

# A Decolonial Perspective of Knowledge, Power and Place in the Eastern Cape Education System

By

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## **Abstract**

South Africa has a complex history of contested places and knowledges. Through colonization and apartheid, places of importance were taken from the indigenous people and the education system aimed to colonize their minds. These issues of place and knowledge tend to be studied separately; however, they grew out of the same colonial seed. The aim of this dissertation is to examine how knowledge and place tie together in the life of Xhosa students living in the Eastern Cape with particular interest in the experiences of high school learners in regions impacted by former apartheid segregation laws. Using mixed methods, consisting of surveys, interviews, and focus groups, this study explores decolonial themes by assessing students' relationship with place and knowledge and examining how these differ across place contexts, and education level. Furthermore, archival methods highlighted ways in which these relationships have varied over time. The main results emphasize that the Xhosa are place-makers, not only by changing place names but also changing the meaning of places. Moreover, they have not passively accepted Euro-American knowledge and have maintained key components of their indigenous knowledge system over time. Hopefulness is another way in which students' express their agency against persisting coloniality and those with a hopeful sense of place also showed a stronger relationship with their indigenous knowledge. It is important to consider high school students' perceptions of place and knowledge when strategizing ways of decolonizing higher education because these experiences are not static throughout their education. University participants expressed the ways in which their perceptions of knowledge and place had changed since leaving school and the disciplines they studied played a role in their perceptions. Ultimately, the strongholds of coloniality in the entire education system not only impacts the endeavor to decolonize the university but also to redistribute land and decolonize places in South Africa.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In the last five years, South Africa has seen intense protests in the university student population around the issue of decolonizing knowledge and the university. These protests focus on the inequality that is present in the epistemology of higher education, as some indigenous knowledge systems find themselves on the margins of academic thought in the country (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016). However, epistemic inequality is not the only inequality that has been emphasized by black South Africans in recent years. Protests concerning land redistribution in the country have also become increasingly more urgent as land ownership has direct impacts on impoverished rural economies (Kepe and Tessaro 2014, Ramosolo 2018). The land debate and protests supporting expropriation of land from white farmers without compensation have attracted global attention as the South African government considers the best approach for handling these spatial inequalities.

While land redistribution and the decolonization of higher education have independently been recognized as important areas from transformation to occur, they are most often examined as separate issues when addressing the consequences of the colonial past in South Africa. The reality is that dispossession and colonial education are twins which were birthed during colonial times and matured under apartheid rule. Thus, understanding the dynamics between land and knowledge in the present-day, should be an important starting point for addressing both of these inequalities.

Additionally, the discussions around these issues tend to take place without the perspectives of high school students who will be the future leaders and contributors to the economy of South Africa. Though these perceptions need not form the basis of decision-making around place and knowledge matters, this dissertation reveals that high school students'

perceptions of these issues do impact their future choices of careers and places of residence one day.

This dissertation aims to connect knowledge and place within a decolonial framework which sees indigenous agency as a powerful resisting force against enduring coloniality in South Africa. It also seeks to center this discussion on students' experiences through field-based work in the Eastern Cape education system in order to understand the role that place contexts and education level play in informing perceptions of knowledge and place as well as seeing how these perceptions have changed over time.

### **1.1. Research Background**

In 20<sup>th</sup> century South Africa, governmental powers constructed places and established a racial segregation which intensified in the apartheid era between 1948 and 1994. Under the Native Land Act (1913) and the Urban Areas Act (1952) black South Africans were forcibly removed and relocated to places that they had no relationship with and on land that was not arable (Platzky and Walker 1983a). The result was a breakdown of relationship with place and identity formed through place (Platzky and Walker 1983b). Furthermore, the segregation of black and white South Africans was more insidious than the broken relationship between people and place; it destroyed relationships between people. The philosophy of *Ubuntu* describes how being a human, and who we are as individuals, is embedded in relationship with others: "I am because you are." Being treated as less than human was more than just an attack on indigenous people's humanity: it was an attack on their ideology and ways of knowing. Jamangile Tsotsobe was one of many interviewed in the Surplus People Project (conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s) during the time of forced removals and he was found in a state of confusion. He could only come to understand the forced removal process "if he says to himself that he is not a man. But then,

what is he?” (Platzky and Walker 1983a, 6). So sinister was the ideology behind apartheid, that it attacked every part of a man without killing him.

Apartheid ideology saw non-white people as inferior to whites and the abovementioned quotation shows that the treatment of black people during forced removals made some feel as though they were not even human. The apartheid hierarchy of mankind according to one’s skin color stands in stark contrast to the indigenous philosophy of *Ubuntu* where one’s humanity is reflected in other’s humanity. This reveals how knowledge systems came into conflict over the essence of what it means to be human through the implementation of apartheid ideology by the government. Moreover, the apartheid government designed separate curricula to reinforce their racist views, based on the knowledge they deemed suitable for each racial category given their limited future opportunities (Kallaway 1984). This served to colonize the minds of black South Africans and subjected them to the poorest quality of education and the menial division of labor.

These two forms of control (over place and knowledge) made it nearly impossible for black South Africans to become financially stable and today, over 20 years after apartheid ended, the country is steeped in inequality. South Africa has the highest inequality in the world according to the Gini and Palma indices (Barr 2017). According to Medina (2013, p. 28), “inequality is the enemy of knowledge: it handicaps our capacity to know and to learn from each other,” making South Africa a country with pervasive epistemic injustice. But beyond the epistemic injury to one’s knowing and learning, inequality bleeds into place through the education system. The poorest quality of education is present in the poorest parts of the country and these impoverished regions were created through the long history of colonial rule and white supremacy. Once students from all these different paths of life meet in the classrooms of higher

education, the inequalities are magnified, setting the stage for epistemic arrogance and ignorance to remain in the dominant student group, the white South Africans (Medina 2013).

Within the formal education systems today, the politics of power are intimately woven into public education within nations, whether it is for the purpose of nation-building (Waters and Leblanc 2005), selecting a story that best represents certain people groups (Smith 2012) or the funding of education (Jansen 1991). The impacts of global colonial power still persist in the public education systems of former colonies and it manifests itself in the particular standard of knowledge that must be achieved in order to compete in the knowledge economy driven by the Global North. This power differential reinforces the global reach of the Euro-American knowledge system (McLaren and Leonard 2001). In this global picture, the eyes of students in former colonies become entranced by the globalization of knowledge to the point that the local, and the knowledge therein, becomes but a passive backdrop (Gruenewald and Smith 2008, Singh et al. 2005).

This dissertation recognizes that coloniality is still present within the education system in South Africa, including at the high school level and a by-product of this is an underappreciation of places outside of the city limits and as knowledge systems that fall on the epistemic margins. For these reasons, this research is situated in two regions, away from major cities, within the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The Eastern Cape region was predominantly occupied by the Xhosa people prior to British settlement and under apartheid many Xhosa people were forcibly relocated to two areas within the province. Today, nearly eighty-three percent of the residents of the Eastern Cape speak Xhosa as their first language (Statistics South Africa 2016). Considering that the population in the Eastern Cape is largely Xhosa, this dissertation will focus on their indigenous knowledge systems and their perspectives.

## 1.2. Research Gaps

It is the colonial history and the persisting inequality that has drawn urgent attention, in recent years, to the need to decolonize knowledge within the education system in South Africa. Within this vein there are a number of areas which this dissertation seeks to contribute to and fit broadly into the themes of knowledge, power and place. First, decolonization research within South Africa tends to begin at the university level and does not examine the grassroots *experiences* that lead to lingering epistemic colonization. These experiences are grounded in place, are informed by one's community and begin long before a student enters higher education. Unless the network between high school and university is examined, the academy loses a critical perspective in understanding knowledge systems and the power that continues to subjugate certain knowledge.

Decolonization work in South Africa largely remains theoretical in its development and application, excluding students' lived experiences of their epistemic colonization. It also focuses mostly on *structures* external to students, which persist in the higher education system, speaking little of the internal *changes of attitude* towards knowledge that take place within students over the course of their formal education. There is not an immediate colonization of the mind and culture as one is born nor is the process of colonization purely a theoretical experience. Research that examines experiences and attitudes towards decolonization are necessary and cannot be done without fieldwork. Ndimande (2012) shows the importance of including students' lived experience in the South African education system through field-based research that seeks to empower each student involved in the research. Fieldwork, both quantitative and qualitative, recognizes that the academy and research produced therein does not exist in a vacuum; that there are varied experiences and perspectives that open our eyes to points that might have been missed in the theoretical examination of the topic. Moreover, fieldwork should not be confined to the

university context alone. This research aims at aiding understanding of coloniality in the education system by situating the research across time, place and education levels and by involving marginalized voices in the research process through fieldwork.

Additionally, while many scholars examine the importance of place attachment, there has not been much research which looks at the *relationship* between one's attachment to their indigenous knowledge and their attachment to place among the student population. Though there have been studies (mostly based in Australia and the U.S.A. ) that consider rural students' place attachment before going off to university (Eacott and Sonn 2006, Petrin et al. 2014, Pretty et al. 2003), there is less emphasis on the link between their place attachment and their "way of knowing" (Deloria Jr and Wildcat 2001, Greenwood 2009) and this has barely been addressed across the African context.

On a broader level, research in Africa tends to produce more work on socio-economic, migratory and political issues rather than deeper ideological connections to place and indigenous knowledge like it has examined in other parts of the world (such as Central and South America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand). Mbembe (2001) speaks of the many ways in which research concerning Africa produced by scholarship in the West tends to focus on what is lacking or absent and a narrative that is negative. In this way, research perpetuates the ideology of "non-being" (no page) which the process of land dispossession began centuries ago. Research which focuses on the problems across the continent, and the lack or the negatives therein, can easily overshadow other important topics of research that counter that narrative are embedded in the local in scale and, thus, maintain the colonization of knowledge and being, continuing to produce images of the Other (Foucault 1980). This research combats the negative narratives of

place in the Eastern Cape and shows the agency of the students as place-makers and indigenous knowledge sustainers, not only in the present-day but also in the past.

Finally, this research is worth doing because we cannot separate land from epistemology as has been the case in South Africa when addressing epistemic conflict. They (land and epistemology) are twins that were raised together under the rigid mantra of separate development. Examining the two on their own, does not provide a clear picture of the dynamics at play in South Africa currently. I am not suggesting that my research paints a complete picture, it is merely a starting point for much more detailed research to follow but it *does* provide a point of departure for more field-based research to be developed. Place was crucial in the plan of apartheid; it cannot be dismissed as unimportant in understanding epistemic and economic injustices in the country.

This research is situated in a global effort to level the hierarchy of knowledge. There has been a growing move, in the new millennium, towards understanding the effect that globalization has on local, place-based knowledge and the effects that it has on indigenous knowledge systems (Escobar 2001, Gruenewald and Smith 2008, Johnson 2012). Taking away the natural landscape that knowledge systems attach themselves to can have irrevocable changes to the way that culture develops and the knowledge that is derived from the landscape (Oslender 2019). The call is growing louder across the globe to include these multiplicities and even the inequality in the knowledge landscape (Deloria Jr and Wildcat 2001, Escobar 2001, Massey 2005, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016, Smith 2012, Spivak 1988). In the African context, Jansen (1991) spoke of Africanizing the university in South Africa in the early 1990s, sharing some common aims with the present-day objective to decolonize the university. Still other South African scholars have spoken of “Reimagining Africa” (Biko 2019). For the purpose of this dissertation



and for simplicity, I will be using the term ‘decolonization’ to represent the need to address the inequalities that exist in epistemology as it is the most utilized term in the current context of South Africa. Decolonization will be discussed more fully in section 2.2.

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

A number of scholars have recently addressed the colonization of the mind and of research in academia (Mbembe 2016, Ndimande 2012, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016, Ngũgĩ 1986, Smith 2012). However, what attracted less attention in scholarly work is the network that exists between the school and the university and how knowledges travel with students from their high school contexts into their tertiary education. Students on the ideological margins within the high school education system have an imagination of the university that may not match up with reality, yet they also bring with them a knowledge system that the university is only beginning to make space for. Understanding how students engage with place and knowledge prior to the university gives insight into what knowledge these students value and consider to be valuable within South Africa. Thus, understanding the students’ experiences of place and knowledge is the primary objective of this study. If the focal point of decolonizing knowledge is the academy alone, we give power to the knowledge that is written and captured therein. However, this thinking misses the broader impact decolonization aims to have. It is just as necessary to critique the role of primary and secondary education through the decolonial lens. As decolonization is a term which is unfamiliar within the high school population<sup>1</sup> the term was not referred to often in the data collection process, the results will point towards decolonial theory by emphasizing students’ agency as place makers and indigenous knowledge sustainers.

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<sup>1</sup> Less than half of the students surveyed (41.2%) were familiar with the topic of decolonizing knowledge and only 34.8% were familiar with the topic of decolonizing the university.

The secondary objective of this dissertation is to contextualize the present study within a decolonial analysis of the past. This perspective on the past 70 years highlights the agency that Xhosa people (also known as the amaXhosa<sup>2</sup>) had over knowledge and place in spite of apartheid governance and is important for revealing how relationships with knowledge and place have changed over time. The aim of the decolonial analysis is to go beyond a post-colonial view on the years of apartheid and inform themes in the present study.

### 1.3.1. Research Questions

This research attempts to answer the following questions that are foundational to understanding the mode of colonization in the academy and take the spotlight off the highly theoretical and place it on lived experiences. The motivation for asking these questions is to gain more insight into relationships with place and knowledge that exist in the student body in the broader education system. These questions will be unpacked in detail in the paragraphs that follow.

1. How have students' perceptions of place and knowledge varied over time (between 1950s and the present)?
2. How do students' perceptions of place and knowledge vary across place context (rural and township<sup>3</sup>)?
3. How do students' perceptions of place and knowledge vary between high school and university?

The first research question acknowledges that power has been exerted throughout the history of the development of South Africa. This question aims to understand how places of oppression

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<sup>2</sup> "Ama" is a prefix indicating plurality. In this case, amaXhosa refers to the Xhosa nation.

<sup>3</sup> Designated for black occupation during apartheid. In the present-day, townships are slums on the margins of urban areas, where dwellings are made from materials that can be salvaged such as corrugated iron, wood or cardboard.

during apartheid were viewed in the past and how they are currently viewed by students living there. A number of studies within the archives, both quantitative and qualitative, help build a picture of past perceptions about the Ciskei and the townships of Makhanda<sup>4</sup> (formerly known as Grahamstown until 2018) as well as how knowledge systems were viewed at the times of these studies.

The second research question seeks to understand how places and knowledge are viewed by high school students living in different places. It examines place perceptions on both a local and a provincial level. The larger hope is to highlight connections that exist between perceptions of place and indigenous knowledge systems as students move through the education system. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through surveys and interviews with high school students in order to address this question.

The third research question relates to the role of transitions in life in shaping relationships with knowledge and place. Transitions are not limited across space but they also include life stage changes. This question seeks to understand how moving away from home and school (even just moving across a valley) to the university environment may affect students' relationship with these former place and knowledge attachments. It also seeks to better understand how students' views of knowledge vary as they move to higher education.

These research questions address coloniality in three more ways. First, the education system within colonized countries was by no means a benign institution; it had a very specific agenda – to ensure that the primary residents of the country were trained to be compliant within the colony. Part of this colonial structure still endures to the present day as minds are channeled

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<sup>4</sup> Makhanda will be used throughout this dissertation, except when addressing the origins of Grahamstown by settler colonials and when speaking specifically about the name change.

into a knowledge system which suits the status quo and maintains harmony. Second, as discussed previously, colonialism impacted place by dissecting the landscape and enforcing a form of governance that had not been present on a national scale. These dissections separated the development of urban and rural areas (particularly those of the former Bantustans<sup>5</sup>). Third, by bringing in another system of thought, a system of governance and an economic system that was distinctly different from the one present in areas colonized, an ontological and epistemological conflict was set in motion. These conflicts are still present in South Africa and are evident in the decolonization protests and the land debate. For this reason, this dissertation considers place and knowledge to be the starting point for this field-based decolonial research.

The broader aim of this dissertation project is to enable policy makers and curriculum developers to understand the significance of place in a student's education in the hope of taking steps towards a more inclusive education system within marginalized communities. Through this dissertation it is hoped that a clear and strong connection between place and knowledge will be drawn together. It is also hoped that this dissertation will prompt deeper examination into the ways in which we have continued separate development mindsets and where this may hold positive potential for social development research in South Africa.

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<sup>5</sup> Bantustans were the only regions in rural South Africa where black South Africans could legally live if they had no employment in the urban areas. Between 1968-80, black South Africans were forcibly removed from their primary places of residence to live in these regions.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.0. Introduction**

This chapter presents an overview of the main theories informing this dissertation, namely postcolonial and decolonial theory. Theory on education, place and indigenous knowledge systems will be embedded in these main theories. Literature on the aforementioned theories will be addressed first and will then be contextualized in historic and present-day South Africa. The colonial history of South Africa is of great significance in this dissertation as it offers insight into the development of the education system and how binaries in place and knowledge emerged. The aim of this literature review is to make robust connections between the education system and indigenous knowledge systems and attachments to place which education impacted. It sets the stage for understanding how relationships between place and knowledge have varied over time (Research Question 1) and lays bare the structure of coloniality that developed from the colonial education which is relevant to Research Questions 2 and 3.

### **2.1. Post-colonialism Theory**

Colonialism exerted power over both knowledge systems and place. Post-colonial theory thoroughly critiques colonial education as a means of colonizing the mind and it examines the ways in which colonial powers had constructed and had agency over places (Sharp 2009). It also draws attention to the binary of “us” and “other” that existed in the colonial time and the divide between urban and rural as the developed and the ‘backward’ or remote respectively (Ashcroft 2001). Post-colonial theory also examines the rise of positivist inquiry and how science holds greater import over other ways of knowing. Since this research seeks to examine ways in which place and knowledge perceptions have varied over time, particularly in the education system, it is important to draw on post-colonial literature.

Colonialism manufactured “the other” and in so doing defined the “us,” privileging the latter (Fanon 1963, Giroux 2005, Said 1978, Sharp 2009). One of the impacts of this othering, is that the image given to the “other” was so negative that the South African black population tended “to find solace only in close identification with the white society” (Biko 1978, 29) seeing the Eurocentric ways of knowing and being as the only way to become enlightened (Fanon 1963, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016). Even if this was not the case for all colonized people, “the subaltern can never speak outside the discourse of power” (Ashcroft 2001, 46) as they had to communicate with the colonizer in his language (Ashcroft 2001, 46, Ashcroft et al. 1998).

Post-colonialism recognizes that places were and still are vehicles of power in imperial hands (Said 1978). Geography was at the very heart of the colonization mission and post-colonial theory critiques the way colonizers drew borders, designated and occupied territory, and designed urban landscape to reflect imperial rule in a foreign land (Myers 2003, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016, Sharp 2009). Places, all at once, became political and economic sites that exposed cultural difference (Ashcroft 2001).

Moreover, colonial authority had a great deal of control over the mobility of the non-white residents in the colonies. Forced displacement of indigenous peoples forever altered their sense of place and alienated people from their homelands as they were forced to migrate to unknown places (Ashcroft 2001). Such violence to one’s relationship with place disrupted identities and ways of life as people were no longer embedded in places they knew (Platzky and Walker 1983b, Relph 1976).

Colonial power, through the education system, set up a Eurocentric enlightened epistemology as the standard for knowledge (Sharp 2009). Indigenous people who became educated in a European knowledge system distanced themselves from their indigenous

knowledge system while those who remained uneducated were understood to be ‘uncivilized’ (Ashcroft 2001). Post-colonial theory speaks to the fallacy of statements such as these which were captured in writing in colonies across the globe and examines how education systems not only aimed at producing politically stable citizens (Abdi 2002) but also how it produced epistemic conflict within an indigenous person as they navigated which knowledge system to follow. Post-colonialism interrogates a history which has mostly silenced voices on the margins, privileging other accounts (McLaren and Leonard 2001).

The enlightened worldview that spread through colonialism also placed high value on scientific knowledge (Pratt 1992, Sharp 2009). Positivism grew from the concrete, measurable and the calculable and became synonymous with development. Post-colonial theory traces this link throughout the colonial period to reveal how these ways of knowing “have become universalized to the extent that they are often seen as the only way to know” in this present day (Sharp 2009, 110).

#### 2.1.1. Limitations

Though post-colonial theory has strengths and is important for laying groundwork for this dissertation, it also falls short in some areas. First, post-colonial theory tends to critique colonization from a Western academic perspective (Pratt 1992). It doesn’t include the voices on the margins, largely because these voices were not present in much of the literature that was produced during the colonial period. This has implications for what is known about place and sense of place of the indigenous people in the past. Post-colonialism places emphasis on the ways in which colonial power had agency over place and its construction. It does not speak to the agency that indigenous people had over the places they lived. It also sees place and sense of place predominantly through the lens of the European/Western “us” and not the “other” where

settlers wrote accounts of their experiences in the colonies while the experiences of the indigenous peoples' sense of place are seldom referenced or recorded.

The binary that post-colonialism emphasizes is also a limitation since it groups every indigenous group into the broad category of “other” which is a gross misrepresentation of the uniqueness of each indigenous group when viewed through a decolonial lens. Moreover, this categorization fails to address the divide that broadened over the colonial period between the African middle-class elites and those who still persisted in their indigenous ways and were looked down upon by the African elite (Burger 1944, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zindo 2016, Pithouse 2006). It also classifies Europe and the West into the category of “us” which is equally limiting.

Finally, post-colonialism places more weight on the ways in which colonialism impacted indigenous knowledge systems and generated a preference for Eurocentric and positivist epistemology than it speaks to the ways in which indigenous knowledge systems remained resilient or adapted to the changes that colonialism presented. Hence to use this theory as a standalone framework for this dissertation would severely confine the direction of this dissertation. For these reasons, postcolonial theory will be used in conjunction with decolonization theory to explore the topics in this dissertation.

## **2.2. Decolonization Theory**

Decolonization theory seeks to address some of the limitations of post-colonial theory and engages much more with coloniality in present-day systems, actively seeking to unseat resilient power differentials which colonialism established. It speaks of *plurality* instead of binaries and does this from a non-Western perspective. It emphasizes that indigenous knowledge has been resilient in spite of colonial education and can be incredibly important for conservation and living as a more connected, self-aware and community-based people (Smith 2012). In so doing,



decolonization theory does not just critique the superiority of positivism but it presents that dance, music, oral history and storytelling (among others) constitute and contribute to knowledge too (Denzin et al. 2008). Moreover, indigenous people's sense of place is often displayed in these non-positivist ways of knowing (Ashcroft 2001).

Decolonization theory fundamentally seeks to not only expose but actionably address how coloniality is still rooted in higher education institutions and the education system, in the telling of history and ultimately in the very places we live. It takes note of how differences between us are exposed (Tebensky and Matthews 2015). Decolonization theory declares that indigenous people have agency over place and that they are not powerless against the coloniality which still alters and resides in place.

Finally, decolonial theory firmly states that the colonized mind needs to be freed and that colonization impacts both colonizer and colonized in the way they see the world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zindo 2016). In order to truly achieve decolonization, this freedom needs to come to both groups otherwise indigenous people will never truly be free (Greenwood 2009, Jansen 1991, Smith 2012).

### 2.2.1. Limitations

The limitation of decolonization theory for this work is that it tends to focus on structures that are embedded within higher education primarily (particularly in the South African context). The education before university is seldom connected together in decolonial literature. This has gathered attention in recent years as work by Christie (2020), Lebeloane (2018), Timmis et al. (2019) confront this gap in the decolonial project but there is still much to do done to address coloniality in the network between schools and universities.

Decolonization theory also puts less emphasis on place. It acknowledges that places are sites of coloniality in its symbols, architecture and organization (Mbembe 2016). It also delves into topics such as sovereignty and rights to lands which people already possess, but attention must be given to agency that indigenous people have over land that is not theirs, their sense of place that is developed in spite of the coloniality that still persists in a place. This truly is decolonization of the mind and person, the very resident of a place.

Specific to South Africa, decolonization literature is developed largely independent of field-based research and matters of place and knowledge are considered as separate entities to decolonize. There is little research aimed at understanding how place is perceived by various ethnic groups in South Africa and even Africa as a whole. Decolonization theory has ample opportunity to contribute to these matters but these remain a current limitation to decolonial theory within South Africa. It is for this reason, that decolonial theory will be supplemented with theory on place, particularly in the results section as it draws attention to the indigenous experience of place and knowledge within the education system, highlighting areas where coloniality is still embedded, such as the norm that education is the only way to be successful.

Together with post-colonial theory, decolonization theory forms a robust lens through which to view this dissertation work. While post-colonial theory exposes the power structures and binaries that were established during colonialism with a thorough examination of colonial education and how they persist into the present, decolonial work emphasizes the agency that indigenous people have and must have in order to address this long-standing coloniality. With these theories, place and knowledge can easily be linked together, having forever been changed through the process of colonization.

The sections that follow present a post-colonial and decolonial perspective on the history of South Africa with special emphasis on the education system and how colonial powers influenced place and indigenous knowledge systems. But first, we have to examine the central mechanism in this dissertation which alters a person's relationship with knowledge and place: the education system. Education has shaped knowledge and place relationships since colonialism. The section that follows will further develop ways that education directly and indirectly impacts knowledge and place. Direct ways involve teaching content which favors Euro-American perspectives especially in the 'objective' sciences and history domains. Migration for education or because of education will be considered as an indirect way in which education influences students' knowledge and place relationships. Education not only offers connection between place and knowledge; it also offers an intersection between post-colonial studies and decolonial theory as the coloniality of education is examined in both theories.

### **2.3. Education as a Mechanism of Influence**

This dissertation takes place within the confines of the education system and as such it is helpful to be explicit about the role education has in influencing people's perceptions of place and their indigenous knowledge in a more general sense first. Education is by no means a benign activity. In this section we will first consider how education exists as a mechanism altering one's sense of place. This will be followed by a discussion on how perceptions of a person's indigenous knowledge are challenged through the process of education. Mention will be made of the role of education in facilitating migration, particularly from a historic viewpoint, as this link emerges in the results chapters. Finally, this section will look at specific customs and beliefs which education may have indirectly or directly impacted in the Xhosa knowledge system.

### 2.3.1. Place

Place-based scholarship views formal education, globally, as prone to being disconnected from the setting of everyday life; transcendent over place (Greenwood 2009). The schooling process is set “apart from the lives of people” forming a physical and mental detachment from one’s community and belonging to a community is an important component of one’s sense of place (Sanger 1997). Education can also nullify the importance of the knowledge gained through every-day life (Deloria Jr and Wildcat 2001).

The disconnect between place and education is evident in the science disciplines – (Deloria Jr and Wildcat 2001, Koopman 2018). Traditionally science education has been unrelatable to students’ lived experience. As knowledge is reduced to “sterile, abstract concept[s]” within the frameworks of science “much is lost that cannot be retrieved” (Deloria Jr and Wildcat 2001, 6) and one thing that is lost is one’s embedded relationship with place. Another thing that is lost in the process is that the urgent and complex problems within places get removed from the spotlight of research (Deloria Jr and Wildcat 2001). When science removes us from our immediate contexts, the local problems we experience are mostly rendered unimportant. This is one aspect of education that decolonization work seeks to unseat.

Privileging objective knowledge also mutes indigenous people’s perspectives of history and recites the ‘appropriate’ story to learners all through their education (Willinsky 2000). Ndimande (2009, 131) speaks of the formal education in South Africa as a system where “the histories of black people are relegated to the margins in the curriculum.” Since the history of a place has also been noted in other countries to strengthen one’s relationship with place (Feld and Basso 1996, Lewicka 2008), it follows that this has consequences for black South Africans’

sense of place. This was clearly an issue in the #Rhodesmustfall movement across universities in South Africa, which will be examined later in section 2.5.

The pursuit of education also encourages and, in some cases, necessitates migration and is noticeable in both past and present South Africa (Cook 1934, McKay 2019). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, non-white South Africans would often have to leave their homes to board at a school far away (de Vos Malan 1939), or to attend Fort Hare university (Davis 1972, Pithouse 2006). And once educated, they had the ability to move away from rural areas and into urban areas as their sense of place shifted away from being locally bound (Cook 1934).

On the contrary, those without education had less choice in where they were able to live and often led to men leaving homesteads to work in mines to provide money for their families in the rural areas in order to survive. In many cases this had terrible consequences for the whole family (Cook 1934, Phillips 1930, Shepherd 1941). While this type of migration is not important for the present-day analysis of this dissertation, it is relevant to the archival analysis and for understanding the ways in which education, and lack thereof, shaped development in the regions where this research takes place.

Regardless of whether the mobility is due to being educated or not, being more mobile has been shown to produce weaker emotional bonds to local places (Gustafons 2014) as it produces “a kind of placelessness or non-place” (Cresswell 2004, 50). In this way, migration acts as an informal education mechanism through which other ways of being and knowing (such as the Eurocentric knowledge system) are discovered and can result in changing preferences toward one’s indigenous knowledge and place relationship. This had particular relevance in the colonial and apartheid time in South Africa when people in rural areas moved to urban locations.

### 2.3.2. Knowledge

Obtaining a Western education in many African societies is of high importance (Jansen 1991, Smith 2012). Jansen (1991,123) goes a step further by saying that preferences for academic knowledge over indigenous knowledge is “rooted in a colonial mentality that sees education as a preparation for privilege” or success. Considering that apartheid education was one of the “most potent weapon[s]” (Abdi 2002, 55) in the colonizer’s strategy, it is important to consider how the process of schooling today is still rooted in its origins. Over 20 years after Jansen penned that indictment aimed at the South African academe, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016, 35) writes that institutions of higher education in Africa are “nothing more than centers for testing European- and American-generated theories on African realities.” Coloniality is still embedded within the system of knowledge acquisition and research in South Africa.

The Western standard of education, implemented in the education system in South Africa, favors positivism and knowledge that is objective. Foucault expresses that there is a power possessed by scientific knowledge which disqualifies other ways of knowing and labels them as “naive knowledges” (Foucault 1980, 82). Western education subtly, yet potently implies “the beliefs and teachings of the tribe are always wrong” (Deloria Jr and Wildcat 2001, 4). Western science explains away the supernatural and when a learner explains an observation through their indigenous knowledge lens, it appears as “non-rational in the perception of Western science but at the same time the learner experiences no contradictions in his or her conceptual system.” (Koopman 2018, 170-171). There is no room for folklore and mystery in the positivist paradigm.

Mobility increases the transfer of knowledge to and from places all over the world and may result in questioning the relevance of *placed* indigenous knowledge (Johnson 2012).

Mobility fosters the thinking that it is better to be somewhere else (Sanders 1994). Migration for educational purposes, in colonial South Africa, was a physical representation of the separation from what was known by the student in their indigenous knowledge and what knowledge was acceptable and expected for the students to know in order to fit into the colonial society. The tension between place, knowledge and migration must be contextualized in connection with the Xhosa knowledge system, one of the largest traditional, linguistic and cultural groups in South Africa. The next section will relay how key components of Xhosa customs and beliefs are attached to place through land and cattle ownership.

### 2.3.3. Xhosa Knowledge Systems: Land and Knowledge

What specific components of Xhosa knowledge systems did education play a role in altering?

This section looks at aspects of the Xhosa knowledge systems that connect knowledge and place together. Education and migration played a role in how these customs and beliefs were adapted or discarded. Contextualizing the place and knowledge theory in the amaXhosa knowledge system is an important step in this literature review in order to provide a background for the themes discussed in the results sections. This section briefly looks at a few key components that link land and amaXhosa indigenous knowledge for the purposes of illuminating how *place* can act as a proxy for knowledge and vice versa. In the results, an examination of the ways in which knowledge and place are linked together will be followed by how their importance and centrality to customs and beliefs of the Xhosa people have changed over time. The customs and beliefs that will be referred to later concern the ancestors, chiefs, land ownership, cattle ownership and diviners. Key Xhosa indigenous knowledge rests within each of these components of traditional life and as such, the major customs or beliefs that emerge in this dissertation will be explored in the paragraphs that follow.

### *Ancestors*

Belief in the ancestors is one of the most fundamental beliefs in the Xhosa knowledge system, so it is a good starting point for expansion. The ancestors are usually males of seniority in the agnatic group that have died (Hirst 2005). The ancestors play a key role in the life and the knowledge system of the amaXhosa (Qangule 1979). There is a continuity of the life incorporated in this strong ancestral belief which presents an entirely different philosophical view on life itself. One's life is connected to and cares for those who went before and one's future is connected to one's offspring. It contrasts the Western view of a person as an individual who is an autonomous entity from ancestors and descendants (Rothbaum and Trommsdorff 2007). Ancestors are also figures of power for the amaXhosa. Crais (1992) writes that the ancestors, together with the river people, hold authority and shape the "collective order of the world" of the life forces (p. 23). Yet ultimately, the ancestors are only delegated this power from the ultimate source, Qamata (God) (Qangule 1979).

### *Chiefs or Kings*

Chiefs were the authority figures below the ancestors in the tribal structure of the amaXhosa (Qangule 1979). Letsoalo (1987) notes that chiefs were responsible for allocating land to the head of each household and were considered by the tribe as "both father and son" (18). Under colonial rule, the chiefs became largely redundant as leadership figures and some became corrupted by colonial influence (Mbeki 1939).

### *Land*

Land was a key resource for "life, social status and political power" (Letsoalo 1987, 1) and the lives of the community revolved around it. All members of the tribe had the right to own land. When land was allocated to a person by the chief, it was their family's land independent of



whether or not they moved away indefinitely. Upon returning to the village, that land was theirs since the bond between each tribesman and their land was more enduring than the chief's relationship to the land (Letsoalo 1987). This being said, land ownership was not by title deed or through the enforcement of 'private property' as would be the case in the Euro-American worldview.

Having land meant that they were able to own cattle and live off the land through subsistence farming. Cattle from various homesteads could graze freely on all the communal land that was under the oversight of the chief (Biko 1978). Each homestead was organized into sections for grazing, an enclosure (the kraal) for the cattle and for the habitation of the family. There was a specific structure that huts were arranged in, with the kraal in the center of a ring of huts in order to protect the cattle from predators (Kuper 1980). The ancestors were said to dwell at the threshold of the homestead and congregate at the gate post to the kraal as the land in front of the kraal was where the ancestors were buried (Qangule 1979). This had to be adapted as more people migrated to the cities where they did not have the land and space for a kraal or even cattle (Hirst 2005). The ring of huts was organized according to order of importance and order of marriage, as polygamy was the norm (Kuper 1980).

In taking away land through colonialism, the economic system of the amaXhosa was disrupted and many were forced to depend more on wage earnings; a meager return for labor (Rogers 1980). Furthermore, without land, families often didn't have the financial means to provide for their children's education (Murray 1992), meaning that those in the former Bantustans had major hurdles when sending their children to school.

### *Cattle*

Cattle are an incredibly important animal for many rituals and customs within the Xhosa culture, such as the Feast of Idini which is “the spilling of the blood for the ancestors” (Limb et al. 2010 quoting Mqhayi, Idini (1928), 20-21). Cattle were also important for marriage customs as a payment for lobola (the bride price) to the father of the bride (Marquard 1939). As such, cattle were symbols of wealth and prestige for men, and men “loved their cattle” (Pringle 1834, 434). Land and cattle ownership were marks of *success* in traditional Xhosa culture (Mhlahlo 2009). Men and boys had an important role of taking care of and herding the cattle. Through this informal system of education, the importance of cattle was conveyed from man to child through generations. Through circumcision, boys became men and could build their homestead and acquire cattle of their own (Mhlahlo 2009).

### *Diviners and superstition*

In keeping with the centrality of the ancestors in the Xhosa knowledge system, diviners are those who mediate messages between the ancestors and those currently living in physical form. If an individual has failed to pay due respect to or has displeased an ancestor, negative life circumstances may be attributed to this grievance against the ancestor (Limb et al. 2010). The diviner is the one who is able to communicate this displeasure to a person via diagnosing their illness or situation and prescribing a course of action in order to appease the aggrieved ancestor (Hirst 2005). Thus, diviners deal with the mystical and supernatural; that which science cannot explain.

Diviners have a keen knowledge of the landscape, and on occasions they will have to find a herb that came to them in a vision or dream in the exact location where it grows (Hirst 2005). One requires a specific calling to become a diviner, unlike herbalists, who use herbal medicine to

cure ailments independent of the supernatural realm. They too have an attuned knowledge of the environment.

### *Summary of Customs and Beliefs*

These aspects of culture and belief reveal connection to place in a spiritual and physical way.

Cultural practices and beliefs were embedded in places either through structure (the kraal protecting cattle), arrangement (order of wives' huts) or location (ancestors meeting at the gatepost) within the homestead and tribe (role of chiefs). These customs and beliefs were also all impacted through colonization over the past two centuries, within the Eastern Cape, as colonizers took land from the people and as the imposed education system caused some to favor European ways of being and knowing (Cook 1934, Hirst 2005, Marquard 1939, Nyquist 1983). Cook (1934) conducted an in-depth analysis on how education segregated the amaBomvana<sup>6</sup> in the Eastern Cape and brought about new labels within the Xhosa language: the ones with painted faces (the traditional Xhosa) and those whose hearts had broken through (the educated Xhosa or those living in towns). This distinction was also referenced in work by Burger (1944) and Phillips (1930), who mention how Bantu distinguished between those who were "dressed" (educated) or "blanket" (traditional) Xhosa and spoke of the tension between those groups as cultural change was quickening. Place and knowledge preferences went hand in hand and impacted not just the individual but the whole community, even their very language.

