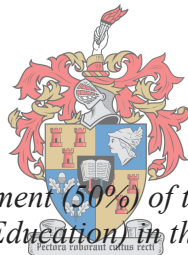


**PERCEPTIONS OF GLOBALISATION: HOW HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS  
PERCEIVE AND EXPRESS THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF GLOBALISATION**

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Date

This thesis is dedicated to my late friend, Werner Viviers, who passed away suddenly on 20 April 2017. He was 25. At the time of his passing, Werner was completing his final year of a BCom degree at Unisa.

Werner, you will always be fondly remembered.

## ABSTRACT

As an art educator, my role is to assist learners to assign a deeper meaning to art. Learners need to be guided to connect with art on a greater than superficial level based on the obvious aesthetic. Learners need to understand that art connects them with the world they inhabit and where they, as a generation, are headed. This has been the focus of my approach: to guide them towards an understanding that there is a difference between form and context. My challenge is to instil knowledge and understanding of the potential of art to reveal more about the world in relation to others and where one stands within this context; to reveal an interconnectedness between the self and the world. This attempt was met with ambivalence, disinterest and, in certain cases, resistance on the part of the high school learners.

The theoretical perspectives of Theodor W. Adorno regarding conceptions of reified consciousness were used to inform the research. The research focused on how high school learners perceive globalisation, how those perceptions are expressed, what those expressions reveal about high school learners' attitudes towards globalisation and to what extent attitudes expressed by high school learners may be interpreted according to the theoretical perspectives of Adorno as reified consciousness. This case study was used in conjunction with non-probability sampling and qualitative data-collection techniques. The sample comprised high school learners at a private school in the Helderberg region of the Cape Town Metropole. Inductive content analysis was used to make sense of the collected data.

The study revealed that perceptions and attitudes towards globalisation of high school learners do indeed exhibit traits of reified consciousness. This was indicated by the learners' general lack of interest in broader socio-cultural contexts and through displays of lack of empathy towards others, a certain level of desensitisation towards violence and a limited level of autonomy.

Implications based on the findings and conclusions of this study indicate that reified consciousness poses a significant barrier to critical citizenship education. As an educator this

poses certain challenges for me, such as how to approach related topics and ensuring that I do not potentially alienate learners further or, unintentionally, reinforce resistive attitudes.

## OPSOMMING

My rol as 'n kunsopvoeder is om leerders te help om 'n dieper betekenis aan kuns te heg. Leerders moet gelei word om 'n band met kuns te vorm op 'n groter vlak as die oppervlakkige wat gegrond is op die vanselfsprekende estetiek. Leerders moet verstaan dat kuns hulle verbind met die wêreld waarin hulle woon, en waarheen hulle as geslag op pad is. Hierdie was die fokus van my benadering: om hulle te begelei om te verstaan dat daar 'n verskil tussen vorm en konteks is. My uitdaging is om kennis en begrip te skep van kuns se potensiaal om meer oor die wêreld in verhouding tot ander te openbaar en waar mens binne hierdie konteks staan; om 'n onderlinge verbondenheid tussen die self en die wêreld te openbaar. Hierdie poging is met teenstrydigheid, belangeloosheid en, in sekere gevalle, weerstand deur die hoërskoolleerders ontvang.

Die teoretiese perspektiewe van Theodor W. Adorno rakende konsepte van gereïfiseerde bewussyn het die navorsing gerig. Die navorsing het gefokus op hoërskoolleerders se persepsie van globalisering, hoe daardie persepsies uitgedruk word, wat daardie uitdrukkings oor hoërskoolleerders se houdings teenoor globalisering openbaar en in watter mate houdings wat deur hoërskoolleerders uitgedruk word volgens die teoretiese perspektiewe van Adorno as gereïfiseerde bewussyn geïnterpreteer kan word. Niewaarskynlikheidsteekproefneming en kwalitatiewe data-insamelingstegnieke is in hierdie gevallestudie gebruik. Die steekproef was hoërskoolleerders by 'n privaat skool in die Helderberg-streek van die Kaapstadse Metropol. Induktiewe inhoudsontleding is gebruik om sin van die ingesamelde data te maak.

Die studie het aan die lig gebring dat hoërskoolleerders se persepsies van en houdings teenoor globalisering inderdaad eienskappe van gereïfiseerde bewussyn toon. Dit is aangedui deur die leerders se algemene gebrek aan belangstelling in breër sosio-kulturele kontekste en gebrek aan empatie teenoor ander, 'n sekere vlak van desensitisering teenoor geweld en 'n beperkte vlak van outonomie.

Implikasies gegrond op die bevindings en gevolgtrekkings van hierdie studie dui daarop dat gereïfiseerde bewussyn 'n beduidende versperring tot kritiese burgerskapsopvoeding inhou. As opvoeder stel dit vir my sekere uitdagings, soos hoe om verwante onderwerpe te benader en te verseker dat ek nie die leerders moontlik verder vervreem nie of, onopsetlik, weerstandbiedende houdings versterk nie.

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## CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

As an art educator, I find it a challenge to bridge the gap between the aesthetic appeal of an artwork and what may lie beyond in terms of deeper meanings – in other words, what an artwork may reveal to us about ourselves and the world we inhabit. Furthermore, I have felt it prudent to contextualise artworks with regard to the conditions under which they were created and the conditions under which they are experienced. Through my own experiences I have come to regard art as being a form of communication subject to the same linguistic instabilities as any other communicative form, such as written text or the spoken word. Art serves as a conduit by which ideas are communicated to an interested audience. Art need not always be expressive, but is always a form of expression. What I propose by this is that art need not always have the gestural, emotive impact of a work by, for instance, Van Gogh or Kirchner, and may at times seem devoid of any emotion or eloquence; however, in whichever guise we may experience art, it always has something to say. Although not mutually exclusive, the communicative aspect of art has, for me, always outweighed the aesthetic component. The potential of art to reveal something about ourselves, where we have been or where we are heading, has essentially been the locus around which my approach to art education has revolved. However, here is where the distance between form and context is most prevalent: where the potential of art to reveal more about oneself and one's place in the world in relation to others is met with a certain degree of disinterest, ambivalence or, in some cases, outright resistance on the part of high school learners. Why is this?

This study was not an attempt at figuring out why learners are not as enthusiastic about art as I am. High school learners are enthusiastic about art, but more so in the spirit of actively making art and engaging in aesthetic experiments than in the spirit of what art may potentially reveal. This study was about gaining a better understanding as to why high school learners tend to approach the broader socio-cultural contexts in which art is embedded with a certain level of ambivalence and lack of interest. This was not a study about art practice *per se*, but more about gaining a better understanding of attitudes towards contemporary socio-cultural phenomena typified by globalisation from the

standpoint of Theodor Adorno – in other words: Can attitudes of ambivalence and disinterest towards thematic concerns relating to broad socio-cultural contexts manifest through globalisation be interpreted as a form of reified consciousness?

## **1.2 BACKGROUND**

As a person in my early forties, I am afforded the benefit of being able to clearly (and sometimes fondly) remember life before the advent of home PCs, the internet, smart phones and the level of global interconnectedness we experience today. Owing to this, it is not difficult for me to gauge the effects these developments have had on my own life and the consequences thereof. I have a clear reference from which to work. However, for a younger generation, this reference point is for all intents and purposes non-existent – except perhaps through the reminiscence of third-party sources such as family elders. Younger generations have never truly experienced life without the ubiquitous technologies associated with globalisation and if I were to sum up what these technologies represent in terms of their impact in a single word, that word would be ‘access’. While younger generations enjoy greater access and to a certain degree have come to depend on these technologies and primary means of interaction within micro and macro environments, the question arises as to how these technologies affect their perceptions and attitudes towards broad socio-cultural contexts.

This study did not aim to take a specific side with regard to globalisation as phenomenally positive or negative – trying to reduce a phenomenon as complex as globalisation to one or the other is merely reductivist and serves no critical purpose. Instead, this study accepted the position of globalisation as consequentially part of our daily lives and sought to gain a better understanding of attitudes towards globalisation as perceived by high school learners, the extent to which they perceive of it as an inevitability and the extent to which they have control over it.

The significance of the research resides in what it was able to reveal about perceptions and attitudes of high school learners regarding globalisation. By having a greater understanding as to how high school learners perceive and cope with the various dimensions of globalisation, educators such as myself should be able to make adjustments as to how to

approach related topics in future. This study may be viewed as a baseline assessment of learners' attitudes within a specific learning context. The study was able to reveal a certain level of reified consciousness on the part of learners towards specific dimensions of globalisation, such knowledge will enable educators such as myself to approach topics related to globalisation from a different angle, thereby ensuring that we do not potentially alienate learners further, or unintentionally, reinforce a resistive attitude.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES**

My role as an art educator is neither defined, nor is it limited to, my abilities as an instructor of technique, but rather, and more importantly, it is defined by my ability as an educator to prepare learners for life after school. In order to better prepare learners, I approach art education from the standpoint of critical citizenship education. By this I propose my approach to art education as a means of nurturing and encouraging learners' ability to critically engage with established norms and values and to see themselves as part of broader social contexts and concerns (Nussbaum, 2002: 295). As stated previously, as an art educator I am faced with the challenge of contextualising art practice as part of a greater socio-cultural environment, in other words, of instilling an understanding of art as a product of the social conditions under which art is created, leading to the ability to reveal deeper meanings with regard to the experiential conditions under which they were created to an interested audience. While learners enthusiastically engage in art practice in terms of art making and aesthetic experiments, conceptions of art as a means of contributing to a broader understanding of the world at large and what one may learn from it are met with a certain amount of ambivalence, disinterest and resistance from learners.

