact that 'dreams' appeared as the second strongest influence for these young people was surprising but corroborated the findings from De Lannoy's study. One of the participants in this study remarked:

First, if you are a person, you should have goals. If you don't have dreams, you will never be anyone in life. So you need a dream. . . . I see myself maybe four to five years to come, having my own office, having the chair that rolls around the office, and all. If you do have these dreams, then that is what keeps you to go on. (Lindelwa, young woman, age 18)

The 'dreams' refer not only to personal success, but also involve the young people's family and even the broader community. In Swartz's study, Mandisa (young woman, age 18) talked about her dream to be a social worker in order to help people and 'to give them the better life that – I want', but ultimately she was willing to be 'even a domestic [worker] . . . just to help my family'. For Khaya, his aspiration in the music industry was 'to put my family on another level' (young man, age 18) whilst in De Lannoy's study, Kuthala, (an 18-year-old young woman) talked about wanting to contribute to the broader community, expressing the belief that 'someone, somewhere out there will benefit from me getting an education'.

Dreams and hope, in a context of hardship, have 'survival value' (Davies 2005). Maintaining hope becomes a coping mechanism in the daily experiences of deprivation. Psychologists have pointed out that: 'the dream ... contains goals, aspirations, and values and ... can be motivationally powerful' (Levinson 1978, quoted in Markus and Nurius 1987, 161). However, the question might be asked as to what happens when young people realise that their dreams of being a wealthy business person, a brain surgeon, a professional soccer player, will only ever be dreams? In a nascent democracy such as South Africa where the transition from Apartheid brought with it enormous optimism and endless promises of change, dreams of possible futures are perhaps also the process of conceptualising the nation and one's inclusion in it. For young people growing up in South Africa, dreams hold a deeper significance of overcoming the current context of ongoing poor education, inequality, unemployment and poverty (Zegeye and Maxted 2002).

Yet, in the context of poverty, an individual's education and the environment they inhabit are not conducive to realising dreams and the social and cultural capital necessary for getting ahead is almost non-existent. In this case, as disillusionment sets in, the weapons of resistance can work against the person's well being. Robert Merton's strain theory provides one explanation for why this state of affairs could be termed *quiet violence* leading some individuals to anti-social behaviour. Merton argues that such behaviour ensues when cultural values 'extols ... symbols of success for the population at large while its social structure rigorously restricts or completely eliminates access to approved modes of acquiring these symbols for a considerable part of the same population' (Merton 1938, 680). In other words, it is significant that in the 'New South Africa', the dream of democracy coupled with a global consumer culture appears to have led young people to have unreasonably high aspirations and to believe in their endless potential to acquire 'the goods' of this new democracy, despite the lack of opportunity to fulfil such dreams, at least in socially acceptable ways.

In this context, the presence of the dream itself functions as currency in the symbolic economy of the 'New South African' myth. By dealing in dreams, young people in the country's townships appear to be writing themselves into the nation's narrative by constructing their own sense of opportunity and, thereby, belonging. Yet the deferment of dreams in many of these young people's lives can have devastating social consequences (Elder 1998) and failed dreams can even return as a form of violence against young people, excluding them from the nation, citizenship and the possibility of belonging that they so desire. Below we consider the kind of anti-social behaviour that can arise as a consequence of lost dreams.

Giving up dreams: possessions, 'being someone' and ikasi style

Anti-social behaviours in the context of social exclusion may be predictable but should not be simply understood. In both studies, young people spoke of material wealth as a key marker of belonging and of respect. This was often expressed in relatively small things like nice shoes or good jeans as Luxolo (young woman, age 19) explained, saying that without them it 'sort of like puts you down ... like ... you're not someone like out there – in South Africa ... [you're not] recognised as a person'. In this and other statements, youth identified the importance of participating in the symbolic economy of material wealth and possession to the process of belonging inasmuch as possessions represent successful negotiation of opportunity in the 'New South Africa'³.