Understanding the deeper meaning of land and place offers sometimes subtle, yet profound, relevance within this research which connects perceptions of knowledge to perceptions of place. Place and knowledge are not distant or independent from one another. They are fused together in a deep way epistemologically in the Xhosa knowledge system and the weapon of

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<sup>6</sup> The amaBomvana and amaXhosa are both tribes that make up part of the southern Nguni people.

apartheid mutilated both place and knowledge and muted the injustices over these areas by making race the sole focal point. As a result, the role and importance of place injustice has been understudied in the South African academy, particularly when it comes to decolonization, and I believe this is of great significance in coming to understand present-day South Africa.

#### **2.4. Colonial History of South Africa**

South Africa was first colonized by the Dutch under the Dutch East India Company in 1652, initially as a place of respite along the trade route to India. The next 300 years saw colonies established by German, French and British settlers but by the 1900s the Dutch (now called the Afrikaans or Boers) and British colonies were the dominant powers, displacing African ethnic groups as they expanded northeastward and became the major place-makers (Abdi 2002, Durrheim 2005, Myers 2003, Plaatje 1982). In order to build and maintain these colonies, the various ethnic groups in South Africa were educated as a means of controlling, subduing and moralizing the native tribes (Molteno 1984).

During the peak of colonialism at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the continued influx of European immigrants, the white population made up a meager 25% of the population in South Africa (Plaatje 1982) yet they had unequalled power. White perspectives of history and knowledge took precedence in the school system and this white-European perspective served the purpose of drilling “into the mind of the African child the idea that in all our fights with the whiteman, the whiteman was in the right and that our forefathers... were the villains in the whole story” (Clarke 1946, quoted in Kallaway, 1984, 66).

In the early 1900s, education of the native population was mainly provided by missionary organizations and the British government under Native Education and was offered to a select

few, primarily for the chiefs' children and those who would be in positions of leadership in their communities (Molteno 1984). Thus, a Eurocentric education was presented by the governing powers to the local powers first. Former president Nelson Mandela was afforded this kind of educational opportunity because of his close familial ties to the Chief Jongintaba Dalindyebo which enabled him to later pursue his law degree (Mandela 1994). The education of black South Africans remained a means of subduing the ethnic majority and they were taught only what the white leadership deemed necessary for their future vocations, such as hygiene, tidiness and obedience (Molteno 1984). This effectively set in motion an epistemicide of South African knowledge systems through not only placing value on Eurocentric ways of knowing but also destroying the value they held in their own (Lebakeng 2016, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zindo 2016, Nielsen 1922, Nyquist 1983).

Land was also reserved for the native population, limiting where they could lease or buy land, under the 1913 Natives Land Act instituted by the Union parliament of South Africa. In these designated regions, no non-white person could own land and land owned by natives, before the commencement of the Act, could only be transferred to native or coloured<sup>7</sup> persons thereafter. In effect, the Native Land Act not only restricted where non-white people could own land but it also spoke to a racist ideology that land owned by a non-white person was inferior. The land allocated for black South Africans became overcrowded and the land overgrazed as one square mile was shared by more than 60 people, along with their cattle, sheep and goats (Burger 1944, Platzky and Walker 1983a). Many reserves did not have suitable soil for farming (Platzky and Walker 1983b). The distinctions between insider and outsider started to surface and South

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<sup>7</sup> The coloured are a mixed race developed shortly after the initial colonization of South Africa

African writers and intellectuals such as Sol Plaatje and Govan Mbeki<sup>8</sup>, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, began to write their story of resistance against the Native Land Act and its amendments (Mbeki 1939, Plaatje 1982).

Towards the mid-1900s the political influence of the Afrikaners grew and the all-white Afrikaner National Party won the general election in 1948, removing governmental power from the British. However, the binary established in colonial times persisted: black and white, “‘us’ (people who belong in a place) and ‘them’ (people who do not)” (Cresswell 2004, 39). Under the National Party, segregation of the non-white and white populations became formalized in what became known as apartheid (Ndimande 2013). Through the Group Areas Acts (1950) the daily mobility of black South Africans became severely limited and places were transformed into juxtapositions of power and inferiority at any location where black and white lives intersected. From 1960 onwards, the National Party initiated the forced removal of black people from urban areas, mostly women, children and the elderly, and placed them in one of the 10 Bantustans (see Figure 2.1), which were viewed as separate states within South Africa (Rogers 1980). These were places that the people did not know (Platzky and Walker 1983a) and, given that “to *know* is first of all to *know the places* one is in” (Casey 1997, 18, emphasis added), this dislocation had damaging effects beyond the physical removal.

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<sup>8</sup> Govan Mbeki was an alumnus from the University of Fort Hare.

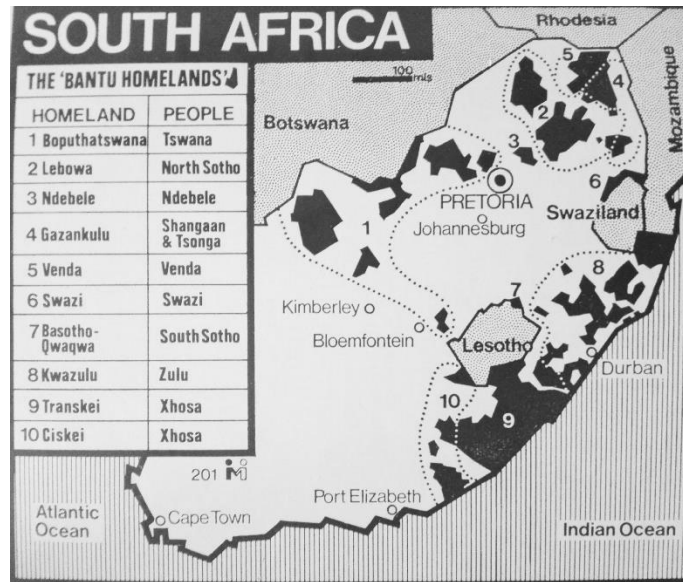


Figure 2.1: Former Bantustans in South Africa

Source: Rogers (1980)

If a Bantustan gained independence from the National Party, the people therein ceased to be citizens of the Republic of South Africa, foreigners in their country of origin. The education in the Bantustans was also distinctly different than in White, Indian and Coloured schools in the urban locations under establishment of the Bantu Education Act in 1953 (Gordon 2009, Ogunniyi and Mushayikwa 2015, Reddy 2004, Vally et al. 1999) and in some areas there were no established schools, as was the case in Glenmore in the Ciskei (Platzky and Walker 1983a). It follows that the education was not just a function of racial demographics but also a function of place, since it varied across geographical regions (rural, township and urban). It also deserves to be mentioned that “education” in this context really refers to the process of schooling, the socialization into a Eurocentric cultural heritage (Abdi 2002, Morrow 1989, Seawright 2014, Willinsky 2000).

Though apartheid may have envisioned education as a passive means of control, it was to become a crucial political player in the anti-apartheid struggle. The Soweto Uprising, which

occurred on 16 June 1976, brought the entanglement of unequal education and power to the surface. On that day, thousands of black students in Soweto protested against being taught in Afrikaans, which they called the “language of the oppressor.” Using education to passively control black learners had failed and over a hundred black students died as the apartheid government went to greater extremes to control the protesting learners (Ndimande 2013, 24). For the black students, education was seen as the tool for social transformation, and democratizing education gave the youth focus to push back against the oppression of apartheid (Samoff 2001). Indeed this is true in many other cases where the more powerful discourse has been fashioned into a weapon in the hand of the oppressed seeking social and political transformation (Ashcroft 2001).

As the demands for skilled laborers increased in capitalist South Africa, the ruling National Party had to change their strategy of education in order to supply sufficient human capital to the market as well as to keep black youth from turning militant towards the government (Fleisch 2002). This resulted in the introduction of the black middle class, referred to as the “urban insiders”, as was the case in Makhanda, one of the places of interest in this research (Nyquist 1983, Southall 2016, 66). This was a group of black South Africans who were privileged by their education and occupation status who became complacent towards apartheid because they were now the exception to the rule. This further served to divide the urban landscape, but now by class, as the black elite moved into suburbs that were previously “white only.”

It is crucial to consider this history in the proposed research since it directly situates education in place and exposes the structures of power responsible for devaluing both place and knowledge systems. Apartheid was inherently attached to place by its very definition



(Christopher 2001) and place history was written by white people; places were constructed by white people for the benefit and advancement of the white population (Myers 2003). Boundaries were determined by white people over the course of the colonial period and it was whites who decided which places the non-whites could be in.

As Ashcroft (2001, 1) mentions, there may have been positives that came out of the colonial history but it is important to be aware that “these colonized people, cultures and ultimately nations were prevented from becoming what they might have become: they were never allowed to develop into the societies they might have been.” The result of colonization was an epistemicide of knowledge systems that were outside the Eurocentric view (Crais 1992, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zindo 2016). This colonization of the mind<sup>9</sup> has endured to the present, impacting the education system as well as the minds of the students, both non-white and white alike (Deloria Jr and Wildcat 2001, Fanon 1963, Greenwood 2009, Willinsky 2000). The danger here is that “as young people learn more and more of the ‘whiteman’s way’ they will also lose sight of portions of their own” (Basso 2010, 63). This preference is a tradeoff of knowledge. But beyond the influence of colonialism on knowledge systems today, there are also notable impressions that colonialism continues to have on place, and this “experience of ‘place’ could be one discourse of post-colonial life most resistant to change” (Ashcroft 2001, 124).

Before moving on to the present context, this post-colonial perspective on the history of South Africa acknowledges difference, power and binaries but it doesn’t emphasize ways in which indigenous people have been place makers or stewards of their indigenous knowledge. This next section steps into a more decolonial perspective on recent history. Decolonization

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<sup>9</sup> Made popular by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o – see *Decolonising the mind: the politics of language in African literature* (1986)

theory exposes difference and inequality within the society in South Africa yet, instead of this being a passive critique about it, it shakes its head defiantly at the opinion that the subaltern cannot speak or that indigenous people are powerless to change the circumstances they were placed in by the colonizer. Decolonization calls for structural and systemic change in South Africa.

## **2.5. Present Context**

South Africa became a democracy under the African National Congress (ANC), led by Nelson Mandela, in 1994. The places constructed over the previous 100 years were remodeled to be more representative of all demographics. Removal of pass laws was followed by access to education in a way that had never before been possible, as students were now able to attend better funded schools in urban areas, migrating from the rural areas to cities. Curriculum changes were first implemented in 1996 to address the different perspectives of history and lived experience within the nation and to promote social cohesion following apartheid. The curriculum, which was revised in 2005 and again between 2012-2014, is still undergoing policy changes to include more cultural perspectives and languages within the education system (Jacob 2019, Petersen 2019, Pudi 2006). Though this was a very important step for social development in South Africa, it has not achieved the goal of educating all students to a “Western standard.” This standard, which will be further explored below, exposes the power that the Global North has over knowledge in South Africa (Swadener and Mutua 2008) and determines what is viable knowledge.

While post-apartheid schooling is said to be desegregated and equitable, education continues to serve a political agenda (Westaway 2016). The economy of South Africa is still developing and there has been much attention given to improving education in the science and

mathematics fields in an effort to produce a more skilled workforce. The Department of Education, through the advising of the World Bank, has been emphasizing mathematics and science development in schools for over a decade and yet, in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2015 rankings, South Africa placed second last in mathematics out of the global competitors and last in science for grade 8 students, even after improvements from the previous testing year (International Study Center 2017). Surprisingly, the very same report in which the World Bank pressed the development of science and technology education, outlined its key pillars to assist in the developing of the country and none of them included education (The World Bank 2007). Moreover, the instances where education was mentioned failed to situate the problem with education in place and instead threw a blanket strategy for accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals for education without distinction between the inequalities that exist between rural and urban schooling. Settler colonialism gave way to a new colonialism under global powers but what is still evident is that knowledge remains controlled by power and hindered by these spatial inequalities. However, this is only one perspective of the post-apartheid time period. Decoloniality shines the spotlight on other perspectives and in this case, the student body has been instrumental in shifting the narrative to the marginalized majority.

In March 2015, student protests erupted on the University of Cape Town (UCT) campus to have the statue of the colonial figure, Cecil John Rhodes, removed from the premises (see Figure 2.2). To African students it was a physical representation of the colonial power that is still present in the higher education system, in the curriculum and the perspectives of history that are taught and those that are withheld (Herman 2015). The statue became a visual reminder that the university was historically a white place, funded by a white slave owner, with theories developed

from a small subset of the world. This symbol of a Eurocentric history agitated black students' sense of place. Protests spread to Rhodes University, the name-bearer of the colonial figure, in an effort to get the institution to change its name (Mnyanda 2015) which has remained a point of contention ever since. Though the name of the university has remained unchanged, in the years that followed these protests, the name of Grahamstown, where Rhodes is located, was changed to Makhanda, after the esteemed leader and prophet who fought against the occupation of British settlers in the region during the early days of colonialism (Roux 1964). This is the name that will be used for the rest of this dissertation. These protests that spread across the country began conversations directed at transforming and decolonizing the university in South Africa.



Figure 2.2: The removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes from the UCT campus  
Source: Van Zuydam (2015)

Protests also raised issues regarding cost of tuition, drawing attention to the long standing difference between institutions that were formerly white universities and those which were formally black (Davids and Waghid 2016). Even from the standpoint of the protests themselves, formally white universities such as UCT, Rhodes and Witwatersrand have larger leveraging

power than historically black universities such as the University of Fort Hare. Both the protests and the places where these protests have greatest leverage, expose the dynamics of power, knowledge and place within higher education in South Africa. These protests are indications of the power which resides within the ‘othered’ members of society and emphasizes that though power structures exist which represent Western epistemology, the voices on the margins hold their own power to shout for change because their lived experience is different from the dominant discourse.

It has been suggested that the university in its current form is out of place in the African context since the university *in Africa* was never, and is not, an *African university* but rather, a place where Western ideology resides in Africa (Jansen 1991, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016). In South Africa specifically, the post-apartheid university may have changed external labels and slogans but “their work, to a significant degree, only changed since apartheid in so far as it has accommodated itself to the neoliberal agenda” (Pithouse 2006, xxiii). Decolonizing the university, therefore, is more than deracializing the university by increasing black representation, it is about examining the epistemology and the knowledge that is valued within the university (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zindo 2016) and in turn critically assessing how historically white universities have power over historically black institutions. It requires recognizing that the university as an institution across Africa, established under colonial rule, continues to produce Western knowledge. Since place influences the way we know, in order to enable representative epistemology at the university level, people from different places, backgrounds and lived experiences need to enter the university and become knowledge producers and create the epistemic friction that is necessary for a healthy democracy (Medina 2013). Decolonizing the university then, should start at the school level which has been a major missing link in discussion

of decolonization in South Africa. This should not only be with respect to the content taught but more crucially, ensuring that people of all different backgrounds are encouraged to contribute to the direction of higher education and in their future places of work. Part of this effort should be emphasizing the validity of non-positivist ways of knowing (dance, poetry, etc.) that enlightenment, which spread globally through colonialism, deemed invalid (Comaroff 2012, Sharp 2009).

The final piece, for understanding present day South Africa, is to understand how the dispossession of land has played out into current events. After 26 years of democracy and programs set to redistribute land, such as the ‘Settlement/Land Acquisition Grant’ (until 2000), the ‘Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development’ (LRAD) thereafter, have had limited success (Moodley 2016). The LRAD (2001) had a goal of redistributing 30% of commercially productive farmland to rural black farmers in a period of 5 years but by 2010, 9 years into the land reform, only 8% of that land had been redistributed (Atuahene 2011). Between 2010 and 2020, there have been considerable tensions mounting because of unmet expectations, to the point where the African National Congress had to either make promises of expropriating land from white farmers without compensation, or lose their standing as the ruling party in the upcoming elections (Jankielsohn and Duvenhage 2018, Müller and Kotzur 2019).

It should come as no surprise that the slow move towards decolonizing the university parallels the sluggish progress of land reform. These topics of decolonization of the university and the land debate are incredibly complex, and rooted together in South Africa’s colonial past. Both expose the pinch that South Africa finds itself in; clutching a Western standard of knowledge and with an economy kept afloat by foreign investment and agricultural exports on the one hand and trying to reclaim space for indigenous knowledge and a place in South Africa

on the other. Issues of knowledge and place must be contextualized together in order for place-relevant problems, such as the land debate, to be examined from non-Western perspectives.

## **2.6. Chapter Summary**

This chapter laid out ways in which education influences perceptions of knowledge and place directly through the curriculum and indirectly through migration. It draws on three main theories in order to examine changing perceptions of knowledge and place: post-colonial theory, decolonization theory and place theory. Post-colonial theory sets the stage for understanding the ways in which colonialism set up a standard of knowledge through the education system. This resulted in many indigenous people choosing Eurocentric knowledge over their indigenous knowledge system. It also speaks to the way in which places were made and shaped by colonial power. Decolonization theory takes this critique a step further by emphasizing that some indigenous people made their own personal choices concerning whether or not to follow the Eurocentric knowledge system. Either way, the Xhosa knowledge system adapted to these changes, keeping key aspects of their culture in place. Decolonization theory also emphasizes that it is not just the colonizers and their descendants that shape and make places. Indigenous people have power and were and still are place-makers in spite of lingering coloniality. Finally, place theory complements the aforementioned theories by emphasizing the role of place in shaping epistemologies and the ways in which symbols of oppressive history continue to invoke strong emotional influence on those who live there. These theories provide a robust framework for examining students' relationships with place and knowledge in the present study which serves to offer a different perspective on the Eastern Cape and it looks into the binaries that still exist in knowledge through students' eyes.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **3.0. Linking Theory and Methods**

Given the colonial history of South Africa and the close connection that colonialism has with education and place, this study adopts postcolonial and decolonial methodologies which aim at emphasizing the experiences of the colonized, investigate the past and present impact of colonialism on knowledge and place in South Africa and critically examine the role of the researcher in knowledge production (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016, Smith 2012).

Furthermore, decolonial research methodology seeks to critique the research process as a construct and enduring legacy of the colonial endeavor. This localized study looks at students' lived experiences within the education system (at both university and high school) as well as looking at historical perceptions of places, such as at Makhanda and Dimbaza, in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.

The relationship that people have with the places they live can be highly complex, and their lived experience within the education system varies from one student to another. Moreover, there are many different scales of power that influence and shape place, the education system and the knowledge that is taught within it (Giroux 2005). Considering this, it becomes difficult to understand these intricate linkages through purely quantitative methods. For this reason, mixed methods were used for the collection of data since they allowed for a more detailed understanding of the relationships that exist between variables of power, knowledge and place and enabled the research project to evolve throughout the data collection process (Creswell 2003).

For this study, mixed methods were used in an elaborative (also known as sequential explanatory (Pluye and Hong 2014)) sense whereby the quantitative part of the study preceded



the qualitative methods. The surveys revealed general trends across a much larger sample size while the interviews explored the details of students' experiences. Within this research design, the quantitative data led the inquiry for the qualitative data collection; however, the analyses for both methods were led by the themes which emerged in the qualitative data. The reason for this was to ensure that the data interpretation was informed by the interviewees experiences as these experiences are the heartbeat of this research.

### **3.1. Research Design**

The methods selected for this study were survey, interview, focus group and archival research methods (collected in this order) to best address the three research questions within this dissertation. The first research question concerns history and how place and knowledge perceptions have varied over *time* and data from archives and historic texts were used to address this question. The second research question examines how place and knowledge perspectives vary across *place contexts* from rural to township locations. The survey and interview data were used to examine this research question. The third research question looked at how students' perceptions of place and knowledge vary between high school and university contexts and relied on high school in-depth interviews and university focus group to answer this question. The research design followed a chain of methods (as shown in Figure 3.1) beginning with the survey and interviews, which were administered to the high school learners and ending in focus group sessions with university students. In order to answer research question 3, both high school and university data was used as indicated by the arrows between the first and second boxes in Figure 3.1. The archival work was completed last and used in conjunction with the survey and interview data in order to address research question 1 as indicated by the arrow between the third and first boxes in Figure 3.1.

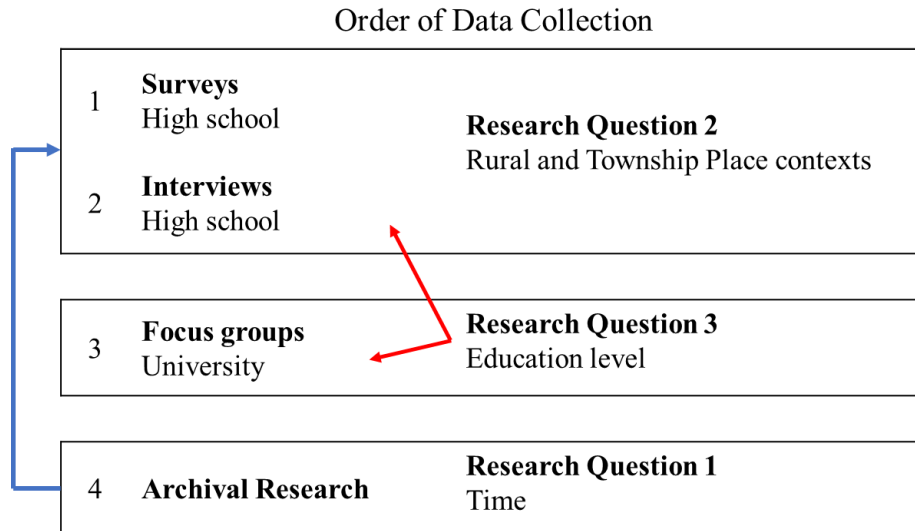


Figure 3.1: The data collection process from start to finish

This design aimed at giving participants the ability to interpret or add to the data that emerged in the high school survey through the semi-structured interview questions and focus group sessions with university students. Since this research examined how place and knowledge perceptions vary as students move from high school to university, the research started its inquiry at the high school level to allow for an elaboration on ideas emerging in the interviews through focus groups with university students.

The archival portion of this research was done last as this enabled a more strategic search of the archives according to themes that emerged in the previous components of the data collection. A detailed list of the archival material is listed in Section 3. The large assortment of research methods involved in this study allowed for more detailed research into the relationship with place and knowledge in the lives of students within the education system in the Eastern Cape and added depth to the broad scope of the dissertation. The order in which the research was done played a large role in focusing the scope of this project and expanding on themes that emerged in the quantitative portion of the study.

### **3.2. Research Sites**

This research was conducted in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. It is the poorest of South Africa's nine provinces and consists mainly of rural land with 72.9% of the population living under the upper-bound of the poverty line, according to a study done in 2015 (Lehohla 2017). During apartheid, two of the 10 Bantustans were located within the Eastern Cape. These Bantustans, the Ciskei and Transkei, were reserved solely for the Xhosa ethnic group, the second largest ethnic group in South Africa (Spain 1984). The places of interest in this work are Makhanda (formerly known as Grahamstown), the first British settler town in the province, and the rural Ciskei around the town of Alice. The motivation for choosing these two areas is based on their historical development which will be addressed in the section that follows.

#### **3.2.1. Eastern Cape**

The Eastern Cape officially became a province in 1994 under the African National Congress. However before this, the Cape province was divided into a west and east region along a line (the 'Eisenline') drawn from Kimberly to Humansdorp (Desmond 1971). The region east of this line was called the Eastern Cape province and many studies and books made references to this region in this manner, such as the Surplus People Project (Nyquist 1983, Platzky and Walker 1983b). This was also the area within which the amaXhosa predominantly resided during the colonial times as they moved eastward upon encountering the Dutch and British colonizers as they moved east from Cape Town and has also been referred to as Xhosa land, British Kaffraria, the Border or Frontier. The archival documents used in this study from 1970 - 1983 also speak of the Eastern Cape and this would refer to the abovementioned 'Eisenline' from Kimberly to the Coast. While the modern-day Eastern Cape extends its border further west than the informal

designation of the past, the region of this study still lies within the provincial boundary and what was historically the Eastern Cape. The results are interpreted more for the central districts of the present-day Eastern Cape which contains the former Ciskei Bantustan which is the region where most of the data were collected.

### 3.2.2. Rural Ciskei

The 10 Bantustans were established by British authority under the Native's Land Act (1913) but it was only after the start of apartheid and leading up to the Homelands Act of 1970 that these homelands in the Eastern Cape began being filled in earnest as people were forcibly removed from their residences and moved to the Ciskei and Transkei. These places were places of death and poverty for those who lived there for over 30 years. The Ciskei Bantustan was overcrowded and the land was of poor quality for subsistence farming which was an activity that many people found fulfilment in (Platzky and Walker 1983b).

While the Ciskei is in a province which is associated with underdevelopment now, it had a big part to play in the anti-apartheid struggle. Many freedom fighters<sup>10</sup>, who were born in the Eastern Cape, were educated in the Ciskei from school level, at Lovedale College and went on to higher education at the University of Fort Hare in Alice. From these scholars, philosophies such as Black Consciousness were born as Steve Biko challenged the white, colonial view of the world. Over the years, there has been a general trend of declining standards of education at the university. For instance, the University of Fort Hare, as one of the oldest institutions of higher education serving the black population of Southern Africa, went from being a place of prestige and intellectual expression to a place which doesn't inspire students to push the bounds of knowledge like it did in the past (Badat 2008, University of Fort Hare 2018). One student

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<sup>10</sup> The leaders who opposed and fought against the apartheid system.

interviewed in a study mentioned that the University of Fort Hare was no comparison to the University of Cape Town (UCT) “I have got this thing that UCT is the best... Here at Fort Hare, maybe 90% of the students are from... the Eastern Cape. The whole institution discourages me... on my first day I missed my two lectures” (Swartz et al. 2017, 99). The university has changed and so has peoples’ impressions of it. Thus, over the last 100 years, places within the former Ciskei, in and out of the education system, have shifted in the way people see and engage with them.

### 3.2.3. Makhandá (formerly known as Grahamstown)

Grahamstown<sup>11</sup> was established in 1820 by British settlers and saw a rise in the black elite who lived on the town periphery in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Nyquist 1983). These African middle-class elite lived on the urban margins and were noted to have a preference for Western ideals and knowledge over the customs of the amaXhosa. Education was an important part of attaining this Western standard of living and being. However, even education could not overcome the binary which existed and persists within Makhandá to this day. Though the name has changed, indicating a reclamation of place by the Xhosa, a binary of colonization is still evident in long-standing inequalities in the town between the suburbs, on the one side of the valley, and the township/slum, on the other.

Makhandá is also home to a prominent university in South Africa. Rhodes University, one of the major higher education institutions in the Eastern Cape, was founded in 1904 with money from the Rhodes Trust, and named after the colonial power, Cecil John Rhodes. Rhodes University has a long history of segregation and was a white-only university for most of its first

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<sup>11</sup> The town was named after Colonel John Graham who was a British military leader during the time of the Frontier Wars as the British fought for occupation of the Eastern Cape region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

century of existence. In more recent years, the demographics have begun to change as black African students make up over 60% of the student population (Rhodes University 2013). While there has been a clear demographic shift in the student population over the last two decades, there is still a dominant white culture at the University which manifested itself in the #Rhodessowhite Twitter handle in 2015 and early 2016, that spoke to the white culture of the University and the colonial history of the name. In short, coloniality is still deeply entrenched in the university (Ndlovu-Gatssheni and Zondi 2016).

This is not only the case within the university context but rather an indication of a larger complaint about the persisting colonial feel of Grahamstown, so much so that within the duration of this study, Grahamstown changed names to Makhanda in order to emphasize a part of history that preceded colonial times in an effort to address the binary that is still prevalent in the town. It is important to mention that Makhanda was a respected leader who helped resist the settler presence that established Grahamstown. He was a spiritual advisor and warrior who is revered by the amaXhosa.

### **3.3. School and Participant Selection**

The former Ciskei region and Makhanda were selected for this study because of their proximity to two major universities in the history of South Africa, one historically black and one historically white. Their development is also a mark of the lasting impacts of separate development under the colonial and postcolonial rule. Within these areas, eight high schools were selected to be a part of this study, four within the former Ciskei between Alice and King William's Town and four in the townships in Makhanda (see Figure 3.2). Schools in the former Ciskei area were selected through convenience sampling. Schools in Makhanda were selected in such a way as to get a spread across all districts of the township region.

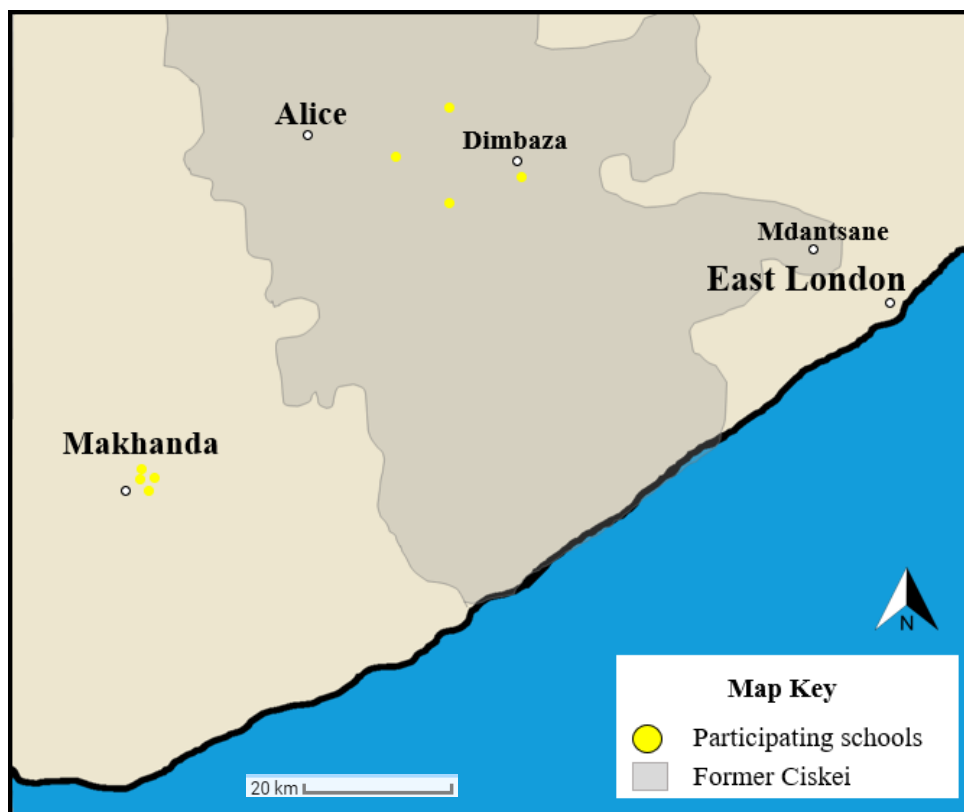


Figure 3.2: Map of participating school locations

Within the schools, students who were in Grade 12 and aged 18 years and older<sup>12</sup> were invited to complete the surveys. After introducing myself and my field assistant, I briefed students about their rights as research subjects, including that participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw their consent at any time. Survey participants were requested to indicate their willingness to take part in follow-up in-depth interviews. Again, the interview participants were informed about their right to withdraw from the interview at any time. Due to time as well as resource limitations, a total of sixteen in-depth interviews were conducted with students.

While it might have been ideal to conduct more interviews with students, the timing of the

<sup>12</sup> This age group was selected because they were legally able to give their consent to participate and they were more likely to be considering what and where to study as they were in their final year of high school.

research coincided with the busiest time of the school calendar year leading into the exam season. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, the interview data combined with the survey data provide significant insight into the students' perception of place and knowledge.

For the data collection at the universities, focus groups were arranged with students. A total of five students from Rhodes University participated, of which four were enrolled in the Faculty of Science and one in the Humanities<sup>13</sup>. The aim was to conduct a focus group with students from the University of Fort Hare but only one student agreed to participate and as such, the focus group could not be arranged. The reason for this weak response from UFH (Alice campus) was two-fold. First, the focus group session was scheduled towards the end of the university year, so students had less time available and second, the students requested remuneration for participating, which could not be offered.

### **3.4. Research Methods**

#### **3.4.1. Mixed Methods Approach**

As was previously stated, the two theories which inform this mixed methods research design are: decolonial and postcolonial theory. Research involving topics on decolonization and indigenous knowledge have two key points which are crucial to this research. First, the researcher should not seek to interpret data alone (Denzin et al. 2008, Smith 2012). And second, there should be communication with research subjects throughout the research process. This was the aim at every stage of the research project where it was possible.

The research process intended to empower the learners, much like the philosophy of education of Freire (1992) purposed to help students be more independent, critical thinkers. After

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<sup>13</sup> The Humanities Faculty, at South African universities, is split into two separate degrees: Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Social Sciences (BSocSc). Thus, the Social Sciences fall under the Humanities discipline in this study.



each class took the survey I shared more about my research and what I was reading about knowledge systems and place theory in an accessible way. The hope was that every student learned something about knowledge systems and about the places they lived which gave them the tools to critically examine their motivations for choosing which university to go to beyond high school.

Within this overarching theoretical framework, mixed methods were employed to explore student relationships with place and knowledge systems. Mixed methods use different types of qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection (Brannen 2005a). Tashakkori and Creswell (2007, 4) describe mixed methods as the process “in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study.” Therefore, the process of mixed methods extends beyond the collection of different data types and continues into the writing stage of the research. Qualitative and quantitative findings must be integrated in the final research product in order to successfully achieve a mixed methods study (Bryman 2007). This means that the quantitative and qualitative methods must truly speak to one another rather than answer separate questions which are hardly related. The true intention of mixed methods is to reveal more about a topic with the two methods combined than could be found by solely relying on one method (Pluye and Hong 2014). This is the great benefit of mixed method approaches.

Mixed methods can be useful for giving additional validity to the data through triangulation (Olsen 2004) as pieces from each method involved support and expand on the other. There can be several reasons for mixing qualitative and quantitative methods in the research design as Brannen (2005b) mentions:

- Corroboration - qualitative and quantitative data support one another.

- Elaboration - analysis of qualitative data elaborates on the quantitative outcomes.
- Complementarity - the quantitative and qualitative data do not agree but there can produce new findings, nonetheless.
- Contradiction – there is disagreement between the results of the quantitative and qualitative research methods.

For the purposes of this study, qualitative data were collected after the quantitative as a means of elaborating on the survey responses. In this way, the quantitative gave some areas to explore in the interviews and focus groups which added a deeper examination of these topics. This also helped with the integration of the qualitative and quantitative data which is of paramount importance in the usage of mixed methods.

#### 3.4.2. Permissions

Ethical Permission was obtained from the University of Kansas and the Eastern Cape Department of Education in South Africa (see Appendix 4). Additionally, I approached each school involved and met with the principal to get their permission and they delivered a letter to the School Governing Body<sup>14</sup> of the school for their approval too. In a few cases the principals were not available, and I spoke to the deputy head or the grade head who gave me permission on their behalf. I left my contact details at each school, so they knew how to reach me. All participants were aged 18 and above and the learners indicated whether they gave consent to participate on the survey forms. In the interviews and focus groups, consent was given verbally after reading them their rights as a participant as a way of reassuring participants of their anonymity in this study.

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<sup>14</sup> The school governing body is the main internal leadership group of a school. It is comprised of the principal, elected teachers, support staff and students.

### 3.4.3. Surveys

Quantitative methods of data collection, such as surveys, have a number of strengths such as their broad application to “provide insights into relevant social trends, processes, values, attitudes, and interpretations” (McGuirk and O'Neill 2010, 192). This makes them ideal for creating a baseline understanding from which more meaningful interview questions can be asked. This research employed a survey with a mix of open and closed questions printed out on paper and administered to high school students. Closed surveys can be very restrictive and enforce the knowledge and language system of the researcher through the questions and the answer options (McGuirk and O'Neill 2010). It is not always possible to do this for an entire study. Thus, a mix of questions was used and the open-ended questions allowed the students to interpret questions through their own understanding and answer accordingly. Since a student's relationship with place and knowledge can be different from their peers, it is crucial to have this flexibility. The surveys were the first part of the data collection process and informed the initial direction of questions for the interviews and focus groups.