For the purpose of this study, the following research question was formulated: How do high school learners perceive globalisation, how are those perceptions expressed and what do those expressions reveal about high school learners' attitudes towards globalisation and to what extent may attitudes expressed by high school learners be interpreted according to the theoretical perspectives of Theodor Adorno as a form of reified consciousness?

The central objective of this study was focused on gaining a better understanding of high school learners' perceptions of globalisation. By focusing the investigation on learners'

attitudes towards globalisation, I was able to ascertain whether I am, as an educator, under current teaching circumstances inadvertently contributing to reified consciousness or providing a learning environment conducive to critical consciousness through critical self-reflection. In certain respects, this study was a baseline assessment of current conditions and provided me with a better understanding of learners' attitudes. This improved understanding, in turn, provided me with the means to act accordingly with regard to how I may better nurture critical citizenship through the promotion of critical self-reflection as a means of unravelling reified thinking.

As an educator, my primary objective is to contribute in a positive, responsible manner to learners' understanding of the world around them through the promotion of critical self-reflection in order to nurture critical citizenship. Mezirow *et al.* (1999, in, Crowther and Sutherland, 2006: 24–38) describe critical self-reflection as a process of becoming aware of one's presuppositions and questioning one's own assumptions and meaning perspectives in relation to established views. This understanding of critical self-reflection correlates with the view of Yip (2007: 290), who defines critical self-reflection as "a process of self-articulation of a situation and internalization of professional knowledge into actual situations and contexts". Critical self-reflection is directed at enabling individuals to critically evaluate their values and assumptions (Yip, 2007: 286), how they came to be and what the consequences thereof are within broader social-cultural contexts. As is evidenced by Yip (2007: 290), the contexts of understanding are as crucial as the understanding itself. This view of critical consciousness through critical self-reflection forms the fulcrum of Theodor Adorno's perspective of critical self-reflection as a means of examining and questioning accepted norms and values in order to affect change where necessary.

This relates to Adorno's concept of reified consciousness. Adorno (2005: 200) describes reified consciousness as the inability to identify with others and states that it is interlinked with three key related concepts, namely barbarism, coldness and autonomy. According to Adorno (2005: 196), barbarism may be understood as one's relationship with or attitude towards violence, which in the context of this study relates to one's level of de-sensitisation towards violence. Coldness relates to one's diminished ability to relate or have empathy with the circumstances of others (Adorno, 2005: 200). Autonomy refers to one's ability to

think outside of the collective and to critically think for oneself. Autonomy is seen as the ability to question the validity of collective ideals and not merely following the collective blindly (Adorno, 2005: 198). Barbarism, coldness and autonomy serve as the foundation of Adorno's notion of reified consciousness, whereby only through critical self-reflection are we able to confront and question on a personal level our perceptions, conscious and unconscious that govern our lives (Adorno, 2005: 195).

#### **1.4 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH PARADIGM AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was centred on a combination of critical postmodern and interpretivist research paradigms. A critical postmodern paradigm posits a theoretical position as “a middle between critical modern, critical pedagogy, critical feminism, critical hermeneutics, critical-ethnomethod, critical-ecology, and post-colonial theories” (Boje, Fitzgibbons & Steingard, 1996: 90–91). Furthermore, as argued by Boje (2007, in Thomas, 2010: 300), a critical postmodern paradigm may be understood as drawing attention to the material conditions of experiential phenomena, whereas postmodern perspectives are macro-oriented and focus attention towards institutional mechanisms. Critical postmodernism recognises one's complicity at an individual level within broader macro-level institutional systems and posits alternative approaches to negotiation, as exemplified in the following statement: “Critical postmodern theory would recognize the multiplicity and multi-dimensionality that make up our organizational and consumer experience of ambiguity, conflict and discontinuity, and can inform more useful ways of working and thinking in this postmodern age” (Boje *et al.*, 1996: 64). Critical postmodernism is less radical in its approach and may be understood as an amalgam of postmodern perspectives and critical theory (Boje, 2007, in Thomas, 2010: 300).

According to an interpretivist research paradigm, “knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation, hence there is no objective knowledge which is independent of thinking, reasoning humans” (Gephart, 1999, in Thomas, 2010: 295). Interpretivist approaches to research assume a position of multiple realities; each one being unique to the individual's experience (Hedberg & Reeves, 2003: 32). In this sense, interpretivist research is centred on placing analysis within context in order to understand the world as a subjective reality of individual experiences. An interpretivist paradigm places emphasis on the human aspect of

research and does not rely as heavily on mathematical modelling of phenomena, as is the case with quantitative approaches (Hedberg & Reeves, 2003: 32). All interpretations are situated within a particular circumstance; they are located in a particular context or situation and time and open to re-interpretation and negotiation through conversation.

For the current study, research and data collection were conducted by means of a case study. The case study was conducted according to qualitative methodology and was interpretive in its approach to the data. The advantage of such an approach to research and data collection lies in its characteristic nature of not predefining dependent and independent variables, but instead focusing on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994, in Thomas, 2010: 296). Tellis (1997, in Zaidah, 2007: 1) contends that “case study research helps explain both the process and outcome of the phenomenon through complete observation, reconstruction and analysis of the case under investigation”. By applying this approach I was able to effectively describe the contextual experience in greater detail and gather data pertaining to what the experience revealed with regard to the participants within the specific context in which the research was taking place. This approach is exemplified by Stake (2006: 2), who states that an understanding of the case “requires experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its context and in its particular situation”. Furthermore, Stake (2008: 136) adds that “crucial to case study research are not the methods of investigation, but that the object of study is a case ... as a form of research, case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used”. By this Stake does not suggest that the methodological implementation of case study research is inconsequential to the outcome, but rather that the outcomes of the case study are defined by the specific contexts of interest, as a phenomenon specific to time and space.

The case study was conducted at a private school in the Helderberg region of the Cape Town Metropole. The case study was divided into three distinct phases and comprised group discussions and the creation of a poster collage. Phase 1 was an introductory phase, where my role as facilitator was centred on passive observation as the learners expressed their initial conceptions of globalisation. In Phase 2 my role as facilitator was more actively engaged with the learners by introducing them to and guiding them through various

thematic concerns relating to globalisation. In Phase 3 the learners were tasked with creating a poster collage as a visual expression of their conceptions of globalisation. Data collection was through group observations and by recording the sessions and compiling notes during the group discussions. Learners were made aware that the sessions were being recorded. Group discussion was chosen as the preferred method of data collection, as I felt this method would not interfere or inadvertently influence the learners' perceptions. Written transcripts were made of the group discussions verbatim in order to review the data. The collected data were kept in a secure location at all times.

### **1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

While the study addressed key concepts relating to broad socio-cultural contexts, it was approached from a specific frame of reference regarding attitudes of high school learners towards globalisation and examined how those attitudes may to a certain extent be interpreted as reified consciousness. It is important to bear in mind certain delimiting factors defining the parameters in which the study was conducted and how the findings may be approached. Firstly, this study was a once-off study. The study was conducted at a small private school with a limited number of high school learners, therefore the number of participants involved in an art-based learning environment was limited to 12. Secondly, the participants shared a similar social-cultural background and demographic profile. This study was context-specific and therefore findings based on this study cannot be generalised.

### **1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

Chapter 1 served as an introduction and an orientation to the study and discussed the background to the research, the research paradigm and research methodology and the limitations to the study.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the theoretical perspectives guiding the study and centres on the theoretical perspectives of Theodor W. Adorno, K.D. Cho and Henry A. Giroux.

Chapter 3 discusses the contextual significance of the study in terms of correlations between Adorno's original publication of the essay "Education after Auschwitz" in 1967 and post-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter 4 examines in greater detail the research paradigm and research methodology and explains how the case study was implemented.

Chapter 5 examines and discusses in depth the findings of the case study with an in-depth analysis of what was revealed regarding the high school learners' perceptions of and attitudes towards globalisation.

Chapter 6 focuses specifically of the conclusions drawn from the findings derived from the data collected during the case study and discusses how empathy, desensitisation towards violence and autonomy were displayed by the learners and to what extent this may be interpreted as reified consciousness.

## **1.7 CONCLUSION**

The research stemmed from challenges encountered in art education when teaching that art has greater significance beyond aesthetic concerns. The research question upon which this study is focused is as follows: How do high school learners perceive and express their understandings of globalisation and to what extent may attitudes towards globalisation be interpreted as reified consciousness? The research methodology employed in this study was case study research conducted at a private school with a limited number of high school learners. The case study was conducted according to a critical postmodern and interpretivist paradigm. The significance of the study resides in what it was able to reveal regarding attitudes towards globalisation and how knowledge acquired from this study may be applied in order to overcome potential barriers to education based on critical consciousness in order to promote critical citizenship.



## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the theoretical perspectives that guided this study. The chapter begins with a review of Theodor Adorno's perspectives regarding education through critical self-reflection as a means through which atrocities such as Auschwitz may never happen again. According to Adorno, such atrocities were brought about through collective attitudes manifested through reification and reified consciousness. I also reviewed the perspectives of K.D. Cho and Henry A. Giroux and examined how their interpretations of Adorno correlate in a more contemporary social setting. I then explain how certain key concepts proposed by Adorno, namely barbarism, coldness and autonomy, relate in context to this study and manifest as desensitisation, empathy and critical thinking. In addition, the concepts of critical self-reflection and critical citizenship are discussed.

### 2.2 ADORNO ON EDUCATION

The theoretical perspectives of Theodor Adorno, specifically relating to his essay "Education after Auschwitz",<sup>1</sup> is the principle frame of reference according to which this study was formulated. It also drew on the insights of K.D. Cho by examining "Adorno on education or, can critical self-reflection prevent the next Auschwitz?" (2009) and Henry A. Giroux's paper, "What might education mean after Abu Ghraib: Revisiting Adorno's politics of education" (2004).