On the other hand, some youth in our research chose anti-social behaviour as a legitimate method of accessing such material wealth and goods. To explain why they drank or smoked *dagga* (marijuana), had multiple sexual partners or committed crimes, youth would often explain ‘This is the way it is in *ikasi*’ or ‘That’s *ikasi style*’ (Swartz 2010, 40, 65). Here, the concept of *ikasi* is not just a physical location as it bounds people’s origins and movement (people inhabit not just the township but specific areas of it); it is also a descriptor of townships as poor, unsafe, racialised spaces. However, as previously described *ikasi* was also a *style* which youth explained as defining the township and also the broader society. When explaining their interaction with the moral landscape of the townships, youth positioned themselves as agents and performers of *ikasi style* which, in its own right becomes both a reconciliation of dreams and the predetermined impossibility of achieving those dreams. *Ikasi* uses the language of belonging by referring to the markers of social inclusion, such as wealth and possessions, and by framing alternative means of access, such as crime or multiple sexual partners. *Ikasi style* is therefore as much a discourse of inclusion as it is a style that creates subjects who are already excluded from the ‘New South African’ narrative. Advertising billboards throughout the townships indicated this pathway to inclusion by peddling middle class products with the tag line ‘*Ikasi for life*’ (Swartz 2010, 74).

Even when dreams are unrealistic or *ikasi style* is the only available route towards achieving them, some young people’s readiness to abandon their dreams for more directly achievable occupations and lifestyles was startling. In Swartz’s study young people’s initial ambition (‘I want to be a social worker’) was quickly conceded upon mention that if they were unable to get the money or high enough marks in school examinations to go to university, they would do any work – including that of a domestic worker (for young women) and construction worker (for young men) – at least for a certain amount of time. In De Lannoy’s study, youth took up shorter term manual work whilst still maintaining their hope to, one day, return to education. Many had older siblings who, despite having completed school, remained un- or underemployed or were employed in casual, poorly paid labourer jobs.

Two results of this ‘hope deferred’ (Zegeye and Maxted 2002) have become apparent. The first is the avolition frequently evident among these young people – the inability to find out about possible careers, about taking practical steps towards higher education, and young people’s seeming willingness to operate on wishful thinking. Many had no idea of what becoming a doctor, lawyer or pilot might entail in terms of study, cost or the required school marks. One example of this arose from a conversation with Thobane, a 15-year-old young man in Swartz’s study who said, ‘If I can’t be a pilot, then I can be a taxi driver’. The second result, again, is anti-social behaviour. The spate of xenophobic violence that occurred throughout South Africa’s impoverished township communities in May 2008, led one commentator to conclude that ‘the rage is not old. It is new, born of the broken dreams of South Africa’s post-Apartheid era’ (Timberg 2008). Amongst the youth in these studies, there was still hope and not rage. The potential for rage however could grow as dreams and opportunities for their fulfilment stretch into years of deferred hope.

Of course some such youth have and will succeed, but the masses remain trapped in poverty. They face the mammoth developmental task of trying to make meaning out of this deferment of dreams which impedes self-actualisation and the development of identity. Developmental psychologist, Erik Erikson, concludes that democracy has

within it numerous paradoxes in which young people need to be both self-reliant and able to ‘adjust to “booms and busts . . . peace and war”’ (1971, 133). He argues that for many young people ‘their whole upbringing has made the development of a self-reliant personality dependent on a certain degree of choice, a sustained hope for an individual chance, and a firm commitment to the freedom of self-realization’ (Erikson 1971, 133). In the South African context, however, for most impoverished youth this ‘choice’ and ‘hope for an individual chance’ are largely absent. This is the social participation described by Berlant (2000), the preclusion of which denies citizenship and belonging. The question that remains, however, is who is to blame for this state of affairs, and more importantly who do young people blame?

The meritocracy myth: ‘It’s only me who is responsible’

Colby (2002) suggests that young people who do not act on their beliefs – in this case by trying to find attainable careers or gaining skills for a potential career – rationalise their actions especially by blaming situational factors. Amongst the young people involved in these studies, such a rationalisation is conspicuously absent. Instead of blaming others, circumstances or the environment, township youth in both studies reported high levels of personal responsibility for their lives, actions and dreams. In Swartz’s study the majority of youth (32 out of 37) took personal responsibility for not achieving their goals. Comments like ‘I’ll blame myself’ were ubiquitous when asked who was to blame for their frustrated dreams and goals. When pressed, young people conceded that possibly lack of money could destroy their dreams, as indicated by Andiswa:

What are the chances for me to achieve my dreams? I may say two out of ten. Because for you to achieve your dreams, I need finance. I do have the determination for it, you know, but the finances are not there and it takes up the 80%, you know. The determination only takes about 20%. Even though I’m trying to get means, you know but they’re not working out. (Andiswa, young woman, age 15)