The surveys were administered at eight schools to a total of 251 matric (final year) students. Four of the schools were in the Makhanda township extensions and consisted of a total of 81 participants. The other four schools were in the former Ciskei region (see Figure 3.2) and consisted of 170 participants. The age of the participants varied from 18 to 23 years old but the majority were ages 18 to 19 (70.9%). Just below half of the entire sample were male (48.8%) and the remainder were female. Most of the respondents (74.2%) were long term residents of the area and had lived in their current locations for 10 years or more. The survey was broken up into three sections (sample questions in Table 3.1) and the full survey can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 3.1: A sample of questions within each section of the survey

Section 1: Background information
How old are you (in years)?
How long have you lived in your current village/settlement?
On a normal day, how many meals do you have?
Who is the head of your household?
Who is the main breadwinner of your family?
Section 2: Sense of place
I feel a strong connection with my ancestors here
Living here is an important part of my identity
I would need to move away from this village/settlement in order to have a better future
The Eastern Cape is a place of opportunity for me
Section 3: Knowledge Systems
I can always apply what I learn in school to my life outside of school
I think Western knowledge is more useful than the local traditional knowledge I learn from living here.
I value traditional knowledge from my culture but do not think that it is important for academic or employment purposes.
My education is important for my community and other people

The first section addressed basic demographics and family information. This included household size, primary breadwinner, highest level of education of grandparents, parents and oldest siblings and resources they had for succeeding as school such as having someone to help them with homework. It also contained questions about whether they wanted to attend university and what their motivations were. This was important to include for the analysis process. The second section was designed to ascertain students' relationship with place using a 5-point Likert scale. The commonly used instrument for determining place attachment is Williams and Vaske (2003) but this would not be translatable to the South African context because the original survey assumes that participants are mobile and have many experiences in other places from which to compare to the place they are attached to. This could not be assumed given the age of the participants and financial restraints which may prevent them from visiting other places. Furthermore, place attachment is one of the most well researched, yet unclear components of

sense of place (Hernandez et al. 2014). Thus, the survey was designed in order to examine broader aspects of sense of place, such as place identity (Jorgensen and Stedman 2001), the role of community (Basso 2010) and acknowledging the history of oppression that led to hopelessness in the past in those places (Lewicka 2008, Sanger 1997). Sanger (1997) speaks of the above as being key aspects in developing one's emotional relationship with place. The measure also sought to understand how the local scale, the village or township, was viewed in comparison to the provincial scale. The third section of the survey contained an instrument designed specifically for this study to understand how students view different categories of knowledge (indigenous knowledge, Western knowledge and school knowledge) and their respective relevance in the students' future lives.

Given the topic of this research, it was crucial to emphasize that each student has rights as study participants. After I introduced myself, I mentioned multiple times that it was their right to choose whether or not to participate and that they could change their mind about their participation at any time during the survey. The students could also look through the questions and then decide. Even those students who did not want to participate were given the survey to look over.

The survey took between 30-40 minutes to complete. The students were asked to wait until everyone had completed the survey. We then had an unrecorded discussion about the survey, about me as a researcher and the content and aim of this research project. This was a rich time of reflection in the schools where this took place. In two of the schools there was not enough time to have the discussion. In most cases, this discussion took about 10 to 15 minutes and its aim was to break down the barrier between researcher and participants and to hear their thoughts and concerns about the study. It was unrecorded because I wanted this discussion to be

beneficial to the students, unhindered by the formality of recording which may have prevented some students from engaging in the discussion. They asked questions, they shared comments and we talked about education. In a discussion at one of the township schools, a student criticized the word “village” used in the survey saying that this was derogatory and they also expressed dissatisfaction with the strong statements such as “I feel hopeless in the Eastern Cape” saying that it was too strong of a statement. I responded that I was glad that they were being critical of the survey and encouraged that way of thinking and stated the intentions behind the words that I used and the need to have strong statements when using a Likert scales to invoke responses which would be more directional than neutral. Other students wanted to know my story and how I was able to get a scholarship to study in the USA. Others wanted guidance about how to approach their future studies. These sessions were an opportunity to give back and advise, as a growing expert in literature on postcolonialism, decolonization, place and knowledge within South Africa and talk about work that is being done globally and locally in these subjects.

The survey also included a section at the end which gave space for questions, comments and concerns. This proved to be a very useful addition as it, once again, gave space to the learners to voice their opinions and concerns external to what was being asked in the survey. Several students wanted to know the purpose of the survey – which I made sure to talk about in depth after the survey was completed. Others were thankful to have the opportunity to do this survey because it made them think about what was important to them.

It helped me to be more [eager] to know about things that are very important in my life.  
(survey respondent 160)

Thank you for asking me these questions because it makes me realize 'who I am', what I want? For whom? (survey respondent 199)

Here we see that the survey didn't leave the students unchanged or as they were before it was given to them and was a reminder of the need to be critically reflexive of the way in which research can impact participants. Research is always disruptive, even when carefully planned to be otherwise. But this feedback was useful as a gauge for whether this work was inspiring critical thinking about place and knowledge. In some cases, it most certainly did.

This survey was written in English. This was chosen since it is the medium of instruction, in theory, in all schools from grade 3 and above. However, there were a few occasions where there was confusion and clarifications were necessary. I gave a few definitions of words in the survey, such as "Western knowledge" in order to make sure that everyone in the class had the same understanding in mind. There were a few schools where time did not permit this thorough explanation. Within academe, some of the terminology in the survey might seem to enforce colonial terminology such as using the term "traditional knowledge," however, this is a term very familiar within the context of the Eastern Cape and hence why it was used instead of "indigenous knowledge." The term "ethnic group" generated a lot of confusion for students. Hence, a great deal of attention went into using words that would not be foreign to the learners. Student criticism of any terms or questions was encouraged in the discussion following the surveys as a way of emphasizing being a critically engaged learner. Overall, the terms used in the survey aimed at being easily understandable. And where this was not the case, my field assistant in the rural areas helped translate any phrases that the learners needed to be clarified during the survey.

#### 3.4.4. Interviews

The strength of interviews is that they allow much deeper exploration of a topic, the relationship between variables of interest and a historical perspective (Creswell 2003). While the researcher is the main instrument in this case, there is still a lot more flexibility for the participant to

emphasize what they deem important, and in semi-structured interviews they can bring up issues that the researcher may not have been aware of or change questions that do not make sense to them. This becomes important when dealing with issues that are difficult to comprehend such as a student's sense of place and, in the case where English is not the mother tongue of the participants. In-depth interviews are a crucial component of this research as they allow for the lived experience, which cannot be captured by a survey, to be documented.

Students at six of the schools participated in follow-up, in-depth interviews. There were two female and two male students selected from each school with a total of 16 students but only 15 of the interviews were included in the analysis as one student did not meet the eligibility criteria. Of the 15 eligible interviews, three students, both males, were born outside of the Eastern Cape Province and had moved to the province during school. These students' interviews were included in the analysis since they had spent their high school years living in the Eastern Cape and could speak to perceptions about the Eastern Cape from those living outside the province. Three of the students (1 male, 2 female) mentioned having spent many years being schooled in an urban area in the Eastern Cape (in East London, Makhanda and Port Elizabeth). Their interviews were also used within the data analysis as they were able to compare and contrast their experiences between place contexts. Interview questions were semi-structured to allow for a more conversational interview style. Sample questions can be found in the Table 3.2, the full interview template appears in Appendix 2. Since the experience of the learners with respect to place was so variable, this allowed for more relevant information to be gleaned that may have been missed in a structured interview format. The limitation of a semi-structured interview is that some relevant questions may only emerge in the later stages of the interview



process, that inform the data analysis, but since the question was not asked to all participants, it leaves a shortfall in data.

Table 3.2: A sample of the interview questions used in high school study.

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Place
What do you value about the place where you live?
Do your parents or guardians ever talk about the places where they grew up?
How do you think your education would be different if you were living in an urban area?
Knowledge
What was your experience going to school in the Eastern Cape?
Which knowledge do you value the most: knowledge about everyday life, cultural knowledge or knowledge you learn in school?
Which do you think is more important: science or social subjects?

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One thing to note, there were few learners who were born outside of the province (3) or in the urban areas and moved to the rural or township schools in high school (3). It was apparent through these interviews there are those students who have experienced life in other places who can compare and contrast their views of places.

#### 3.4.5. Focus Groups

Focus groups, though they have their challenges, allow for a level of inquiry through the group dynamics that cannot be achieved through an interview. Comprised of people with some key characteristics in common (such as schooling background), the focus group allows for different experiences to be validated or opposed as well as for individuals “to formulate and reconsider their own ideas and understandings” (Cameron 2010). The study by Ndimande (2012) in South Africa used focus groups as a part of a decolonizing methodology when interviewing parents of children in townships since it was a less formal way of interviewing. He sees the discussions within this method of data collection as more than plainly answering questions, “but a

representation of the ‘world’ in which the participants live, especially their experiences with social inequalities” (Ndimande 2012, 216).

It is also helpful for eliminating some of the power dynamics in the researcher-interviewer method since the researcher is outnumbered by the participants. Cameron (2010) also mentions that this method is ideal for research that seeks to understand the social construction of knowledge and the complex process of knowledge production that this research looks at.

The focus group sessions were the last step involving research participants in the research design in order to bring direction to the data analysis collected from the school goers.

Focus groups were held in Makhanda where three to four Rhodes University students participated over the course of two, hour-long focus group sessions. The first session consisted of 3 participants (2 males, 1 female) and discussed questions concerning place. The second consisted of 4 participants (3 males, 1 female) and discussed themes on knowledge. All four participants grew up in township environments (two were from Makhanda, one from Mdantsane and one from Port Elizabeth). There was only one humanities student who attended both focus group sessions. The other students were studying towards a Bachelor of Science degree. The focus groups were primarily used to unpack the themes of the data from multiple perspectives and provided reflections on the past. There were some guiding questions for each focus group and a sample is listed in Table 3.3. The full list of questions can be found in Appendix 3.

Table 3.3: Guiding questions for Focus Groups with university students

Place
<p>Why did you choose to go to university and why did you end up coming to this university?          What motivated you to pursue graduate education?          How did you view the places that you grew up in when you were a child and how has that changed now that you are at university?</p>
Knowledge
<p>What is knowledge and who gets to say what knowledge is?          What influenced your decisions to study what you are producing knowledge on, or exposing existing knowledge?</p>

These sessions were recorded and transcribed. Students were recruited through the snowball method and the limit of this method is that most of the participants were science majors since the student I approached first to recruit others, was studying in the faculty of science. Focus groups at other universities could not be arranged at the time of this study due to the end of year examinations.

#### 3.4.6. Archival Methods

Archival documents were sourced from the Corey Library, in Makhanda, as it contained most of the documents for the region of study, the east region of the Cape Province after 1948. All these materials were analyzed through content analysis according to themes that arose in the present-day data. The central focus was to look to the past and pick up decolonial trends with respect to knowledge and place emphasizing the ways in which the Xhosa have expressed agency over these. Photographs were taken of all the documents. The studies and documents which were of importance in this study were:

- 1) Nuffield Education Attitudes study (1956)
- 2) Nyquist (1966-7 and 1975)
- 3) The Ciskei Quail Commission (1979) – Schlemmer Survey

#### 4) Surplus Peoples Project (1982)

Given that archival material can be biased by the dominant narrative at the time the document was recorded, it is important to examine the purpose behind the studies listed above and who was responsible for working on the projects. The Nuffield Education Attitudes study (1956) was an academic study aimed at understanding the quality and knowledge retention within the Bantu Education system. The study also aimed to determine how the education of black South Africans prepared them for their future employment in rural and urban settings. There were 26 participants in total from this study and they were based around the East London metropolitan area. The principal researcher was a Xhosa woman, Miss Nongauza, who administered the surveys and analyzed the results under the supervision of Professor Morton. I used the raw qualitative survey responses which addressed attitudes towards education and referenced her analysis were applicable.

The Nyquist study (1966-7 and 1975) was completed for the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Rhodes University and its intention was to understand the circumstances in which potential future leaders within the African urban elite were faced with, what they were doing and what their thoughts were towards issues in Makhanda and South Africa as a whole. They also reveal the opinions of the community regarding how they felt about the elite members of their community. In Nyquist's fieldnotes, I found 8 interviews which spoke of relationships with customs, beliefs and attitudes towards education. The total Nyquist study consisted of 62 interviews and 494 surveys, with participants of various ages, and a thorough analysis is included in his book the "African Urban Elite" which I reference where appropriate.

The Ciskei Quail Commission (1979) was ordered by the Ciskei Bantustan government and conducted by the University of Natal and it aimed at understanding how black South

Africans felt about the homelands, with particular interest in thoughts about Ciskei gaining independence as a state. If Bantustans became independent, they would be treated as a separate country with its own economy by the surrounding South Africa. The Ciskei Quail Commission Schlemmer surveys included questions about attitudes and beliefs in relation to Xhosa indigenous knowledge and in relation to other ethnic groups within South Africa. The study consisted of over 700 Xhosa participants living in locations all across South Africa. However, for the purposes of this study, only Xhosa speaking participants between 16-24 years of age were included in the analysis as these age ranges best capture the student age within this study. There were 180 surveys in this sample found in the archives. Lawrence Schlemmer analyzed the survey originally and predominantly focused his analysis on the responses with respect to place contexts.

The Surplus Peoples Project (1982) is a published study that exposed the experiences of people living in the Bantustans all across the country. The purpose of this study was to highlight the unjust and dehumanizing impacts of the forced removals that were not well documented in the first few decades of apartheid. There were ten life histories included in the Eastern Cape volume and these were used as qualitative accounts of peoples' relationship with place, both in their former homes and the locations to which they were relocated.

#### 3.4.7. Pseudonyms

In order to keep the identity of research participants confidential, I assigned pseudonyms to those involved in the qualitative portion of the present-day study (interviews and focus groups). The present-day survey participants were referred to using the participant number from the survey. The participants in the Nyquist study were assigned a pseudonym based on the same style that Nyquist used when referencing interviews in his book (such as Mr. Ng, Mrs. Ti). The names of

those who participated in sharing their life histories remained the same as those published in the work by Platzky and Walker (1983b).

### **3.5. Data Analysis**

#### 3.5.1. Survey data analysis:

The survey had three sections as outlined in Section 3.4.3. The analysis of the first section included basic statistics such as mean, median and mode and served as baseline information for the sample from which correlations could be drawn further into the data analysis. The purpose was mainly to rule out certain assumptions that could be made about the population such as whether food security impacted their education experience.

SPSS software was used to analyze the survey data. The process of analysis started with finding major components of the place and knowledge instruments (in sections 2 and 3 of the survey respectively) through running a factor analysis. Due to the incomplete nature of some of the measures (which was due to both editing issues and giving students personal choice in their responses), the N greatly diminished in size after running the factor analysis from 246 to 171 for the knowledge measure and 185 for the place measures<sup>15</sup>. Once the factor analysis was completed, independent two-tailed t-tests were used at the 95% confidence level to compare the samples. This was followed up by computing the correlation matrix to determine relationships between factors and other demographic information in the study.

The interpretation of these results was, to a large extent, dependent on the information synthesized from the interviews and focus group data. However, there were less obvious patterns which emerged through the quantitative analysis which were not immediately apparent in the

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<sup>15</sup> This was further reduced to 141 when correlations between the two measures were calculated

analysis of interview and focus group data. Mixed methods have been vital to the greater understanding of this research project.

The themes which specifically emerged from the survey concerned “Place satisfaction” and “Place hopefulness.” The main differences within place satisfaction were based on gender and the main difference with place hopefulness was the students’ relationship with traditional knowledge. These themes were used as another lens through which to view the qualitative data analysis. In this way, there was a feedback loop between the qualitative and quantitative data.

### 3.5.2. Qualitative Data Analysis

Since the themes within this study are more abstract, latent content analysis was used to analyze the data collected from the interviews, focus groups, and archival methods. Latent content analysis is used when the themes within the research are not expected to be specifically stated word for word, as is the case with manifest content analysis (Berg 2009). Berg also states that the best practice for latent content analysis is to have “at least three independent examples for each interpretation, each from a different respondent, or item of analysis” (344). This has been adhered to as far as possible in the analysis and writing stage when selecting interviews to support the themes.

Once the broader themes were found through latent coding, each interview was analyzed in accordance with a positive/negative sense of place (place hopefulness) and a positive/negative place satisfaction. This was incredibly helpful in determining which words or phrases were commonly used when considering attitudes towards place. It also provided validity for the quantitative findings that students can have a positive sense of place and yet still want to leave their locales because their needs are not being met there. This could clearly be seen within the

interviews and allowed insight into understanding elements which contributed to a students' positive sense of place.

The textual analysis of archival documents was done last and had the added challenge of navigating around terms that are no longer acceptable because of the period within which the data were collected. This required being critically aware of the colonial influence on research questions, research intentions and knowing who initiated the studies and for what underlying purpose. Given that this is a decolonial work, these undertones were important to pay attention to in the analysis.

Emerging latent themes were coded and compared to the themes that were emerging in the interview, focus group and survey data. The codes that were central to the interview and focus group data guided the coding of the archival material and ultimately directed the structure of the archival results section. In this way, this mixed methods study interpreted one data type alongside the other in an integrated way.

### **3.6. Challenges and Limitations**

#### **3.6.1. High School Follow-Up**

Posters of the first preliminary findings were made and distributed to every school that took part in the research project, with the purpose and aims of the study listed, along with my email address. The students had begun exams at this point, so I was unable to do any follow up discussions with the learners, but I still wanted to inform the students of some of the initial findings through the posters.

#### **3.6.2. Research Fatigue and Colonization within Research**

One factor affecting the responsiveness of learners and teachers in arranging interviews in a timely fashion in the township schools was the reality of research fatigue. As the township



schools are close to Rhodes University, the students are no stranger to the process of research which results in students feeling research fatigue, and at times there was a palpable feeling of frustration. This does not only affect the learners but the office administrators and the teachers involved in the process of recruiting and this resulted in some difficulties with recruiting students for this study. One of the students from the focus group spoke to this point about one school in the area by saying:

There was another non-profit organization that was there with children and some American students and they come and experiment with the high school students. There were a lot of dramatic changes in the school, better changes since 2013. So, it's been like a center of attraction, for all those experiments... Experimenters come and ask questions and there's this apprehension towards people who go into those school for purposes like that. I've been part of those... objectified in my experience in high schools in the township. (Luyolo, university student)

Not only does this speak to the fact that students at this particular school are constantly under the spot-light, it also speaks to the reaction or “apprehension” that students now experience when approached by a researcher and in particular a researcher from America. At this particular school, the students were very reluctant to participate so the response rate was much smaller than from other schools.

### 3.6.3. Research Timeline

One of the difficulties involved the research and analysis timelines for this research. The research design required data interpretation input from students at the university level from similar backgrounds to those in the high school sample. However, the detailed analysis of the data was only done in the months that followed the focus group discussions and by then it was difficult to get input from university students who had their own research priorities.

### **3.7. Positionality**

Being critically reflexive is essential in the research process, and more so in work that is situated in the decolonial paradigm (Smith 2012). In this section I will explore the ways in which I am both an insider and outsider within this research context, particularly within the themes examined in my research questions: power, history, place and education.

I am a white South African born as apartheid was ending. Given the history of segregation and racism in South Africa and the perpetual privileging of Euro-American ways, this situates me in a position of power and an outsider in this research context. My reliance on and proficiency in the English language also placed me in a position of power as it determined the language in which students could communicate with me.

Partially offsetting the power of race is the fact that females are in a weaker position than males in South African society. Being female, in the Xhosa culture, garners less authority, particularly after males have been circumcised which would be the case for those 18 years old and above. However, this was a positive thing when working with female students who may not have felt comfortable interacting with a male researcher.

I am also an outsider due to my lived experience within the education system in South Africa. I grew up in suburban East London and went to school in a semi-private school where there was access to resources that are not present in the rural and township schools. However, I am an insider in that I have been subject to one of the revised, government provided, curricula since apartheid and grew up within one hour of the rural locations where this research work took place and I also spent four years studying at Rhodes University in Makhanda which is where the township schools in this research project are located. As a result, I have an insider's perspective of how the Eastern Cape is viewed by the rest of the country and its inhabitants alike, since this

is deeply engrained in my lived experience. These points brought valuable insight into the subtler undertones when investigating place and knowledge, particularly when working with the archival documents, as I was able to easily determine whether information was relevant for the research questions based on where the study took place.

Finally, I am an outsider because of my level of education. As a researcher who is working on my Ph.D. there is a major disparity between me and the school participants. Furthermore, studying at a university outside of South Africa added distance between me and the school students. In most cases, particularly within the rural schools, there was a level of respect which this afforded me from the standpoint that I was able to leave the province and even the country to study at university. The respect came not from a place of my education level but more from the standpoint that I managed to succeed in a way they hoped to succeed in life. Being aware of my insider and outsider status as a researcher was important but my aim was to ensure I heard everyone involved who wanted to speak, that I had respected everything they said and responded in humility (Smith 2012, 140).

## Chapter 4: Perceptions of Place and Knowledge over Time

### 4.0. Introduction

Indigenous place relationships and perceptions of knowledge systems (Western and indigenous) are not static and the high school students express, in Chapter 5, that there are aspects of their culture that their parents and grandparents performed that that are no longer done. Xhosa customs have shifted over time in the face of modernity, and the aim of this chapter is to provide a decolonial perspective on how perceptions of knowledge and place within Ciskei and Makhandla region have changed or adapted, such that the indigenous experience is front and center. While postcolonialism has strengths in unpacking the binaries of colonialism, it often does so at the expense of the inherent agency that indigenous people have. Colonialism had deeply felt consequences for the Xhosa people but they by no means were passive in this process. They have actively been resisting the forces of colonialism since Europeans first arrived in the area of the Eastern Cape where this study takes place (Roux 1964). They have also been engaged in the process of selecting aspects of European life they wished to incorporate into their own (Nyquist 1983). Furthermore, it is the indigenous perspective of history which played such a crucial role in deepening students' sense of place in the present-day research with students (which will be discussed in Chapter 5 and 6) making this chapter even more meaningful.

This chapter addresses how perceptions of knowledge and place have shifted over time through a decolonial perspective. This requires paying attention to indigenous people's *agency* over place and knowledge over the course of a half-century. It also requires understanding enduring coloniality, as formal education encouraged a separation of one from place and from seeing the validity of their indigenous knowledge system. Moreover, it also requires exposing ways in which coloniality has fused itself to certain aspects of the amaXhosa knowledge system

in order to perpetuate coloniality. Cultural change isn't solely in the hands of the colonizer to produce; indigenous people do "have a say in" what changes and what doesn't (Njambi 2004, p. 300). Moreover, the Xhosa are not passive spectators within a place, but active place-makers. Thus, in this chapter there is an emphasis on the power that indigenous people have to make places and to shape their knowledge system as a collective. A decolonial perspective of history, presented in this chapter, demands attention: the Xhosa knowledge system has been resilient to fundamental change in spite of the forces of colonialism and the mechanism of Eurocentric education over the course of 200 years. The process of colonialism did not entirely eclipse the Xhosa knowledge system nor did it engulf indigenous ideology despite its very real intentions of casting 'difference' or 'otherness' in a negative light (Fanon 1963).

This chapter draws from documents and surveys that were conducted between 1956 and 1983 in order to better understand place relationships in the past. It also seeks to highlight ways in which perceptions of knowledge have shifted over time through education or proximity to urban locations. There are four archival data sources used in this chapter that span three decades: the Nuffield Education Survey (1956), Nyquist's interview fieldnotes from 1976 for the study published in *The African Middle-Class Elite* (1983), the Surplus People Project published life histories by Platzky and Walker (1983) and finally the Schlemmer survey conducted for the Ciskei Quail Commission (1979). These data sources work together to develop a narrative concerning place and knowledge relationships among the populations living in the Ciskei and Makhanda during the time of apartheid. The Nuffield Education survey looks at education from the perspective of those older individuals who did not have access to higher education themselves and reveal attitudes towards formal education that connect to the present-day data. The interviews conducted by Nyquist show attitudes towards indigenous knowledge in the

township community of Makhanda and offer supporting evidence to what was found in the Nuffield Education Survey. The life histories in the Surplus Peoples Project allow a thorough look into individual place relationships during the forced removals process, a component that the previous data sources did not explore in detail. Lastly, the Ciskei Quail Commission offers a quantitative look at themes of place and knowledge that enable some comparisons to be drawn between the quantitative data from the present-day data collection. Each of these data sources provides the legs on which this chapter stands, speaking to the ways in which education can force a wedge between some aspects of indigenous knowledge while leaving the core components of traditional life resilient against change.

#### **4.1. Education as a Mechanism of Influence**

In the literature review, I developed the idea that education is a mechanism of influence over knowledge and place. As such, it is of primary importance to examine how formal education has been viewed in the past in this region in order to determine ways in which relationships with place and knowledge have been altered through the formal education system. The amaXhosa did not always consider formal education as important because they had their own system of education that had a fundamentally different purpose to that of colonial education (Cook 1934). However, over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a shift in the desire for education (de Vos Malan 1939) as the colonial structure of the economy of South Africa placed pressure on indigenous people to attain formal education or migrant work as a means of generating income, as their subsistence farming did not enable them to pay hut tax and other fees (Bahlmann 1983). There were also expectations placed on students by their communities to become leaders or in some way give back to their people. The paragraphs that follow will show how this shift resulted in formal education being synonymous with status and success among the black middle-class at

the cost of one's relationship with place and aspects of one's knowledge systems and relies on the Nuffield Education survey data and the work by Nyquist (1983).

The Nuffield Education Survey (1956) is the first dataset that will be examined. This small survey of 26 respondents contained 'complete the sentence' questions about education that Xhosa respondents of all ages, living outside East London, had to complete. The first question of interest in this survey asked participants to finish the sentence: "An African who goes to university is..." The primary researcher of the Nuffield study found that "62% of the sample place a definite duty to his people e.g., uplifting them, sharing his knowledge with them" (Nuffield field notes) when analyzing the responses for this question. She showed that there was a prevalent expectation that the one who is highly educated will be a leader of his/her people or ultimately sow back into the community. It cost a family a lot of money to send a child to get an education, both financially and by losing someone to work the land or maintain the homestead (de Vos Malan 1939, Shepherd 1941). There was the expectation that the investments in schooling would yield fruit for the entire family. Education was, and to a degree still is, a community endeavor, and higher education in particular is an opportunity that few have without the financial support of extended family.

However, a theme which was not noted in the original analysis for the Nuffield study was that a person who had a university education was considered to be more enlightened and was expected to have a lifestyle which reflected this. I consider this theme important to add because a similar theme emerges in the present-day data, concerning perceptions about students who return home from university. These statements speak to a separation from the community because those who are highly educated are considered to have a different lifestyle; one that is more 'civilized' in nature than the rest of the community.

An African who goes to university is...

...the person who is civilized. (Respondent 8)

...expected to have a higher standard of living than the rest. (Respondent 14)

Education causes a distinction between the educated individual and the community from which they came, either as a leader or as one with a better lifestyle. Both of these contributed to an elevated status of an educated individual in the eyes of the community. Post-colonial theory has thoroughly examined these binaries introduced through education, and speaks to the lifestyle divergence between the educated and uneducated (Denzin et al. 2008, Sharp 2009, Willinsky 2000).

“If I could go to school I would...” was the second ‘complete the sentence’ of interest and shows how people came to understand the value of education. I examined these responses in relation to themes of success and specific careers. Participants recognized that education was instrumental in opening doors to greater opportunities in life by linking education to ‘success’ or certain careers, such as law or medicine, which were seen as successful.

If I could go to school I would...

...study conscientiously with a view to becoming a qualified doctor. (Respondent 20)

...study law. (Respondent 11)

... study and progress so that I should acquire property that would make me succeed in life. (Respondent 4)

These responses point to the importance of education in uplifting their personal lives with no mention made of their communities. However, another theme worth stating, which did not emerge as a theme in the original analysis, was presented by one individual in this dataset: the role of education in pleasing their parents. For some people, education was much more than having an easier life for oneself, it was about the well-being of other people too and this has



relevance in the study today (see Chapter 5.2.3). This reveals the important connectivity between generations and the importance of honoring parents by attaining formal education in a field which they approve.

If I could go to school I would...

...simply go there - and study to become what it will be pleasing to my parents.  
(Respondent 1)

There is further evidence presented two decades later which support these themes of leadership, community respect and success. In Nyquist's (1976) interviews for the African Middle-Class Elite study, the relationship between education and elitism comes up again within the community of Makhanda. He highlights, in his own analysis of his survey and interview data, that education was an important aspect of attaining higher status in the community of Makhanda, displaying the evidence of such in his book. He presents the perspective that education was a means of attaining closer proximity to European culture, which he states as the "ultimate reference group."

However, in terms of occupational aspirations, he states the African elite of Makhanda are the ones that the community looks to as a reference group, highlighting the importance placed on becoming lawyers and doctors. I want to emphasize that these aspirations began in a person's youth by using the quotes below. The desire for education occurred at a young age as children watched those in their community achieve elite status and saw how they were respected for their education. This emphasizes the importance of the community in influencing attitudes towards education. The following quote shows evidence of the ways in which the elite community members motivate others to pursue a similar path. It can be seen from the quote below that education also had a benefit for the community, as those who attained education sowed back into the community.

These are the people [of high status] who in their youthful days had strived for better things such as better education and better knowledge... [they] achieved their elite status through education, contribution to education and their contribution to the community... To be respected and honored by others spur people to strive for higher status. (Mr. Sh, Nyquist interview notes)

Education afforded one respect within their community which in turn motivated others to strive for a similar standing through a similar path. Formal education was not the only way to gain such respect but it became one of the primary ways in which respect could be earned, particularly in the urban setting. Formerly, land and cattle ownership were the primary ways to earn respect (see Chapter 2.3.3).

While education afforded the educated higher status, certain professions were also highly respected and were mentioned specifically in relation to success and Nyquist found that doctors and lawyers were the most highly ranked professions by the African community of Makhanda. Again, *children* looked up to those in the community in these professions as examples to follow for their future careers. People in these careers indirectly influenced the career aspirations that children had, as they were seen to be successful in life.

As children, some people might have grown up with a desire to be like certain people in life such as lawyers, doctors, teachers etc. and as these people grew up, they put these ambitions into reality in an attempt to emulate them. Doctors of medicine with their aura of success around them have influenced some young people to take up medicine so that they could also own cars and be of success in the world. (Miss Ma, Nyquist interview notes)

Children are impressionable and when they saw people in their communities who owned a car, for example, and the respect it afforded them, school goers began to value those careers and desired to pursue similar paths in life. The quote above shows agreement with some of the responses from the Nuffield Study examined previously, which specifically mentioned being a doctor or studying law as specific paths in formal education which were desirable. It also connects to the findings in Chapter 6.1.3 with the current high school population who

specifically mentioned law and medical professions as two of the top 3 careers to go into. There is a legacy of moving into careers of social prestige and respect in the community, not just for the working professional themselves but for community respect for their families by association.

The intention of bringing this point up is to investigate whether these careers are boxing in mindsets into colonial ways of knowing and how coloniality may persist through an aspect of indigenous knowledge: respect for one's parents and the desire to be respected in the community. These two elements can sustain the longstanding preference for certain careers for this present generation of university goers and is presented in Chapter 5.2.3. When seeing knowledge through an economic lens, formal education has had enduring benefits in the past for lifting families out of poverty in the homelands. Yet when it is considered through the lens of epistemology, this type of preferences has consequences for one's engagement with their indigenous knowledge system. For example, de Klerk (2000) shows that when Xhosa children enter first language English schools, they often lose interest in communicating in Xhosa and are less able to follow what happens in Xhosa rituals. She highlights that by preferencing English, there is a distancing effect in children's cultural proximity. Preferences for the sciences, English or certain careers certainly do impact students' engagement with their indigenous knowledge systems.

Formal education was not the only mechanism involved in changing preferences for ways of life. We've already seen how education was related to success and a superior lifestyle in the Nuffield surveys and this was supported by Nyquist's findings. However, migration to urban areas for education or work was another way in which indigenous people were exposed to Eurocentric ways of knowing (Nyquist 1983). One of the published interviews by Nyquist (1983) mentioned how the African community in Makhanda "try to embrace Western civilization" in

order to be successful in the urban areas because “conditions in town are not comparable to country conditions” (p. 59). Nyquist presents the point that in order to be successful in the urban areas, people had to imitate Europeans and to embrace their way of life but he speaks very little of the ways in which the Makhanda residents were navigating their cultural change by maintaining customs and beliefs. This will be explored in section 4.2 using interviews found in his fieldnotes. The urban place played a central role in exposing difference, while those in the Bantustans did not have as much contact with white South Africans for difference to be fully exposed. Decolonial theory interrogates how differences come to light so it serves us well to develop this further (Tebensky and Matthews 2015). Exposure to difference emerges in two ways in this study: continue as best as one can within one’s knowledge system, living in two worlds, or adopt the way of the Euro-American society. Mbembe (2015) refers to this dichotomy as “difference” and “imitation.” This becomes a key theme in Chapter 6 when understanding the experiences of the university students processing their experiences at university. In the focus groups, the students spoke of this process with the term “norms.” They spoke of ways in which their norms were placed in sharp contrast to the norms of others from more privileged backgrounds and they had to navigate whether they were going to keep their norms or conform to dominant ways around them.

Throughout this study, in fact, we see split ideals: the one part holding to traditional ways of knowing and valuing practice, and the other, out of a desire to live a successful life, adopting another knowledge system through formal education. This internal conflict of ways of knowing was introduced through colonialism as society awakened to difference and rigid binaries which have remained a stronghold in the present-day students’ lives. It is important to understand how

education was and still is a mechanism for exposing difference and altering one's knowledge preference.

The themes in this section, linking success, lifestyle and careers to formal education, will emerge again as themes of importance in Chapters 5 and 6 in the present study's results concerning perceptions towards formal education. Understanding attitudes towards education in the past is important to help illuminate the mechanisms in the present which may be hindering progress in decolonizing knowledge systems within South Africa. A deeper look at the specific collective impacts that education directly and indirectly had on customs and beliefs through formal education or migration will be explored in the section which follows. These customs and beliefs had an important role in connecting an indigenous person to the land so this will be instrumental in laying a basis for the results concerning place perceptions.

#### **4.2. Perceptions of Indigenous Knowledge**

This section will examine past perceptions of customs and beliefs within the Xhosa indigenous knowledge system. I want to pause to clarify that customs and beliefs within any given indigenous culture are not the sum total of the indigenous knowledge system; they are but a component. An indigenous knowledge system is a system of thoughts, values, facts and ideas about social, environmental, philosophical and other dimensions of life that an indigenous population share as a common approach to life (Smith 2012). Customs and beliefs are one aspect of this but it would be very limiting to use them interchangeably. However, considering this is an archival survey, these were the data that were available and they still provide useful insight into questions of perceptions of knowledge.

Education and a closer proximity to the European culture were looked upon as the major components required for lifting one to a higher status in life and Nyquist (1983) presents this

perspective. Work by Cook (1934) supports this by showing that closer association with Europeans and formal education are a part of the same trajectory towards a more European lifestyle. Cook (1934) found that formal education played a major role in turning away from one's devotion to their indigenous knowledge and rural community in pursuit of a lifestyle offered by the Eurocentric culture. Educated Bomvana in the Transkei moved to the European-developed towns and came to be called *Amagqoboka*, meaning "those whose hearts have broken through" by European knowledge; leading the *Amagqoboka* to forsake their former cultural beliefs.

Regardless of the racialized curriculum during apartheid, the impact of the formal education system still set an indigenous person apart from those who were not educated in the community. This contributed towards changing perceptions of indigenous knowledge. Mr Ts, a resident of Makhanda at the time of the Nyquist interviews mentioned that embracing another knowledge system meant washing one's hands of their own beliefs.

We've accepted Western Civilization which is based upon customs different from ours. We cannot therefore be able to practice two systems at one and the same time. Beliefs are concepts of the past. When we embraced Western civilization, we tacitly washed our hands of such beliefs which through Western civilization itself have been proved empty and with no significance. (Mr. Ts, Nyquist interview notes)

What Mr. Ts talks about is a deep conflict with knowledge systems and he expresses that traditional beliefs will not be relevant in the future, that one could not keep holding onto two different knowledge systems at once. In the urban locations, there was inherently more pressure to conform to the 'white' way of life as the difference between European ways of knowing and being was brought into sharp contrast with traditional ways of life (Nyquist 1983, Schlemmer 1979, Smedley 1979).

Education still played a role in shaping thoughts about indigenous knowledge in the Ciskei Quail Commission Schlemmer Survey (1979), but this survey can offer further details into which cultural practices the educated deemed unnecessary to continue. For this study, an age-based subset of the full Ciskei Quail Commission dataset was used to capture those in their mid-teens to early twenties who would be similar in age to school and university goers and I will reference the findings of the broader study were applicable<sup>16</sup>. It also looks at perspectives that are outside of the urban setting. It provides quantitative evidence for specific ways in which Xhosa culture was shifting at the time through the process of education and which aspects of culture were being impacted. Table 4.1 shows the highest level of education attained and its correlation with three groupings of customs. The variables grouped together were highly correlated items through factor analysis in SPSS and thus were reduced into a single variable. As someone attained more education, belief in diviners, herbalists, female initiation and chiefs become less important to maintain. However, the more educated still had a desire to hold to belief in the ancestors and the feast for the ancestors as well as male initiation and lobola<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Schlemmer analyzed his findings predominantly from the perspective of place contexts for the entire sample of Xhosa-speaking participants and focused his correlative analyses predominantly on aspects pertaining to the independence of the Ciskei.

<sup>17</sup> Lobola is a marriage custom where the father of the bride states the number of cattle that must be given in return for a man marrying his daughter.