In "Education after Auschwitz", Theodor Adorno (2005: 191) proposes that the primary goal of all education should be the prevention of another Auschwitz. He examined the state of education in post-war Germany and identified certain key factors that serve as indicators pertaining to collective attitudes regarding atrocities. Furthermore, Adorno (2005: 191–192) explains that events such as Auschwitz are not mere anomalies occurring as isolated incidents, but are the result of allowances brought on by the collective attitude of the society in which such atrocities transpire. Adorno points out that education played an

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<sup>1</sup> "Education after Auschwitz" was originally presented as a radio lecture on 18 April 1966 as "Padagogik nach Auschwitz". It was later published in 1967. The English translation appears in Adorno (2005: 191–204).

important role in forming collective attitudes that allow for the foresaid atrocity,<sup>2</sup> but he also proposes that an education based on critical self-reflection is in his opinion the only meaningful deterrent against such atrocities in the future – hence his assertion that education should serve primarily to prevent another Auschwitz: “The premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again” (2005: 191). While the locus of Adorno’s essay is centred on Auschwitz, Auschwitz serves as an analogy for any form of violent, irrational act – physical or psychological – committed against the ‘other’ at any point in time.

Brons (2015: 70) describes othering as follows:

... the simultaneous construction of the self or in-group and the other or out-group in mutual and unequal opposition through identification of some desirable characteristic that the self/in-group has and the other/out-group lacks and/or some undesirable characteristic that the other/out-group has and the self/in-group lacks.

Brons makes lucid the idea of othering as the process of whereby individual or group identities are formed based on the assumption that the foresaid individual/group possesses certain unique desirable traits that distinguish them from other individuals/groups not possessing these traits or characteristics and form the basis for exclusion. In “Education after Auschwitz”, Adorno states: “The only education that has any sense at all is an education toward critical self-reflection” (2005: 193).

### **2.3 REIFIED CONSCIOUSNESS**

A key concept addressed by Adorno in “Education after Auschwitz” is the notion of reified consciousness, which, according to Adorno (2005: 200), “is a consciousness blinded to all historical past, all insight into one’s own conditionedness, and posits as absolute what exists contingently”. What Adorno means by this is that reified consciousness is a form of consciousness through which decisions are made based on a limited understanding and a disregard of the broader consequences of one’s actions and who they may affect. Basically, reified consciousness is the antithesis of critical self-reflection. For Adorno it is in reified

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<sup>2</sup> See Giroux (2004: 5–27).

consciousness that the seeds of destruction are sown and if education is to prevent the next Auschwitz, it needs to overcome reified consciousness through the promotion of critical self-reflection.

Cho and Giroux revisited Adorno's "Education after Auschwitz" and provide invaluable insights into Adorno's original essay and its relevance and impact in today's globalising world. According to Cho (2009: 75), "it still has resonance today as the contemporary moment has seen the return of Auschwitz in such places as Darfur, East Timor, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the former Yugoslavia, and now Iraq". Cho sees such atrocities as a result of struggles of which the root causes may to a large extent be located in the social disparities created by the on going expansion of neo-liberalism and capitalist practices as a whole. According to Cho (2009: 80), "violence and brutality are at the heart of capitalist society itself". He elaborates as follows: "the transformation of society will only become total when capitalism itself has been brought to an end. Thus education after Auschwitz can only be actualised by becoming part of a larger collective struggle against capital" (Cho, 2009: 95).

Giroux (2004: 5–27) examined perceptions of the Gulf War as a mediated phenomenon and posits to what extent atrocities are validated and accepted on the home front as consequence of the war on terror. Giroux examined the media's role in formulating a collective consciousness that potentially allows for such atrocities as a means - for it serves a righteous end. For Giroux (2004: 23), this is an extremely dangerous proposition, and he turns towards Adorno and critical self-reflection within the sphere of public pedagogy as an alternative preventative measure, as is made evident in the following statement:

[E]ducation as a democratic force could play a central role in constructing political and moral agents and in altering the rising tide of authoritarianism on a national and global level. His [Adorno's] call to rethink the importance of critical education as a central element of any viable notion of politics offers an opportunity, especially for educators and other cultural workers, to learn from the horrors of Abu Ghraib, and to rethink the value of public pedagogy – produced in a range of sites and public spheres – as

constituting cultural practices, the future of public institutions, and global democracy itself.

One may be inclined to inquire where the relevance of the above lies with regard to high school learners and their perceptions of globalisation. In answer to this, I return to Adorno. Although Adorno's essay places emphasis on Auschwitz and the conditions that led to such an atrocity, he cautions against the changing social climate in which he found himself in post-war Germany characterised by neo-liberalism and growing capitalist influence (Adorno, 2005: 200). Particular attention is given to the impact of technology and consumer culture on collective consciousness, evidenced in the following statement (Adorno, 2005: 200):

[O]ne should also observe closely the relationship to technology, and certainly not only within small groups ... A world where technology occupies such a key position as it does nowadays produces technological people ... This has its good reason: in their own narrow field they will be less likely to be fooled and that can also affect the overall situation. On the other hand, there is something exaggerated, irrational, pathogenic in the present-day relationship to technology. This is connected with the "veil of technology." People are inclined to take technology to be the thing itself, as an end in itself, a force of its own, and they forget that it is an extension of human dexterity. The means – and technology is the epitome of the means of self-preservation of the human species – are fetishized, because the ends – a life of human dignity – are concealed and removed from the consciousness of people.

Adorno is talking to us directly about the impact of technology on our consciousness by applying the concept of reification as theorised by Georg Lukács in *History and class consciousness: Studies in Marxist dialectics* (1968). According to Lukács (1968: 83), "a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity', an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people". Here Lukács demonstrates that reification is the process through which social relations are taken as things. Social relations are approached as objects and the social dimension that sustains the phenomena is nullified.<sup>3</sup> The social dimension is diminished to the point where it is no

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<sup>3</sup> See Feenberg (2015).

longer considered as part of the technological process; the consciousness dimension of technology begins and ends with the technology itself. Adorno applies this logic to his conception of 'reified consciousness' whereby "[p]eople of such a nature have, as it were, assimilated themselves to things. And then, when possible, they assimilate others to things" (2005: 199).

These insights regarding the social impact of technology were made in the mid-60s, and while the technological developments experienced at this time were undoubtedly significant in terms of their influence on the lived experience, consider now how technology has further evolved in the 50 years succeeding Adorno's original essay. No matter one's view on technology as either beneficial or detrimental, either way it would be foolhardy to dispute the fact that technology has and continues to have a significant impact on the manner in which we conduct our lives. It has provided the means for an acceleration of globalisation and mass media consumer culture. As our lives become ever more permeated with technology, our relationships become ever more mediated by technological means.

Reified consciousness may be interpreted as the process whereby decisions are made with little regard to how the consequences affect others. A further characteristic of reified consciousness is an unwillingness to learn more about a situation or incorporate new knowledge into one's point of view or accept an alternative approach. This is particularly evident when one views such action as reduction of one's original position. As stated by Adorno (2005: 196), "reified consciousness is the inability to identify with others", particularly those who may be in a precarious position relative to one's own. A reified attitude is likely to cause one to take a resistive stance towards others to the point where such persons may even be deemed a threat to one's current position. Reified consciousness places the individual at the centre of the decision-making process and acts only in accordance with potential benefits arising for the one making the decision. A further characteristic of reified consciousness is the tendency to lash out at others when the situation may seem untenable. This is exemplified by one blaming a minority group for the perceived ills in one's own life without stopping to consider the challenges that such a minority group may face on a daily basis. For the reified mind, the minority group in question never amounts to anything more than an object – a thing. The group is never

thought of as being comprised of individual people with their own personalities and their own humanity. As Cho (2009: 87) aptly explains: “the reified, half-educated, mind, which is enthralled by the immediacy of stereotypes and caricatures, will allay its fears by looking for explanations in the Manichean demonisation of the dissimilar and nonidentical – for example, the so-called ‘Jewish plot’”. Cho (2009: 87) further extends his contention by stating:

Reification might be accurately pictured in the mind’s eye as the liquidation of individuality in favour of fashion trends and consumable goods, but it manifests more concretely as a mundane refusal to think deeply, a plugging up of one’s ears and a shutting of one’s eyes.

Adorno’s concept of reified consciousness is entwined with three key related concepts concerning education after Auschwitz, namely barbarism, coldness and autonomy.

## **2.4 BARBARISM**

In its simplest form, barbarism may be understood as an archaic tendency towards violence (Adorno, 2005: 196) and as such is illustrated by the following statement (Adorno, 2005: 191):

One speaks of the threat of a relapse into barbarism. But it is not a threat – Auschwitz was this relapse, and barbarism continues as long as the fundamental conditions that favoured that relapse continue largely unchanged ... It drives people toward the unspeakable, which culminated on a world-historical scale in Auschwitz.

The fundamental conditions of which Adorno speaks may accurately be viewed as the conditions manifested by collective attitudes towards violence – or more accurately, the condoning of violence by the collective as an act of reification.<sup>4</sup> Giroux (2004: 14) complicates the issue further by addressing collective attitudes towards violence within the context of contemporary life:

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<sup>4</sup> “Thus reified consciousness and reflective concentration will be the two antipodes which determine whether Auschwitz returns or not” (Cho, 2009: 84).