As discussions deepened, the initial optimism often dwindled with young people saying there was only a small chance that their dreams would be achieved. Countering Colby’s observations, young people’s strong sense of personal responsibility seemed to reflect the ‘meritocracy myth’ (McNamee and Miller 2004). Meritocracy invokes the idea that by hard work and personal responsibility a person is able to achieve what has eluded others, without concern for social and political contexts. This notion of attainable personal success is a major tenet of the post-Apartheid South African narrative. Thus poor youth take unrealistic and ‘middle-class’ responsibilities upon themselves while lacking the requisite middle-class resources. Lucey and Reay argue that this meritocracy myth, ‘the belief that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get . . . constantly threatens to undermine children’s positivity and creativity’ (2002, 264). The young people in both studies remained positive, supported by their belief in the opportunities of the ‘New South Africa’, whilst the deferred dreams and aspirations thwarted due to structural and symbolic violence frustrated their ongoing project of trying to belong. Their simultaneous presence in the South African collective and exclusion from it may be explained by aspects of what Ramphela calls the persistent ‘wound of racism’ in the post-Apartheid era. Not only are South Africans ‘a wounded people’ but they ‘are in denial about [their] wounds’ (Ramphela 2008). It is to this final aspect that we now turn.

Racial woundedness and belonging

South Africa, a country that has led the world in visions of social unity, must continually contend with the socio-historical scars of institutionalised racism. Mamphele Ramphele, citing Franz Fanon, refers to the ‘scarring of the black psyche’ (2009, 74), mainly as a consequence of colonial and racial subjugation. She describes its effects as ‘a socially induced inferiority complex, self-hatred, low self-esteem, jealousy of those seen to be progressing (both black and white), suppressed aggression, anxiety, and sometimes a defensive romanticisation of indigenous culture’ (Ramphele 2009, 16). Her characterisation of South Africa as a nation wounded by racism has manifestations including enduring poverty, persistent violence and the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. In most contexts those who are subjected to racism are also poor (Zegeye and Maxted 2002).

But what does it mean to belong to a wounded nation? How is the wound of racism embodied and what are the consequences of the use of the language of bodily harm, infirmity or disability for the members of that nation? The ubiquitous image of South Africa’s townships could be understood as representing the physicality, the historical manifestation, of South Africa’s woundedness against which the hope and prosperity of the ‘New South Africa’ is defined. Township youth are among those most wounded, most excluded, from the new South Africa. As South Africa works to live up to its inclusive constitution, and belonging is tied to making use of new possibilities for social access and economic mobility, we are left with the questions: what does it mean to be counted among the wounded excluded and how does this concept relate to that of citizenship?

From this perspective, the township represents the bounded process of subjectification through which the youth derive agency in South African society (Yuval-Davis 2006). The result is the production of identities tied to social status and behaviours that are shaped by the inequality experienced in the legacy of Apartheid, a form of belonging that is, as we have seen, achieved through engagement in violence, crime, sex, drug and alcohol use. The legacy and the form of belonging have been shaped by a history of entrenched racism. These manifestations of poverty and inequality therefore represent the ‘wound’ in South African society, whilst the nation represents ‘a wounded state’ (Berlant 2000). Youth here came to empathise equally with perpetrators and victims of crime and violence and frequently identify themselves as both. Similarly, through hope and dreams, they were able to empathise with the promise of post-1994 freedom. As we have indicated, the sense in which township youth experience belonging to South African society was through their exclusion from it. In this way, they are the primary victims of the wounds of South African history. The symbolic violence of the wound – young people’s assumption of its coherence – exemplifies the pain the nation suffers from this wound and represents its perpetuation.

Although young people were reluctant to acknowledge the determining effects of their country’s social history, some made, albeit limited, connections between poverty, crime, violence, despair and unemployment. When asked what they would change about South Africa, the majority of answers were concerned with social and economic issues – providing more houses, jobs, free and better quality education, more tertiary bursaries and more sports and other recreational activities for youth to keep them from ‘doing crime’. While not many made direct connections between crime or violence and a lack of housing, recreation and support services, those who

did frequently connected ‘having nothing to do’ with therefore ‘doing crime’. Vuma, for example, (almost alone along with Andiswa) made the following connection between past injustice, present poverty and what he termed ‘corruption’:

It has affected my parents – and when it affect my parent it affect me you know cos like if Apartheid didn’t affect them then maybe we wouldn’t be staying in that shack house you know ... like me I won’t get corrupt – like I will be still at school ... So maybe if my parents are staying in the suburbs I wouldn’t know about those things ... smoking *ganja* [marijuana] you know and hijacking ... Cos if I were not living there [in *ikasi*] – like maybe I was living in another place, being another person – maybe I was not behaving like I am now. (Vuma, young man, age 19)