Table 4.1: Correlation between customs and level of education

Dominant factor components		Highest Level of Education
	Correlation Coefficient	-.292**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0001
Diviners, herbalists, female initiation, chiefs	N	172
	Correlation Coefficient	-.135
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.044
Belief in ancestors, Feast of Indini	N	172
	Correlation Coefficient	-.102
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.018
Male initiation, Lobola	N	172

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own calculations from the Ciskei Quail Commission (1979) dataset.

There are a number of reasons why educated people may have considered certain customs to be less-essential. Diviners engage in the supernatural world to remedy ailments and bestow blessings and curses. This deals with an unquantifiable and mysterious part of life that science cannot explain or that science disqualifies (Koopman 2018). The focus group analysis, in the present study, also speaks to this in Chapter 6, as Bachelor of Science students expressed that through scientific knowledge, many mysteries can be debunked. Herbalists deal with homeopathic remedies which stand in opposition to modern medicine. Those who became better educated moved away from these experiential ways of knowing that rely on spirits or the use of medical plants without formal training. Similarly, chiefs also became less important authority figures as colonial powers setup a new standard for governance (Smedley 1979) and chiefs became leaders without any accountability over time (Kepe and Tessaro 2014). Moreover, teachers had ill feelings towards the chiefs because they were illiterate and considered “unfit” to



lead the African people at a critical time of change (Davis 1972). This very point speaks to the link between education and leadership. The former ways of attaining power, which would pass within one family for generations, were limited to a few people in the community and ultimately did not stand up against the rising preference for educated leaders that anyone could aspire to become.

The other categories of customs, which were not affected by education level and were considered ‘essential to keep’ by the entire sample (Schlemmer 1979), are still widely practiced today<sup>18</sup> and have been adapted to the constraints of urban life (Hirst 2005, Schlemmer 1972). These essential customs highlight the importance of men and the principles of manhood within the Xhosa knowledge system (Kepe et al. 2008). Male initiation and lobola are rites of passage for men (Mhlahlo 2009); the latter being important in developing a bond between father-in-law and son. In this way, there was a strong emphasis on the importance of keeping respect for men in the family unit, but not so much for the chief. The preeminence of these customs and the role of men allowed for these customs to be set apart from the influence of education, exposing ways in which the amaXhosa knowledge system has resisted the influence of foreign knowledge systems even through one’s education. Nyquist found similar attitudes towards male initiation in Makhanda (Nyquist 1983).

The Ciskei Quail Commission (1979) survey data examined above can also be looked at independently from the participants’ level of education. Table 4.2 reports responses from the student-aged sample, indicating which customs were rated as ‘essential to keep’ and those that were deemed as ‘undesirable.’ Male initiation (90% of the sample agreed this was essential), belief in the ancestors (77.8%), lobola (74.4%) and idini feasts for the ancestors (73.3%) were

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<sup>18</sup> It must be added that diviners, herbalists and chiefs are still roles in Xhosa indigenous knowledge that have persisted post-apartheid.

considered to be the most important to keep. Polygamy (88.3% agree it was undesirable) and women not eating eggs<sup>19</sup> (75.6%) were considered to be the least desirable customs to keep. Schlemmer (1979) presented the analysis for the entire sample consisting of all age ranges and found similar results concluding that the desirable and less-desirable customs would continue within the Xhosa population and the undesirable customs, listed above, were “under threat” of being discontinued<sup>20</sup>.

Table 4.2: Importance of customs and beliefs

Customs and beliefs considered essential to keep	Percentage (%)
Male initiation	90.0
Belief in the ancestors	77.8
Lobola	74.4
Idini feasts for ancestors	73.3
Customs and beliefs considered undesirable to keep	
Men having more than one wife	88.3
Women not eating eggs	75.6

N = 180

Source: Own calculations from the Ciskei Quail Commission (1979) dataset.

Overall, there was a majority response in the student-age sample for the four customs that were desirable to maintain and those which were undesirable to keep, but for other customs (such as diviners, herbalists and chiefs) there was less consensus on whether to discard or keep them and these remained contested beliefs. The changing dynamics of the culture caused complex relationships with aspects of the Xhosa knowledge system.

For some greater clarity into why some had a clear desire to keep or discard certain customs and the apparent divergence in opinion over other customs we return to Nyquist’s work. He probed attitudes towards indigenous customs and beliefs and found that there were mixed

<sup>19</sup> It is considered taboo for women to eat eggs, particularly after getting married or while pregnant for fears of fertility issues or complications during pregnancy (Chakona and Shackleton 2019).

<sup>20</sup> In order to understand whether age played a significant role in which customs were considered to be important, a separate study would need to be done. This topic was out of the scope of this research project.

feelings among residents of Makhanda too concluding that it was not likely that the African urban elite would forsake their indigenous knowledge entirely (Nyquist 1983). However, his study focuses more on why the African residents of Makhanda want to assimilate to European culture and does little to address *why* the residents of Makhanda found *their indigenous knowledge important* or the distinction some residents made between certain customs and beliefs. Some residents desired all customs to be continued while others only thought beliefs needed to be maintained. Furthermore, one respondent even drew distinctions between different beliefs stating that some beliefs have faded away while others remain central. Each individual had different thoughts regarding relevant aspects of culture. I'll be using unpublished interviews in his Nyquist's fieldnotes to explore these points, emphasizing why indigenous knowledge was important to Fingo and Xhosa residents of Makhanda in the past.

The next few paragraphs will highlight some of these variations: those who felt all beliefs and customs were necessary, those who felt that only some customs needed to be maintained with the ultimate aim of looking at how certain beliefs have varied over time. Respondents who felt that all customs should be continued stated health and welfare, and maintaining mental order within communities as reasons for holding to customs. The first respondent believed that Xhosa people had moved away from their customs and this had led to their unfortunate circumstances in life. The second quotation speaks to the chaos which would occur in the future if they were to suddenly abandon their customs. Both highlight the importance of holding onto their indigenous customs.

Custom was the source of health to our forefathers... The real cause of our poor plight today is that we have discarded some of our customs. (Nyquist interview notes)

There would be chaos and confusion if we were suddenly to throw our customs away. (Mr. Ma, Nyquist interview notes)

According to the above quotes, customs should be kept because the health of the people depend on it. Similarly, discarding them is associated with oppression, chaos and confusion. These quotes show a strong attachment between a person and their knowledge system that has positive impacts when the attachment is maintained and negative side effects when the attachment is broken (Berg 2001). Furthermore, confusion is experienced in the mental domain of being. Thus, upholding customs as they were practiced by their forefathers was not only considered to be of benefit to physical health but to mental health too.

The practices of divination and belief in the ancestors were specifically mentioned in regard to physical health by another participant in the Nyquist study. The following participant had a strong belief in the ancestors and mentioned the role that the diviner had in performing the necessary rituals upon the birth of their child to heal them from their illness:

When I performed the ritual, she was well. Customs should be observed. ... I believe in ancestral spirits because they even come to me when I am asleep and talk to me. (Mr. Ts, Nyquist interview notes)

For Mr. Ts, the health of their child depended on the practice of divination which appeased the ancestors by performing the necessary birth ritual. Thus, both beliefs in the ancestors and divination should be kept for the physical health of the family (which stands in stark contrast to the high esteem given to Western medicine in the 20<sup>th</sup> century). The positive relationship between maintaining customs and mental health are consistent with more recent work by Cocks and Møller (2002) who consider the benefits of indigenous medicine on enhancing personal well-being. Similarly, Berg (2003) notes the mental health benefits for those who revere their ancestors by feeling protected, mentored and guided by their ancestors.

Mr. Ts felt that beliefs and customs went hand in hand, but keeping *both* beliefs and customs was not a given for everyone and further reveals the complexity of navigating cultural

change. Those who had adopted Christian principles of living had changed their beliefs, such as the belief in the ancestors and consulting diviners (Mr. Mj, Nyquist interview notes), as another participant drew a distinction between customs and beliefs that allowed them to be dealt with separately:

They (tribal customs) should be followed... All people follow them. Wouldn't be wise to do your own thing. But tribal beliefs, I don't believe them. The majority does. (Nyquist interview notes)

This distinction between beliefs and customs highlights that even though beliefs changed through the introduction of Christianity, there were still cultural norms which fostered social cohesion and it was not advisable “to do your own thing.” Unity within the community points to the importance of community in holding individuals accountable to their indigenous knowledge. This is still important today, as university students, Section 6.2.1, highlighted the importance of the community in holding them accountable to their *beliefs* while they lived at home. This accountability fell away upon moving to university and for most of the focus group participants, their former beliefs became nothing more than superstitions. All in all, it is apparent that community remains an important source of accountability for one's perceptions of indigenous knowledge.

Not everyone in the Nyquist interviews agreed that all customs should continue to be followed. Some felt that only the customs that were beneficial should be kept. The customs which were considered beneficial varied from interview to interview which highlights the varied experience with cultural change even within this small community in Makhanda in 1972. While forces such as urban living, Christianity and education are linked to shifting perceptions of customs and beliefs, one participant in the study by Nyquist noted that culture simply changes over time, making “certain beliefs become meaningless” as “new ideas are embraced” (Mr. Ma,

Nyquist interview notes). Mr. Ma went on to emphasize that while they no longer believe in the gods of the amaXhosa, they could not “run away from belief in ancestral spirits” because “they are our forefathers to whom we owe so much and we have to perform due courtesy towards them to maintain [the] balance of life” (Nyquist fieldnotes). This places a distinction between types of belief within the Xhosa knowledge system. For Mr. Ma, change in culture is normal, and he admits that believing in the Xhosa gods has faded out, however, the one inescapable belief that was agreed upon was the belief in the ancestors.

Though aspects of customs and beliefs have shifted since these archival records, interviews with high school students reveal that tension still exists between the Western knowledge system and their indigenous knowledge system for their future lives (Chapter 5.2.1). Furthermore, some beliefs showed diverging opinions of relevance and this is still prevalent, such as the belief in the powers of the diviners and herbalists (Cocks and Møller 2002); there are still mixed opinions of the importance of this aspect of indigenous knowledge to this day but the very fact that these are still practiced reveals the enduring commitment that many Xhosa still have to these customs. Furthermore, there are core components of indigenous knowledge which have been resistant to change for 200 years in spite of colonialism and its system of education. This speaks to the collective agency of the amaXhosa as they navigate around the old and new constraints of place and knowledge that were imposed on the landscape of South Africa through colonialism and post-colonialism.

This being said, there is still the ever-present tension between indigenous knowledge and the Euro-American knowledge system as students in high school today, in Chapter 5, confirmed that they still value cultural knowledge but at the same time feel that in order to succeed in life they need to be educated. Chapter 5 also presents ways in which perceptions of indigenous

knowledge being useful in the future were linked to one's positive sense of place. With this in mind, we once again look back to 1982 in order to understand perceptions of place and its link to indigenous knowledge.

### **4.3. Perceptions of Place**

Understanding how place was perceived in the past is a challenge with archival material because for most of the colonial experience, researchers were not concerned with what the indigenous population thought about the places they lived, only that the colonizers confined them to 'somewhere.' This section will first draw on the life stories from Platzky and Walker (1983b) which offer qualitative evidence for perceptions of place in the past, followed by further analysis of the Ciskei Quail Commission (1979), which was introduced in the previous section, for quantitative evidence.

The Ciskei Bantustan was a region where many Xhosa people were relocated to during the forced removals of the late 1960s and into the early 1980s. Interviews done as part of Surplus Peoples project, reveal there were no positive feelings about this place by those who had been forcibly moved there (Platzky and Walker 1983b). Of the life histories that were recorded across the South African Bantustans, ten experiences from the Eastern Cape are printed in the Surplus People's project in the Eastern Cape volume<sup>21</sup>. These accounts are significant because Sanders (1994) postulates that the most enduring sense of place of one's home, good or bad, will linger with someone for their whole lives. These life histories also give deep insight into the way in

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<sup>21</sup> The experiences of those living in Dimbaza were not included in these interviews, though the conditions were said to be somewhat better there than in other parts of the Ciskei (Platzky and Walker 1983b). Dimbaza was featured in the documentary *The Last Grave at Dimbaza* in which the conditions were exposed to the rest of the world and the apartheid government went to great lengths in order to improve conditions there to show the world that conditions were better for the people.

which people felt about these foreign places they were forced to move to and the attachment they had to the places where they grew up and had to leave. For those relocated to the Bantustans, there was no ancestral connection within these new places, no sense of community and the land did not allow for agricultural practices to be maintained, which formed a part of one's identity, due to poor soil quality. The deep connections between place and one's ancestors were severed until new roots could be developed with the new generation. Belief in the ancestors was an aspect of indigenous knowledge which was considered to be 'essential to keep' (see section 4.3) but this belief was not only important for the spiritual, mental and physical health of the people; it impacted their very relationship with the land. The graves where their ancestors were buried played a role in attaching people to the places where they had grown up and had been forcibly removed from.

They could not leave their ancestors' graves. The land belonged to them. His mother had grown up in that house, her father had grown up in it. They could leave neither the house, the graves, nor the land. (Michael Welile Ntlanjeni, life history in Platzky and Walker 1983b, 349)

The land had an important connection to their ancestry and family history which rooted indigenous people into place. The very life and death of their forefathers in their former home established thick attachments to place (Sack 1997) and these attachments resulted in a "willingness to stay close, and wish to return when away" (Manzo and Devine-Wright 2013, p. 52). Forced removals severed this strong connection in the immediate generation and had lasting impacts. Owning land where their ancestors had lived was only one component of the meaning of land to the Xhosa. The second important component of land ownership was its ability to be farmed. Farming was a means of meeting their food needs within an area:

We had our own land, our ancestors lived on this land. We planted vegetables, potatoes, mealies, beetroot we planted... Here the land is like stone. (Maria Zotwana, life history in Platzky and Walker 1983b, 353)



Before their removal, they owned the very land on which their ancestors had lived and farmed. They cultivated the land and it yielded fruit for their labor. Maria was moved to a place where the ground was unsuitable for farming. Moreover, having arible land deepened one's connection with place and Siphoo Booie and Sakhiwo Shode both talk about a similar emotional bond to place that developed through their care and stewardship over their crops.

They loved the land.... He knew there was no other place where he could grow such big pumpkins, such huge watermelons. They protested and refused to leave the farm... Siphoo said he became very tired but when he thought of the watermelons, he was going to plant he did not mind the long journey [to Kammaskraal] or the cold. (Siphoo Booie, life history in Platzky and Walker 1983b, 344)

He liked working on the land best, planting things, seeing them grow. (Sakhiwo Shode, life history in Platzky and Walker 1983b, 356)

Farming had been a family activity for generations, providing attachment to one's forefathers on the land that they once worked. Furthermore, farming was an enjoyable process to Siphoo and Sakhiwo. Siphoo's life story reveals the optimism he had on the long journey to the Ciskei homeland when he thought about the watermelons that he would be able to plant. His relationship with his former place and his farming lifestyle gave him an optimism about the future. Unfortunately, the land he moved to did not provide such and he was left feeling hopeless. Siphoo also spoke of how he refused to leave his home, just as Sakhiwo's parents refused to leave theirs. Theirs was a sacrificial sense of place, in which they were prepared to endure beatings or even give their lives to stay in their homesteads (Shamai 1991).

In the process of forced removals, this relationship with land changed dramatically. They were torn from their ancestral roots and living amongst strangers. Moreover, the very places these interviewees were living in were foreign to them. The poor quality of the soil meant that their farming lifestyle had to change which fundamentally impacted their personal identity within the new place. There were few options for feeding families and for earning income for the

surplus people who could not find employment in the cities. As a result, in these early years of removal, the places in the Ciskei Bantustan were considered to be *places of death* as children and adults alike, died.

Here is only death. Only death in this place and this place we do not know. (Maria Zotwana, life history in Platzky and Walker 1983b, 354)

These were foreign places and there was no way of farming for survival. This tragedy was more severe than the shortening of one's physical life; there was a death of the meaning of life itself. People who desired to have families and jobs saw the very death of their hopes and dreams for their futures too. Here we begin to see how a person's hopefulness in the future was related to their negative relationship with the places they were now living.

To me the future means death. I don't have a future; you can see for yourself. When one says future you mean, you have a job and it means children, you see your children growing up ...and then again, their children, your grandchildren. (Sakhiwo Shode, life history in Platzky and Walker 1983b, 357)

I will die in this place. I won't have a wife; I won't have children. (Michael Welile Ntlanjeni, life history in Platzky and Walker 1983b, 350)

These were places where residents considered there to be no future. Here, the term future speaks to employment, a spouse, children and grandchildren. For these men, having a future meant seeing one's blood line continue and being able to make provision for that future vision. Within these places, men such as Sakhiwo and Michael could not see their future vision materializing and this filled them with hopelessness. They would not become ancestors to their descendants one day if they did not have children. This visionless future deeply impacted their relationship with place.

Moreover, instead of being a place where children grew up, these places turned children into adults before their time. Children were put in a position where they had to step into roles of responsibility, worrying about money and food. They were prevented from going to school

because no school supplies could be brought and there was no food to promote mental concentration (Platzky and Walker 1983b).

There is less qualitative data available in the Makhanda region to be able to understand sense of place from the past. Some relevant details can be found in the Nyquist study. His analysis reinforces that Africans by and large felt discontent with the places where they were living as they were subjected to oppression by Europeans (Nyquist 1983). This history of oppression has also been told to the next generation. High school students in the present study have an awareness of how the places they live used to be. They relayed stories that their parents or grandparents had told them of their experiences living in Makhanda in the past, the way that they used to struggle both financially, the racism they experienced and the restrictions placed on their mobility. One student mentioned that her parent's family struggled to buy school uniforms and pay school fees (Lisakhanye, high school student). Another student spoke of the resistance that black students experienced, by whites, when going to school or the library because "they don't want blacks to have knowledge as they do" (Anothando, high school student). She also spoke of the importance of taking a pass book when travelling into town. Makhanda was a very small valley town and even though the township butted up close to the white side of town, a space was created between the two worlds with the requirement of the pass book.

Though both the former Ciskei and Makhanda have a longstanding history of oppression, there are further nuances to people's sense of place in these areas with regards to their hopes for the future. Though the homelands were filled with people who had been forcibly removed from their homes, and though the urban areas were sites of racism and oppression, there were some Xhosa people who had hope that the future would be better, that they would not always be oppressed as they were.

#### 4.3.1. Hopeful Sense of Place

The interviews involving residents of the Ciskei who had been forcibly removed from their homesteads, paint a picture of hopelessness when considering their future in the Ciskei Bantustan. However, not all people felt the same level of hopelessness. There were other thoughts and attitudes towards the Ciskei that the Quail Ciskei Commission (1979) draws out. The survey included a question addressing feelings about the present and future life within South Africa from the perspective of residents in and around the Ciskei homeland. The responses revealed a future state of optimism that the entire sample of Xhosa participants, living in various locations within South Africa, had about life in South Africa (Schlemmer 1979). Considering the student-aged population in this study, this optimism is evident too. Over forty-two percent of the young respondents felt that Africans would be very happy living in the country ten years on, compared to the feelings about the present-day conditions where only thirteen percent felt very happy and thirty-seven percent felt angry and impatient about life in South Africa in 1979 (see Table 4.3). A paired sample, two-tailed t-test was run between the responses for life in 1979 and ten-year projections in order to determine whether respondents felt more or less optimistic about the future. The results show that feelings about the present and future were significantly different at the 95% confidence interval with more optimistic feelings about the future ( $t(175) = 31.2, p < .0001$ ). Student-aged participants felt much happier about life in South Africa ten years into the future than they did in the present moment. Furthermore, the youth were more optimistic than the entire Xhosa sample. This indicates a sense of hopefulness about where the country of South Africa or the country of the Ciskei – in the case of its looming independence – was headed. Moreover, it highlights that even under extremely unjust circumstances this collective internally fought against their oppressors with their optimism about their present conditions getting better.

Table 4.3: Emotions around the present and future in South Africa for people living in or from the Ciskei

	N	Angry and impatient (%)	Unhappy (%)	Not happy but not unhappy (%)	Happy (%)	Very happy (%)
How do African people like yourself in Ciskei feel about life in South Africa now?	176	37.5	14.8	18.8	15.9	13.1
How will African people like you feel <u>ten years</u> from now?	177	21.5	6.2	15.3	14.7	42.4

Source: Own calculations from the Ciskei Quail Commission (1979) dataset.

There is a significant, albeit weak, correlation between how participants responded to both questions with a correlation coefficient of .299, meaning that people who were generally happy had a likelihood of indicating that they would be happy in the future, too, and the same for those who were unhappy, they would likely indicate that they would be unhappy in the future too.

There are two important sources of a hopeful sense of place in this time period and within this chapter. In the life histories above, land ownership or stewardship was already seen as life-giving to those who owned and worked the land in close synergy and the loss of land led to great despondency. Moreover, indigenous knowledge was also noted to as a source of health to the forefathers in Section 4.2. Thus, this section will turn to the quantitative evidence in the Ciskei Quail Commission to connect land and indigenous knowledge together by presenting the importance of land ownership and indigenous knowledge beliefs in fostering future optimism. The link between indigenous knowledge and optimism will emerge again in Chapter 5.

Using the student-aged data from the Ciskei Quail Commission, I found that optimism about the present was correlated with a factor determined by statements pertaining to land in

Table 4.4. People who felt more strongly about ‘owning land in the country’, ‘having land that was granted by the chief’ and ‘owning cattle’<sup>22</sup> had a greater sense of optimism both about the present and ten years into the future. These three statements emerged as strongly related in the factor analysis of the Ciskei Quail Commission using SPSS and were reduced into one variable for this correlation.

Table 4.4: Correlations between statements concerning land and feelings about current and future life in South Africa

	Pearson’s r	How do African people like yourself in Ciskei feel about life in South Africa now?	How will African people like you feel ten years from now?
Factor components:	Correlation	.271**	.291**
Chief granting land, having cattle, owning land in the country	Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	0.001 148	0.0001 148

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own calculations from the Ciskei Quail Commission (1979) dataset.

Land was deeply connected to the Xhosa knowledge system. In the Surplus Peoples Project interviews, we saw how a severed place relationship could yield hopelessness about the future. Alternatively, we can see how land ownership and owning cattle played into people’s optimism about the present and the future. The homestead offered a link to one’s ancestors, land provided grazing for cattle and cattle were signs of wealth, success and allowed marriage customs to be upheld through the custom of lobola. In turn, the cattle needed to be slaughtered to show respect to the ancestors and so completes the holistic connections between indigenous knowledge and place that were bound up in land ownership.

<sup>22</sup> This question was requested a ranking out of ten for each statement. Those who ranked ‘having land that was granted by the chief’ as 10 on the scale made up 56.4% of the student-aged sample. Over 56% of the sample ranked ten for having cattle and a further 60% expressed a ranking of ten for owning land in the country.

The link between optimism about the present and perceptions of indigenous knowledge was also present when considering the customs and beliefs that were considered to be ‘less essential’ elements of Xhosa culture. In my analysis, I found that those who felt that these customs were “essential,” and thus more important than the average response, were more likely to feel optimistic about life in South Africa at the time of the study (see the correlation in Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Correlation between current and future optimism and ‘less-desirable’ aspects of culture

Pearson’s r		How do African people like yourself in Ciskei feel about life in South Africa now?	How will African people like you feel ten years from now?
	Correlation Coefficient	.313**	0.115
Diviners, herbalists, female initiation, chiefs	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0001	0.135
	N	170	171

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own calculations from the Ciskei Quail Commission (1979) dataset.

Interestingly, these customs did not have a lasting impact on optimism when respondents looked ten years into the future the way that ownership of land and cattle did. The same outcome appeared when considering education. Those who were more educated were content with the present but not the future. This marks the long-term importance of land and cattle in the vision of one’s future and in one sense of success in life at this time. This is important to mention because first, it highlights how holding parts of one’s knowledge system closely has a positive impact on the processing of difficult circumstances. Second, it emphasizes that not all aspects of culture have the same long-term benefit for one’s hopefulness about place. People felt more optimistic about South Africa if they could consider themselves having land of their own in the future, with cattle of their own, as this had spiritual and physical importance. Land ownership was able to satisfy the needs of one’s whole being in the past and not just for the present life, but for future

generations. This could not be said of diviners and herbalists and chiefs who solve more immediate, short term problems.

Between Table 4.4 and 4.5, there is evidence which suggests the importance of holding to one's indigenous knowledge as a source of optimism, much like the interviews in Nyquist's fieldnotes suggest that keeping to customs provided health to their forefathers. Furthermore, it speaks to the importance of Xhosa land or place relationships in an individual's optimism. The overlap between indigenous knowledge and land is such that they could not be adequately separated out as independent themes in this section, showing similarities between the connection that is still present with some students today. However, in the past, indigenous knowledge was deeply rooted in the stewardship and ownership of the land (Kepe et al. 2008, Njwambe et al. 2019). Through forced removals, urbanization or migrant work life, a chasm between land and indigenous knowledge began to form such that in the present-day study, land ownership was not mentioned in any interviews and only subtle hints at agriculture and forestry careers emerged in the surveys. This generation has their sights on moving to the urban areas and returning temporarily, but they do not desire to root themselves in the land like some of the student-age population in the Ciskei Quail Commission desired.

#### 4.3.2. Place Satisfaction and Attitudes to Urbanization

Place satisfaction concerns the ability of a place to meet material needs (Stedman 2002). In the present-day study, place satisfaction included the ability of a place to make provisions for the future (this will be explored again in Chapter 5). This section unpacks the future focus of place satisfaction when young adults in 1979 considered the places where they wanted to retire. Some of the key factors in retirement are having a form of social security and a network of family and community to support one in their aging years (Butcher and Breheny 2016). There were two



distinct ways in which an elderly person could be provided for in the colonial economy of South Africa independent of other family members: a government supplied pension (Woolard et al. 2010) and living off subsistence farming. Land ownership was formerly one's retirement safety net but those who were more educated did not need that form of security for their retirement (Ferguson 2013, Peil 1995, Smedley 1979). With the data at hand, I will attempt to speak to these two diverging avenues for social security in old age and show how this ultimately affected one's place relationship.

From the analysis of the Ciskei Quail Commission, the distribution of responses for where to retire, shown in Table 4.6, reveal that most of the student-aged respondents desired to live within the Eastern Cape region (82.7% of the student-aged sample), with the remaining 17.3% wanting to live in cities outside of the province. Just over half of the sample wanted to live in towns or cities in the Eastern Cape, indicating a preference for urban living that was prevalent in Schlemmer's analysis of the entire dataset and confirming the trend of urbanization that has persisted through the 20<sup>th</sup> century into the present (Schlemmer 1979). Furthermore, there was a weak correlation between choosing to retire closer to a rural setting and one's preference for land and cattle ownership ( $r(144) = -.190, p < .05$ ) suggesting that those who wished to remain in the rural areas had some motivation to own land and cattle of their own. There was no relationship between the region that the student-aged respondent was living in when taking this survey and where they desired to retire. This result highlights the disconnection between one's sense of place and their place of residence that was set into motion through forcible removals and the laws of segregation. While local place attachment had been minimized through these experiences, the regional attachment to the Eastern Cape remained strong within both the student-age group presented here and the entire sample presented in (Schlemmer 1979).

Table 4.6: Participant’s first choice of where to live when they retire

Where respondents desired to retire	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Rural village, Eastern Cape	32	18.4
Semi-urban, Eastern Cape	23	13.3
Town in the Eastern Cape	44	25.4
City in the Eastern Cape	44	25.4
City outside the Eastern Cape	30	17.3
Total	173	100

Source: Own calculation from the Ciskei Quail Commission (1979) dataset.

Land ownership allowed food needs to be met through subsistence farming and there was the benefit of living in a close-knit community that honored the elderly. For those who did not earn much money or have a job with an independent pension fund, the land was their financial nest egg. This dependence on land or rural homes bound a person to a place for life. While they may have left to work in the cities in low income positions, their ultimate dependence came from their relationship with the land (Ferguson 2013, Schlemmer 1972). For this group of young people, place satisfaction was bound up in cattle and land ownership.

Alternatively, those who were educated and in the skilled workforce did not need to own land and cattle to store their wealth and as a result their relationship with land was more distant (Nyquist 1983). They were more likely to retire closer to the urban areas and live a more Western life near the city (Schlemmer 1979). There were moderate and significant inverse correlations, in the Ciskei Quail Commission, between one’s level of education and how desirable land and cattle ownership were,  $r(150) = -.275, p < .001$ , emphasizing that those who embarked on a road to success that was independent of the land did not expect to live in close connection to the land upon retiring. This group of Xhosa people made up the majority of the sample at the time of the Ciskei Quail Commission study (1979). The relationship with land was more drastically impacted by

one's education than one's beliefs of the central components of the Xhosa knowledge systems (such as lobola, male circumcision and belief in the ancestors). This is consistent with the study by Nyquist (1983), who found that the majority of his participants "would choose a good education over owning cattle" (p.148) or employment which afforded one communal respect instead of land ownership (Nyquist 1983). With increased mobility in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became much easier for an urban resident to only return to the rural area when necessary (Schlemmer 1979).

There is agreement here with what Smedley (1979) investigated about attitudes of Xhosa men living and working in the Western Cape. She distinguished between 'rurally-oriented' individuals and 'urban-oriented,' stating that those who were younger and with more education tended to have higher levels of urbanization. Urban-oriented individuals had likely been born in the urban areas, had fewer family ties to the rural areas and had higher expectations for the places that they lived in comparison to the rurally-oriented. They were not likely to return to the rural areas for family, employment or land-based reasons. The rurally-oriented respondents still had, to some degree, commitments to the places from which they migrated in the rural areas and could be swayed to return based on the high esteem given to migrants who returned and if they were given the opportunity to own a home in one of the two Bantustans in the Eastern Cape. For the rurally-oriented, being respected by the community and owning land played into their considerations of return. These two elements were recurring themes in both urban and rural contexts within the previous sections when looking at education and can be noted as highly influential in one's relationship with place and knowledge.

Though the city may have provided access to resources that the rural settings could not offer, the city did not offer the same psychological benefits for one's hopefulness about the future

in South Africa. While this subsection looked at rural versus urban living, it did so without examining the role of family in connecting individuals to place. Community is such an important theme within place and knowledge relationships in the present study that it provides good reason for examining the role of family in a participant's place attachment in the past.

#### 4.3.3. Family Connection to Place

In the Ciskei Quail Commission (1979) there was a section which enquired about the participant's birthplace and that of both of their parents. I compared these places to the actual place which the respondent wanted to retire in order to find out whether one's sense of home had any generational links. Places of retirement that were the same as one's birthplace and the same as one's parent's birthplace were tallied and are reported in Table 4.7.

First, just over thirty-one percent of the student-aged sample wanted to retire where they had been born. This shows that for some there was an enduring connection to their place of birth. There was a willingness to root oneself in a location that has family heritage. An important point is that this choice had no correlation to the region where these participants were living at the time of this survey (and potentially would be for their working life). This rootedness, which came up in the present-day data as well, makes a subtle nod to the practice of burying the umbilical cord of a child in their place of birth, symbolically tethering one to the land after the physical tethering to a mother had been cut (Ferguson 2013, Kepe et al. 2008). Similarly, Schlemmer (1979) concluded in his analysis for the entire dataset that there were "moderately strong childhood and kinship links between city Africans and the homeland" (p.35). Schlemmer (1972) also found this to be the case among Durban migrants. He found that about 50 percent of the respondents who were living in the city still had significant objective ties (through children,

cattle or land ownership) and subjective ties to place, where place of retirement was considered as a subjective tie to place.

Table 4.7: Participant’s choice of place to retire relating to their birthplace and parent’s birthplace

	N	Frequency	Percentage (%)
First choice of place to retire depends on their own birthplace	179	56	31.3
First choice of place to retire depends on their parent’s birthplaces	178	64	35.9

Source: Own calculations from the Ciskei Quail Commission (1979) dataset.

Second, Table 4.7 also shows a connection between the places where the student-aged sample wanted to retire and their parent’s birthplace. Over a third of the sample wanted to retire where their parents (one or both) had been born. This provides a snapshot into how longstanding place relationships were beginning to change. The generational connection to place was shifting as many wanted to live closer to urban areas, where their parents were less likely to have been born during apartheid. Furthermore, there was a strong correlation between choosing to retire in one’s birthplace and choosing to retire in one’s parent’s birthplace which indicates that almost 50% of those who wanted to retire in their parent’s birthplace, had been born there as well (see Table 4.8). This generational connection to place was spoken of in the life histories in section 4.3.1 where people protested being torn away from the places where their ancestors lived. These results highlight how colonial influences on education, lifestyle, employment and forced removals acted together to weakened the generational bonds within rural places, amplifying the permanent relocation to urban settings even beyond retirement. Ferguson (2013) noted that those who could not afford to remain in the urban areas for retirement made their way back to their rural homes, even if it was not where they truly wanted to retire.

Table 4.8: Correlation between retirement in their birthplace or their parent’s birthplace

	Kendall’s Tau	First choice of place to retire is their parent’s birthplace
First choice of place to retire is their birthplace?	Correlation Coefficient	.485**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	178

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own calculations from the Ciskei Quail Commission (1979) dataset.

It must be stated that the movement of amaXhosa was restricted at the time of the survey in 1979, and in some cases those within the Bantustans may have been affected by the forced removals from their prior homes, the places they were born. Post-colonial perspectives may suggest that this played a large part in their decision to stay within the Eastern Cape region suggesting that because their mobility was restricted, they had little choice but to remain in the Eastern Cape and in the Bantustans. Alternatively, a decolonial perspective reveals the complexities of a group’s relationship with place during changing times and emphasizes the “self-ownership” (Mbembe 2015, no page) that went into one’s decision to be closer to a familial context; it was not a decision that was forced upon them. Within the confines of a larger colonial power structure, they were making decisions about place and imagining a future in a place that was driven by their own agency, not colonial control as many participants in this survey were optimistic that life in South Africa would not always be the same as they currently experienced. Had this question been asked about immediate place preferences, their answers may have been more strongly swayed by the political and economic constraints and their immediate needs. However, as respondents projected into the future to their retirement years, when they would leave the capitalist economic system, they could choose where they desired to live in the optimistic vision that many had for their futures (seen in section 4.3.1). There is agency in

decision making, even in future projections, that should not be minimized. This decision-making is also apparent when choosing what customs were essential to keep. Respondents were making these choices in a time when a Eurocentric knowledge system was becoming increasingly dominant. However, as a people, they were collectively navigating cultural change with their own agency.

Though the choice of where to retire was, in part, influenced by familial ties to a place it is important to assess whether gender played a role in this decision too. In the present survey, gender significantly altered high school students' relationship with place, with more female students wanting to move to larger urban areas than their male peers (See Chapter 5.1.1). Thus, it is worth investigating whether gender played a role in one's relationship to place in the past.

#### *Gendered responses*

Men and women have their own unique experiences of the world and thus can experience places and aspects of a knowledge system differently to each other. However, analysis of the student-age sample of the Ciskei Quail Commission dataset revealed that gender played *no significant role* in how most of the factors of customs and beliefs were viewed. Thus, for most aspects of life, male and female participants held similar values. The only customs that were found to be significantly different,  $t(171) = -3.435$ ,  $p < .002$ , was the factor comprised predominantly by 'polygamy' and 'women not eating eggs' which were considered to be undesirable customs, particularly by women, which suggests that women were less inclined to maintain these components of culture. These customs also disproportionately impacted women's lives.

There was no significant difference between male and female responses concerning the type of place in which they wished to retire in the student-aged sample (see Table 4.9).

Schlemmer (1979) also found no significant difference between how male and female

participants in the entire sample responded to places of retirement. Male and female student-age respondents were as likely to prefer to retire in the rural, town and city areas, respectively, but females did indicate slightly more of a desire to live in a city in the Eastern Cape than their male peers (see Table 4.9). This result contrasts with research by Schlemmer (1972) in the Durban area, who found that women (both educated and uneducated) were *significantly* more likely to want to retire in a city than men. This could be due to the fact that the participants within Schlemmer’s earlier study were all currently living in Durban compared to the sample of participants in the Ciskei Quail Commission who were a mix of Xhosa residents in urban areas and residents of the Ciskei.

Table 4.9: First place of choice for retirement according to gender of respondents, Ciskei Quail Commission

	Male (%)	Female (%)
Rural village, Eastern Cape	17.9	18.9
Semi-urban, Eastern Cape	12.8	13.7
Town in the Eastern Cape	29.5	22.1
City in the Eastern Cape	20.5	29.5
City outside the Eastern Cape	19.2	15.7

N = 78 Male, 95 Female

Source: Own calculations from the Ciskei Quail Commission (1979)

#### 4.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter aimed at understanding how students’ perceptions of place and knowledge varied over time and was presented through a decolonial lens which emphasized the agency of the Xhosa over the past 70 years in spite of colonial governance. Through the use of archival material and present-day interviews it was evident the relationships with place have changed over time as students are less likely to remain in the Eastern Cape than they were in the past and



the negative identities of places that were impacted by colonialism and apartheid have been rescripted into a positive narrative by the present-day students. Aspects of indigenous knowledge have also changed as customs that were generally considered ‘undesirable’ have been phased out over time. That being said, students’ relationship with knowledge exhibits similar tensions as in the past, as a number of students in the present-day study still expressed that their indigenous knowledge was the most important knowledge to them even if it was not going to be used in higher education or their work life. There are also long-standing preferences for certain careers which have remained strongholds of coloniality in the education system.