[H]ow might one explain the ongoing evaporation of political dissent and opposing viewpoints in the United States that preceded the events at Abu Ghraib without engaging the pedagogical campaign of fear-mongering adorned with the appropriate patriotic rhetoric waged by the Bush administration? ... How might Abu Ghraib be used to analyse critically the willingness of so many Americans to allow their country to be put in lockdown status, barely register a protest when Mitt Romney a 2008 Republican presidential contender called for doubling Guantanamo, or Washington politicians refer to torture as ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’.

Giroux presents a real-world case of collective attitudes enacting the barbaric tendency which Adorno so passionately cautions against in “Education after Auschwitz”. At its nucleus, barbarism is manifest in the relationship towards violence and how that relationship is enacted. When we consider barbarism as contingent on the relationship towards violence, we may make the assertion that detachment from or indifference towards violence characterised as de-sensitivity is a form of barbarism as well – for it governs our attitude towards it in the sense that we no longer react to it accordingly. However, our lack of action towards violence *is* a form of action – indirect action guided by an impassive, desensitised attitude that, while not necessarily condoning violence, does not condemn it either. It is this detached, de-sensitised and hence *reified* view of violence that Giroux draws to our attention as collective conditioning for barbarism in the Adornian sense of the word. De-sensitivity towards violence is reified consciousness enacted.

## 2.5 COLDNESS

A second key concept that relates to this study and is addressed by Adorno in “Education after Auschwitz” is coldness, which he describes as “people who cannot love. This is not meant to be sentimental or moralistic but rather describes a deficient libidinal relationship to other persons” (2005: 200). We may deduce from this statement that the lack of love to which Adorno refers as coldness may accurately be described as a sense of detachment or the diminished ability to relate to the circumstances of others. We may further interpret this coldness in the contemporary sense of the word as a lack of empathy towards others. Empathy may be broadly understood as concern for others and experiencing emotions that

match those of others (Levison & Ruett, 1992, in Hodges & Klein, 2001: 438). According to Hodges and Klein (2001: 438), empathy is the bridging of the gap between self-experience and the experience of the other.

This assumption is corroborated by Adorno when he states “if people were not profoundly indifferent toward whatever happens to everyone else except for a few to whom they are closely bound . . . then Auschwitz would not have been possible, people would not have accepted it” (2005: 201). Empathy, or more accurately, the lack of empathy when considered as a sense of detachment from the realities of others, gives itself over to reification, for one does not recognise the human quality but only the objectivised circumstance in question to which an indifferent, disinterested response is offered in return.

## **2.6 AUTONOMY**

A further key aspect to consider is Adorno’s conception of autonomy: “The single genuine power standing against the principle of Auschwitz is autonomy ... the power of reflection, of self-determination, of not cooperating” (2005: 195). Here there is a clear distinction between the viewpoints of Adorno and Lukács. Lukács proposes that the on going class struggle would only be overcome by the collective through class consciousness.<sup>5</sup> Adorno, on the other hand, takes a position whereby he resists the urge to join the collective, for it is within the collective that reified action is manifest. As Adorno states (2005: 195):

The very willingness to connive with power and to submit outwardly to what is stronger, under the guise of a norm, is the attitude of the tormentors that should not arise again. It is for this reason that the advocacy of bonds is so fatal. People who adopt them more or less voluntarily are placed under a kind of permanent compulsion to obey orders.

Adorno contends that it is collective thought that governs the mind set of the individuals and suppresses the tendency to think critically for oneself: “People who blindly slot themselves into the collective already make themselves into something like inert material, extinguish themselves as self-determined beings. With this comes the willingness to treat

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<sup>5</sup> See Feenberg (2015).



others as an amorphous mass” (Adorno, 2005: 198). In other words, social exchanges are approached as things. One should be wary of interpreting Adorno’s contention that *all* collectives will inevitably metamorphose into some form of collective fascist compulsion. No, he merely shows, firstly, that the potential is there, and secondly, that the inertial drive of collective thought comes at a cost to autonomy – to critical thinking and critical self-reflection and the resolve to resist and not blindly accept the will of the masses.

## 2.7 CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION

Returning to Cho (2009: 88): “Adorno believes education can do something by providing the very thing reification eviscerates, namely training in reflexive thinking” and Adorno (2005: 193): “The only education that has any sense at all is an education toward critical self-reflection”. Critical self-reflection or reflective practice,<sup>6</sup> which Yip (2007:290) defines as “a process of self-articulation of a situation and internalization of professional knowledge into actual situations and contexts”, enables individuals to critically evaluate their values and assumptions in regard to the broader context. Self-reflection is outward-looking. It resists the tendency to internalise or to withdraw and isolate oneself as separate from the conscious reality of the whole. Jaspers (1963, in Yip, 2007: 294) postulates as follows:

Each act of reflection throws light on something that had been unconscious and obscure and with this comes release from the obscure bondage of the undifferentiated, from the given thus-ness of the self, from the power of uncritically accepted symbols and from the absolute reality of the objective world.

As stated by Yip (2007: 294), critical self-reflection enables one to understand one’s point of reference in relation to the whole and to “gradually release ... [one’s] deep-seated feelings, cognition, memory suppressed in the unconscious”. By taking cognition of our position through critical self-reflection, we are able to confront and to question on a personal level the very perceptions, conscious and unconscious, which govern our lives; the power of reflection, of self-determination, of not blindly following along – this is the autonomy for which Adorno strives as the counteragent to reification. As Yip (2007: 290) affirms, self-reflection can be an endless process. The more one observes oneself, the more one can understand and reveal oneself.

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<sup>6</sup> For an in-depth explanation of the relation between self-reflection and reflective practice, see Yip (2007).

## 2.8 CRITICAL CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is by its intrinsic nature a learned experience and therefore always centred on learning. The link between education and citizenship is to a degree centred on and understood through what Benedict Andersen (1991, in Osler & Starkey, 2003: 244) describes as “socialisation into an ‘imagined community’ of the nation”, whereby citizenship implies one’s normalisation into the core shared values of a society, which, when taken from a systems theory perspective, cancels out any potential conceptual dilemmas, as it functions on the premise that all systems tend towards equilibrium or homeostasis (Marshall, 1994). Equilibrium from a systems theory perspective may be interpreted as the harmonious integration into the social order of things – in effect, maintaining the status quo of a system where variations or deviations of the said system are quantifiable and outcomes largely predictable through clearly defined boundaries. However, ‘real-world’ contemporary societies do not function on this premise. The physical and psychological boundaries that in the past have to a lesser or greater extent determined the social-cultural environment are in a constant state of flux as global societies change and adapt to pressures brought about through the effects of globalisation. As Osler and Starkey highlight (2003: 244), this ‘education for citizenship’ approach “fails to engage with the actual experiences of ... [life] in globalised [contemporary societies]”, where citizens “are more likely to have shifting and multiple cultural identities and a sense of belonging that is not expressed first and foremost in terms of the nation”.

So, when Martha Nussbaum calls for education for citizenship in her article “Education for citizenship in an era of global connection” (2002: 289–303), what exactly is she implying? Education for citizenship in this sense is not centred on how well one is able to adjust to established norms, but rather to what extent one is able to critically engage with established norms within a broader socio-cultural context. Nussbaum (2002: 295) states: “Citizens ... need ... an ability to see themselves as not simply citizens of some local region or group but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern”. This contention ties in with Paolo Freire’s conception of citizenship as a “synergistic process of reflection and action through which the people would become

‘involved in the organised struggle for their liberation’” (1972, in Johnson & Morris, 2010: 80).

Nussbaum and Freire both suggest that the onus of citizenship falls not on the collective state, but more so on individuals as active, engaged participants within their broader social contexts. By implication, citizenship is not necessarily envisaged merely as a sense of belonging arbitrarily defined by physical and ideological boundaries, but encompasses a sense of social responsibility and action on the part of individuals within their communities of practice. According to Smith (2003), communities of practice may be understood as the pursuit of common interests on the part of a group of individuals. These communities may be formal arrangements, as in the case of institutional education, or less formal, as in the case of shared common interests in certain leisure activities. While the assertion outlined above is applicable in the context of this study, I applied the term ‘critical citizenship’ as a means of delineating the broad social contexts in which individuals interact and are able to exercise a certain level of influence. In many respects, the assertion of citizenship as being socially aware and pro-actively engaged with what we choose to give voice to is what gives expression to the notion of critical citizenship education.

Critical citizenship education and critical self-reflection are synonymous concepts in that they are closely entwined as a means (critical self-reflection) to a desired end (critical citizenship). Critical citizenship through critical self-reflection is a dialectical process; in other words, it involves the generation of knowledge by means of discussions and through the sharing of and reflecting on ideas and opinions as opposed to didactic approaches centred more on outright instruction. Owing to its dialectical nature (Day, 2011: 4), art education has the potential to play an integral role in fostering critical self-reflection and critical citizenship.

## **2.9 CONCLUSION**

In ‘Education after Auschwitz’, Theodor Adorno proposes critical consciousness and critical self-reflection as a means to overcoming reified consciousness. Reified consciousness, according to Adorno is manifest as barbarism, coldness and autonomy. Barbarism relates to

one's attitude towards violence, coldness, as one's diminished ability to empathise with others while autonomy relates to the power of reflection. In other words, autonomy encompasses one's ability to think critically and not necessarily accept the collective will. While an orthodox view of citizenship may be conceived of as one's normalisation into the core shared values of a society, critical citizenship on the other hand centres on to what extent one is able to critically engage with established norms within a broader socio-cultural context. Critical citizenship education encompasses instilling a sense of social responsibility and action on the part of individuals within their communities of practice

## CHAPTER 3: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by examining the social context of Adorno's original 1967 essay and proceeds to draw comparisons between post-World War II Germany and post-apartheid South Africa. The chapter examines how Adorno was aware of the growing influence of mass media technologies on social life and cautioned against its potential impact. There is a correlation between the time of Adorno's writing of "Education after Auschwitz" and South African society after the end of apartheid and how globalisation has impacted society in the succeeding years. It considers the impact of globalisation specifically on the youth. It examines 'youth' as a transitional concept – in other words, as a transition phase between childhood and adulthood determined by the level of independence an individual may enjoy. Youths enjoy a greater level of independence than children, but not the degree of independence enjoyed by adults. As individuals transition through the youth phase, their level of independence increases. This chapter also examines the effect of globalisation on the youth, particularly in terms of the impact of technology on youths as the primary source of interaction with globalisation through access to communications technologies.