Among the majority of young people, pervasive critical consciousness was absent. As we indicated, there appeared to be little understanding about how these current problems had structural causes and origins in historical injustices. There was little attempt to address the personal dimension: such as how Apartheid and poverty affected their everyday lives. Most tacitly refused to identify themselves as victims of injustice; instead stating that Apartheid had not affected them personally. Their refusal appeared to be connected to their desire not to jeopardise their future; they seemed keen to forget and move on, little realising how remembering might in fact aid their liberation. Their desire to forget bordered on a paranoia or superstition. Would the act of remembering itself cause a rupture of dreams, a denial of opportunities, and thereby reinforce their social exclusion? Consequently, these youth did not wallow in their victimhood. They were active; they employed the moral structure to their advantage and interacted with the South African discourse of possibility. They were agents engaged in self-definition in relation to the wider context of South Africa.

As Yuval-Davis notes, ‘the discourse on social locations, complex as it is, cannot be conflated with the belonging discourse on identifications and emotional attachments, and any attempt to do so is essentialist and often racialized’ (2006, 202). That is to say that the social location of township youth is not the determinant of their identity but forms part of the frame in which the process of subjectification occurs. To view township youth as exclusively ‘wounded’ would be patronising and could lead to interventions of a paternalistic tone. These township youth embody Wendy Brown’s (1993) notion of ‘wounded *attachments*’. On the one hand, youth, through *ikasi style* (‘I am of the township’) embrace the hurt status quo, while on the other they attempt to heal themselves through hope and dreams (‘I want something better’). They are not in that sense ‘wounded’ citizens but active participants (albeit with injured attachments) in the citizenship project of becoming someone.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to uncover the ways in which thwarted aspirations do violence to young people’s psychological development, and contribute to exclusion rather than belonging. It has done so through examining young people’s understanding of poverty and inequality, of what it means to live in a nascent democracy, and of how Apartheid has affected their life chances. Youth who participated in the two empirical projects described in this paper exhibited two different methods of belonging within the context of poverty: dreaming and *ikasi style*. Dreaming represents participation in the ‘New South African’ narrative while *ikasi style* enables access to the markers of belonging in the absence of real opportunity.

On the subject of how this state of affairs might best be addressed in both educational and political contexts, we present here only preliminary suggestions. Youth might benefit from being aided to develop a Freirian critical consciousness (Freire 1972) regarding the influences of past conflict and present poverty on their current development and future life choices. This would need to be carefully broached given young people's reluctance to look backwards and their optimism about the future. Educators themselves might benefit from engaging with the paradox of what it means to be both 'wounded' and agents. Arguably, youth might also benefit from having school subjects such as history and citizenship pay explicit attention to, for example, the development of nascent democracies, the physical and psychological effects of conflict on succeeding generations, and the effects of poverty and structural injustice on life course development. Furthermore, further study into how career guidance might best be provided in contexts of inequality, in a world without work, or where, as Merton (1938, 680) argues, 'cultural aspirations . . . [and] the opportunities to achieve them' are not evenly distributed. From a policy perspective, close attention could be given to the effects of affirmative action programmes for youth, including preferential hiring, subsidies and job seekers' allowances. Finally, and perhaps most quixotically, citizenship and moral education initiatives might benefit from encouraging those who have been beneficiaries of an unjust system to make intentional choices for the sake of the combined futures of those who now belong to the nation.

Notes

1. According to the United Nations Human Development Report (UNDP 2010), the 10 most unequal countries in the world are, in descending order of inequality, Namibia, Comoros, Botswana, Haiti, Angola, Colombia, Bolivia, South Africa, Honduras and Brazil. All are characterised by colonial exploitation.
2. We use 'progenetic' as a metaphor relating to parasitic worms that leave behind viable eggs even though they may themselves die in the body of the host. While Apartheid is dead, its effects remain and give birth to new social problems.
3. For young men, the same logic applies to sexual relationships. In *Teenage tata* (Swartz and Bhana 2009, 74), the justifications given by young black men in townships for having multiple and concurrent sexual partners are captured in 20-year-old Onathi's words: 'Being poor, I don't have possessions but I can possess lots of women'. The young men in the study further argued that the choice to 'possess' many women was made in contrast to becoming *gangstas*. They chose to achieve belonging not through criminal means but through sexual means – an alternative, attractive and frequently taken route.

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