While aspects of culture have changed, and practices that depended on land have shifted over time due to urbanization, the important thing to state is that the changes ultimately took place with a shared vision for the future of the Xhosa knowledge system, keeping the central components of their knowledge system firmly in place in spite of pressures introduced through colonialism to disregard customs as superstitious. Colonial power had influence over place and knowledge, restricting where indigenous people could live and shaping thoughts towards indigenous knowledge by imposing a foreign education system. As more people moved away from lands that were overseen by chiefs, there was less importance placed on the chief as an authority figure because there were other authorities over people in the urban areas. As modern medicine became more prominent and careers in the medical field became desirable, the role of the diviner and herbalist became less central to the healthcare system of the Xhosa. Likewise, the ways in which certain customs were performed had to change as a result of being within towns and cities. Cows could not be kept or easily slaughtered in the urban areas and there was no gatepost to the kraal where one could meet with their ancestors. Through the challenges and changes which presented themselves in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the aspects of Xhosa culture which

depended on place or land (the gatepost to the kraal, cattle ownership) were adapted to the new constraints in order to keep core values within the Xhosa knowledge system intact (Biko 1978, Hirst 2005). Post-colonialism writes history as if indigenous people had no agency in navigating their own cultural change through this time awarding colonizers the power to force change on a person in every facet of their lives. However, this is only one perspective of history. The amaXhosa did not accept what was presented to them through education or a different lifestyle unconsciously and without critique. As a collective, they were thoughtfully engaged in the process of cultural change, and were not passive bystanders.

In the Eastern Cape province, many of the amaXhosa have shifted away from what they have come to consider the non-essential aspects of their customs (polygamy and women not eating eggs) and have held on to the essential components, such as the ancestors, lobola and circumcision. Biko (1978) acknowledged the role that the Europeans culture had on causing “the African to lose grip on himself and his surrounding” (p. 41) but he also emphasized that over time there is “a natural evolution of the true native culture” (p. 70) which suggests that indigenous people have a power to resist colonial forces of cultural change and control their own cultural evolution. It must not be assumed that all cultural change is at the hand of the colonizers through mechanisms of education or severance from the land, because that drastically underplays the power within the indigenous people of South Africa to steer their culture’s natural evolution. That being said, in the past, education did play a role in determining whether a person found certain customs to be undesirable or not-essential. However, the core customs remained unaffected by one’s level of education. Today, education still presents these tensions but there is still a notable group of students who value their indigenous knowledge above school knowledge and will be considered in Chapter 5.

In terms of place, in the past respondents were more attached to smaller regions and there were still a number of respondents who desired to retire where they had grown up or where their parents were from, indicating familial ties to place. There was also more interest in land and cattle ownership in the past than there is in the present student population. These elements of place are shifting in the present time, particularly among those who are pursuing higher education, and attachments to the local scale (even for family reasons) do not bind one to remain there. This was made clear by one of the focus group students in Chapter 6. Also, present day students have an enlarged sense of place, in that they speak of the local and provincial scale interchangeably, as one and the same place in their minds and exhibit a provincial identity in the high school interviews. They were also much less likely to remain in the Eastern Cape when they left school.

At the heart of it all, this chapter shows that the relationship with one's land and indigenous knowledge systems is important for a person's future outlook. Optimism in the future was not just seen within this chapter but also in the present study, highlighting the enduring benefits of being connected to place and one's indigenous knowledge system. However, the relationship with land is not as intimate today as it was in the past, as students want to get an education to provide for their lives in future. Their attachment is more on an emotional level than a physical tethering to place and they have a stronger provincial identity than an identity forged on the local level. This will be evident in the next chapter which will develop knowledge and place relationships in the student population in the present-day.

## Chapter 5: Perceptions of Place and Knowledge across Place Contexts

### 5.0. Introduction

Chapters 2 and 4 discussed how colonization, particularly through education, impacted the relationship that the indigenous people of South Africa had with land, place and their indigenous knowledge systems. The segregation of the homelands from urban South Africa generated an interesting divergence in the development of rural and urban spaces. Rurality became a construct “pejoratively associated with the former Bantustans which combine poverty and isolation” (Guyot et al. 2015, 2), while urban places were constructed as centers of power associated with success and affluence (Hart 2002, Myers 2003). The effects of this “separate development” can be seen to this day in the great inequalities that exist within South Africa, particularly in the former homelands (Kepe 2016, Saul 2012), through “differential access to resources and life-opportunities” (Sharp 2009, 64). The development of rural areas is still ‘separate’ in the multiplicity of trajectories present in postcolonial South Africa (Hart 2002, Mbembe 2001) and the development of these places makes the ‘colonial present’ evident (Fraser 2007, Gregory 2004).

The students in the rural and township areas in this study are aware of these differences and have described the way that their homes are different to urban locations: their daily routines are different; they have to walk great distances to get to school and access to many resources is limited. However, it cannot be assumed that students’ sense of place is shrouded in the injustices of the past which linger on in the places where they live. Conducting research with such assumptions results in the perpetual production of the ‘other’ (Denzin et al. 2008), requiring these students to conform to the dominant perception that they are in hopeless situations. This is the very essence of coloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zindo 2016) as it places the African

subject, particularly the rural/township subject, on the margins while centering the Western subject or more realistically in South Africa, the urban subject, at the center (Kepe 2016). Thus, it is vital to understand students' relationship with place, in its many facets, using the words that they have spoken.

This chapter examines the connection between sense of place and indigenous knowledge and shows the importance of indigenous history, rootedness, and community in fostering a positive sense of place. The heart of this section aims to answer how *place contexts* influence students' perceptions of the places they live and their ways of knowing (Research Question 1). Regardless of whether a student has migrated within their years of schooling, there are themes which emerge here that are independent of place contexts, such as whether a student has a positive sense of place and relationship with their indigenous knowledge. Other themes, such as place satisfaction, *do* vary across place contexts. Both sides of place and knowledge perceptions will be considered in this chapter; those that do and do not vary across place contexts. Students' place relationships are an important starting point in this chapter as place plays such a large role in developing epistemology (Cresswell 2004, Deloria Jr and Wildcat 2001). The relationships that students have with their places of residence and their indigenous knowledge are multifaceted and these will be explored in detail in the sections that follow.

### **5.1. Place Perceptions**

There are many dimensions to one's sense of place: place attachment (Gustafons 2014, Manzo and Devine-Wright 2013), place identity (Jorgensen and Stedman 2001, Lewicka 2008), and place or residential satisfaction (Ghafourian and Hesari 2018, Ramkissoon and Mavondo 2015, Stedman 2002) are considered the main ones. Many of these theories have been developed mostly in the Western world, their development in Africa remaining limited (Myers 2005). The

majority of the studies concerning place in South Africa center around land rights and the meaning of land to indigenous populations of South Africa (Kepe 2016, Kepe et al. 2008, Saul 2012); spatiality in urban planning (Visser 2013); urbanization and migration (Bakker et al. 2019); desegregation (Dixon and Durrheim 2004) and sense of place at university (Mtolo 2020, Tebensky and Matthews 2015). Examining the core components of students' place relationships, particularly those marginalized in post-apartheid South Africa, is crucial in the decolonization project. This section seeks to examine the complexities of students' senses of place and how they may differ according to where students live. It will also examine students' place identity on a provincial scale from a qualitative point of view.

The quantitative analysis of the present-day survey provides a starting point from which to understand differences in perceptions of place based on place contexts. The Place measure produced two continuous variables through a factor analysis using SPSS and these two factors form the basis of the investigation on place: place satisfaction and hopeful sense of place. Factor analysis exposes the underlying structure within the eighteen place variables by showing which statements are highly correlated, and these are all merged into one independent factor from the other factors which emerge. Table 5.1 shows the Likert-scale statements which were grouped into these two factors. The first independent factor shows that four statements were strongly correlated (indicated by an asterisk in the table) between 59.9% to 71.1% and described characteristics of one's place satisfaction. The second independent factor shows that five statements, concerning hope and future prospects, were strongly correlated with each other between 50.4% and 76.3% and was summarized as a hopeful sense of place.

Table 5.1: Place satisfaction and hopeful sense of place

Survey Statements	Place Satisfaction	Place Hopefulness <sup>23</sup>
a. I feel a strong connection with my ancestors here		-.137
b. This village/settlement is too small for me	-.180	-.241
c. I see myself living in the city after I matriculate		-.201
d. This place offers everything I need for my future life	.652*	
e. I would need to move away from this village/settlement in order to have a better future	-.123	-.110
f. I am most satisfied and fulfilled when I am here in this village/settlement	.620*	.199
g. Even if I have to leave this village/settlement one day, I will always belong here		
h. Living here is an important part of my identity	.155	
i. I feel hopeless in this settlement/village		-.669*
j. The most important part about a place is the people who live there, not the things that I am able to do there		
k. The most important part about a place is job opportunities and the life I can have there		.116
l. The Eastern Cape is a place of opportunity for me	.711*	.274
m. I have no future in the Eastern Cape	-.310	-.504*
n. If I left the Eastern Cape to live somewhere else, I would feel a part of me would be left behind	.202	
o. Eastern Cape is home but it does not offer what I need to succeed	-.477	-.597*
p. I would rather further my education outside the Eastern Cape than get a diploma or degree in this province	-.252	-.628*
q. One day I would want to raise my children in the Eastern Cape	.599*	
r. I feel hopeless in the Eastern Cape		-.763*

Source: Factor analysis of ECHS survey (2018)

<sup>23</sup> The negative weighting means that this factor is composed of opposite feelings towards place than were listed in the survey. More students disagreed with feeling hopeless in their communities and thus, this factor was called Place Hopefulness. As the factor scores go upwards, place hopefulness increases.

An in-depth examination of place satisfaction will be explored first, integrating both survey and interview data into the results. These results point to a relationship with place that is utilitarian. This will be followed by a detailed look at what contributes towards a hopeful sense of place, which speaks to a student's emotional attachment to place.

#### 5.1.1. Place Satisfaction

Place satisfaction is the “utilitarian value [of a place] to meet certain basic needs” (Guest and Lee 1983, p. 234, quoted in Stedman, 2002). Stedman (2002) describes it as an attitude which is shallower than, for example, place attachment. For the students in this study, the places in which they live fail to meet their utilitarian needs and as such, place satisfaction is a strong indicator for students' intentions to migrate in the future. The statements which form the basis of the place satisfaction factor (in Table 5.1) in this study indicate that this relationship with place is informed by students' present experience of needs satisfaction as well as their estimations of their *future* needs. These thoughts concerning place satisfaction are projected into the future, and their projections of place satisfaction even extend to their future families' needs. If this place does not satisfy their needs, it is unlikely that it will satisfy their children's needs in the future. Opportunities for the future, specifically employment opportunities as mentioned in interviews, form another aspect of place satisfaction within this study. Thus, place satisfaction fits comfortably into Push-Pull migration theory (Lee 1966), as it recognizes that there is a place outside of their location or province (such as Cape Town or Gauteng Province) which the student believes will satisfy the above-mentioned needs. The positives of moving outweigh both the negatives of migrating and the positive aspects of remaining in the Eastern Cape.



On average, students in the survey were not satisfied in their current places of residence, with 48.5%<sup>24</sup> disagreeing with the statement “I am most satisfied and fulfilled when I am here in this village/settlement” and 57.9% disagreeing with “the Eastern Cape is a place of opportunity for me.” These two statements speak to the lack of satisfaction not only on the local level but at the provincial level too. There is agreement between the survey results and the interviews as 12 of the fifteen students interviewed indicated that they were definitely going to leave the Eastern Cape, motivated by employment opportunities, new experiences and better resources elsewhere. On a local level, students highlighted that living in the rural areas meant that they were far away from economic hubs where resources are readily available and are not in locations where many teachers want to work.

[There are a lack] of teachers in most cases because those schools are schools that are looked down [on]. No teachers are interested [in going to] teach in a rural village.  
(Mivuyo, high school student)

What I do not like about living here [is that] there are not [many] resources. (Ziyabukwa, high school student)

On a provincial level, there were similar feelings of ruralness and remoteness compared to other provinces, as students expressed that the Eastern Cape as a whole did not have many resources or employment opportunities and indicated that it felt small. This sentiment is parallel to that expressed about the rural areas and supports the idea that even though students would be able to move to cities within the province, such as East London and Port Elizabeth, they still felt that the province was not a place of opportunity for them.

The Eastern Cape is a little bit small which makes it a little bit difficult for jobs, any kind of opportunities... [many] go to bigger places like Johannesburg, Durban (Aluve, high school student)

Eastern Cape is a province which lacks opportunities, job opportunities, it lacks resources  
(Mivuyo, high school student)

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<sup>24</sup> Those who felt neutral about this statement made up 29.5% of the sample.

In the context of urbanization and globalization discussed in Chapter 2, the former results are not unexpected nor is it a new phenomenon in the history of South Africa as migration from rural to urban areas has been documented at length as people find work in cities in South Africa (Mears 1997, Schlemmer 1972, Smedley 1979). However, in order to address Research Question 2, differences in place satisfaction must be understood across place contexts: rural/semi-rural and township locations. First, looking at the mean factor scores of the factors in Table 5.2, there is an overall negative place satisfaction for those in the rural areas and a positive mean value for the township participants and these differences were statistically significant. This means that overall, those who are living in the township areas felt that they had more access to resources and things that they needed compared to those in the rural areas. An independent, two-tailed t-test indicated that students living closer to Makhanda have a significantly different place satisfaction than those in the rural areas in the former Ciskei ( $t(185) = -3.87, p < .0001$ ).

Table 5.2: The mean factor scores for place satisfaction across place contexts

Region	N	Place satisfaction
Rural	124	-0.208
Township	63	0.409

Source: Own calculations from ECHS survey (2018)

Moreover, Table 5.3 showing the Pearson's correlation between place satisfaction and place contexts (Rural/semi-rural as 1, township coded as 3), indicates that students in the rural areas are less satisfied with the places where they live on a utilitarian level, on average, compared to students in the townships. Students who are closer to a town or city are more satisfied on average with the places they live. These results connect to those discussed in Chapter 4.3.2. concerning

past urbanization trends whereby over half of the respondents in the Ciskei commission desired to live close to a town or city when they retired.

Table 5.3: Positive correlation between proximity to an urban area and place satisfaction

	Pearson's r	Region (rural/semi-rural = 1, township =3)
Place Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.293**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	185

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own calculations from ECHS survey (2018)

According to interviews with students in the rural area, particularly the two who had previously attended urban schools in East London and Port Elizabeth, there is less access to educational resources, such as computers and school libraries, and fewer teachers want to move there to teach. This diminishes their sense of satisfaction with basic needs being met for their education and progression in life. This is further supported in the interviews with rural students through expressions such wanting to have “a fresh start” (Manyanisa, high school student), “to see other provinces” (Lathitha, high school student), and that there is a “better life” and “jobs” elsewhere (Bulumko, high school student) when discussing reasons why they didn't see themselves living in the Eastern Cape in the future. These will be explored in greater detail in the following subsection, as this doesn't necessarily mean students have a negative relationship with place.

To contrast this, in the township areas, even though students mentioned that there are limited resources in the school itself, they still have access to resources outside the school, such as mentorship programs and being tutored by students at Rhodes university (Lisakhanye, high school student). Those living in Makhanda were more satisfied with their needs being met, on average, than those from the former Ciskei rural and semi-rural school locations.

Lefebvre (1991) presents the idea that space and time have been “urbanized,” leaving the rural areas in a timeless, pre-modern state. Rural areas, particularly the former homelands, experience high unemployment and poverty rates which forge a dependence on migrant work in urban centers (Arndt et al. 2018). In many senses, the development of South Africa has left the rural areas dependent on migrant labor in order to participate in the capitalist economy (Mears 1997) which only serves to deepen the divide of place satisfaction as students equate success with urban migration. Work by Njwambe et al. (2019) speaks of this place relationship as a “commodifying” attachment and noted that the migrant population from rural Transkei, Eastern Cape, view the city as a place they go “to meet economic, social and other needs” (p. 428) but these feelings were not as strong as their attachments to the rural areas for their spiritual and ideological needs. It is interesting that students’ attitudes concerning place satisfaction have been deeply developed before they even leave their communities, as they have watched migrants return to their communities and viewed them as the embodiment of success. While, in the past, rural places played a more intimate role in tethering a Xhosa person to the places where they had familial connection, this has degraded over time.

These perceptions of place and consequential mobilities are seen on other continents too. Cuervo (2014) conducted research in rural Australia and found that students living in rural areas described their resources and access to opportunities as “limited” and they intended on moving to the urban centers in order to pursue education and employment for future success. This global experience has been coined the “mobility imperative” as rural students feel they have little choice but to leave (Farrugia 2016). In the case of this student population, they have to leave the Eastern Cape province to escape rurality.

### *Gendered difference in Place Satisfaction*

Students' place satisfaction not only varies according to place contexts but also according to the sex of the participant. Table 5.4 shows that men, on average were positively satisfied with the places they lived, whereas the female participants were not satisfied. The differences between these mean scores were also statistically significant ( $t(183) = 3.49, p < .001$ ). Thus, male students were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the places they lived than their female peers.

Table 5.4: The mean factor scores for place satisfaction according to gender

	N	Mean place satisfaction
Male	96	0.244
Female	89	-0.254

Source: Own calculations from ECHS survey (2018)

As stated earlier, the interviews showed there is a connection between place satisfaction and a student's intentions for leaving the province. Thus, it follows that female students are more likely to want to leave the province regardless of whether their place of residence is in a rural or township area. In the interviews, the only student who expressed a desire to stay in the province was a male student. Of the other two who might consider staying, one was female. Every other student interviewed intended on leaving the province.

The reason for this gendered difference in place satisfaction was not something that was in the forefront of this research design or the interview guide but a number of the female students interviewed were very determined to leave and had ambition for achieving success in their future. At least two of the female students were set on leaving the country for a while and one desired to be an influential political figure. Traditionally, Xhosa women have a role in the

community that starkly contrasts independent, postmodern feminism. A male has more authority and autonomy in the Xhosa culture, particularly after their rights of passage into manhood through circumcision. Gouws and Galgut (2016) specifically highlight “the tension between rights and cultures in South Africa” speaking to ways in which cultural practices deny the agency of women and their ability to “act for themselves” (p. 8). They continued by stating that under customary law, Xhosa woman have to have a male family member present in order to enter the traditional court. Furthermore, women are often denied the “right to access and ownership of land” (p. 8) by traditional leaders who have the responsibility of redistributing land. There are also certain cultural taboos which reinforce gender roles such as that woman are responsible for collecting firewood (Cocks et al. 2012). Work by Njwambe et al. (2019) expressed that for some women, the task of collecting wood is a source of “enjoyment and satisfaction” (p. 426) when returning home from the cities but women also took “advantage of the more relaxed social norms around womanly role and behaviors in the city” (p. 428).

Thus, female students who are about to graduate high school may be looking to the future life in the city and its associated freedom and as such, their place satisfaction is muted in comparison to their male peers. A male student is less likely to feel as though a place hinders his progress in life. On the other hand, female students feel more confined by their current places and want opportunities to travel and be their own person. These students want to be in an environment where they can grow and have access to new opportunities that have not been available to them where they currently live, township and rural areas alike.

Place satisfaction is not the only relationship that students have with the places in which they live. Place satisfaction is more calculated and logical relationship with place that depends

on one's physical needs being met. The other relationship that emerged was a deep emotional connection to place and will be examined next.

### 5.1.2. Hopeful Sense of Place

There is much debate in the academy as to the exact components of one's sense of place (Hernández et al. 2007, Pretty et al. 2003). However the most prominent components were proposed by Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) who broke down sense of place into place attachment, place identity and place dependence. None of these components directly speak to the hopeful sense of place that emerged in this study, so in an effort to prevent further confusion within definitions of place attachment, I have opted for using the overarching theory of sense of place within which to situate the relationship that the students in this study have with place.

Sense of place is both an emotional attachment to a place and one's mental perception of it (Basso 2010). It is "a rich conceptualization of how an individual's experiences and impressions perceive a place and define its essence" (Ghafourian and Hesari 2018, p. 696). A student's sense of place recognizes that places are "exerting a force" on them in some way (Sack 1997, p. 36). In the case of this sample, this is a positive force; one which produces a hopeful sense of place and has psychological benefits (Scannell and Gifford 2017b). This measure contained strong contributions from the statements found under the hopeful sense of place in Table 5.1.

A hopeful sense of place speaks to the ability of the places they live to give them a feasible future life if they stayed locally or in the Eastern Cape. Though most desire to leave the province, many students still feel they have cause for hope for their futures in the Eastern Cape if they stayed, as 53.1% of the sample disagreed with the statement "I have no future in the Eastern

Cape.”<sup>25</sup> This percentage is reduced when students considered their future on a local level, as only 45.1% of the sample disagreed with the statement that “I feel hopeless in this village/settlement.”<sup>26</sup> There was more cause for optimism on a provincial scale when thinking about remaining in the Eastern Cape in the future than there was for the local scale where these students were currently living.

Table 5.5 shows the mean factor scores for the hopeful sense of place factor across place contexts. The rural/semi-rural on average had a slightly more hopeful sense of place compared with the sample living in a township context as indicated by the higher mean factor score. However, the difference between students’ hopeful sense of place across place contexts was not statistically significant and thus it could not be concluded that the students in the independent samples felt any more or less optimistic about place according to their place contexts.

Table 5.5: Mean factor scores for hopeful sense of place across place contexts

	N	Mean factor scores for hopeful sense of place
Rural/Semi-rural	124	.0673
Township	63	-.132

Source: Own calculations from ECHS survey (2018)

Unlike place satisfaction, a hopeful sense of place is largely unaffected by place contexts as it is more about an emotional connection to place than a dependence on a place to meet physical needs. In essence, for this measure, rural and township place context are not perceived so

<sup>25</sup> Just over twenty-five percent (25.2%) of the respondents felt neutral about the statement “I have no future in the Eastern Cape,” showing a minority felt hopeless in the Eastern Cape.

<sup>26</sup> Just over twenty-five percent (25.1%) of the respondents felt neutral about the statement “I feel hopeless in this village/settlement” showing a minority felt hopeless in their village or settlement.



differently in the affective domain. A hopeful sense of place did not vary across gender either, unlike place satisfaction.

Another contrast between the former measure and this sense of place is that most of the students who were interviewed could be considered as hopeful about place. Thirteen out of the fifteen South African students interviewed could find positive aspects about where they lived or spoke affectionately about the Eastern Cape and the way growing up there had influenced them positively. This means that most of the students interviewed had a positive sense of place, despite wanting to move out of the Eastern Cape because it couldn't meet their needs. This emotional connection became clear in the way that they rose to defend the Eastern Cape or how they spoke of the things they valued about growing up where they did. The interviews give valuable insight into what cultivates a hopeful sense of place and how it can exist simultaneously with the desire to leave the Eastern Cape. Five key themes emerged from the interviews that develop a student's hopeful sense of place and these themes will be explored in detail in the coming subsections: community, the indigenous history of the area, being rooted in place, having a desire to explore outside the Eastern Cape and having a strong provincial identity. Though there are some overlaps, these themes form distinct entities of a positive sense of place.

### *Community*

The students in this study who feel connected to their community have an optimistic sense of place. Students who were place hopeful mentioned their community as being something they value about the place they live. Students expressed an appreciation for the way that their community encouraged them in their pursuit of education, taking an interest in their personal development. One student described their township community as a unit indicating how they are bound together a people.

They're nice here... they are encouraging. They'll say "carry on and do better." (Lathitha, high school student)

Here in the townships, we have that ideology of a unit. We are united and we actually love each other as a community. (Chumani, high school student)

For the hopeful student, the community support encourages them and connects them to the places where they live. Not in a way that makes them feel like they cannot leave, but to the point where they feel empowered to go and dream bigger because they are backed by a strong community (Bowlby 1984). Place attachment, a component of sense of place, has been linked to community involvement (Anton and Lawrence 2014) and strengthening one's sense of community (Hernandez et al. 2014) in other contexts and supports these findings. Furthermore, Njwambe et al. (2019) also highlighted the importance of one's community in contributing to the place attachment of migrant workers in the city. One's family and friends were noted to be one of the biggest reasons for returning home year after year. Thus, these findings echo that community is an integral part of developing feelings of belonging and a positive sense of place for these students.

### *Indigenous History*

Another theme within this study that is associated with a positive sense of place is the valuing of indigenous history. Students come to learn about the history of the area and the province through a number of different avenues: family, school and historical monuments. The amaXhosa perspective of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the places where students now live are taught to them by their elders and parents. One student described that her curiosity about history drove her to ask her older community members questions about the history of the area. Another student's mother told her what Makhanda was like during apartheid and the history behind the area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

I ask a lot of questions.... [I learn] from people who have lived here longer. Older people. People who have experience of Dimbaza. I just like history. Learning how it was in the past. (Philasande, high school student)

My mom always tells me that, this place was dominated, colonized by [the] white race and that white race were killing them unnecessarily for going to school, for being on the streets before 9, for going into town without passports. (Anothando, high school student)

Older people in the community also teach the local history from the period of the Xhosa wars in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This vital repository of indigenous perspectives of history is fortified by the teaching of Eastern Cape history that appears in the school curriculum, showing that students are exposed in some way to place-based history in their primary and secondary education. Thus, not only does a student's community provide a moral support for them, it's also an important repository of the "collective memory" of the area (Harvey 1993).

We were taught by our grandmother and the older people usually tell us about those stories but we have learned about them in primary [school] and also in grade 9. (Ziyabukwa, high school student)

Another important source of information regarding the local history is the presence of monuments commemorating indigenous perspectives of history and inadvertently the names of places. These symbols draw attention to the binary perspectives of the past and create a dissonance with the status quo in present-day South Africa. The Wall of Fame is a monument that was mentioned by two students in Dimbaza as a source of information which "tells the history of Dimbaza" (Philasande, high school student). Even the names of places in Makhanda or the name Dimbaza brought to mind pieces of history. One particular student did not find history to be of much significance because "the history has passed...it is not going to do anything to the future" (Anothando, high school student), yet she still mentioned a list of place names which spoke to aspects of local history, giving evidence of the ways in which place names carry the past into the present and teach students about indigenous and British history.

There was a man called Makhanda who lived here who fought for freedom. There's Steve Biko. They said they caught Steve Biko by Zuma Drive... Settler's monument: there I think they [the British] used to stand there and then shoot here." (Anothando, high school student)

Even the name Dimbaza has a history behind it. Because apparently it means people were being dumped here back then, Dimbaza was a name to sum up that sort of moving - people being dumped here. So, I value the history of Dimbaza, because in a way it has a unique history. How certain infrastructures were established, how the names came about. (Philasande, high school student)

We were taken there and then we were dumped here in Dimbaza, that is why the place is called Dimbaza. (Limile, high school student)

Though monuments and place names hold clues to what took place in the past, the greatest repository of history remains within the community, as many of them lived through pieces of it and see it through indigenous eyes. The community can also speak to the ways in which places have changed over time in a way in which a monument or place name cannot. Through these conversations with the community, students can tell how circumstances and place meanings have changed over time. For example, a student from Dimbaza said that "people no longer hold that Dimbaza was a place of dumping" and it is now "a warm home" (Philasande, high school student), showing that a site of death and oppression for those experiencing the forced removals to Dimbaza has not been given over to the students, generation as they have become place-makers of Dimbaza. To see the hardship of the past makes them deeply value the relative freedom which they experience in the places they live now.

Being here makes me feel happy because there are a lot of things [in history] here. For example, there is King Rharhabe there (points in a direction). There's a guy who's in the history book; I live in his village. (Lathitha, high school student)

We are enjoying staying in Dimbaza right now rather than back then. So, we don't see Dimbaza as [it was] before because we are enjoying it. (Limile, high school student)

I know that there are many popular people who come from this place and they all have left their legacy... It makes me want to contribute. It makes me actually want to achieve a lot also. (Milisa, high school student)

Students value their indigenous history because it connects them to their culture. Xhosa history teaches them “about how people were living in the olden days and the culture in it” (Mivuyo, high school student) and how their predecessors fought for these places where they live and fought for freedom (Bulumko, high school student). History teaches them to value what they have now in light of the hardships endured by their ancestors to get to where South Africa is now (Ziyabukwa, high school student). Knowing this history produces feelings of pride associated with these places and a sense of responsibility to “look after” these places (Mivuyo, high school student). Thus, having a hopeful sense of place is more than looking to the future with a hopeful gaze, it is about students being deeply connected to the history of Xhosa people fighting for freedom and overcoming great difficulty and being inspired to make their own contributions; to be place-makers in South Africa and to “follow in their [ancestors’] footsteps” (Bulumko, high school student). Indigenous history is empowering for them because they see their ancestors’ role in resisting colonial power and their communities’ work in re-making places, ascribing them with meaning and positive attributes which they hold to this day.

There is no denying that students living in the former Ciskei and Makhanda townships were deeply aware that the history of the areas they live in was oppressive and full of hardship in the past, but this history generates a distinct sense of place that is valuable to those who possess it. One student expresses it like this: “Sometimes when I walk by those places [my mother] used to tell me “This happened here and this happened here.” I take time to imagine how it happened so I think I value it” (Anothando, high school student). She walks through a place with a strong sense of what occurred there many years ago, what her mother experienced and bringing that into her present sense of place. On the other hand, for other students, their parents or grandparents speak of places in the past being better than the present (Milisa and Mivuyo). In the past, “they

would heal disease by themselves” (Sechaba, high school student) and “they used to practice their culture” (Limile, high school student) unlike today. This highlights that indigenous perspectives of history are a part of one’s indigenous knowledge which is crucial for cultivating one’s sense of place (this was seen in Chapter 4.3.1 and will be returned to in section 5.1.1).

Regardless of whether the past, under apartheid, was perceived as better or worse than the present, indigenous perspectives of history offer a counter narrative to the colonial course of events. It speaks to the active role that indigenous people and indigenous knowledge plays in one’s sense of place and calls the place-hopeful students to be agents of change, place protectors and place makers regardless of whether they stay in the Eastern Cape or not. This kind of place relationship is one which endures despite a person moving away. Students have a strong place relationship that affords them the confidence to leave and to dream big for their futures.

These findings are consistent with a study by Devine-Wright and Lyons (1997) based in Dublin, Ireland. In a place of contested national identities, they found that sites of historical significance were important in maintaining social memories which generated a continuity between the past and the present. Similarly, Stefaniak et al. (2017) found that teaching local history can improve one’s place attachment. Students learn about the history of their homes in parts of the school curriculum but more so from their families and memorial sites they see. Within the context of South Africa, places store history of contestation in many respects; however, it is indigenous perspectives of history which fuses these students to the places they live.

### *Rootedness*

Students who have a positive sense of place made use of the phrases “to know one’s roots” or to “know where one comes from.” The very word ‘root’ speaks of a relationship with place by

creating an image of a growing plant or a fortified tree, firmly established in a location. Roots are always attached to something. There is stability in having roots. Relph (1976) goes as far as to say that having roots in a place is a necessary for fulfilling other soul needs. Those who are rooted in places are more likely “to know and care for those places” (Sanders 1994, 74), emphasizing the stewardship that was mentioned in the preceding subsection. These are all things which emerge as important for establishing a positive sense of place for the students in this study.

The source of the rootedness is their strong connection with their indigenous knowledge system. Place, roots, culture all find a meeting point in the theme of rootedness in this study. Developing a sense of place necessitates that students grow together in “social cultural soils” (Basso 2010, p. 146). The students who adapt to other cultures and who live in the cities are considered to be those who are disconnected from their roots and do not care about the past. In this sense, they are seen to be uprooted from the network of thoughts, customs, ideology and place of the indigenous knowledge system.

People living in East London or Port Elizabeth they don't know more about tradition... they have forgotten about their roots. It is a serious problem because you will find that they're living the new lifestyle; they don't even care about traditional culture. (Mivuyo, high school student)

People have stopped caring about where they come from. They adapt to other cultures that they don't know. So, it is a bad thing to not know where you come from, where your roots are. In the urban areas, a lot of cultural things are not done, so they will start living the urban culture. They don't know their roots, where they come from, where they first lived in. Every black person in the Eastern Cape started in the rural areas, whereby we're doing rural things. Then these urban things only emerged in the 90s. (Lathitha, high school student))

Kepe et al. (2008) speaks of rootedness in the South African context by using the Xhosa word *umnombo* to convey its meaning. The literal interpretation is “the wick of a lamp” (p. 148) which

is a metaphor for “the source of life that is closely tied to the area of one’s birth” (p. 149).

Though people may leave their places of birth for other provinces and place, their *umnombo* is where their lives began, their umbilical cord was buried, and a place where they will have a “lifelong attachment” (p. 149). This apparent contradiction can be summed up in one interview where a student expressed the way she had invested her life in Dimbaza and how it was her home, yet she desired to travel and live in many other places, only coming back to the Eastern Cape for her holidays. Though she has deep roots in Dimbaza and has invested much in her home context she did not want to live there permanently:

Limile: I feel like Dimbaza is my home because I grew up here from 3 years old right until now. It’s just that I’ve invested my life, my whole life in Dimbaza, and I’m not going anywhere. Dimbaza is the place to be. It’s my home town.

Interviewer: So, if you moved away to study would you come back to the Eastern Cape?

Limile: Only on holidays.

Interviewer: And then would you choose to live there?

Limile: Nope, I will not live here because as I’ve told you, from three years old right until now, I’ve stayed in Dimbaza so I want something new. I want something fresh. Even if I stayed in London for two years, you know and then go to Nigeria for three years and then come back, no problem. But then just stay for few years away from Dimbaza, just so I can miss it more.

A similar tension was present in a study in Western Sweden, Gustafson (2001) classified place attachments in terms of “roots” and “routes.” Those who rooted themselves in place did not desire to travel as much and were attached to fewer places. To contrast this, those he placed in the routes theme were more mobile and wanted to travel to new places, assigning little meaning to the places where they lived. In this study, those with a hopeful sense of place were both rooted and had a desire to be mobile in their futures. In this case, their place attachment becomes evident in their desire to return year after year for holidays.



### *Exploration*

Students who are place hopeful have a desire to interact with people from other places and to learn new ways of seeing the world. This includes travel and living elsewhere. Meeting people with diverse experiences or going to places that are different to where they grew up are important for providing future vision for these students. Having a rootedness and hopefulness in place enables these students to dream big and imagine a life of diversity that they have not yet experienced where they live. Though the “wick of the lamp” is embedded in the Eastern Cape, its flame can burn elsewhere.

I will travel around the world. (Lathitha, high school student))

I want to go out there to explore the world and to see different things and to learn different things. (Ziyabukwa, high school student))

I want something new. I want something fresh. (Limile, high school student))

At university we have to meet other people that come from different places and now you have to know more about the people and see how are their lifestyles. (Khazimla, high school student)

The high school students desire to be exposed to different people, places and lifestyle. However, they do not yet understand the complexity of integrating into other places in South Africa, like the university students express in Section 6.3. However, they desire to step outside what they currently know about the world. Medina (2013) draws a helpful distinction between ‘integration’ and ‘interaction’ that may serve as useful in understanding what type of diversity these students may desire. He theorizes that integration is sometimes unhelpful as it aims at merging differences together in such a way that dominant epistemologies almost always marginalize other knowledge systems. He proposes that *social interaction* is a more appropriate goal in many contexts, such as educational institutions, as this develops the “communication and cooperation”

necessary for sharing “social spaces and practices without ignoring each other, but *fully* taking into account each other’s difference experiences, interests and aspirations” (p. 10, emphasis added). The students do want interaction with different ways of knowing and being, but they do not necessarily desire this experience of diversity to change the indigenous values which they hold as important.

Most place attachment studies define place attachment as a “willingness to stay close, and wish to return when away” (Manzo and Devine-Wright 2013, p. 52) but the rootedness presented here emphasizes that no matter where a student ends up, they will remain fueled by the place of their birth, returning to it with fondness throughout their lives (Njwambe et al. 2019). Place attachment doesn’t have to minimize one’s ability to explore; these can be attachments that are strengthened by time apart (Gustafson 2001). In fact, Fried (2000) proposed that place attachment behaves in similar ways to infant attachment, providing one with the confidence necessary for exploration. In this way, exploration is a sign of a hopeful sense of place (Scannell and Gifford 2017a).

The only student with unequivocal intentions of remaining in the Eastern Cape chose to remain because of his provincial attachment and his relationship with his family and friends. These were ultimately the most important aspects of place to him and held far greater importance than the opportunities that he might get elsewhere:

It's because I love my province and then I don't want to go anywhere else. I just want to stay here because where my family is and my friends. (Khazimla, high school student)

Having a strong provincial identity does not require one to remain in the province, as was the case with this student above. The next section will emphasize that despite students’ desires to leave the Eastern Cape, they have a strong provincial identity which ultimately contributes to their hopeful sense of place.