### 3.2 SOUTH AFRICA IN CONTEXT

This study followed the theoretical perspectives of Theodor Adorno pre-eminently regarding his 1967 essay titled "Education after Auschwitz". Adorno contends that the primary task of education should be centred on the prevention of another Auschwitz. I have also taken into account the perspectives of K.D. Cho and Henry A. Giroux, who revisited "Education after Auschwitz" and extend Adorno's original contentions into contexts closer to home. Cho examined Adorno's work as a means towards preventing another Auschwitz through critical self-reflection, while Giroux re-examined Adorno's original ideas and projects them onto a more contemporary period. Giroux reveals how the original ideas espoused by Adorno remain as relevant today as they did in the mid-60s.

An interesting point to raise at this juncture is that when "Education after Auschwitz" was first released into the public sphere, 20 years had passed since the atrocities committed by

the Nazi regime under Adolf Hitler. There is a correlation between Adorno's period of producing "Education after Auschwitz" and the period in which we find ourselves now as South Africans more than 20 years after the end of apartheid. While both countries were trying to come to terms with the atrocities of their recent pasts, they were also trying to adapt to a fast-changing world in terms of geopolitics and socio-economics. Adorno was acutely aware of the changes taking place in the various sectors of public and private life and attempted to project a certain amount of caution as to where he felt his world was moving to at the time. South Africa, on the other hand, found itself in a similar position during the period of transition to a democratic state (Marais, 2001: 85–90). This period of transition coincided with a time when globalisation was increasingly entering into the broader public imagination with the rise of and intensification of fledgling technologies such as the World Wide Web and mobile communications.<sup>7</sup> Neo-liberal economics was entering a stage of unbridled growth into new markets facilitated to a large extent by the rapid growth of the fore-mentioned technologies; fuelled by the recent demise of the Soviet Union, resistance to neo-liberal economics was at an all-time low: "after the Soviet barriers to the capitalist world market finally collapsed, we have witnessed an irresistible and irreversible globalization of economic and cultural exchanges" (Hardt & Negri, in Held & McGrew, 2003: 116). Giddens (2000: 32) gives further impetus to this assertion by stating as follows:

The collapse of the Soviet Union added further weight to such developments, since no significant group of countries any longer stand outside ... The ideological and cultural control upon which communist authority was based similarly could not survive in an era of global media.

In much the same way as Adorno in 1966 found himself in a society grappling with its past while at the same time trying to adjust to a changing present, contemporary South Africa faces similar challenges. This too is a society still coming to terms with its past while at the same time trying to adjust to a present greatly influenced by the characteristic tendencies of globalisation. Globalisation is not going to go away; it will continue to exert its influence on our lives in ever more intriguing ways for the foreseeable future.

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<sup>7</sup> While South Africa has enjoyed a certain level of integration into the world economy since at least the 1870s (see Boshoff & Fourie, 2015), I here refer to when globalisation as a distinct phenomenon became part of common discourse within the broader public imagination.

### 3.3 GLOBALISATION AND THE YOUTH

How do these changes affect youths and how do youths respond to them? In order to properly answer this question, we need to first examine the relationship between the youth and globalisation. According to the United Nations World Youth Report (UN, 2004: 5), the concept of the 'youth' varies from culture to culture and from one society to another, and therefore defining the youth in numerical terms such as members of a society between the ages of 15 and 24 only serves as a statistical basis upon which to quantify related phenomena. A quantified conception of the youth does not necessarily describe properly the dynamics at play with regard to youths and their relationship to other members of society. This is particularly important in a Western context, where age group boundaries have increasingly become blurred owing to "the homogenizing – but simultaneously individualizing – effects of universal education and popular-culture consumerism" (UN, 2004: 5). The UN report (UN, 2004: 5) furthermore states:

The boundaries defining the transition from childhood to youth and from youth to adulthood are shifting, and the crossover into each new stage is now manifested in different ways than before. The ritualized events marking the progression from youth to adulthood are changing and losing their earlier significance, as an individual's status and position do not change with the partial rituals of the consumer culture in a way that classical ritual theory would define as signalling a clear transition.

The above statement makes lucid that even at this early juncture, the impact of globalisation is already felt when merely formulating a working conception of what it means to be a youth in industrialised countries affected by the globalist phenomena of consumerism and consumer culture. In addressing these limitations, the UN report (UN, 2004: 6) proposes youth as a transitional concept "through which the nature of contemporary youth and the process of becoming an adult can be understood and described". Curtin (2002, in UN, 2004: 6) gives impetus to the assertion of youth as a transitional concept by stating as follows:

[Y]outh is a complex interplay of personal, institutional and macroeconomic changes that most young people ... have to negotiate. Globalization is reshaping life-phase

transitions and relations between generations, and the changes that young people must negotiate do not occur as predictably as in the past.

Owing to the fluidity of the concept of 'youth' in the developed<sup>8</sup> world, youth is not defined numerically, but rather as a transition phase between childhood and adulthood; a transition from dependence to independence (UN, 2004: 9). From this we may derive that youth, as a transition phase, entails a certain level of independence – not as much as during adulthood, but more so than during childhood, and as youths transition through this phase, their level of independence or personal autonomy<sup>9</sup> (UN, 2004: 8) increases. As one's independence increases, so does one's level of integration into the global community, whereby the effects of globalisation may become more pronounced, but as youths, these effects as direct phenomena may in some regards be limited to the level of access they have to globalisation as a whole. This is especially relevant when considering the level of inclusion and exposure high school learners have to globalisation as a particular set within the broader concept of youth. High school learners have less independence than youths who have transitioned to higher learning or initial employment, but they too possess a level of independence and autonomy, albeit limited and although that independence is frequently played out through their access to communications technology and multimedia networks.<sup>10</sup> The UN world youth report states the following:

Youth are at the forefront of the information revolution, but they face the challenge of reconciling the reality of their daily existence with the popular images presented in the media. Many young people are simultaneously experiencing life within the global and local spheres. They may develop a global consciousness yet still have to function and survive in their own locality and culture. (UN, 2004: 329)

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<sup>8</sup> This phenomenon is applicable as well in the developing world or within newly industrialised countries. As they integrate further into the global community, the fluidity of transition will inevitably become more apparent.

<sup>9</sup> The autonomy described here is autonomy regarding one's ability to self-sustain with the broader socio-economic environment and is not necessarily akin to Adorno's (2005: 198) conception of autonomy as the power of reflection, of self-determination, of not cooperating.

<sup>10</sup> According to the UN report (UN, 2004: 322), "[c]hildren and youth in the developed world have taken to the wonders of the media culture like fish to water. They are able to incorporate the use of information and communications technology (ICT) into their media-filled lives with relative ease and flexibility, alongside and often in association with more traditional activities".



Global consciousness is in principle one's perception of globalisation, which in turn is the key determinant to one's attitude towards it. At this stage of their lives, high school learners' attitudes towards globalisation are formulated primarily by mediations through communications technology, which at the same time impacts their everyday lived experience – although they may not necessarily be directly aware of that impact as a mediated experience. Their relationship to technology is synonymous with their attitude towards globalisation as a whole. For high school learners, the dissemination and exchange of cultural ideas via mass media is *the* significant factor in the formulation of perceptions and attitudes towards globalisation, which falls within the realm of public pedagogy. The question in point here is what are high school learners being taught and what are their responses in relation to globalisation as a potentially universalising force underpinned by increased consumerism and commodification? The UN world youth report states that:

Globalization is underpinned by a desire to create uniform global markets that consumers can be persuaded to respond to individually. "Consumerism as a way of life" promises so much. Whether a young person is living in the Hollywood Hills or in rural Lebanon, the global consumer culture appears to offer something special – and above all, the chance to feel a sense of belonging. Nonconsumption, meanwhile, is experienced as a lack of control, a form of exclusion that perpetuates poverty and withdrawal. Globalization raises consumer expectations that often cannot be fulfilled, and the end result is alienation, frustration, relative deprivation and, potentially, crime and social strife. (UN, 2004: 302)

It is evident from the above statement is that there is much at stake in terms of how attitudes may be impacted by commoditised, consumerist orientations. From this point of view, participation in the global community and one's sense of belonging are reduced to little more than one's ability to access the market. This in turn has the potential to propel one towards a more self-centred, inward state of consciousness that regards the current situation as an individualist struggle for power – of getting one's own. Consumerism becomes the preoccupation of mind and expectations must be met no matter the cost.

It is this technologically mediated tendency of consumerist-orientated mass media which Adorno cautions against,<sup>11</sup> as it is a reified experience of reality; reified in its detachment from the greater socio-cultural context from which it paradoxically extends. As a matter of course, Adorno's contention is not necessarily aimed specifically or exclusively at consumerist culture *per se*, but more at the power relations played out at the institutional-level characteristic of late capitalist society. These power relations may be understood as being typified by quantifying reality into binary constructs of strength and weakness, inclusion and exclusion, between those who have and those who have not, between winners and losers. Ironically, capitalism is ambivalent as to where and how these contestations are played out. Whether it be on the battlefield or on the stock market, within the civic arena or the school yard, as long as capital keeps flowing. For Adorno it concerns consciousness instilled at the institutional level and enacted at the personal level.

Giroux (2004: 17) makes the following interesting observation:

Adorno was acutely aware that education took place both in schools and in larger public spheres, especially in the realm of media. Democratic debate and the conditions for autonomy grounded in a critical notion of individual and social agency could take place only if the schools addressed their essential role in a democracy. Hence, Adorno argued that the critical education of teachers was essential in preventing dominant power from eliminating reflective thought and engaged social action.

### 3.4 CONCLUSION

The social context of Theodor Adorno's original essay was examined and drew comparisons between post-World War II Germany and post-apartheid South Africa and established a correlation between the two social contexts. The correlation was that both countries were trying to come to terms with the atrocities of their recent pasts while at the same time, they were also trying to adapt to a fast-changing world in terms of geopolitics and socio-economics. Also considered was the impact of globalisation, specifically on the youth and found that the effects of globalisation as direct phenomena are limited, owing to the level of

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<sup>11</sup> "Above all, one must also consider the impact of modern mass media on a state of consciousness that has not yet come anywhere close to the state of bourgeois liberal culture of the nineteenth century" (Adorno, 2005: 200).

access the youth have to globalisation as a whole. Access to globalisation is most frequently played out in their level of access to communications technologies and multimedia networks which in turn are key determinants in formulating perceptions and attitudes towards globalisation.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on the research paradigm and chosen research methodology. It commences with a detailed discussion of the research paradigm as being from a critical postmodern and interpretivist perspective. This study also adopted an interpretivist position of multiple realities; each one being unique to the lived experiences of the individuals concerned. An interpretivist paradigm aims at uncovering how individuals make sense of their world by engaging with the individuals from within their particular social contexts. This study adopted a case study research methodology, as case study research has the advantage of not relying on predetermined dependent and independent variables. Case study research focuses instead on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994, in Thomas, 2010: 296). By adopting a case study research methodology I was able to effectively describe the experience in greater detail and gather data pertaining to what that experience revealed with regard to the participants within the specific context in which the research was undertaken. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations pertaining to this study.

### **4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

This research project was conducted from a critical postmodern and an interpretivist research paradigm. A research paradigm centred on a critical postmodern approach to research may be regarded as an amalgam of research paradigms developed within postmodern approaches and critical research. In contrast to critical research paradigms, critical postmodernism focuses primarily on discourse at the micro level as opposed to macro-level institutional dynamics (Thomas, 2010: 300). This is not to suggest that from a critical postmodern paradigm macro-level institutional dynamics are not pertinent to the argument, but merely that the focal point is centred more on the outcomes of macro-level dynamics within micro-level environments. This is further evidenced by Gephart's (1999, in Thomas, 2010: 300) statement: "[T]he goal of critical postmodernism is social transformation to displace the existing structures of power and domination by opening opportunities for social participation among persons previously excluded and dominated".

The effects of macro-level institutional dynamics on the immediate lived experiences at the micro level is of primary concern and through analysis, we are afforded the possibility or opportunity for an alternative. This assertion is further elaborated upon by Boje (2001, in Thomas, 2010: 300), who states that “critical postmodernist analysis attempts to deconstruct discourse to reveal hidden structures of domination ... and then reconstruct or offer alternative, less exploitive social arrangements”. As stated previously, the critical postmodern research paradigm is borne from the amalgam of postmodern discourse and critical research and is therefore non-exclusive; in other words, it is able to assume a position whereby it effectively combines relevant research approaches in order to achieve the desired goals. In this sense, critical postmodernism is a dynamic and adaptable approach to research and may employ various methodologies in accordance with the given situation, but maintains its commitment to dialectical analysis and to critical and postmodern theory (Gephart, 1999, in Thomas, 2010: 300).

Thomas (2010: 295) states that according to an interpretive research paradigm, reality “consists of people’s subjective experiences of the external world; thus, they may adopt an inter-subjective epistemology and the ontological belief that reality is socially constructed”. According to Gephart (1999, in Thomas, 2010: 295), “interpretivists assume that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation, hence there is no objective knowledge which is independent of thinking, reasoning humans”. Reality, according to Thomas and Gephart, is therefore perceived from an interpretivist perspective as non-objective; in other words, as a subjective phenomenon and open to interpretation. Hedberg and Reeves (2003: 32) further elaborate on this assertion by stating that from an interpretivist paradigm, focus is centred on placing analysis within context in order to understand the world as a subjective reality of individual experiences. As a qualitative approach to research, the interpretivist paradigm places emphasis on the human aspect of research and does not rely as heavily on mathematical modelling of phenomena, as is the case with quantitative approaches (Hedberg & Reeves, 2003:32). Furthermore, according to Hedberg and Reeves (2003: 32), interpretivist research is “concerned with understanding the nature of this constructed reality from multiple perspectives, emphasising the roles of culture, gender, context and other factors in the construction of reality”. When considering the two approaches, we are able to identify the correlation between critical postmodern and interpretivist approaches

to research through their shared interest in context-based research and micro-level experiences of phenomena.

Ontologically, this research took the interpretivist position of multiple realities; each one unique to the lived experiences of the individuals concerned. It aimed to uncover how individuals make sense of their world by engaging with the individuals from within their social contexts. It also assumed the epistemological position as worded by Thomas (2010: 298), namely that “the inquirer and the inquired-into are interlocked in an interactive process of talking and listening, reading and writing ... as a more personal, interactive mode of data collection”. Furthermore, “those active in the research process socially construct knowledge by experiencing the real life or natural settings” (Thomas, 2010: 298). This is essentially a phenomenological strategy whereby it aims at describing meanings derived from the lived experiences of individuals in relation to a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 1998: 51). Phenomenology addresses the “meaning things have in our experience ... the significance of objects, events, tools, the flow of time, the self, and others, as these things arise and are experienced in our ‘life-world’” (Smith, 2016). Smith (2016) further elaborates by stating “phenomenology leads from conscious experience into conditions that help to give experience its intentionality”. By intentionality, what Smith is asserting is that phenomenology gives specific direction to the experience towards things as they are experienced; it is consciousness not only of but also towards something.

Owing to the ontological nature of interpretivist research as assuming a position of multiple realities, the interpretivist approach was adopted. The research and case study were centred on gaining an understanding of learners’ attitudes towards globalisation through an analysis of their individual experiences. Furthermore, the interpretivist approach allowed for the more personal and interactive mode of data collection alluded to by Thomas (2010: 298), which proved advantageous in the context of the research. It was necessary to approach the study in a manner that did not inadvertently influence the prevailing attitudes of the participants.

### 4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research and data collection were conducted by means of a case study. The case study was conducted according to qualitative methodology and was interpretive in terms of its approach to the data. The advantage of such an approach lies in its characteristic nature of not predefining dependent and independent variables, but focusing instead on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994, in Thomas, 2010: 296). The case study model was adopted for this study, as I deemed it the most effective in the context of the research project. According to Tellis (1997, in Zaidah, 2007: 1), “case study research helps explain both the process and outcome of the phenomenon through complete observation, reconstruction and analysis of the case under investigation”. When applying the quantitative-qualitative dichotomy of Halfpenny (1979, in Dixon, Green, Kelly & Putney, 1999: 371) as basis for comparison, qualitative research methodology allows for greater flexibility than quantitative methods in its approach to the subject matter, as it allows one to adapt the investigation according to the dynamics of the situation. This was particularly relevant to this study, as it was an investigation primarily concerned with phenomena within a real-life context (Yin, 1984, in Zaidah, 2007: 3). The qualitative approach to research methodology provides what Zaidah (2007: 4) terms “holistic and in-depth explanations of the social and behavioural problems in question”. Zaidah (2007: 4) further elaborates by adding: “[C]ase study research allows the researcher to go beyond the quantitative statistical results and understand the behavioural conditions through the actor’s perspective”.

The case study was conducted at a private school in the Helderberg region of the Cape Town Metropole. The case study was conducted during the first week of the third school term from 24 until 28 July between 24 and 28 July 2017. The participating learner group consisted of high school learners at the fore-mentioned locale. While the group was relatively small – 12 learners in total – they are the largest cohort<sup>12</sup> that participates in an arts-orientated learning area at the school and therefore provided me with greater demographic diversity. Their demographic profile was as follows:

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<sup>12</sup> The high school where the case study was conducted operates on the premise that a smaller class equates to a better learning experience. In some instances, especially from grades 10 to 12, this philosophy results in only one learner in a particular subject/class.

All learners were aged between 13 and 16 years and to a large extent shared a similar socio-economic background as being from middle-income households where in most instances both parents were employed. With the exception of one learner, all were of local birth (South Africa). Only three learners claimed to have travelled beyond South Africa's borders – one learner to Europe, one to the Middle East and Australia and one within the South African Development Community region. Seven of the learners were white, one of whom emigrated from the EU, the others typically of Afrikaans and English heritage – two learners were coloured and two were black. Seven of the participants were female and the remaining five were male.

The research involved a non-probability, purposive sampled (Groenewald, 2004: 44) case study in order to capture empirical data. During data analysis, the participants were given a code in accordance with their gender (M being male and F being female) and a unique number to differentiate between the participants: Male participants were therefore assigned codes M1 to M5 and female participants codes F1 to F7. Inductive content analysis was used to interpret the data. According to Thomas (2010: 2), “[t]he primary purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies”. In other words, inductive content analysis relies on inductive reasoning, whereby themes emerge from the raw data through examination and comparison. As stated by Thomas (2010: 2), “the inductive approach is a systematic procedure for analysing qualitative data where the analysis is guided by specific objectives”. In the case of this study, the specific objective was to gain insight into the learners' attitudes towards globalisation and the extent to which those attitudes may be interpreted as reified consciousness according to the theoretical perspectives of Theo Adorno. Conclusions were reached through an analysis of the collected data by focusing on three categories, namely barbarism, coldness and autonomy, and the extent to which they were phenomenologically manifest in learners' attitudes in group discussions and informal interviews through the duration of the case study.