### *Provincial identity*

Throughout the interviews, a student's provincial place attachment and their local place attachment are somewhat interchangeable. Even within place satisfaction and sense of place statements there are these two scales at play. This exposes a fluidity of the concept of scale through the eyes of the students and this has not been developed in literature. Students frequently referred to their local place as the "Eastern Cape" instead of their village or township. This was evident in both the rural and townships interviews and was confirmed to be the case within the focus group discussions, indicating that a student's sense of place cannot be confined to the local or provincial alone. This would also be consistent with the evidence that one's optimism regarding place did not vary across place contexts because students' place attachment was more regional.

Provincial attachment is developed most notably through relationships with people in the province; both deceased and those who are alive. One student felt attached to the province because their ancestors are there. Still another spoke of their fondness for the people living in the Eastern Cape. Just as community fosters a hopeful sense of place locally, it similarly cultivates a positive place relationship on a provincial level.

My ancestors they are [here]... my roots are in the Eastern Cape. (Lisakhanye, high school student)

Eastern Cape is a good place. There [are] great people here. (Chumani, high school student)

For the students in this study, their sense of place was not just impacted by their local attachment but it is strongly informed by their provincial identity. The Eastern Cape has a reputation for being more traditional and less developed and the students are prepared to defend their province

against any negative perceptions that the rest of the country has. Others mentioned that South Africans generally believe that the Eastern Cape is “lacking information” and that it is a place that is disgraceful (Sechaba, high school student). The students feel that the rest of the country looks down on them or sees residents of Eastern Cape as belonging to a lower class. Students feel that many South Africans label those living in the province as uneducated, lacking information, lazy people or boring. The provincial place then acts as a proxy for what the inhabitants are like in the eyes of outsiders.

[They think that there are] no educated people. They look at us like we are no people. They look down on us... I think they see Eastern Cape as a no province. They don't invest in us. (Limile, high school student)

You see, they talk [to] us like we don't want to do school work or we are lazy people just because of our reputation. (Khazimla, high school student)

They see Eastern Cape as a disgrace, like a place where there [is] no life and there's nothing. There's no money. (Sechaba, high school student)

Despite these outsider perceptions, the students show a sense of resolve to prove that these perceptions are wrong. One student desired to promote the Eastern Cape from a political platform in the future. Her provincial attachment was not only personal, but in the future, she intended to make it known to the public as a way of countering the negative perceptions about the province.

You know, when I'm in Gauteng (since I've said before that I want to be involved in politics) my heading will be, “Look at the Eastern Cape as a ruling province!” I want to make Eastern Cape more popular when I'm there. (Limile, high school student)

Students' provincial identity influences their defensive behaviors concerning the reputation of the province. They are aware of the dominant outsider narratives about the province; even the South African government is said to turn a blind eye towards the development of the province.

This view of the Eastern Cape angered one student in particular because the province of his birth is not seen as being important.

Mivuyo: Eastern Cape is a province which lacks job opportunities. It lacks resources. Even the government doesn't care about Eastern Cape, the way I see it. I think that people living in the Eastern Cape would rather choose to leave Eastern Cape and go to live in other provinces just because Eastern Cape is so low in class, if I can say it like that. yes.

Interviewer: So, does that make you feel that Eastern Cape isn't valuable?

Mivuyo: It makes me feel angry because you know Eastern Cape is the province that I was born in and seeing that Eastern Cape is treated like this and people don't appreciate it and seeing that the government doesn't appreciate it as a province; it doesn't even do things to make it better so that people may appreciate [it more]. It makes me angry.

Despite the negative narrative outsiders have of the Eastern Cape, many students speak in defense of their province because they disagree with the outsiders' impressions of their home. Again, this illuminates agency as these students refuse to accept the labels assigned to them and their province. Their positive sense of place plays into their provincial identity because students know that there is much to value within the province. Students expressed feelings of "anger" (Mivuyo, high school student) or were "offended" (Sechaba, high school student) because of these negative perceptions of the Eastern Cape. These feelings arose because "people don't appreciate" (Mivuyo, high school student) the place where they were born or the influential leaders in history who came from the Eastern Cape. The perceived external perceptions about the Eastern Cape reveal some reasons why students find other provinces attractive to move to, there are different opportunities and resources in other provinces (real and perceived).

The above quote not only shows the reaction when a place of attachment comes under verbal attack by outsiders, it also highlights the negative ways in which these outside perceptions can impact residents of the Eastern Cape and motivate them to leave. Thus, the negative narrative over the Eastern Cape can have a negative impact on its residents over time.

There was one student who stood out as notably discontent with the place where she lived and was one of two students interviewed who had a hopeless sense of place. She had done part of her schooling in an urban school in Makhanda and had transferred to a township school in Grade 10. She did not feel optimistic about her future prospects for higher education as she felt her and her peers' chances of getting into university "very, very, very slim" so she has to push herself and work hard to get the opportunity to go. She considered Makhanda to be "cursed" because she considered her community to be lazy, just waiting for the government to hand them everything on a platter. Though she valued the history of Makhanda she did not think the name change from Grahamstown to Makhanda was necessary because the "history has passed... it's not going to do anything to the long-term future."

The history about Makhanda; it's quite rich which makes me proud but what I hate: [this] settlement and how things are. I feel like [Makhanda] is cursed, because many people from outside Grahamstown come here and learn here and graduate [from Rhodes] while people from Makhanda, they too lazy to study and go to university. We do have a university here but they're too lazy to study to go to varsity so that's what I hate. I wish those gowns are made from Birch<sup>27</sup> could worn by us instead of KwaZulu Natal people and people from all over the world. (Anothando, high school student)

She also felt that people in the Eastern Cape lived in the past as they still believe in chiefs and kings and they "lack knowledge." She was more interested in "what's going to happen next." One final point about this particular student who exhibited the antithesis of place attachment: she considered success in the Eastern Cape as an exception not the norm. To her it was almost an anomaly to have successful people in the Eastern Cape:

"Those people who were successful in life coming from the Eastern Cape were fortunate enough to be successful and prosper." (Anothando, high school student)

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<sup>27</sup> Birch is a department store in Makhanda that supplies graduation gowns for Rhodes University students.

Her outlook on success within the Eastern Cape was pessimistic, as were her thoughts towards aspects of indigenous knowledge. Those who maintained connections to the past were considered to lack knowledge. Herein lies a glimpse into the connection between place attachment and knowledge which will be explored in greater detail in Section 5.4.1.

To summarize students' perceptions of place, students had two different relationships with place. One was about the practical ability of a place to meet their utilitarian needs and the other was an emotional connection to place which expressed an optimism in the future. A hopeful sense of place can grow in the soil worn by a history of oppression. Understanding place hopefulness in this way shows a decolonial perspective of place making within these areas originally constructed under racial oppression. Post-colonial theory would suggest that places were made by colonial powers alone and indigenous people were spectators within this history. However, students today show how indigenous people have the ability to remake places into their homes, and recast a negative history into something positive and inspiring for them. The history of these areas violated human rights, but assuming that it continually dominates indigenous people's experience of place is a colonial projection onto the present. Hopeful sense of place transcends time, looking back into the past for empowerment and forward into the future with optimism, knowing that they will find their fuel in their places of birth. It allows students to dream bigger for their lives, knowing that their community supports them and their ancestors endured hardship and resisted colonial power. Furthermore, it is informed by their provincial identity, so in this way it transcends the discrete confines of scale. A hopeful sense of place recognizes the value of a place beyond its material benefits or lack thereof. Beyond the emotional and psychological perceptions of place, students recognize that places need to play a

role in meeting their needs. Place satisfaction speaks to this and is a major motivator for students wanting to leave their current homes. Places that are closer to urban areas have higher place satisfaction than in the rural areas but the rural areas offer the benefit of being close to where cultural rituals take place. Those who have a positive sense of place desire to leave their provinces because they want their lamp to burn elsewhere. Ultimately, their fuel will remain the area of their birth.

Scannell and Gifford (2017b) investigated the role of geographical scale on place attachment and its effects on feelings of ostracism concerning places of attachment and found that larger environmental spaces (such as a park or recreation center) are likely to attenuate the negative effects of ostracism because the inclusion of other people allow for criticisms to be diffused among a larger group of people. Furthermore, Stedman (2002) showed that those with higher place attachment and lower place satisfaction are engaged in place-protection, fighting to preserve places that are central to one's identity and are perceived as being in "less-than-optimal condition" (p. 577). These findings support the relationship that students have with place. Though they have a deep connection with place they also acknowledge the short comings of the places they lived. However, when students are faced with prejudice towards their province, they will rise to defend it and were less likely to take it negatively.

Place satisfaction and a hopeful sense of place are the dominant relationships in this study. The former is impacted by place contexts: those closer to the city, on average, feel less negatively towards the places they live from a commodity standpoint. The latter does not depend on place. A hopeful sense of place is woven together with aspects of indigenous knowledge, such as community, indigenous history and rootedness, so it is important to examine the role of place contexts in understanding perceptions of knowledge. This will be explored in detail below.



## **5.2. Knowledge Perceptions across Place Contexts**

Students' engagement with knowledge systems can be influenced by the location where they live. Greenwood (2009) speaks of the ways that place and knowledge interact with each other as places "shape our experiences of learning and becoming," and at the same time our formal and informal education contributes "to place-making, place-changing, and place-leaving" (p. 1). It was necessary to speak about students' relationships with place to understand how places are influencing students' "becoming" and how learning indigenous history urges them towards "place-making" and "place-changing" as they change the narrative of oppression over the places where they live and defend the reputation of their province.

Giroux (2005) writes about knowledge being communal in the sense that communities strengthen one's knowledge of shared values, emphasizing the role of the community (which was a component of a hopeful sense of place in section 5.1.2.) in reinforcing certain knowledge. In these ways, knowledge is tied to place. Understanding students' relationships with place will help examine their perceptions of knowledge and how these perceptions may vary across place contexts in order to fully answer Research Question 2.

Even though places have the ability to shape how students' see the world, place contexts did not play a significant role in shaping students' relationship with knowledge. However, having a hopeful sense of place was significantly correlated with how students perceived their indigenous knowledge. As such, this section will home in on general perceptions of knowledge regardless of place contexts, examining the link between students' hopeful sense of place and their value of indigenous knowledge for its usefulness in their future lives. This section will also include an analysis of high school students' perceptions of higher education as a way of understanding what type of knowledge students feel will be useful in their academic journey and

future careers and will serve as a link connecting the high school study to the university focus group results discussed in Chapter 6.

While place contexts didn't have an impact on students' engagement with knowledge systems, there exist distinct preferences for various knowledge types within this sample of students. The students who were interviewed were asked to choose which knowledge was the most important to them: school knowledge, their indigenous knowledge or knowledge about everyday life. Of the fifteen students that were interviewed, six chose their indigenous knowledge as the most important knowledge to them. Four thought that knowledge learned in everyday life was the most important, one of which added that knowledge from everyday life included their indigenous knowledge. Three students mentioned school knowledge as being the most important and the remaining two stated that all the knowledge types were important because each teaches them something different about life. Only two categories, school knowledge and indigenous knowledge, will be explored in greater detail below as these are the most relevant to the themes in this dissertation.

### 5.2.1. Indigenous Knowledge

Students who responded stating the indigenous knowledge was the most important mentioned a number of motivating factors for this preference: respect for elders, leadership, enduring difficult circumstances, and linking the present to the past. First, some students felt that indigenous knowledge promotes respect to elders and being a good leader. Respecting one's elders is an important part of cultivating a strong community. Furthermore, gaining respect has been highly valued both in the past (see Chapter 4) and the present (Njwambe et al. 2019). For these students, it is one's indigenous knowledge that is the main educator on the subject of respect. Not only is it

important to be respected as a leader but showing respect to others emerges as important here and indigenous knowledge teaches one how to be respectful.

I would say cultural [knowledge] because usually we are taught how to behave ourselves, and how to be a better person in life. We should respect others; we should be a good leader. (Lisakhanye, high school student)

Another student favored their indigenous knowledge because of the central role that it played in his everyday life; particularly in moments of crisis. In trying times, the student's culture is his compass, not his education. Thus, one's knowledge system can provide a similar security to them as their place attachments. A place gives a physical home and community to fall back on, but a knowledge system provides a robust ideological, philosophical and psychological mindset to weather the storms of life and once again points to the importance of indigenous knowledge for the well-being of a Xhosa person as seen in Section 4.2.

As a Xhosa person our culture is actually important more than anything in life. So, if anything goes wrong in life we actually bend to our culture. That's what we believe in and that is what we live by. Education I say, comes second after culture. (Chumani, high school student)

Another student recognized that parts of her culture had changed and adapted during colonialism and as such she found her indigenous knowledge important because it links her to cultural expressions in the past. Indigenous history was found to be an important part of a student's sense of place but it is also a vital part in rooting a student to their indigenous knowledge system, particularly to cultural ways prior to colonialism. It is interesting to note that indigenous history not only strengthens one's bond to place by looking up to leaders, such as Makhanda, who resisted colonial settlement, but also strengthens these students' bonds to their indigenous knowledge. Place and indigenous knowledge relationships are deeply tethered to an indigenous perspective of history.

Ever since South Africa was colonized, we became more focused on the Western practices so I'm very much interested in the things we did, like back in the past. I love history so more attracted to that. So, I would say cultural [knowledge is the most important]. (Philasande, high school student)

In the surveys, the response to questions concerning students' relationship with their indigenous knowledge showed great division of opinion. Forty-five percent of students sampled agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "The most important knowledge I learn is from the school curriculum and not from my personal experiences or my community" (see Table 5.6) indicating that there was slightly more value placed on formal education compared to knowledge gained through experience in the community. When considering Western knowledge and indigenous knowledge, the results were much more evenly distributed with 39% favoring Western knowledge over their indigenous knowledge and 37.3% possessing the opposite opinion. These two results indicate that, much like in the past considered in Chapter 4, there are still many students who consider their indigenous and experiential knowledge to be important to them as individuals. However, the same cannot be said when considering the knowledge that students' think will be important for their future studies and employment, as only 21.7% of the high school sample felt that their indigenous knowledge would be useful to them in their future lives in higher education or the working world. This reveals that there are certain contexts where high school students already believe they must leave their indigenous knowledge at the door before entering.

Table 5.6: Relative opinions of high school students concerning types of knowledge

	N	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
The most important knowledge I learn is from the school curriculum and not from my personal experiences or my community	242	5.0	21.1	28.9	30.2	14.9
I think Western knowledge is more useful than the local traditional knowledge I learn from living here	241	11.2	26.1	23.7	22.8	16.2
I value traditional knowledge from my culture but I do not think that it is important for academic or employment purposes	235	5.5	16.2	25.1	33.2	20.0

Source: Own calculations from ECHS survey (2018)

Further quantitative analysis illuminates how students' perceptions of their indigenous knowledge in other settings of life, such as their careers and future studies, is linked to their hopeful sense of place. This factor was generated from the Knowledge measure in the survey and is comprised of the statements in Table 5.7, with three statements being strongly correlated (indicated by the asterisk). It was correlated with a hopeful sense of place (see Table 5.8) but was not related to the place context where the students were living.

Table 5.7: Statements contributing to a factor regarding future use of Indigenous knowledge in students' lives

Indigenous Knowledge is not important/useful for future life <sup>28</sup>	Weighting
a. I can always apply what I learn in school to my life outside of school	
b. The most important knowledge I learn is from the school curriculum and not from my personal experiences or my community	.714*
c. The knowledge I gained from my schooling will be useful in the future	.305
d. I can easily relate information I learn outside of school to what I learn in school	
e. I think <i>Western</i> knowledge is more useful than the local <i>traditional</i> knowledge I learn from living here.	.639*
f. I don't think I'll use the knowledge I gained from my schooling in the future when I leave high school	.117
g. My schooling mostly promotes Western thinking	.356
h. I value traditional knowledge from my culture but do not think that it is important for academic or employment purposes	.612*
i. I struggle to relate to the content of my school curriculum	.359
j. The knowledge I learn in school promotes one's self and resources	
k. Traditional knowledge promotes one's self ( <i>muntu</i> ) and other people ( <i>bantu</i> )	-.213
l. My knowledge and educational advancement is only for my own good	
m. My education is important for my community and other people	

Source: Own calculations from ECHS survey (2018)

The highly correlated statements in Table 5.7 present tensions between knowledge systems. This factor expresses that formal education is the most important aspect for furthering one's academic studies and for future employment. Students still hold formal education in high regard and this

<sup>28</sup> The higher the factor score is for this factor, the more strongly students feel that their indigenous knowledge is not important

factor addresses the way that traditional knowledge is placed on the margins of a student’s future employment, just as it is marginalized in the South African university (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016) and economic activities of South Africa (Arndt et al. 2018, Kepe and Tessaro 2014). This factor not only addresses a student’s present relationship with knowledge systems but also their perceived relevance in the future at university or work.

This is particularly interesting when considering the significant inverse correlation between a hopeful sense of place and a student’s view of the relevance of their indigenous knowledge in the future shown in Table 5.8. The students who believe their indigenous knowledge *is* important for their future employment and academic pursuits, not just their present lives, are more likely to be those who are hopeful about the places they live and their future in the Eastern Cape. Place hopefulness becomes more positive with increasing factor values, while beliefs that indigenous knowledge is *not* important for future life become stronger with increasing factor values. Thus, the inverse correlation indicates that those who are more place hopeful tend to feel less strongly about their indigenous knowledge being irrelevant in the future or more accurately, as Table 5.8 indicates, the place hopeful student feels that their knowledge *will* be useful in the future.

Table 5.8: The correlation between a hopeful sense of place and perceived unimportance of indigenous knowledge in future employment or studies

	Pearson r	Place Hopefulness
Indigenous Knowledge is not important/useful for future life	Correlation Coefficient	-.397**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	141

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own calculations from ECHS survey (2018)

Students who have a positive sense of place, which provides fuel for their lives, are more likely to have a stronger attachment to their indigenous knowledge, as it anchors them in turbulent

times of life and teaches them to be good leaders and to respect others, motivated by great leaders who have gone before them. With this in mind, it is critical to examine the perceptions of knowledge that students have before entering the university as many students do not feel it is necessary to include indigenous knowledge perspectives in this space as they do not feel that it is important in the broader context of South Africa. Students in this study have set beliefs concerning which disciplines in particular are important within higher education and the economy of South Africa, and these will be looked at in Section 5.2.3 and Chapter 6, respectively, as these beliefs have an influence on the dual lives that students live with respect to their indigenous knowledge system and the knowledge system presented in formal education. And these thoughts may have an impact on their optimism for their futures. Before getting into those details, it is necessary to first understand students' general perceptions of the knowledge presented in the formal education system.

### 5.2.2. School Knowledge

Formal education can cause separation between a learner and their immediate context and community (Gruenewald and Smith 2008), all while constructing the broader society to which the student assimilates (McLaren and Leonard 2001). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the education of indigenous students, where formal education serves to redefine “the world and where indigenous peoples [are] positioned within the world” (Smith 2012, p. 34). Indigenous people find their experiences on the margins of formal education as they become “schooled in difference” (McKinley 2007, p. 345), being socialized into thinking that indigenous knowledge is illegitimate compared to school knowledge (Deloria Jr and Wildcat 2001, Denzin et al. 2008). They must navigate a duality that Mbembe (2001) speaks of as “the twin project of emancipation and assimilation” (no page) whereby an African student must find the middle ground between



complete “identification with “traditional”... African life and his/her merging with, and subsequent loss in modernity” (no page). Thus, understanding how students perceive school knowledge is important to understanding the duality that is evident within this student population.

There were a number of reasons why students indicated that school knowledge was the most important for them to know. One student described how knowledge within the education system gives you transferable knowledge into other contexts. According to him, if one were to rely solely on indigenous knowledge it would be more difficult to adjust to life in a big city, like Johannesburg. Additionally, without formal education, finding the employment necessary to progress in life would be a challenge. He shows a realization that in a globalized society, where many people have different knowledges, the so-called neutral ground of school knowledge prepares him to interact with people from other places who may not think like him.

School knowledge is important because in life you are not only going to meet the people that do the traditional every day. School knowledge ...will get you places. When you have that traditional knowledge, you get to Gauteng Province, there are a lot of things happening there, like business, and you won't have that knowledge. It will have an effect on you. Your life won't progress really clearly. (Lathitha, high school student)

Education provides avenues to progress in life and teaches a knowledge that is transferable to many contexts. Another student agreed with the opinions above by first highlighting that school knowledge is important because traditional knowledge is built on superstitions and myths and these beliefs contrast with the objective facts of formal education, science in particular. School knowledge, according to this student, opens door to employment in a way that their indigenous knowledge cannot.

I think school knowledge because in cultural knowledge you are only taught about things that are myth or something that didn't even exist. But in school you are taught about how to get a career and something that will benefit yourself in the future. So, school opens

your doors to many things other than knowledge that you get from culture or your village knowledge. (Mivuyo, high school student)

Both of the quotes above speak to the relevance of formal education in their future careers. For these students, traditional knowledge will limit what you are able to do in the future. This was seen earlier as the most prevalent thought concerning traditional knowledge found in the survey data. When students think of their lives in the employment or academic setting in the future, they perceive a certain type of knowledge being important within those contexts but when there is not a specific setting in mind or a projection into the future, students still find their traditional knowledge as important knowledge to maintain.

What is evident in these attitudes towards formal education is the duality which Mbembe (2001) addresses. He mentions assimilation and emancipation as two paths which modernity requires them to choose, with many choosing to assimilate to the dominant culture. High school students that were interviewed are aware that school knowledge, the sciences in particular, are important for entering the workforce in South Africa (see Chapter 6). There is coloniality in the structure of the economy of South Africa that requires a secondary and tertiary education to fully participate in it. The economy of South Africa is entrenched in capitalism which colonialism introduced and the National Party fortified into a robust system of inequality where the Euro-American tertiary education system is prized above all. This allows little to no space for other ways of knowing to generate innovative approaches to solving problems in the country (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016) particularly outside the academy. This coloniality, in part, confines students to specific paths for their future studies and careers, the path of assimilation with the Euro-American knowledge system and capitalist economy. Moreover, the same coloniality guides students' parents to consider a smaller set of careers as viable as they were subjected to these ideas themselves during colonialism and these perceptions can influence their children's

career paths (this will be spoken of in greater detail in the chapter that follows). Both of these effects of coloniality are of utmost importance to acknowledge as ways in which minds continue to be colonized through preferences for certain knowledges.

Furthermore, while indigenous knowledge is an important part of one's relationship with place and one's community, school knowledge is considered to be the best route towards success. This has great significance when considering the philosophy of success in traditional Xhosa life, which sees the ownership of land, cattle and the construction of a homestead as the marker of success (Mhlahlo 2009). Those who deem their indigenous knowledge as an important part of their future lives are likely to have a deeper connection to place than those who walk on the path to success through formal education. While certain elements of indigenous knowledge have shifted and students recognize that certain aspects of their culture have changed since their parents' or grandparents' generations, some students still expressed an affinity for their traditional knowledge, and the fundamentals of the Xhosa knowledge system remain in place (Biko 1978). This indicates that though coloniality endures, it has limits to its power. Colonization of the mind is not ubiquitous at this age within these areas. Thus, there are still students who have a mindset of emancipation, one where they believe their indigenous knowledge will be useful in their future employment or academic lives such that they are liberated from the confines of the dominant narrative.

Developing an awareness of students' preferences for knowledge in school is a necessary precursor for examining how these students perceive higher education. Each student who enters the academy has already developed a pre-existing perception about where their indigenous knowledge fits in in the context of formal education. Furthermore, they also have a perception

about the university. Looking into how they view the university deepens the inquiry into high school students' perceptions of knowledge within areas similar to this research context.

### 5.2.3. Perceptions of Higher Education

The students in high school today will be the students in university tomorrow. This linkage between school and university is inseparable and much literature in recent years has addressed enduring coloniality in knowledge systems solely in the university domain. However, there is little literature which considers the complex place-backgrounds with which the students enter higher education institutions (Timmis et al. 2019). Given that a student's sense of place is related to what knowledge they think will be important for their future lives (see section 5.2.1), this is a significant oversight in approaching decolonization work in South Africa. It is imperative in the effort to decolonize knowledge at the university to understand incoming students' relationship with knowledge or what knowledge they expect to leave the establishment with.

The majority of the students in the present-day survey expressed their desire to attend university. Only seventeen students out of 246 survey respondents (6.9% of the sample) did not want to go to university after they graduated from high school. This indicates that, generally, students in these areas consider higher education to be the most promising next step after school as a way to succeed in life through formal education. Of those who desired to attend university, there were a number of different motivating factors that students listed in a free-response section of the survey. These motivators were coded and categorized according to family reasons (such as making parents proud) or personal reasons (such as achieving goals or independence), or both (see Figure 5.1). The survey results show that the most dominant motivator for attending university was for *personal* success with 55% of the respondents indicating that they desired to go to university for their own benefit.

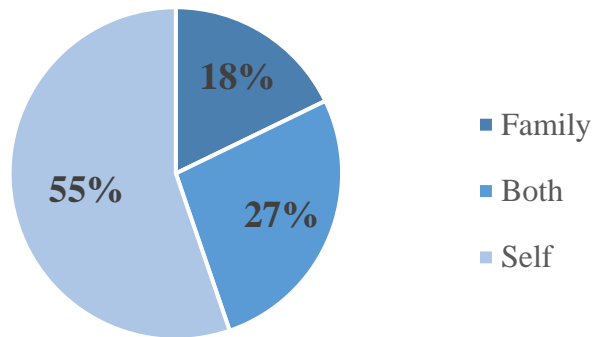


Figure 5.1: Primary motivator for high school students wanting to attend university

Source: Survey results (2018)

Some of the written statements from the surveys made it clear that education is considered to be for one's individual benefit as indicated by students' desire for independence. There is a desire among these students to explore, meet new people and to gain independence from their guardians. They believe that higher education will help them gain this independence.

I want to fulfil my dreams and have my own things because I'm tired of being dependent. (survey respondent 66)

I want to meet new people and explore. I want to be independent. (survey respondent 188)

Independence was mentioned by other students in relation to being a successful person. Success and independence are both key personal motivators for wanting to go to university. Success is seen as a necessary precursor for gaining independence and education is seen as the means to this end.

Because I want to be successful in life and be an independent woman. (survey respondent 35)

To further my studies more and become an independent, successful person in the long run. (survey respondent 106)

The reason I want to go to university, I want my life to be success and education is a key to success. (survey respondent 120)

It is because I want to go and learn how to succeed my goals and how to be independent. (survey respondent 193)

There is the expectation that higher education will enable these students to attain their personal life goals. The very idea of independence speaks to the desire for a financial separateness from one's family or community. The personal motive for attaining higher education also came up in the high-school interviews, as one student mentioned that her degrees are only for herself because they will only be in her name. Thus, her education is ultimately a personal matter and the success that she has in her future will only be hers and cannot be shared with her community.

I want university education for myself, because the degrees and the diplomas will only be mine, not for the community... I cannot pass my qualifications or my success to them. (Ziyabukwa, high school student))

This emphasizes the individual nature of education and the success it affords for a large percentage of the student sample. The above quote also highlights the thinking that not only is a university degree an individual achievement, their success is too. Their success cannot be passed onto or shared by their community. These students desire independence from their families and believe that a university degree will be the gateway towards this goal.

Not all students felt that their education was for their individual benefit. Some students interviewed expressed that their motivation for pursuing higher education was to please their parents and benefit their immediate families. Others expressed that their higher education was to improve the lives of their communities. This theme stands in sharp contrast to the individual centered approach to education and aligns strongly with the philosophy of *ubuntu*, which is a Southern African philosophy which “recognizes that my humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together” (Tutu 2007). Students who wanted to attend university to please

their parents have an awareness that education can be more than just for personal betterment. It can impact the lives of their families and raise the status of their household. These students believed that attending university would ultimately lead to employment but their personal success was not at the forefront of their decision to go to university.

I want a better life for my mother so I have to go to university so I can be educated and have money. (survey respondent 21)

I want to go to university so I can fulfil my mother's dream and be the first graduate at home. (survey respondent 71)

Because I want to change the situation in my home and I want to make my parents feel proud about me. (survey respondent 154)

Other students were motivated to attend university for reasons beyond their own homes. They went one step further and expressed that their education had potential to positively impact their communities at large. This is far from being a motivator for self-interest and shows that while the degree may belong to an individual, the educated person has the ability to be an agent of change in their communities.

I want to go to university so that I can change the community that I live in. (survey respondent 196)

It's because I want to be a doctor to help people [who] live with disease in my community. (survey respondent 9)

I want to go ahead with my studies in order to make my community a better place [than] it is. (survey respondent 213)

There were students in the interviews who also pointed to the ways their personal pursuit of education can benefit the community. Even at a high school level, one student recognized that she could be an influence in her community just by being a role model to others. Another student spoke of the great opportunities and knowledge that can be gained from a university education and how these could be used to help develop his rural community.

School actually pushes me to be a person who plays a role in other people's lives and that people see a role model in me. (Milisa, high school student)

[You go to university] to help your community. You get too much knowledge and too much opportunity. Then you come back to the rural areas where you came from. (Liyema, high school student)

The first quote once again highlights the value that this student places on being seen as a leader in the community. The second quote reveals that no matter where a student ends up after he graduates, he is still connected to his rural roots and will need to help his community when he returns. Yet graduates returning to their rural homes permanently is highly unlikely, both in the past and present. Earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Mbeki (1939) criticized training and secondary schools for absorbing University of Fort Hare graduates as teachers at schools away from their origin community, and present-day rates of urbanization continue to rise many decades later (Bakker et al. 2019). In Mbeki's eyes, there was no point in a student attaining higher education and never coming back to apply their knowledge to help their communities. Education for community benefits speaks to an important aspect of the Xhosa knowledge system. Even the original analysis of the Nuffield study, referenced in Chapter 4.1 revealed that the community placed expectations on those who went to university to uplift their community. The shift to more personal motivators for higher education does show a move towards a more independent lifestyle when compared to the role of education in the past as a means of either helping the community and/or being respected by the community.

Regardless of whether students saw their education being for their own benefit or for their communities, there is the overall perception that higher education will allow them to have better opportunities than they would have without education. Education is seen to be the key which opens doors to success – for oneself or one's community. These are indications that



students believed that attaining a degree *guaranteed* them success in life and this was clearly seen in some of the interviews.

To my knowledge, university gives you that successful life. (Mivuyo, high school student)

University gives you a lot of opportunities. And [can] change your life. It takes you straight to work. (Liyema, high school student)

Yes, I think so, because when you go to a university, when you pass, then you get your certificate - your diplomas. When you do your CV, then take them to a company with your diplomas, the company will definitely want you. (Aluve, high school student)

While it may or may not be the case that university leads to a successful life, these students believe this to be true and upon entering the university, this can cause some disillusionment (see Chapter 6). The question arises, how did students develop this belief that higher education leads to success? There are two reasons that I will address here which allude to the origins of the association with success and a university degree for these students: parental beliefs and watching university students return home.

First, certain students were motivated to study further because it would be pleasing to their parents or fulfil a parent's dream (both in the past and the present). Higher education was less accessible to former generations under apartheid and highly esteemed, resulting in many familial benefits when a child received a university degree, evoking emotions of pride and being able to fulfill their parents' dreams. This aspect of association between education and success was also explored in Chapter 4. There is a long-standing valuing of university education within the regions in this study.

The other reason why students associate higher education with success involves what high school students observe of other university students in their family and community when they return on holidays. They carry themselves differently and they behave in a way that makes

high school students think they've made it in life. This reinforces the idea that the university is the pathway to success.

We put the university up there because we see the people who are at university, we see how they live, like they come here... the way they do things, they are already living life. (Lathitha, high school student)

Those who are educated receive a level of respect and conduct themselves differently in a way that is noticeable to high school students. There is a desire to follow in the footsteps of those who have succeeded through university education. While the community may not play a dominant role as a motivating factor in the students' decisions to attend university in the survey data, the role that the community does play is in influencing students' perceptions of success through education. This can be in an active way, by elders encouraging students to study further, or a passive way, by watching older students return from university with a different manner about them.

The university is clearly held in high esteem, as a place which can provide a better life for one or for all. This is not the only perception of the university that students have. It was shown earlier, in section 5.2.1, that traditional knowledge was not believed to be important for university purposes. This indicates that students enter the university with a perception of what knowledge will be taught there; a knowledge which excludes their traditional knowledge. The high school students interviewed perceive that university education is Western or at the very least, does not have a strong inclusion of other knowledge systems. There is the expectation that the university is the pipeline into a career (in particular, science and law are presented as important) and excludes culture.

[The university] does promote Western life. In tertiary education, you see, we are being taught of mostly, scientific things and that we are not being taught about how to maintain the African culture or how to maintain the diversity of [Africa]. It only focuses on the careers of people. (Chumani, high school student)

One student even expressed that if the university did incorporate indigenous knowledge then it “will discriminate [against] people who are not Xhosa” (Liyema, high school student). This is quite an interesting statement since it alludes to the idea that the knowledge within academe is currently “neutral” or it is currently perceived to be non-discriminatory in this student’s eyes. Another student said that indigenous knowledge did not need to be a part of university education because one could learn about the Xhosa culture by getting a book out from a library (Lisakhanye, high school student). Statements and perceptions like this show that, for these students, the realm of higher education is distinct from their indigenous knowledge and it is necessary to leave their traditional knowledge at the door before proceeding into higher education or continue to live out their “twin project” at university.

One student in particular believed that it would be beneficial to include indigenous knowledge in tertiary education because students in the urban areas “don't know much about our traditions” so it would be important for them and “for people who come from different places” (Lathitha, high school student) to learn about African cultures at university. This student recognizes that Western and indigenous knowledge systems have their own unique part to play in life and neither can substitute for the other. Western knowledge does open doors in ways that traditional knowledge does not in the modern economy of South Africa, but this student believes that making space for teaching indigenous knowledge at the university would help those who have become “urban-oriented” to learn where their roots are.

Though the students recognize that the university does not operate out of an indigenous knowledge system, they are also aware that formal education serves a different purpose in their lives than school knowledge, no matter where they are on the spectrum of knowledge preference. Once again this highlights the dualism in which high school students already possess before they

enter the university. One student summarizes this tension, highlighting that traditional knowledge roots him in a place that is layered in meaning through an indigenous perspective of history. At the same time, Western knowledge is the highway taking him to the destination he is aiming for. Each serves a purpose but only one is seen to be relevant to formal education.

Traditional knowledge is important because you have to know where you come from. But the Western knowledge is important to know because it gets you somewhere you want to [go]. (Lathitha, high school student)

School knowledge forms the foundation for gaining entrance into university and therefore, a university degree which is a requirement for most promising careers. In understanding how school knowledge motivates certain decisions for higher education and careers, one can understand the broader system of coloniality in higher education in South Africa. There has been much written on the coloniality of the university in Africa (see Mbembe (2016), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015), Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi (2016) and Tebensky and Matthews (2015)) and, while they address the ways in which coloniality persists in higher education, in epistemologies, in material and symbolic ways in the university space in South Africa, they do not adequately speak to coloniality that is present within the network between the school and university, which perpetuates coloniality by maintaining the supremacy of the formal education over indigenous knowledge within schooling years. This supremacy is particularly evident in the scientific disciplines and degrees leading towards certain careers that have been culturally synonymous with success in South Africa and tend to exclude indigenous ways of knowing. If students do not think their indigenous knowledge will be useful in their future academic and employment lives, they will not desire to bring these perspectives into the university when they get there. Instead, these knowledges will remain on the margins of epistemology.

### 5.3. Chapter Summary

The goal of this chapter was to address how students' relationships with place and knowledge vary according to the place contexts that they live in. High school students' relationship with place does depend on place context to some degree but only when looking at place for its ability to satisfy their practical needs. When a student looks to place for utilitarian satisfaction, they are more likely to be satisfied with a place that is close to an urban location than in the rural areas. Most of the high school students interviewed desired to leave the province after graduating high school to pursue their tertiary education, with little intention on returning. This indicates that those who are less satisfied with form and function of a place are likely to migrate away from their homes and the Eastern Cape Province.

That being said, many students who feel this way actually have a deep sense of place that roots them to a place on an emotional and psychological level. This beneficial relationship was independent of the place contexts where these students live. Their hopeful sense of place was built upon the foundations of good community, an attachment to their indigenous history, a feeling of rootedness in place that gave them confidence to explore other places as well as their provincial identity in the Eastern Cape. This deep connection with place was related to the perception that their indigenous knowledge would be useful in their future lives at university and in the workforce. Students' relationship with place and knowledge in this way is emancipatory as they are currently free to see South Africa and the world as a place full of opportunity for them and which allows space for their indigenous knowledge system. This, in fact, is not the case awaiting them outside of their community spaces, made evident by the decolonization protests over the last five years, but this provides insight into a decolonial perspective of place and knowledge that students, with a deep attachment to their places of residence and their indigenous

knowledge, possess. The place hopeful students have a boldness towards change and difference and they are far from powerless or oppressed in their vision for the future. Their lives are the embodiment of resilience and purpose, despite how onlookers perceive their situations.

Place context was also found to have little bearing on one's relationship with knowledge. A hopeful sense of place was a much better indicator of whether students felt their indigenous knowledge would be useful in the future. Though the trajectories of development in township and rural locations has been very different, and the ability to practice traditional customs is limited in township locations, culture has adapted to these variations in development in such a way that the locations considered do not greatly hinder their culture practices, which was more notable in the past (see Chapter 4). In this way, Xhosa indigenous knowledge has begun to transcend the constraints of place even as it is deeply rooted in more regional sense of place. Even the ideas of the ancestors having a locality has shifted as one student expressed that her ancestors "will go with" her when she leaves here home (Manyanisa, high school student). Within the movement towards modernity, the amaXhosa have adapted their knowledge system to change. This also expresses power to resist the eradication of their knowledge system. It looks different in many ways in the present day but the central elements, seen in Section 4.2, still remain in place.

This is a counter narrative to the common view of rurality in Africa. Township and rural places have been cast as sites of poverty and isolation and research therein tends to focus on this perception of place. Furthermore, African people in general have been spoken of as having victim mentalities (Mbembe 2001). In general, Mbembe (2001) laments that the main discourse of the African experience is cast in "negative interpretation" (no page), that Africa is mostly depicted as "incomplete, mutilated, and unfinished" (no page). This crippling perspective written

over Africa continually suppresses the narratives of indigenous people within the continent, casting them in the light of less-than-human or powerless to change their circumstances. This chapter does not support that negative narrative. While students' attitudes may well change when they enter the academy, their current perceptions of place and knowledge have freedom of expression that must be emphasized in order to contribute to decolonial work at universities and other establishments in South Africa. Students with a hopeful sense of place do not see themselves as victims and do not allow the oppressive history of the places they live in to swallow up the meaning they imbue to place and their plans for the future.

## Chapter 6: Knowledge and Place Across Education Level

### 6.0. Introduction

Moving from school to university often requires moving away from one's home. Through this change, there is potential for students' perceptions of place to change as they relocate and reflect on their experiences growing up (Sanders 1994). This is particularly true in the context of South Africa where, in many cases, moving away from home amplifies exposure to differences in inequality, in lifestyle, in opportunities and perspectives of history. Moreover, higher education in South Africa can be epistemically and physically unwelcoming to indigenous students (Mbembe 2016, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016, Tebensky and Matthews 2015). Taking the above into consideration, this chapter examines how the process of moving to the university space affects students' relationships with place and knowledge. These are the questions that this section will speak to.

The last chapter looked at high school students' relationship with place and knowledge across place contexts. This chapter will build on Chapter 5 and take a closer look at how perceptions of knowledge and place may alter upon entering the university, through the data collected from focus groups with students from similar backgrounds as those in the townships of Makhanda. The focus of knowledge will move beyond the distinction between school knowledge and indigenous knowledge (which was covered in Chapter 5) and critique the role that academic disciplines play in shaping perceptions of knowledge and place. This discussion will begin with an analysis of high school students' interview responses on the value of science over humanities subjects and will be followed by focus group data addressing how these decisions regarding what to study create different experiences of knowledge and place.



The careers that students desire to go into influences which disciplines they end up studying at university. Unlike universities in the United States, degree programs in South Africa work on a tiered system of subject choices within a science stream or a humanities stream. Interdisciplinary degrees between these streams are discouraged, as scheduling is not flexible enough to accommodate this option. Furthermore, general education credits are not a part of this approach to higher education system as is the case in the United States. Thus, when students enter the university within their chosen discipline they are channeled into more exclusive paradigms of objectivity or subjectivity and seldom do the two paradigms converse. It is even more important in this model of higher education to understand why decolonization efforts are slow moving.

Since only one humanities student participated in the focus group discussions, it is not possible to draw conclusions between the behavior of sciences and humanities students towards place and knowledge. However, the results of the study provide important insight into the thinking of students in these two groups. Thus, it would require a much more extensive study to understand the different changes of perceptions of knowledge that occur within professional degrees, scientific degrees and humanities degrees and would ideally be longitudinal in nature. Research with participants from broader disciplines would be needed to fully answer how knowledge varies between high school and the university. However, what can be drawn from the analysis in this section is that education level does impact the realizations students have concerning knowledge systems and exposes differences that exist in the student body at university with regard to knowledge systems and the places students came from.

## **6.1. Perspectives on Science and the Humanities in High School**

In Chapter 5, the connection between formal education and success was discussed and there was found to be a mixed response among high school students concerning the relevance of indigenous knowledge versus school knowledge for their future lives. This section goes a step further, breaking down formal education into scientific and humanities disciplines to see which disciplines are valued at the high school level. It is important to remember that those who felt that indigenous knowledge would not be useful in the future valued school knowledge, as they believed it had greater applicability to future employment. It follows that there must be certain types of employment that students desire to pursue and which will ultimately influence what they study at university. If education leads to success then students must have a career in mind that will lead to a successful life. Ergo, not all avenues of formal education led to the same levels of success.

There is a general consensus, amongst the high school students interviewed in this study, that South Africa places higher value on the sciences than the humanities. Eleven students were asked in their interviews whether South Africans placed more value on the sciences or the humanities subjects. Only one student responded that, in general, South Africans value history above all else. The other ten out of the eleven students responded that they felt that as a country, there was higher value placed on the sciences. Students felt that South Africa is “obsessed with science” (Milisa, high school student) and that they “bow to science” (Limile, high school student). The preference for science has real consequences for how students are trained to see the world, so it is of primary importance to talk about how academic disciplines shape knowledge preference. That being said, even though the high school students spoke of a national preference for the sciences, some of them did not show the same alignment with this national value. These

two camps of opinions about the sciences and the humanities will be explored in detail in the next subsections. These high school preferences for disciplines of knowledge, in conjunction with what will be explored from the university focus group data, help to highlight some of the stubborn ways in which coloniality persists in higher education in South Africa. A longstanding preference for science began in colonialism and sought to minimize the relevance of indigenous knowledge.

#### 6.1.1. Science

Science deals with hard facts, logic and the physical world. As mentioned in the literature review, science impacts both place and knowledge relationships. Students who value science believe that science is more likely to lead to employment and developing the economy of South Africa. For one high school student, science is seen as the only hope for improving life in the future. Overall, it would appear from the interview excerpts below that science leads to a brighter future both for oneself and for others.

It's more important to learn about the sciences. I think science is the only thing that can improve our future. I believe that science can change the world. (Lathitha, high school student)

Sciences solve problems for you. (Anothando, high school student)

Science has more job opportunities. If you have learnt science, you are able to get jobs. (Liyema, high school student)

There are a lot of careers that include science more than the social sciences. (Ziyabukwa, high school student)

Science is practical and seen as being more useful to those who value scientific problem solving. These students are likely to go on to study a field within the sciences and they may have similar experiences in the future to the focus group participants who study science.

For all the good that science has to offer, it is by no means a neutral way of knowing, particularly in the context of indigenous knowledge. For Foucault (1980), the sciences are at the top of the knowledge (and thus power) hierarchy and act as the standard against which all other knowledges are tested for legitimacy. Science is not only subjected to external power; scientific statements have their own “internal regime of power” (p. 113) capable of demanding supremacy over other “minor knowledges” (p. 85).

Science was the tool used to encase both the natural and social world in the European paradigm (Pratt 1992), and through the colonial expansion indigenous epistemologies were violently moved to the margins (Spivak 1988). This still has consequences for how indigenous people around the world engage with their indigenous knowledge through their schooling process. McKinley (2007) writes about her experiences navigating her scientific trajectory as a Maori woman calling attention to the long-standing attitude that indigeneity and science were mutually exclusive. Additionally, Deloria Jr and Wildcat (2001) speak of the “painful experience” that Native American students face when they encounter disagreement between science and their tribal knowledge because Western education presents itself as infallible and implies that the “beliefs and teachings of the tribe are always wrong” (p. 4).

Science can become abstract and universal to the point where places become irrelevant (Sack 1997, p. 53). One of the issues with science education in South Africa that Koopman (2018) addresses is the fact that the science curriculum fails to connect to the lived experiences of the students or make room for them to “apply their own knowledge to the learning experience” (p. 168) and thus fails to validate or even acknowledge students’ place relationships.

Valuing science over indigenous knowledge does not mean that students are necessarily opposed to their own indigenous knowledge. However, the power differential between scientific

knowledge and other ways of knowing is very real and can produce systemic coloniality if it not critically examined. In Section 5.2. this power differential is very apparent and can have negative consequences.

#### 6.1.2. Humanities

In South Africa, the humanities are split into the Social Sciences and the Bachelor of Arts, which are subjects “that can’t be proven by science” (Philasande, high school student). Some high school students personally preferred the humanities, saying that it is attentive to people, to real life and gives insight into how places developed, connecting the present to the past. For these students, it is more accessible and relatable than the physical sciences. There is no mention of employment in this decision, only that there are beliefs and situations in life where socially centered subjects are more useful.

It deals more with people and I care a lot about people. I would like to involve myself in more things that involve helping people. (Mivuyo, high school student)

We don’t live science. They can say we are doing scientific things but I believe that we don’t live science at all. (Limile, high school student)

Chumani and Khazimla both mentioned terms relating to knowing more about their roots (‘knowledge about where you come from’ and to ‘know about the roots of your country’) when speaking about humanities subjects which shows that within these disciplines there is space for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge, particularly in the context of history, linking students to their roots in a place. Ziyabukwa also mentions history as an important subject to learn about as it connects this generation to the past by reminding them that many people endured hardships to ensure a better future for all in South Africa. History also emerged as an important theme in Section 4.3.1, where the connection was drawn between place attachment and indigenous

knowledge. It is not coincidental that this connection should emerge again when examining the disciplines.

In social science you have to get knowledge more about where you come from and what's going on, what made you to become you. (Khazimla, high school)

It is actually great knowledge to know about the roots of your country. That's what we learn about in history. That is what we learn about in life orientation. (Chumani, high school)

If there was no history, we would not know how black people struggled. It is important to teach us and to make us remember that some of us went through difficult things to get where we are right now so that we can value the things that came hard. (Ziyabukwa, high school)

The humanities are devalued in the hierarchy of knowledge, yet they are more adept at diagnosing and addressing the non-ideal settings and complexities of social issues and injustices in the present (Medina 2013). Lebakeng (2016) presents the argument that though the humanities have been sidelined in higher education institutions in South Africa, graduate students within these disciplines are a “critical component of the success of African democracies” (p. 54) as they continue to address deep seated coloniality. For these reasons, there are national consequences to students' decisions to value science over the humanities.

Science, as it currently stands, is only beginning to draw in other knowledge systems into its methods and approaches to research and thus the humanities currently provide more avenues for exploration into indigenous knowledge than the physical sciences. Humanities thinkers are needed for the project of decolonization in South Africa and for encouraging a flexibility of ideas and innovation in higher education, business and other sectors. While these diverging opinions about the humanities and science disciplines were already established at the school level, they became much more evident within the university student sample.

### 6.1.3. Career Choices

Given that there are differing opinions of which disciplines are more important within this student sample, it follows that there are certain careers which high school students seem to favor as they consider entering higher education. Only a small number of respondents in the high school survey (11.8%) mentioned the specific careers they wanted to study towards at university, many of which were professional or medical degrees such as law, engineering, architecture, and psychology. Frequencies of the professions that were mentioned are listed in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Professions that were mentioned by high school students as their motivation for attending university

Choice of study for higher education	Frequency
Law	8
Engineering (Mechanical, Electrical...)	6
Doctor, nurse or medical professional	4
Agricultural Science, management or forestry	4
Professor	1
Business	1
DJ	1
Psychologist	1
Media and Arts	1
Teacher	1
Architecture	1
Total	29

Source: Own calculations from ECHS survey (2018)

There is a legacy in the choices of study that cannot be overlooked when examining power and education in the Eastern Cape province, which was already touched on in Chapter 4. In the past, disciplines such as engineering and medicine were considered to be “prestigious fields” (Jansen 1991, p.25) and as such, they were not taught at black universities during apartheid which made it exceptionally difficult for black students to become doctors and engineers. Those who managed to overcome these major obstacles were highly respected in the community (Nyquist 1983). Given that the parents of students in this study were likely living within these times, there

is a possibility that their parents influence their choices of subjects. As seen earlier, some students desire to fulfil their parents' dreams of becoming doctors, nurses or engineers when they did not have the opportunity to do so (as was covered in Chapter 4) or their parents offer them academic advice concerning disciplines that were valued in the past since career guidance is lacking in the rural areas. Either way, most of the careers listed in Table 6.1 require pursuing scientific knowledge at a higher education level and may serve to extract students from place and their indigenous knowledge. While disciplines such as law, engineering and medicine are high paying jobs that may help offset the severe economic inequality in South Africa, they may slow efforts to combat epistemic inequality in the country.

There were four students who listed some type of agricultural or forestry career that they wished to study towards. This deserves to be recognized as a lingering connection to the natural landscape surrounding the students and these fields have links to indigenous knowledge. For example, collecting fuelwood for the woodpile has been found to be a cathartic experience for Xhosa women when returning to their rural roots (Cocks et al. 2003, Cocks et al. 2012, Njwambe et al. 2019). In another study, Cocks et al. (2016) show how the forest is a place of tranquility and that good pasture land for one's cattle produces a happy heart. Students who move in these directions of study may connect themselves more deeply to places of significance in their indigenous knowledge system but more research would be needed to investigate this specifically.

Choosing a career determines which paradigm a student will be educated into. Students studying towards a science degree have little exposure to business subjects or the humanities and vice versa. This next section will show how important these disciplines are in shaping perceptions of knowledge and place.



## **6.2. University Students' Engagement with Knowledge across Education Level**

From the focus group discussions, it became apparent that the way that knowledge was perceived by university students largely depended on which discipline they were studying: science or humanities. In the one camp is the more rigid and scientific worldview which provided a buffer to the student's own subjective experiences of place and knowledge. From this objective stance, personal experiences are of little importance when the procedures of a discipline, such as the physical sciences, seeks to remove any trace of human involvement. On the other hand, for the humanities student, all of their experiences in life informed and critiqued the knowledge they were acquiring in their degree.

For the science students, decolonizing the university had no relevance in the sciences because an operational and universal system has already been established for the scientific community of all backgrounds. The student in the humanities had a more fluid view of knowledge and he was able to critique the past and present through multiple lenses and expressed frustration in the rigidity of scientific enquiry. His view on knowledge required attention to be given the coloniality of knowledge and the need to decolonize the university.

Only two out of four students in the focus group were originally from Makhanda but, since place contexts had little bearing on perceptions of indigenous knowledge in the preceding chapter, place contexts were not an important component in the focus group discussions on place and knowledge. This section will build on the previous discussion in section 6.1 concerning students' opinions about certain disciplines but will focus more on how perceptions of knowledge have changed since moving to university based on the student's field of study. This will be done by first examining attitudes towards customs or cultural practices, such as divination, and will be followed by addressing how knowledge within formal education

expanded beyond mere facts in a book to abstract truths which can be applied to many different scenarios.

#### 6.2.1. Customs: From Truth to Superstitions

Students in the university focus group made mention of ‘superstitions’ within their indigenous knowledge system that could be disproved with science and, as a result, these superstitious customs have been disqualified in their minds. Chapter 4 presented a few customs and beliefs in Xhosa culture which were considered to be ‘less-essential’ in 1982, such as diviners and herbalists. These have become nothing more than superstitions within the minds of the science students in the present day. Students made reference to buying lightning from a witchdoctor as something unbelievable and unreal.

Mention was also made of the cattle killings of 1856 to highlight the consequences of believing visions or dreams. This was a time in colonial history where Nongqause, a Xhosa prophetess, told her chief that the spirits of the dead had ordered the Xhosa to kill and eat their cattle and to leave their land fallow (Roux 1964). The spirits would then drive the white people from the land or cause the sky to fall on them. Instead of winning the land over from the British, this became a catastrophe to the amaXhosa as an estimated 25,000 to 50,000 people died of starvation and drove many more to the British colonies for aid and employment. This story in particular was a part of the reason for one of the science students turning away from aspects of their indigenous knowledge and towards the objectivity of science (Thango, university student).

He continued by saying:

For now, mysterious things - I really think we should be against them at some point; with some knowledge. (Thango, university student)

There is a sense that superstition is not in itself a form of knowledge in the mind of this student.

Using a phrase such as “with some knowledge” implies that there is a particular knowledge

system that can eventually explain everything, such as the scientific worldview that this student is immersed in. The same superstitious label was given to beliefs in the ancestors. One student in particular said that she questions everything and that believing in the ancestors “did not make sense” to her (Qaqamba, university student); Furthermore, Thango revealed that holding onto these beliefs in his younger years was dependent on the accountability of their community. He believed in the ancestors when he was younger simply because he was not given the freedom to question anything like Qaqamba was.

“There are always threats [that] if you start to question, you'll either be hit by lightning or something bad will happen to your kids the rest of your life, so I didn't question but it's only like recently now, that I've said, “you know what? I make decisions for my life so it doesn't matter if I get cursed, it's fine. I can live with that. It's better to have knowledge of something.” (Thango, university student)

Once again, the community emerges as a theme which links students to their indigenous knowledge system; therefore, it is of no surprise that one's community plays an important role in enforcing the collective knowledge system. Similarly, Njwambe et al. (2019) found that a migrants' community nurtures shared values and beliefs, ensuring that social and familial obligations are met by migrants. In this research context, the community is seen to be a source of accountability, around which this student did not wish to question beliefs. The community acts as a means of reducing the influence of a student's exposure to different ways of believing and seeing the world. When this student entered the university and was exposed to difference away from his community it forced him to contend with other ways of knowing and being through the scientific paradigm in which he had chosen to position himself.

As students enter higher education, with “more knowledge,” particularly scientific knowledge, certain customs within the Xhosa knowledge system become no more than superstitions to these science students or, in the words of Deloria Jr and Wildcat (2001) that were

encountered earlier, that the “beliefs and teachings of the tribe are always wrong” (p. 4). The humanities student did not contribute to the theme above as this was not an aspect of knowledge that presented any change. For him, understanding *what* constituted knowledge became much more important in his journey through higher education. These sentiments are also shared by Njambi (2004) who notes the harmful dichotomies, such as science/superstition and educated/ignorant, tend to turn cultural practices against logical or rational thought presented in scientific education. While the science students also felt that their understanding of knowledge expanded and deepened in their university degrees, they didn’t critique the source of knowledge like the humanities student did. This will be further examined in the section to follow.

#### 6.2.2. Formal Education: More Than Facts in a Book

Within the focus group, university students felt that in high school they also viewed knowledge as being confined to a book (Thango, university student); a collection of facts or “information” stored “in their memory” (Vuyile, university student). One student admitted that he had felt in the past that “if it’s not recognized there [in the textbook] then it’s not a... reliable source of knowledge.” (Luyolo, university student) which concurs with the sentiments of one of the high school student interviews, from Chapter 5, who said that the best way to learn about Xhosa culture was in a book from the library. The important thing about this definition of knowledge which university students gave is that it discounts ways of knowing that cannot be fully experienced in a book such as dance, music, storytelling and oral history.

For the university students in the sciences, knowledge is seen as being more neutral and ‘objective.’ Their understanding of knowledge changed less as they moved from high school to the university. In a sense, the sciences form a global knowledge system that every student can conform to, independent of their prior knowledge systems so they did not have to wrestle with

the marginalized ways of knowing. To these students, indigenous knowledge was little more than superstition at worst and subjective at best.

Within this worldview, there was little point in decolonizing knowledge. For Thango, a comprehensive and functional system was already in place so “why would you invent a new system if the current one is already working?” Moreover, Qaqamba explained that decolonizing knowledge didn’t make sense to her and Thango mentioned that he was unfamiliar with much of the terminology within the movement which added to the confusion about the purpose of decolonizing knowledge.

I don't know... what is it? Decolonizing how? What? It doesn't make sense to me. Maybe I've accepted what is happening for what it is. I think it works for me (Qaqamba, university student)

They use all these fancy words like... [Qaqamba says “pedagogy, epistemology and whatever... those words”] ... yeah, if you could explain what that means, maybe put it in simple terms, then it's a discussion. We're not all doing humanities, we won't all know what those words mean. (Thango, university student)

There is an apparent divide in mentality towards knowledge between those in the sciences and their humanities peers and at the heart of the contestation is a lack of understanding between the two worldviews when navigating topics about decolonization. For science students, knowledge should be facts-based and unbiased. Though scientific knowledge was considered to be more neutral amongst the science students in the focus group, they did recognize key themes in the development of science and the nature of skepticism that accompanies non-white ideas. These ideas were presented after the humanities students explained how knowledge primarily comes from the Global North and I briefly elaborated on this point talking about the politics involved in scientific research. With this priming, students recognized that scientific developments can be accelerated by political agendas and hindered by racial discrimination.

You are correct in that sense, like the story of the atomic bomb is exactly that. A race between America and Germany. They were racing to make an atomic bomb and Einstein was very skeptical. He believed that theories don't work... they aren't practical. But he realized he can make this theory into a nuclear reaction. That led to the development of the atomic bomb. But Germany, of course, gave up and the Americans built it and when the war was over, they dropped it on Japan. So, you're right, politics can drive scientific discovery. That's quite correct. (Vuyile, university student).

Vuyile admitted that “politics can drive scientific discovery,” explaining how international politics drove the development of the atomic bomb as governments raced to outdo one another. In this way, scientific development can rapidly address issues but it is always the issues that serve a certain agenda for a certain category of people. Thango also acknowledged that if a black person comes up with a theory, the theory gets questioned and interrogated more than those of other scholars until someone else can validate the finding and then it receives immediate interest from the scientific community. In this way, science is hindered by human bias within racial discrimination against black scientists.

Also, basically, there is someone who is controlling the direction of knowledge and that someone cannot be just anyone because if it's a black person who just comes up with something then you get questioned, "No, you can't be saying that" and “that can't be true," until another person says it and then people immediately find interest in it. [Thango, university student]

These are not small ‘subjectivities’ in the execution of scientific research. While the content of science may seem to be objective, the very direction of scientific questioning comes from the Global North and has racial and political biases. This was not immediately apparent to students in the sciences, yet these are the very ways in which science resides in coloniality. Preference for science, without critically engaging with the coloniality embedded in its structure, keeps indigenous students from developing African centered science to solve African problems.

For the only humanities student in the focus group, aspects of knowledge that are non-scientific can be rich repositories of indigenous knowledge as their “cosmologies are embedded

in the language, in the poetry, in the idioms” that are shared (Luyolo, university student). He had a different journey in understanding what constitutes knowledge than the science students. His lived experience in higher education exposed the inequality within the domains of Knowledge and in turn, showed how other knowledges have been minimized, those knowledges that didn’t fit into the textbooks or couldn’t be proven by science. For this humanities student, the way he viewed knowledge changed over time, particularly because of the #RhodesMustFall movement. During the student protests of 2015, this student began to dig into what knowledge meant to him. He began to understand that Knowledge, the ‘superior’ knowledge, was from the Global North, yet his experience within his community and family had developed an equally concrete knowledge base as any other. His definition of Knowledge is:

That [which] comes from the Global North written by some white scholars while the other knowledge sources are not acknowledged, are not canonized into the curriculum. The knowledge that my mother taught me, my grandparents, or my community, those things were never encouraged to be used as knowledge bases. (Luyolo, university student)

The humanities discipline gave this student the language he needed to articulate his exposure to place-based and knowledge-based differences. This awakening to new perspectives of knowledge did not happen right away. It happened over time as he took courses which critically engaged with some of the binaries which still exist in post-colonial South Africa. Ultimately these realizations about knowledge systems and the university in South Africa propelled him into doing research which seeks to answer relevant questions within his indigenous community. He was critical of dominant epistemologies and research methods. He grew tired of the “anthropological gazing... that views the African experience from Western lens” (Luyolo, university student). He internally questioned who he was citing and why? Whose knowledge held more weight or power? These questions all led him towards his current research project. As

this student journeyed through higher education and wrestled with the tension that he felt between different knowledge systems, he began to see the enduring coloniality in the South African academe and he wanted to add his indigenous critique to it. Over time, this student shifted away from a 'textbook knowledge' definition and his definition of knowledge became:

...experience that would come after the classroom. So, lived experience is a critical knowledge source and that means the things I've experienced, things I've learnt growing up, things that I've read and all of those things form part of that big knowledge repertoire. (Luyolo, university student)

Knowledge is gained through experience and not purely ingested as facts and information. The knowledge gained through lived experience includes the knowledge of indigenous poetry, song and language, much like one of the high school students in Chapter 5 mentioned that knowledge learned in everyday life includes cultural knowledge. This understanding of knowledge is expansive and inclusive of indigenous knowledge systems as it recognizes that the dominant, Global North Knowledge has limits.

Denzin et al. (2008, 2) state that Western facts were implicated in the "colonial apparatus," excluding all knowledge that could not be determined 'fact' to the peripheries. Furthermore, Sanger (1997) adds that textbooks have "impersonal authority" which serve to devalue "local forms of knowledge" (p. 2). At the school level, knowledge is still steeped in coloniality in this respect and at the university level, though this broadens beyond book knowledge, the coloniality implied in the former way of learning is easily resumed at the university level.

The perceptions of knowledge do change and deepen for those in the sciences but the real change of view on knowledge was exhibited in the humanities student. These systems of thought, sciences or humanities, create a lens through which the world and knowledge are seen that will likely be lifelong. What is apparent in this section is the divergence of perceptions of knowledge



the occur with the science students and the humanities student as they moved from high school to university. This indicates that education level does impact perceptions of knowledge by strengthening preferences for science or humanities worldviews. Given the link between knowledge and place that was developed in Chapter 5, it follows that the move to university may serve to disrupt students' perceptions of place. This will be examined next.

### **6.3. Experience of Place across Education Level**

High school students' perceptions of place were laid out in Chapter 5.1. In this section, the objective is to understand how this relationship with place changes as a student moves to the university by expanding these perspectives to include university students' experiences. A portion of the students at the school level had some idea of how their immediate location was different from other parts of South Africa largely because of their own migration between rural and urban schools. These students were able to compare and contrast their experiences at schools in other place contexts. However, most high school students interviewed did not have many lived experiences in other places.

At the university level, students have more opportunities to travel to other parts of the country which inform the way that they see their local place. Migration within education is one of the indirect mechanisms of changing perceptions of place. Being exposed to different lifestyles, availability of resources and work opportunities result in a different perception about the Eastern Cape as a whole and therefore their future within the province. Thus, there is an aspect of place perception that changes when students move from school to university. There was also a different experience of place for those in the sciences and the student in the humanities discipline that will be addressed.

### 6.3.1. Difference is Exposed

When students enter the university, they are exposed to different ways of knowing and being. Exposure to difference, in this context, leads to becoming more aware of how people in different places have various lifestyles (way of doing and being) and different ideologies that they live by (ways of knowing). Exposure to difference presents a student with a decision to either change or to remain the same person. In Chapter 5, most high school students in this study saw place through a more practical lens; putting value on a place's ability to satisfy their utilitarian needs or provide certain commodities (Njwambe et al. 2019). This was a separate relationship from a hopeful sense of place where most students had multiple layers of meaning within the places that they lived than their "commodifying" attachment. High school students made mention of the lack of resources at the schools and how this would likely be different in other places, particularly urban school contexts. Transitioning from high school to university gave the university students the distance necessary to critique their experiences of the places they had grown up. Thango started the conversation by highlighting how travelling to Cape Town opened his eyes to the ways that Makhanda (Grahamstown) was lacking:

What I did realize about Grahamstown, [having] been exposed ... I saw that actually, in Grahamstown, it's pretty much an undeveloped [town]. I know we're getting there but we pretty much don't have anything in Grahamstown compared to Cape Town and Jo-burg. ...There are plenty of opportunities in Cape Town... there's nothing else you can do here other than become a teacher or work at Rhodes. (Thango, university student)

For this science student, who had spent his whole life living in Makhanda, the exposure to difference through travelling with his department to another city resulted in him seeing the town as undeveloped when compared to other places that he had visited. This did not occur until the difference was exposed through travel outside of the Eastern Cape. He also mentioned that there are more job opportunities in other places like Cape Town which was something that the high

school students perceived too. This relationship with place centers around place satisfaction, looking to a place to meet his employment needs. He continued by saying how he used to see the environment that he grew up, in the township of Makhanda, as “normal” until he went to university. After living across the valley for a semester, he went back home and thought to himself:

‘There's something seriously wrong.’ You keep complaining about the environment, the way people live. I used to live that way so I didn't have a problem before the exposure to the university, but when I got back home, I was like, ‘that's not right now.’ It's spoilt different environments. (Thango, university student)

Nothing about the place he had left six months prior had changed much and he didn't need to travel a great distance to see his home in a different light, but his worldview had been changed in such a way that his relationship with place was fundamentally altered. Qaqamba added that upon returning home “You don't fit in anymore.... you shift your [norms]” (Qaqamba, university student), emphasizing that the way she saw place changed because her social norms had shifted. This serves to say, that in South Africa, the norms of university life are so radically different that one does not necessarily have to even experience life in another city or province to be exposed to difference. Simply leaving the township to go to the other side of the valley to live in a residence hall at university was enough to expose students to difference. This highlights the inequality that exists within spatial areas such as towns and cities.

For Qaqamba, place had little bearing on her life “as long as my general welfare is taken care of” (Qaqamba, university student). This relationship with place is based on place satisfaction. However, even though she does not find herself strongly attached to place, she did agree that the norms in one place may not be the norms in another such as was the case in her move from a township outside East London to Rhodes University. Through this transition she realized that “you get to a place and you realize that actually your normal is not enough”

(Qaqamba, university student). For this respondent, originally from a township outside East London, changing places meant being confronted with different social norms, but ultimately, she chose to be her own person, despite other social pressures. Though her life was not dependent on being in any one place, she still acknowledges that coming to the university exposed social differences in the country and broadened her perspectives.

For the humanities student, Luyolo, the Makhanda he perceived growing up was completely differently to the place as he sees it now. He speaks of the way in which the other side of the valley was the place where you succeeded in town and at university. For him, moving to the university as a place and knowledge institution was enough to open his eyes to difference:

I did not need to go elsewhere, I just had to come here and at Rhodes, everything else changed... (Luyolo, university student)

Though he spoke of how he saw the place he grew up as “normal” he also expressed the tension of “knowing that the town and the university is where you [go to] better your life.” Stating this in the vocabulary of this dissertation: the general perceptions around him were that urban living and tertiary education were the path to success. While the township was a norm for him, he was aware that this was not the norm or standard way of life for many people. There was a common understanding that...

...the ways to mark achievement was to move from that place to the other side of town. So, I came to that place and I thought that I was going to have the same relationship I used to have [with Makhanda], kind of like a positive relationship, on a surface level but when I came here ...it was a cultural shock. (Luyolo, university student)

This student’s experience of place speaks to the larger perception that education leads to success; the definition of achievement meant moving across the valley to a suburb and indicated that there was always a binary within the city limits. He only began to see the negatives of that binary when moving to the other side of town. This is very similar to the perceptions of Xhosa and

Fingo residents living in Makhanda in the 1970s which was presented in Nyquist's study. During that time, there was a valuing of the European way of life and a growing association between education, success and being respected in the community.

This binary initially was somewhat inert because Luyolo mentioned having had a positive relationship with place which he thought would remain unchanged. However, as he moved to the university and experienced the culture shock of difference, his perspective of place and the way he saw Makhanda had changed. He began to process that the university was "historically and conceptually not designed for having people like me" (Luyolo, university student). Part of this exposure to difference entailed encountering a non-indigenous history constructed into the very material form of the institution. It was upon entering the higher education space that his understanding of place deepened. He saw the associated politics of place and what is involved in feeling an insider or outsiders in spaces. For him, moving across town and into the university space did not merely illuminate place-based differences but also ontological conflict in his life.

The sense of belonging that takes [place in] my culture ... was seen as deviating the norm. It was a norm to have a nice phone. It's a norm to speak a certain way... It was not plural. It was not multicultural, or a multilingual space. English is a norm. If you express yourself in isiXhosa it is not a norm. (Luyolo, university student)

Qaqamba jumped in at this point to say that if you speak Xhosa in this space then "you are not intelligent enough," drawing attention to the fact that indigenous language itself (an integral part of a knowledge system) was sidelined as contrary to the norms within the university to the point that when they spoke in their indigenous language they were perceived as less intelligent.

Moving to the university fundamentally shifted Luyolo's sense of place in a negative way in the same town where he had resided his whole life. For this student, mobility on a national level was not necessary in order to expose him to difference; entering the university as a pedagogical place was enough for him to know the politics of place and knowledge. This

changed the trajectory of his future studies and propelled him away from the sciences, which were alienating, and into the humanities, which offered insight and the vocabulary necessary for him to process his culture shock and offered more space for indigenous ways of knowing to be integrated into the academy than the sciences did. After this switch, he was motivated to study 19<sup>th</sup> century Xhosa intellectuals at a graduate level. Interestingly, this student's place relationship is less about place satisfaction but centers more around his sense of place in Makhanda and his sense of place in the university, as he sees history embedded in the development of both.

From these focus group sessions, every student had a different experience engaging with place and knowledge. Two students, across both disciplines, saw their homes through completely different eyes when moving across the valley to start university. The science student was more concerned with place satisfaction and the utilitarian differences between places. The humanities student, who was hopeful about life in Makhanda in the past, made the same move across town and found that his sense of place in Makhanda was not as positive as it had been as a result of moving. This drove him to the humanities where he ended up furthering his studies within his indigenous knowledge system. Qaqamba, on the other hand, didn't have any attachment to place but did notice the pressure to adjust who she was, but ultimately, she chose to remain the same person when she entered university. Thus, the university, as a place, exposed difference to these students both ontologically and spatially and concerning place satisfaction and sense of place.

Fried (2000) postulated that place attachment provided confidence for exploration "within (but not outside) the local community" (p. 195). For high school students, in Chapter 5, exploration was discussed as one of the attributes of a student's hopeful sense of place. Students desired to be in an environment that they were not familiar with. However, the focus group participants noted that entering the space of the university required adjustment and challenged

their life norms prior to their relocation, even across the valley. In this case, students' sense of place was threatened without the attenuating presence of their community in the space of higher education. Moreover, any ostracism that students were subjected to at Rhodes university would be directed more to their local sense of place, and thus harmful to the university students' local place relationship.

In the edited volume by Tebensky and Matthews (2015), authors specifically address the way in which material and tangible artifacts within the universities, such as Rhodes, have agency over those who enter the university, hindering black South African students from feeling at home in higher education. Matthews makes the point that "institutional cultures are experienced very differently by people of different backgrounds" (p. 75), emphasizing that students do not enter the university with the same set of experiences or perspectives. However, they do little to outline what these variable backgrounds are beyond charging higher education with the task of understanding their student population. Recent work by Timmis et al. (2019) addresses these variable backgrounds by exploring rural students experiences at university in relation to their lives prior to university and support the evidence presented in this section adding that university students from rural areas felt a loss of agency when entering university. This was due to their former experiences and responsibilities not being recognized in context of higher education and they had technological disadvantages that challenged their sense of inclusion. However, over time, students found different ways of expressing their agency by incorporating aspects of their life experiences into the university space, such as relying on a community for help, whether it be tutors or their peers.

Students' sense of place, coming from rural or township areas, is abruptly altered between their homes and university residences in such a way that even former positive place

relationships are reexamined as students are exposed to difference outside of their community. Though students may enter the university space feeling foreign, they did not move away from their communities feeling this way. Higher education must not only seek to broaden and challenge one's worldview to include other ways of knowing, it also needs to be responsible for being a community which validates the marginalized epistemologies that township or rural students may enter with in order to ensure they feel empowered by their way of knowing this setting.

### 6.3.2. Response to Living in Eastern Cape

Students in the focus groups had similar opinions about the Eastern Cape in general as the high school students. They too felt that the Eastern Cape failed to deliver opportunities that they needed to succeed. This was particularly the case with the students within the sciences, as the Eastern Cape is not known to have many prospects for those who graduated with specific Bachelor of Science degrees. Thango indicated that he wanted to leave the Eastern Cape because the only job he would be able to get as a physicist was as a teacher. He said that he would likely move to Cape Town for work after he graduated. This is not dissimilar to the thoughts the high school students had concerning the Eastern Cape, particularly in the case of place dissatisfaction. The only thing keeping him in the Eastern Cape currently was his family. It is important to emphasize the role of family again in influencing place and knowledge relationships. In section 6.2.1, the family and community not only kept this student accountable for certain beliefs in indigenous knowledge systems, but here they serve as an important binding agent to place. To contrast this, the student who was studying the humanities expressed the way that his research had shaped his understanding of the Eastern Cape to give him a deep appreciation for the province; despite people in his community encouraging him to leave. For both this student and



the former student, their place relationships, while influenced by family or their community, was ultimately determined by them.