The case study was divided into three phases. Phase 1 was approximately 45 minutes in duration – a single class period. Phase 2 was approximately 30 minutes in duration – a



double class period. In Phase 3, the learners were allotted approximately two hours in which to complete their poster collages – three class periods, but non-consecutive. The case study was conducted from 24 until 28 July 2017 during the first week of the third school term. My relationship to the participating learners is defined by the fact that I am their Visual Art and Design educator. I have taught at this specific school for nearly 10 years and I have come to know the learners since their initial enrolments. The school at which case study was conducted is a dual-medium institution; however, the group discussions were primarily conducted in English as the preferred language of the learners who participated in the study.

At the beginning of Phase 1, two questions were posed to the group, namely “What does globalisation mean to you?” and “Do you believe globalisation has an impact on your life?” These questions further functioned as a guide throughout the case study. Phase 1 centred on a group discussion in which my primary role as facilitator was to listen with as little interference on my part as possible. This enabled me not only to get a general sense as to their contentions regarding globalisation, but also to ascertain in which direction to pursue the topic further. They were then tasked with writing down a single sentence without the aid of the internet or other sources on what globalisation meant to them or how they felt it affected them personally.

As in Phase 1, Phase 2 centred on a group discussion; however, in this phase my role as facilitator was to be more actively engaged with the group. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, I introduced them to various topical points regarding the process of globalisation as phenomenologically centred on a growing sense on interconnectedness and interdependence. The topical points were pivoted on the dimensions of globalisation as conceptualised by Giddens (2001: 51–52) and articulated globalisation as phenomenologically manifest within the scope of politics, socio-economics and culture. Included within these broad topics were narrower concepts such as developments in ICT, migration, identity, commerce (neo-liberalism) and environmental concerns.

Phase 3 saw the learners individually composing mixed-media poster collages as a visual expression of their conceptions of globalisation. These collages were not graded as part of

the learners' formal curriculum, as not all learners participating in arts-oriented subjects decided to participate in the study. The learners were made aware of this from the onset. This strategy was also chosen as I wanted the participating learners to be as free and as open as possible in their approach to their visual expressions without being pre-occupied with grading structures.

They were then encouraged to present their collages to the rest of the group and briefly discuss the contents of their collages and their relevance to their understanding of globalisation. This project was not necessarily aimed at changing attitudes during the initial process of the case study, but rather focused on gaining an understanding of prevailing attitudes.

#### **4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the principal of the school concerned. Consent forms based on Stellenbosch University guidelines were provided to all participants, including school management, learners and their parents. In addition, all participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the research (Stellenbosch University, 2013). The consent forms clearly stated and emphasised confidentiality and informed consent as being of utmost importance and the participants were not placed under duress to participate. The participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they chose to do so without prejudice. In order to assure no potential emotional anxiety to the participating learners, the research was conducted in the learners' own classroom and questions and discussions were presented and answered in the preferred language of the learners. While the school at which this research was conducted does not employ a school psychologist, the learners were made aware that if they were so inclined, they were free to approach the school principal concerning any matter relating to this study. The Stellenbosch University guidelines for responsible research were considered for this research. The case study was implemented in such a way as to ensure it did not interfere with the curriculum as mandated by the Western Cape Education Department.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

Research was conducted from a critical postmodern and interpretivist research paradigm. The research centred on placing analysis within context and aimed at uncovering how individuals make sense of their world, by engaging with individuals from within their unique contexts. Research and data collection were conducted by means of a case study. This allowed for greater flexibility than quantitative methods as it allows one to adapt the investigation according to the dynamics of the situation. This was particularly relevant to this study, as it was an investigation primarily concerned with phenomena within a real-life context.

## CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the findings of the case study. It considers the learners' initial responses towards globalisation and then proceeds to examine in depth the learner responses towards specific thematic considerations. The thematic considerations include learners' responses towards global economic exchanges, technological development, current affairs, global cultural exchanges and migration.

### 5.2 LEARNER RESPONSES

During the initial phase, the learners displayed an underlying 'passive' understanding of globalisation. They understood to some degree what it encompasses in terms of 'visible' instances, but seemed at a loss as how to express conceptions of globalisation holistically; in other words, the cause and effect and potential long- or short-term consequences. They did, however, display an understanding of globalisation as a sense of interconnectedness; even if they were not necessarily aware of the intricacies underlying it. This is evidenced through a sample of some of their initial sentences presented below:

"It's like when you can go all over the world" (M3)

"Facebook, Twitter, etc." (M4)

"Globalisation is something about society. Media, technology and the people around the world that use these things" (F1)

"Globalisation is the linking of countries and the people in those countries" (M1)

"Speaking to all my friends around the world" (F6)

"Having family and friends in faraway places" (F5)

#### 5.2.1 Global economic exchanges

While recognising their understanding of globalisation as a sense of interconnectedness, I began Phase 2 by introducing the learners to the idea of interdependence and the sharing of risk, allowing them the opportunity to express their own views generally perceived in

economic/financial terms regarding currency fluctuations and foreign markets. They knew these things were connected to each other, but not necessarily how. This in turn allowed me to introduce neo-liberalism into the discussion (making sure not to overwhelm them with big-worded jargon, by which I was sure to lose their interest). This topic was broached mainly through examples of neo-liberal practices pertaining to First and Third World relations and the consequences thereof for both sides. Examples included practices such as the promotion of industrial development zones as a means to attract foreign direct investment and the potential consequences thereof with regard to labour practices. A further example discussed related to how large corporations may choose to relocate their manufacturing capabilities to developing countries due to the benefit of cheaper labour and less rigid labour laws and the consequences thereof for both sides. Furthermore, I discussed the meaning of First and Third World economic relations as the First World being comprised of the highly industrialised states of Europe, the USA, Japan and Australasia, while the Third or developing world are nations formerly under colonial rule in Asia, Africa and South America (Giddens, 2001: 36). I explained that developing countries enjoy a certain amount of industrialisation, but struggle to compete against industrialised First World economies and therefore do not exert the same level of influence in the global economic arena. The general response to the topic was positive in the sense that the learners were able to see how the benefits to these relations were asymmetric and, upon reflection, were able to provide numerous examples of their own, mostly involving so-called big-brand consumer goods such as Nike, Puma and Apple.

### **5.2.2 Technological development**

Drawing on the assumption that at this point in their lives globalisation is most apparent and experienced by the learners through their level of access to multimedia, I posed questions relating to how they perceived ICT and how they felt these technologies impacted their lives. All learners admitted to owning a mobile device. When given the option as to whether their device was extremely important, important or not important, all except for one learner (M1) admitted their device was important to them, the exception stating that it was not important in his life. None of the learners felt that their device was extremely important. Enquiring as to how they benefited from their device, responses tended towards basic communications, web navigation and access to social media platforms such as

Facebook and WhatsApp. All admitted that their device was their primary point of access to the internet.

### **5.2.3 Current affairs**

When asked whether or not they kept up to date with events happening around the world, four participants answered “yes”, four answered “no” and four answered “only sometimes”. Those who answered “no” said they were not interested in these things because they did not concern them. Those who answered “yes” or “only sometimes” failed to give explanations beyond a generic “only when they interest me”, with the exception of one learner. That learner’s reasoning was that they were to return to the EU on completion of their studies and therefore felt it important to “know what I’m getting myself into”. I further enquired as to which type of events or articles the learners found most interesting. Two admitted to politics and current affairs, two mentioned technology, while the remaining eight learners admitted to sports and entertainment as topics of interest. When asked which topics were of least interest, six said current affairs, four said sports and two said arts and culture. The reasoning behind their answers ranged from seeing these topics as boring, especially regarding politics and arts and culture, to not seeing these issues as concerning or involving them.

### **5.2.4 Global cultural exchanges**

We discussed how cultural values and norms may be disseminated across the world through globalisation and how this may affect localised cultural practices. In bringing the point across, I asked them to describe what a ‘foreign film’ was. Answers were generally ‘any film not in English’. Only two participants included American films in their description of a foreign film. When asked how many local films they have seen, one learner in particular was very proud of the fact that they had seen at least 20! When asked how many ‘Hollywood’ films they had seen, expectedly, none could give an accurate account – the total being too great. Of course, these questions were not really about films, but more an illustration of how cultural ideas, values and norms embedded in the medium may be spread through globalisation, once again in an asymmetrical manner. Their general feeling upon reflection was one of caution, meaning they were able to connect the dots in as far as how it related

to globalisation and cultural exchange, which I believe opens up scope for further investigation in a future project.

### 5.2.5 Migration

Globalisation and migration were perceived in both positive and negative terms; positive as being able to travel, live and work abroad, but overtly negative towards inward migration.<sup>13</sup> When asked how they felt about foreigners living within their communities, views were negative with reference to the ‘usual suspects’, being Zimbabweans and Nigerians. Responses were mostly as seeing foreign migrants as a threat to job security and purveyors of crime, with one of the participants going as far as pronouncing to the whole group “Why don’t they just go somewhere else?” (F2). The rationale behind this statement was that according to the learner, there were enough people in Cape Town already and it would be better if they “went somewhere else like the Northern Cape because it’s empty there” (F2). The reasoning that migration towards urban centres such as Cape Town related to greater access to opportunities, and that this was quite possibly the same reasoning which brought the learner’s family to this area in the first place, made little impact on the learner as valid grounds for migration.