The research which the humanities student was involved in played a major role in developing his provincial sense of place. In studying 19<sup>th</sup> century Xhosa intellectuals, he and fellow scholars have found their research areas responsible for connecting them deeply to the Eastern Cape “in ways unimaginable” (Luyolo). His research has had profound impacts on his sense of place which is of far greater importance to him than the ability that a place has to meet utilitarian needs. For him, it is not the buildings or neighborhood where he grew up, but his research that connects him to the Eastern Cape and it is a connection which is sensed emotionally and experientially. This next quote describes the deep and rich sense of place which this student possesses due to his research:

It is my research specifically which connects me with the place more than I have ever connected with the place. It has not been the people or the buildings or the opportunities, job opportunities, which [have] come to be questionable as I grow up. Now, that I know what that means to be looking for a job but the place itself has become deeply connected to me and not only just my intellectual research but literally me, holistically, like with my spirituality and every other thing that makes my entire being. (Luyolo)

His sense of place is so intimate that if he was to leave the province to study at another university he will remain on a “journey of recovering the marginalized voices of the early Xhosa intellectuals of the Eastern Cape” because the Xhosa intellectuals that he studies “were situated in these places like your Makhanda, and surrounding areas.” His research “anchors” his being in the Eastern Cape for he “lie[s] deeply scattered in this place.”

In Chapter 5 the link between indigenous history and one’s sense of place was apparent. The high school students who had a positive sense of place also strongly valued indigenous history. Moreover, several students also indicated that social subjects were important to them at school and these both had positive effects on their sense of place. For the university student

studying in the humanities discipline, it once again emerges as a significant part of his sense of place. It is clear from his statement that his studies allowed him to explore deeper aspects of place and history through an indigenous lens. The exploration of history and learning about deeper layers of meaning in place positively impacts a student's sense of place. His ever-growing relationship with his indigenous knowledge system informs and deepens his relationship with place. In a place attachment study conducted in two European cities with conflicting pasts, Lewicka (2008) finds that knowing the complex history of place improves residents' place attachment. The pre- and post-colonial history of the Eastern Cape has been full of contestation and some tragic events took place. However, seeing this history through the eyes of indigenous forefathers, leaders and heroes is profoundly beneficial for the humanities student's regional sense of place.

One final note of interest: during the time of this study the name of Grahamstown was changed to Makhanda. The science students made reference to the place as Grahamstown (the former name) while the humanities student spoke of Makhanda (the name that replaced it) when referencing the place where he grew up and now lives. This subtly reveals further evidence of the divide between place relationships between these groups of students. Sciences students are more removed from the political or emotional aspects of place, such a place name but for the humanities student, place names hold vital meaning and it is of great importance to use the right name; the name which honors a great Xhosa leader and resistor of colonialism.

#### **6.4. Chapter Summary**

This chapter began with a look at how the university was perceived by the high school students' responses in the surveys and interviews. Just over half of the students listed purely personal reasons for wanting to attain higher education such as for their own success and independence.

The remainder desire, in part, that their education helps their families or communities and makes their parents proud. These motivators play a part in which knowledge students' value for their future studies. It became apparent through the high school interviews that students believed that the sciences were more important for future employment or more highly regarded in South Africa and this plays a role in their selection of what to study at university. Understanding these preferences is a necessary foundation for understanding the changes towards knowledge and place that occur among university students.

Within the university student focus group, students from both science and humanities backgrounds showed similar realizations about the places they grew up as they transitioned to the university. They came to see their previously normal way of life as being subpar when they compared it to their lifestyle at university. However, the science students and the humanities student did react differently to these realizations, either becoming indifferent to anything besides its utilitarian value (place satisfaction) or developing a deeply connected sense of place to a broader region based on their deepening knowledge of the place history. There was a common experience of internally wrestling with seeing their 'normal' through a different lens as they moved into a new place at university.

When considering how a student's perception of knowledge changed as they entered university, this largely depended on which discipline they went into. For students studying the sciences, there is a pre-constructed worldview of objectivity that does not alter in its structure between high school and the university. The university student studying the humanities pointed to the way his understanding of knowledge had drastically changed as he leaned into a worldview that is more metaphysical and philosophical, one which exposes power dynamics between the Global North and the marginalized voices of the Global South. For this student,

there was a big difference in the way he saw knowledge after entering higher education and this, in turn, deepened his sense of place in the Eastern Cape. While there was only one humanities student in the sample, and there are limitations to this, he thoroughly articulated his experience which provides a valuable point of departure for future studies in this area.

Given the way the university system works, those who choose degrees that are more scientific are channeled into a system of thought which does not confront the political and socio-cultural problems which life in post-apartheid South Africa has to engage with. This can ultimately serve to replace one's indigenous knowledge system with a Euro-American one and, in turn, impacts students' local sense of place as places are seen more for their utilitarian value than for their emotional significance. Drawing attention to this long-standing drive towards certain careers or disciplines is an important part of acknowledging ways in which the education system remains colonized.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### 7.0. Summary of the study findings

This research set out to understand the perceptions of knowledge and place within the student population in and around the former Ciskei in the Eastern Cape, including those leaving school and students attending university. This analysis was done across time from the 1950s to the present, using both archival and field sources. The places in this study were severely affected by apartheid policies of segregation and forced removals and these experiences of dispossession were documented as devastating events for those who lived through these experiences (Luthuli 1962, Platzky and Walker 1983a). With such impactful collective memory written into the landscape, it was worthwhile to see how places are speaking meaning to the Xhosa residents now.

The results in Chapter 4 and 5 show that places negatively impacted by apartheid segregation laws have been re-scripted and the history of oppression of the amaXhosa, from their perspective, has the ability to strengthen students' relationship with place and their resolve. The pain of segregation and forced removal was evident in these areas in the 1970s to 1980s and it was even evident in the naming of one of the locations, Dimbaza, yet the students today do not see it as a site of dumping.

During my fieldwork I bought a t-shirt designed by an artist in Dimbaza (see Figure 7.1). It has these words printed on it “e Bumnandini uzandifumana khona – Dimbaza” which means “you will find me in the place of pleasure – Dimbaza.” This is consistent with the view that the student residents have about the place they now live. They have participated, as place makers, in

building a new Dimbaza; giving it new layers of meaning which have nurtured a deeply connected and optimistic sense of place.

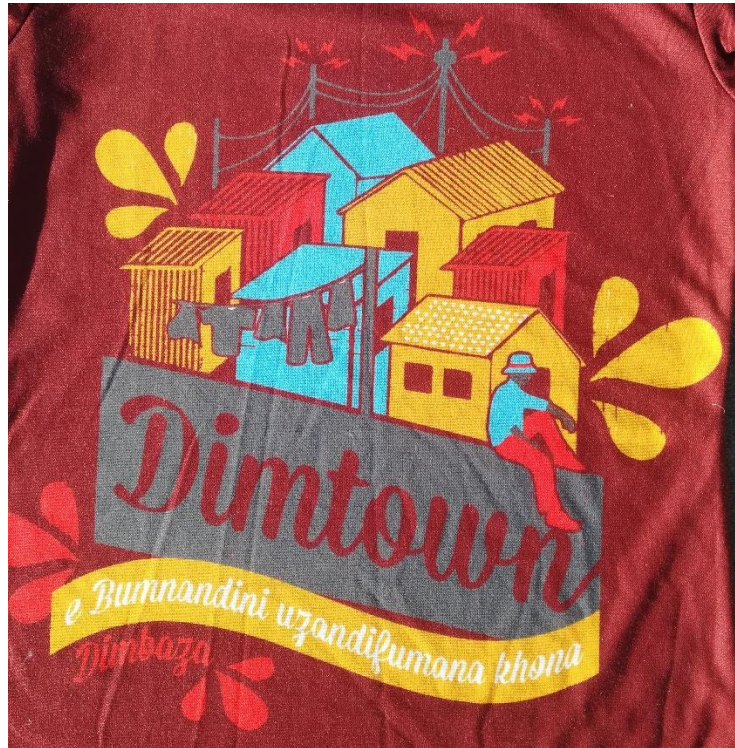


Figure 7.1: A shirt designed by an artist living in Dimbaza.

Not only have the past negative narratives been re-written to fortify current residents, the present-day negative narratives spoken over the Eastern Cape as a province do not make students downcast. For the most part, high school students stated that this spurs them on to make a difference, a difference that can only be achieved together. This exposes the agency that students have in their willingness and/or ability to be place-makers. Despite perceptions that outsiders cast onto the Eastern Cape as being a place of uneducated or lazy people, the students' relationship with place allows them to ward off the discrimination they face for living where they do; they do not have a hopeless vision of their future or take on the impressions that others have about their places of residence. They still want to leave the province but the motivation isn't

hopelessness, it's more for practical reasons such as finding employment and providing for their families, both current and future. This ability to transform a place from 'doomed' according to onlookers to 'not doomed or hopeless' does not just speak to their agency as place-makers, it is also connected to their relationship with their indigenous knowledge system. The weak but significant correlation between place hopefulness and indigenous knowledge not being relevant for the future indicates that place and knowledge are not separate entities. They are part of each other to some extent and this relationship is important in cultivating a positive sense of place or hopefulness about the future of a place.

Overall, students still value their indigenous knowledge over other ways of knowing but many felt that it would not be important in future work or studies. They are not idealist to think that one way of knowing is sufficient for all of life in South Africa. Those who believe that school knowledge is more important than their indigenous knowledge are more likely to enter higher education with expectations of which degrees or disciplines are most likely to lead to future employment and success. This is one of the ways in which coloniality remains entrenched within the education system through the preferences of certain careers.

These findings offer important contributions to current research in place and indigenous knowledge systems literature in South Africa as they include high school students' experiences, thoughts and opinions and highlight the complex attachments that students have to places and different facets of knowledge. While decolonization within the school context is beginning to gain attention in South African literature, there is still much work to be done (Christie 2020, Lebeloane 2018, Mahabeer 2020). It also extends decolonial literature within the South African context by emphasizing the agency that high students have as place-makers as they change the identity of a place as they grow up there. Decolonization literature in South Africa tends to focus

its attention on higher education but this research includes valuable perspectives from high school learners that need to be taken into account in order to achieve the decolonization of higher education and beyond.

Chapter 4 examined snapshots from the past showing that great importance was placed on education as a means of acquiring a European lifestyle or to be successful. This is a pervasive thought in the current generation (highlighted in Chapter 6). Certain fields or careers were historically associated with community respect and success (law and medicine) and remain top choices for what to study at university. Given that these disciplines are less likely to critique place and knowledge through a humanities lens, this leads students down a similar path of thought seen in the science students at university. If students are going into professional degrees for potential employment in careers that are historically favored then there are fewer who will seek to go into graduate degree programs or research positions and contribute to issues of local and global significance from the position of their knowledge system, such as the humanities student. Furthermore, given that most high school students entering the university believe their indigenous knowledge will not be useful in future studies and employment, this further perpetuates the cycle of coloniality embedded in the education system. This research addresses this gap within decolonization literature, once again emphasizing the need to include high school students' opinion in the project to decolonize higher education.

Chapter 6 built on the point above, highlighting how the choice of disciplines influences students' relationship with place and knowledge after entering the university. Those in the sciences spoke of the way that science could disprove mysterious things over time such that there was no need for superstitions. Their relationship with indigenous knowledge had changed, particularly once removed from the accountability of their community. This was not the case for



the humanities student where his view of knowledge exposes the power hierarchy that exists globally in the knowledge domain. He began to critique the knowledge that was produced by white men in the Global North and this drove him to material that was written by Xhosa intellectuals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, a student's relationship with place was also impacted by moving to university (even if that move was just across the valley). While all students in the focus group recognized some difference in the way they saw the places they lived previously, the science students spoke more of the practical differences between places they had lived and the job constraints while living in the Eastern Cape. The humanities student articulated the power dynamics he saw in moving into the academy for people like him; that the university was not a place designed for "people like him." In this way, moving to higher education does alter students' relationship with place and knowledge, but these changes are different for those in the humanities and science fields. While work in decolonization theory within South Africa has spoken of the need to decolonize disciplines, such as psychology, anthropology and the social sciences (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016), it fails to contextualize these disciplines in the network between high school, university, and the workplace and the knowledge that students deem important for each of these contexts and this research exposes why this is of paramount importance in the effort to decolonize aspects of the education system.

### **7.1. Why is this Research Important?**

In an age of globalization, there is a growing fear that everything unique in cultures will be lost in time. This research suggests that this is not necessarily the case. Yes, there are certain aspects of Xhosa culture that have been lost in practice and have been changed as a result of their changing relationships with place in the times of rapid urbanization. However, the adaptations that have been made were made in order to preserve components of their knowledge system that

are fundamental to their traditional heritage. It is important not to look at changes as the dying of a culture or a loss of agency of the amaXhosa. Cultures are always undergoing change and cultures always influence others around them.

Additionally, this research highlights important aspects of students' place relationships. While they may leave the Eastern Cape to pursue opportunities elsewhere, their hopeful sense of place still sees the province as an anchor to be rooted to. While it's true that the students recognize what their places of residence lack, they are also vocal about the positive aspects of these places that have made them who they are. Mbembe (2001) condemns "the West's obsession with, and circular discourse about, the facts of "absence," "lack," and "non-being," of identity and difference, of negativeness—in short, of nothingness" (no page) in Africa. This research is important because it seeks to address the negative interpretation of Africa. This decolonial perspective scrutinizes these pessimistic views and presents the ways in which indigenous people have asserted their power, their positivity, their endurance in the face of much opposition over their very existence and the places they live. Furthermore, students' place relationships are important to consider in the future of rural development and land redistribution. If most students desire a life that is disconnected from the land outside of the Eastern Cape province, this has implications for land redistribution efforts, which will be discussed briefly in section 7.2.

The discussions presented in this work show the way in which relationships with place and knowledge systems are connected together, situating the research within the experiences of students aiming to understand these connections at a grassroots level. While this has been explored in other contexts (Deloria Jr and Wildcat 2001, Greenwood 2009) there is little development of these connections in academic literature in South Africa, particularly through

field-based research. The efforts to redistribute land and decolonize higher education in South Africa are vitally important but they cannot be considered as mutually exclusive effects of colonialism and they must consider high school students' experiences of place and knowledge in the process as the youth are already place-makers and knowledge-sustainers. Fundamentally, decolonizing knowledge cannot be fully achieved without decolonizing place and land. They are intimately connected, both in the past and in the present. Land redistribution needs to be seen as a way of liberating indigenous knowledge systems too.

This research seeks to address the dominant view that indigenous people have been powerless in the midst of cultural changes that have taken place in South Africa's colonial history. It is a plea for local and place-based research where the results speak more than our hypotheses and preconceived ideas about the negatives that are generalized across large spatial chunks of Africa. This requires the minds of researchers to be decolonized. It also invites us not see each generation through the same lens, and especially not history. It calls for field-based responses to the theoretical perspectives of decolonization, knowledge systems and the pluriverse. In our research efforts in developing these themes, we cannot afford to have a nihilistic approach where efforts to change the status quo are considered to be pointless against the tides of global change. In doing so we minimize indigenous agency as place-makers and knowledge-sustainers.

## **7.2. Policy Implications**

There are a number of points within this dissertation that can be used to inform policies within various organizations. Since matters of land distribution and education tend to be regarded as separate issues by NGO's and governmental institutions, this section will speak to both divisions individually. However, a challenge must be given to stakeholders dealing with place and land

matters (such as rural development, agricultural development, land redistribution, and even urban planning) to remain cognizant of the importance that knowledge systems play when approaching certain problems and stakeholders within the education system (schools, universities, NGO's and government) need to consider the role that place has in shaping students' outlook on knowledge.

Understanding that coloniality in education is manifested in career choices demands a solution. Government and education focused NGO's, particularly foreign funded NGO's, should not only focus on improving the quality of education that a student receives but also provide quality career guidance that is future focused. Given that the sciences and particular professional careers, such as law and medicine, tend to be the most attractive careers, the guidance that is given to students should include viable careers that are less well known in both science and humanities fields (such as professors, logistic managers, geologists, quantity surveyors, theater managers, linguists, industrial psychologists etc.) Furthermore, the university is considered to be one of the only routes towards success or financial independence which may not be true. Stakeholders in education need outline the importance of technical diplomas in addressing skill shortages in the country. Electricians, hydraulic technicians, plumbers and construction managers are all trades which fulfill a specific need in country and align with South Africa's infrastructure investment plans for the future. Ultimately, to truly decolonize the university, it must lose its supremacy.

The government could address these issues by making changes in the Life Orientation curricula in high school education, highlighting the importance of a wide variety of disciplines for the development and betterment of South Africa. NGO's can also play a role in changing these perceptions by designing specific after school programs or work shadowing opportunities for careers that are less well known within the communities where they operate. This guidance is

crucial in order to prevent students from starting universities degrees, only to switch to another discipline a year or two into the process. Each year of university tuition is a burden to the family of students who are coming from previously disadvantaged home. Proper guidance to students could prevent money being spent finding out one's direction while a student is studying. Career guidance should have vision for the next decade of skills in South Africa, inclusive of social science and Bachelor of Arts opportunities. These choices cannot be determined by long-standing favored subject choices in the past.

The data presented in this dissertation reveals the tendency for students to think their indigenous knowledge will not be important for their future employment and, truth be told, if the concept of decolonization is only aimed at university transformation then a student's indigenous knowledge will remain unimportant in their future employment. Decolonization of the university should not only be connected to addressing coloniality in high school but also in understanding the place it has in the workplace. Indigenous knowledge systems are evident in customers' buying behavior, in their financial decisions for the present and future, in workplace relationships and in the success and failure of businesses in certain areas. Indigenous knowledge systems are present in the decision-making of consumers in South Africa and the tertiary sector does benefit from understanding these subtleties. However, larger societal issues, such as climate change mitigation, xenophobia and crime, need innovative indigenous perspectives within the public and tertiary sectors in South Africa. Strategic consulting roles should be opened for university graduates to move into public and tertiary sectors to provide place-based and knowledge-conscious solutions to social and environmental issues in South Africa.

Finally, while land redistribution seeks to address the injustices that took place during colonialism, it is also important to consider that the student population are largely looking to

move to urban areas outside the Eastern Cape in pursuit of work and not towards land ownership in rural areas, at least for the next chapter of their lives. The aim of land reformation should not only be to redistribute land, but also to reconnect people to the land of their forefathers. If this is to truly happen for the younger generation there must be investment in their agricultural education, such that there is potential for economically viable farming possibilities for those who choose it in the future. For this to happen, thorough and strategic planning must go into the development of rural economies, and a robust network established between rural and urban areas must be maintained so that the rural is not purely linked to the urban areas through remittances from migrants but also through the trade of produce.

There are a number of challenges which will prevent the abovementioned changes from being implemented. There has to be an interdisciplinary approach where stakeholders in education connect with those in rural development and land redistribution to bridge the gap that exists between these two spheres of South Africa's governance. Furthermore, any changes that are made to integrate aspects of education and rural development will take time and cannot be confined to a revised curriculum. Students would benefit more from having discussions around these topics and that requires teachers to be engaged with topics they may have varying opinions about. Regardless of the challenges, this is a worthwhile endeavor.

### **7.3. Future Directions**

In a time of severe social and environmental pressure being experienced globally, it is important that we do not pigeon hole research in the academy and adopt a doomsday attitude, especially within research in Africa, where Mbembe (2001) decries the way in which Africa is constantly cast in a negative light and never studying the ways in which Africa thrives. There is much good to focus on and yes, we can critique the past and speculate about the future but this should be

balanced by examining hopeful and positive social and environmental relationships that people have with place and knowledge. Future research centered around indigenous knowledge in South Africa should seek to unseat this dominant narrative.

There is also important work that can be done to examine these topics in other areas that were former Bantustans during apartheid. The Transkei contains areas that are much more rural than the areas within this study and it would be beneficial to compare thoughts towards indigenous knowledge and place within these regions. Since the Bantustans in each province became the place of residence for distinct ethnic groups, it would be interesting to see the evolution of place and knowledge relationships in these areas too.

This research did not engage with knowledge and perceptions of indigenous students within urban schools. This is another area that would be important to examine for future work, especially with students who had been born in urban areas. Understanding these students' thoughts towards rural places, in connection with their indigenous knowledge, would further reveal whether place contexts influence students' relationships with knowledge and place.

Finally, there is much potential for understanding the role of disciplines in shaping students' thoughts towards knowledge and place, not only at the university level but within the workplace after graduating. Since indigenous knowledge is generally regarded by the students in this study as being irrelevant to future employment, it would be interesting to explore how indigenous knowledge values change within these contexts too. The tertiary sector forms a major component of development in South Africa, contributing 63% to the economy (Stats SA 2018), and understanding how indigenous knowledge is taken into consideration within the way businesses operate will be critical for moving South Africa forward in future years.

It seems fitting to conclude this dissertation with the words of Vicky Sampson in her song “Afrikan Dream,” which was recorded as the curtains closed on the dark period of apartheid. This song captures community and optimistic vision for the future from an *African* perspective. This was her African centered dream:

Alone my dream is just a dream  
Another false illusion, a shadow in the night  
All I want is for our hearts to be beating just as one  
To silence the confusion  
Then the pain and the illusion will disappear again  
And we will never run  
  
'Cause in my Afrikan dream, there's a new tomorrow  
My Afrikan dream is a dream that we can follow.



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Appendices

Appendix 1: High School Survey

UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE HIGH SCHOOL SURVEY

Having heard details about this project and your rights as a participant, do you give your consent to participate in this research survey? Circle the option that applies.

Yes	1		No	2
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SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Sex of respondent (circle the number which applies)

Male	1		Female	2
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2. How old are you (in years)?

\_\_\_\_\_ years

3. Place of birth:

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Ethnic group:

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Language spoken at home:

\_\_\_\_\_

<b>6. How long have you lived in your current village/settlement?</b>	_____ years
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<b>7. a. How many people live in your household? _____</b>				
<b>7 b. Who do you live with at home? (circle all that apply)?</b>				
Father	1		Aunt	6
Mother	2		Cousins	7
Brother	3		Grandfather	8
Sister	4		Grandmother	9
Uncle	5		Other (please specify): _____	10

<b>8. Who is the head of your household?</b>	_____
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<b>9. How many people in your household are on government grants?</b>	_____
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<b>10. Who is the <i>main</i> breadwinner of your family?</b>	_____
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**11. What is the employment status of your family members? (Check the corresponding box with an X). If you do not know, then check the “Not known” box for the corresponding family member. Use additional columns for additional siblings.**

	Father	Mother	Brother	Sister		
Unemployed/ Job seeker						
Agricultural worker						
Domestic worker						
Employer/ Manager						
Health worker						
Manual worker (skilled)						

Manual worker (unskilled)						
Office worker						
Mine worker						
Police/Military/Security						
Professional (e.g., lawyer, doctor, academic, engineer)						
Scholar/ Student						
Teacher						
Businessman/ woman formal sector (self-employed)						
Operated own informal sector business (doing the same activity as now)						
Operated own informal sector business (doing different activity from now)						
Not known						
Other (specify): _____						

**SECTION B: EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

**12. Highest education level of family members. (Check the corresponding box with an X). If you do not know, then check the unknown box for the corresponding family member.**

	Unknown	Grade ____ (insert grade)	Grade 7	Grade 12	Diploma	University Degree
<b>Father</b>						
<b>Mother</b>						
<b>Grandfather</b>						

<b>(on father's side)</b>						
<b>Grandmother (on father's side)</b>						
<b>Grandfather (on mother's side)</b>						
<b>Grandmother (on mother's side)</b>						
<b>Oldest Sibling</b>						

**13. To what level do you agree with the statements below regarding your education?**

Rate each of statement using a 5-point scale below where

1= Strongly disagree    2= disagree    3=neutral    4=agree    5=strongly agree

Circle the number that best describes how you feel.

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
a. My family value the importance of education	1	2	3	4	5
b. My family provides all the school supplies that I need that aren't supplied through the school	1	2	3	4	5
c. Education is viewed as an important asset in my community	1	2	3	4	5
d. I know someone in my community who has succeeded in life through education	1	2	3	4	5

**14. How often do you miss school? (check the box that applies with an X)**

More than once a week	1		Once a term	3
Once every few weeks	2		Hardly ever	4

15. Does someone help you with homework? (circle the option that applies)				
a. Yes	1		b. No	2
15.a If yes, who helps you?				

16. On a normal day, how many meals do you have? (circle one which applies)				
One	1		Three	3
Two	2		Other: _____	4

17. a. Do you have a sibling who has finished high school and still lives in this village? (circle the option that applies)				
a. Yes	1		b. No	2
17.b. If more than one, state the number here: _____				

18. Do you want to go to university next year? (circle the option that applies)				
a. Yes	1		b. No ( <i>skip to question 19</i> )	2
18a. If <b>Yes above</b> , please give the reasons why you want to go to university?				
_____				
_____				
_____				
18b. If <b>cost and distance were not factors</b> , which university would you like to attend?				
_____				

19. a. If <b>No in q.18 above</b> , please give the reasons why you do not want to go to university				
_____				
_____				

19b. What would you like to do instead of going to university?

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20. Do your parents/guardians want you to go to university? (circle the option that applies)

a. Yes	1		b. No	2
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21. Which province in South Africa do you think has the *lowest matric pass rate*? (Circle one)

a. North West	1		f. KwaZulu Natal	6
b. Limpopo	2		g. Eastern Cape	7
c. Western Cape	3		h. Mpumalanga	8
d. Gauteng	4		i. Northern Cape	9
e. Free State	5			

22. Which province in South Africa do you think has the *highest matric pass rate*? (Circle one)

a. North West	1		f. KwaZulu Natal	6
b. Limpopo	2		g. Eastern Cape	7
c. Western Cape	3		h. Mpumalanga	8
d. Gauteng	4		i. Northern Cape	9
e. Free State	5			

**SECTION C: SENSE OF PLACE**

<b>23. Where is your <i>ikhaya lam</i>?</b>	_____	
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<b>24. Where were your grandparents' born? If you do not know, write unknown.</b>	<b>Grandfather (father's side)</b> _____ <b>Grandmother (father's side)</b> _____ <b>Grandfather (mother's side)</b> _____ <b>Grandmother (mother's side)</b> _____
---	--

**25. Please answer the following questions regarding your attachment to the Eastern Cape using the 5-point scale below, where**  
**1= Strongly disagree      2= disagree      3=neutral      4=agree      5=strongly agree**

**Circle the number that best describes with how you feel about the following statements:**

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
a. I feel a strong connection with my ancestors here	1	2	3	4	5
b. This village/settlement is too small for me	1	2	3	4	5
c. I see myself living in the city after I matriculate	1	2	3	4	5
	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
d. This place offers everything I need for my future life	1	2	3	4	5
e. I would need to move away from this village/settlement in order to have a better future	1	2	3	4	5
f. I am most satisfied and fulfilled when I am here in this village/settlement	1	2	3	4	5
g. Even if I have to leave this village/settlement one day, I will always belong here	1	2	3	4	5
h. Living here is an important part of my identity	1	2	3	4	5
i. I feel hopeless in this settlement/village	1	2	3	4	5



j. The most important part about a place is the people who live there, not the things that I am able to do there	1	2	3	4	5
k. The most important part about a place is job opportunities and the life I can have there	1	2	3	4	5
l. The Eastern Cape is a place of opportunity for me	1	2	3	4	5
m. I have no future in the Eastern Cape	1	2	3	4	5
n. If I left the Eastern Cape to live somewhere else, I would feel a part of me would be left behind	1	2	3	4	5
o. Eastern Cape is home but it does not offer what I need to succeed	1	2	3	4	5
p. I would rather further my education outside the Eastern Cape than get a diploma or degree in this province	1	2	3	4	5
q. One day I would want to raise my children in the Eastern Cape	1	2	3	4	5
r. I feel hopeless in the Eastern Cape	1	2	3	4	5

#### SECTION D: KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

**26. a. If you ever struggled in your school education, what grade did you first experience difficulty?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**26.b. Which subject, if any, did you struggle with the most in your schooling?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**27. Do you think that school knowledge is the same as Western knowledge? (circle the option that applies)**

a. Yes	1		b. No	2
--------	---	--	-------	---

<b>28. Please answer the following questions using the 5-point scale below, where</b> <b>1= Strongly disagree      2= disagree      3=neutral      4=agree      5=strongly agree</b> <b>Circle the number that best describes with how you feel about the following statements:</b>					
	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
a. I can always apply what I learn in school to my life outside of school	1	2	3	4	5
b. The most important knowledge I learn is from the school curriculum and not from my personal experiences or my community	1	2	3	4	5
c. The knowledge I gained from my schooling will be useful in the future	1	2	3	4	5
d. I can easily relate information I learn outside of school to what I learn in school	1	2	3	4	5
e. I think <i>Western</i> knowledge is more useful than the local <i>traditional</i> knowledge I learn from living here.	1	2	3	4	5
f. I don't think I'll use the knowledge I gained from my schooling in the future when I leave high school	1	2	3	4	5
g. My schooling mostly promotes Western thinking	1	2	3	4	5
h. I value traditional knowledge from my culture but do not think that it is important for academic or employment purposes	1	2	3	4	5
i. I struggle to relate to the content of my school curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
j. The knowledge I learn in school promotes one's self and resources	1	2	3	4	5
k. Traditional knowledge promotes one's self ( <i>muntu</i> ) and other people ( <i>bantu</i> )	1	2	3	4	5
l. My knowledge and educational advancement is only for my own good	1	2	3	4	5
m. My education is important for my community and other people	1	2	3	4	5
n. My decision to go to university or work is for my own benefit	1	2	3	4	5

o. What I learn in school makes me a better member of my community	1	2	3	4	5
p. University builds on what I learn in school	1	2	3	4	5
q. Traditional knowledge won't be as important as Western knowledge at university	1	2	3	4	5

<b>29. Are you familiar with the topic of decolonizing knowledge? (circle the option that applies)</b>				
a. Yes	1		b. No	2
<b>30. Are you familiar with the topic of decolonizing the university? (circle the option that applies)</b>				
a. Yes	1		b. No	2

<b>31. Do you have any comments or questions?</b>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

***End of Survey***  
***Enkosi Kakhulu!***

## **Appendix 2: High School Interview Questions**

Sample of semi-structured interview questions.

### **Knowledge Questions**

- 1) Describe what it was like going to school in Eastern Cape?
- 2) Please could you talk about your education experience from primary school until present. Explain any difficulties you experienced, how you viewed your teachers, any thoughts that you had about the curriculum as you were growing up in this village?
- 3) How are you affected by the news about the Eastern Cape's education being the worst in South Africa?
- 4) How do you think the school curriculum represents your lived experience?
- 5) What knowledge is valuable to you, the knowledge about everyday life, cultural knowledge or the knowledge taught in school?
- 6) Are social issues (like are taught in history and sociology) or science more important to learn about? Why?
- 7) What knowledge do you think South Africa values?

### **Place Questions**

- 1) What do you value about the place where you live?
- 2) Do your parents or guardians ever talk about how this place was when they were growing up? What do they talk about?
- 3) How do your parents or guardians view this place?
- 4) How is education affected by where you live? For example, if you lived in a city like East London, how would your education possibly be different?
- 5) If you could move anywhere, where would you move and why?
- 6) Which university would you ideally like to go to? Why?
- 7) What is the purpose of university education?

## **Appendix 3: Focus Group Questions**

### **Focus group 1: Place**

- 1) Why University and why Rhodes? Why have you chosen to do postgrad? Did university meet your expectations? In what ways did it/did it not?
- 2) Describe how you felt about the place you grew up (as you were growing up)
- 3) How did your feelings and thoughts about that place change as you grew up and as you entered Rhodes university?
- 4) What were your thoughts on the Eastern Cape and how did those change over time?
- 5) What do you know about the history of the places you have lived and currently live in?
- 6) How do you think place influenced your education? How does it still influence your education?
- 7) Do you think place has a role in decolonizing knowledge systems/ the university in South Africa? If so, how?

### **Focus group 2: Knowledge**

- 1) What is knowledge and who gets to say what knowledge is?
- 2) Talking about postgraduate studies, what influenced your decisions to research what you are currently working on?
- 1) Do you think that science is removed from the politics of knowledge? Is science exempt from this discussion about how power influences what is defined as knowledge?
- 3) How should the university in SA make room for other knowledge systems?
- 4) Where did you come to know about the history of the Eastern Cape?
- 5) What is your perspective of decolonization of education, of knowledge or the university?

## Appendix 4: Research Permissions

### 4.1. The University of Kansas, Institutional Review Board

#### Human Subjects Approval



Date: July 25, 2018  
TO: Abel Chikanda, (achikanda@ku.edu)  
FROM: Jocelyn Isley, MS, CIP, IRB Administrator (785-864-7385, [irb@ku.edu](mailto:irb@ku.edu))  
RE: **Approval of Initial Study**

The IRB reviewed the submission referenced below on 7/25/2018. The IRB approved the protocol, effective 7/25/2018.

IRB Action: APPROVED		Effective date: 7/25/2018	Expiration Date : N/A
STUDY DETAILS			
Investigator:	<a href="#">Abel Chikanda</a>		
IRB ID:	STUDY00142545		
Title of Study:	A Critical Perspective of Knowledge, Power and Place in the Education System of the Eastern Cape, South Africa		
Funding ID:	None		
REVIEW INFORMATION			
Review Type:	Initial Study		
Review Date:	7/25/2018		
Documents Reviewed:	• AVDingle_KU_HumanProtocol, • consent_focus_groups_university, • Focus Group questions Schools.pdf, • Focus Group Sample Question for University, • July_Sample of possible semi-structured interview questions (high school).pdf, • July16_Eastern Cape Province High School Survey.pdf, • Letter to Principal and Student Governing Body at schools, • Oral consent Interviews, • Oral consent surveys and focus groups		
Exemption Determination:	• (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation		
Additional Information:			

**KEY PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES.** Consult our website for additional information.

- Approved Consent Form:** You must use the final, watermarked version of the consent form, available under the "Documents" tab, "Final" column, in eCompliance. Participants must be given a copy of the form.
- Continuing Review and Study Closure:** Continuing Review is not required for this study. Please [close your study](#) at completion.
- Modifications:** Modifications to the study may affect Exempt status and must be submitted for review and approval before implementing changes. For more information on the types of modifications that require IRB review and approval, [visit our website](#).
- Add Study Team Member:** [Complete a study team modification](#) if you need to add investigators not named in original application. Note that new investigators must take [the online tutorial](#) prior to being approved to work on the project.
- Data Security:** [University data security and handling requirements](#) apply to your project.
- Submit a Report of New Information (RNI):** If a subject is injured in the course of the research procedure or there is a breach of participant information, an RNI must be submitted immediately. Potential non-compliance may also be reported through the RNI process.
- Consent Records:** When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity.

Human Research Protection Program  
Youngberg Hall | 2385 Irving Hill Rd | Lawrence, KS 66045 | (785) 864-7429 | [research.ku.edu/hrpp](http://research.ku.edu/hrpp)

## 4.2. Eastern Cape Department of Education.

Permission to conduct research in select high schools.



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**STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY RESEARCH AND SECRETARIAT SERVICES**

Steve Vukile Tshwete Complex • Zone 6 • Zwelitsha • Eastern Cape  
Private Bag X0032 • Bisho • 5605 • REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: +27 (0)40 608 4773/4035/4537 • Fax: +27 (0)40 608 4574 • Website: [www.ecdoe.gov.za](http://www.ecdoe.gov.za)

Enquiries: B Pamla

Email: [bahawa.pamla@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:bahawa.pamla@ecdoe.gov.za)

Date: 06 August 2018

Ms. A Dingle

1475 Jayhawk Blvd

Lawrence

Kansas

**United States**

**66045**

Dear Ms. A Dingle

**PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE A DOCTORATE THESIS: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF KNOWLEDGE, POWER AND PLACE IN THE EASTERN CAPE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

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1. Thank you for your application to conduct research.
2. Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research from nine (9) selected secondary School in King Williams Town, Fort Beaufort and Grahamstown District under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) is hereby approved based on the following conditions:
  - a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;
  - b. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;
  - c. you present a copy of the written approval letter of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) to the Cluster and District Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;
  - d. you will make all the arrangements concerning your research;
  - e. the research may not be conducted during official contact time;
  - f. should you wish to extend the period of research after approval has been granted, an application to do this must be directed to Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation;



- g. your research will be limited to those institutions for which approval has been granted, should changes be effected written permission must be obtained from the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation;
  - h. you present the Department with a copy of your final paper/report/dissertation/thesis free of charge in hard copy and electronic format. This must be accompanied by a separate synopsis (maximum 2 – 3 typed pages) of the most important findings and recommendations if it does not already contain a synopsis.
  - i. you present the findings to the Research Committee and/or Senior Management of the Department when and/or where necessary.
  - j. you are requested to provide the above to the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation upon completion of your research.
  - k. you comply with all the requirements as completed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE document duly completed by you.
  - l. you comply with your ethical undertaking (commitment form).
  - m. You submit on a six monthly basis, from the date of permission of the research, concise reports to the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation
3. The Department reserves a right to withdraw the permission should there not be compliance to the approval letter and contract signed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE.
  4. The Department will publish the completed Research on its website.
  5. The Department wishes you well in your undertaking. You can contact the Director, Ms. NY Kanjana on the numbers indicated in the letterhead or email [nelisa.kanjana@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:nelisa.kanjana@ecdoe.gov.za) should you need any assistance.



**NY KANJANA**  
**DIRECTOR: STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY RESEARCH & SECRETARIAT SERVICES**  
**FOR SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL: EDUCATION**