When asked about the transmission of culture through migration, only one learner expressed this as a challenging experience. The learner (M3), speaking from experience, migrated from Europe to South Africa only a few years earlier and shared some of the challenges regarding language and adapting to the idiosyncrasies of South African culture. Only two other participants had travelled outside of South Africa and expressed their experiences as positive in the sense that they were able to see new places. When asked about how they were treated as foreigners, their responses were somewhat indifferent to the experience; it had never occurred to them that *they* were the foreigners during their time abroad. Extending the topic of migration, I additionally enquired from the remaining participants about any direct interactions they may have personally had with foreigners, to

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<sup>13</sup> While inward migration is understood as the process by which migration occurs from rural to urban areas, in the context of this study and for the sake of clarity of explanation for the learners, inward migration is migration to this locale as opposed to migration from this locale, irrespective of whether that migration is from rural to urban or from further afield, such as overseas.

which the responses were once again indifferent. Except for the learners within the group who had travelled abroad, the majority have, up until the time of the study, led somewhat culturally isolated lives with little meaningful contact with persons of foreign origin. One learner went so far as to state: “I have never met someone from another country” (M5). Two of the learners responded by relaying their limited experiences as being positive.

Owing to the mainly hostile attitude towards migrants and foreigners, I decided to delve a little deeper into their perceptions of and attitudes towards hostility and violence. This was approached from the perspective of mass and multimedia exposure. Eight of the participants felt that there was too much violence in the media, four felt the opposite – not in the sense that there was not enough violence, but rather that it was a non-event. Six said that violence as portrayed in the media had a negative impact on them, while six said it did not. When asked how they responded to violence, two answered that they try to understand the cause behind the violence, while the rest of the group mostly contended that they responded by avoiding the issue. Interestingly, four of the learners who said they responded by avoiding the issue said they did so because it did not involve them. When asked as to whether they felt that violence was sometimes justified as a means of action, four of the twelve answered “yes”, but were reluctant to elaborate on their rationale. The rest of the group tended to perceive violence as not being justified as a means of action.

The poster collages produced during Phase 3 once again tended to reflect their perceptions of globalisation primarily in economic/consumerist terms and as access to sports/entertainment. While some of the collages did exhibit traces of a deeper understanding of globalisation as a growing sense of interconnectedness and interdependence, overall conceptions tended more towards the superficial. As stated earlier, this project was focused at gaining a better understanding of prevailing attitudes and not necessarily aimed at changing attitudes during the initial phases of the project. However, it is interesting to note that while creating their collages, minimal consideration was given to any new or alternative contention they may have encountered during the initial group discussions. Examples of collages are given as an addendum at the end of the paper.



### 5.3 FINDINGS

As previously stated, the initial conceptions of globalisation within the group tended towards superficial comprehensions; as something benign and therefore non-threatening. Conceptions tended to be somewhat consumer-orientated. Attitudes tended to be mostly positive regarding access to products or having greater access to sporting and cultural events and celebrity entertainment via technologies such as the internet, social media and so forth. I attribute this to the fact that as a process of globalisation, developments in communications technology have arguably had the greatest visible impact on their lives so far. Although it was still difficult for them to comprehend the full extent as to how their lives are affected by communications technologies, as post-millennials they have never known life without them and this may perhaps be interpreted as a case of not seeing the forest for all the trees; they know it, they understand its significance, but they fail to grasp to what extent their lives are guided by it.

The learners displayed an inward orientation regarding their perspectives of world events; the majority being of the opinion that if it does not involve them, then it does not concern them. Interest in international events was almost exclusively restricted to sports and entertainment. Only two learners admitted to watching the news, while none of the learners could claim to have read a newspaper out of their own free will. Less than half the group knew what CNN was. Only one learner was able to equate the 2017 refugee crisis unfolding in Europe as a process relating to globalisation. While the rest of the group were at best vaguely aware of the crisis, once again they were not overly interested, as they felt it was no concern of theirs. It was perceived in political terms, not human terms.

Attitudes towards migration were distinctly negative – even though none of the participating learners could claim to have been negatively affected by an incident involving foreign migrants directly. Attitudes towards migrants and foreigners were stereotypical in references made to Zimbabweans, Nigerians, job losses and crime. Migration was only perceived of favourably regarding opportunities afforded them, in other words as a chance for them to travel and work in other countries, but most were highly resistive towards inward migration. An interesting point to raise here is that during the discussion on

migration, none within the group were able to recognise their collective attitude as being hostile towards inward migration.

Attitudes towards violence were cautious. While nobody in the group viewed violence as a favourable condition, one does get the sense, however, that violence is accepted as an inevitable part of life. The general sense is that violence is not a justified means of action, but reactions towards violence were based upon avoidance as preferred method of addressing it.

An interesting observation was that race and gender did not play a significant role in distinguishing individual attitudes from that of the collective. Variations in attitudes tended to be based more on the type of exposure to global phenomena the individual learners had experienced. For instance, learners who had enjoyed more meaningful exposure to global phenomena through their experiences of traveling abroad tended to be more accommodating when confronted with alternative contentions. On the other hand, those who had not benefitted from international travel tended to be more resistive and less accommodating in their personal stances towards certain issues – particularly inward migration.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

During the initial phase, learners displayed a ‘passive’ understanding of globalisation. Perceptions were expressed mainly through the immediacy of ‘visible’ instances. They struggled to express conceptions of globalisation as having cause and effect, as well as having potential long- or short-term consequences. They did, however, display an understanding of globalisation as a sense of interconnectedness; even if they were not necessarily aware of the intricacies underlying it. Regarding global economic exchanges, views were generally expressed in economic/financial terms concerning currency fluctuations, foreign markets and access to big-brand consumer goods. They knew these things were connected to each other, but not necessarily how. Primarily, learners expressed a dismissive attitude towards current affairs. Perceptions were mostly geared towards not seeing such issues as being of concern as they did not necessarily personally involve them.

Migration was perceived in both positive and negative terms; positive as being able to travel, live and work abroad, but overtly negative towards inward migration. Foreign migrants were seen as a threat to job security and purveyors of crime. None of the participants were able to recognise their collective attitude as being hostile towards inward migration. Variations in attitudes towards globalisation tended to be based on the type of exposure the individual learners had experienced.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The last chapter focuses specifically on the conclusions drawn from the findings in the previous chapter. It considers in detail perceptions of globalisation as being indirect phenomena of which the learners did not necessarily see themselves as part of and how attitudes towards globalisation were inward-oriented. It concludes by briefly addressing the implications of the findings and conclusions regarding art practice and its role in contemporary society in relation to critical citizenship.

### **6.2 PERCEPTIONS OF GLOBALISATION**

Perceptions of globalisation formulated on direct experiences are understandably limited owing to the participants' current life circumstances as high school learners with only rudimentary encounters beyond the extent of their current domain. Perceptions of globalisation were therefore for the most part mediated through their access to digital multimedia. Owing to their reliance on third-party mediations, perceptions were oriented towards globalisation as being indirect phenomena – as events occurring somewhere else which do not necessarily have direct consequences for the learners as individuals and do not pose a major concern for them at this current moment of their lives. They did not necessarily perceive of globalisation as something of which they are a part. Globalisation was perceived as primarily economic and financial phenomena and detached from their daily lives, as they were yet to integrate into the labour market. They did, however, understand and appreciate the benefits of economic globalisation as providing greater access to products and services. World events were for the most part perceived as indirect, isolated phenomena with interest primarily centred on entertainment and sport. Politics and current affairs were of least interest, which may explain why there was only superficial comprehension with regard to how world events are interrelated and how these events may be consequential to them as well.

Attitudes towards globalisation were inward-oriented; in other words, perceptions were formulated according to how globalisation and related phenomena may affect individual interests first and foremost, which in certain instances was characterised by reactive, defensive postures. This inward orientation was evident in their tendency to express a lack of interest in certain topics because they felt it did not concern or involve them. There was little sense of community outside of the scope of their immediate surrounds or through social networks, which primarily serve as a means to connect with people with a common interest in the things they enjoy. In this sense they were not outward-looking.

How do high school learners perceive globalisation, how are those perceptions expressed and what do those expressions reveal about high school learners' attitudes towards globalisation and to what extent may attitudes expressed by high school learners be interpreted according to the theoretical perspectives of Theodor Adorno as a form of reified consciousness? Before I can present a qualified answer based on the evidence collected and presented through this study, I need to first make clear that by reified consciousness, I neither mean to suggest that this particular group of learners may have possessed tendencies towards antisocial behaviour, nor do I contend that they could potentially at some time in the future be complicit in some form of atrocity. Reification and reified consciousness in the context of this study were limited to their attitudes towards globalisation and related phenomena based on displays of empathy towards others, the levels of desensitisation towards violence and their ability to act autonomously in relation to current events and their understanding of how those events may impact them. While the principal theoretical perspective throughout this study was Theo Adorno's contention on reified consciousness as the underlying tendency within the broader public consciousness, which led to atrocities such as Auschwitz, in this particular instance, as in the case of Cho and Giroux, Auschwitz serves as an analogy for any potentially violent or hostile act or detached, disinterested attitude towards the world as a whole. Auschwitz is the extreme which education strives against.

### **6.2.1 Empathy**

Regarding displays of empathy towards others in the context of globalisation, the learners displayed a certain level of coldness and disinterest towards others. This was evident in their

overall lack of interest in world events and current affairs on the grounds that it does not concern them. As stated previously, these phenomena are primarily perceived through third-party mediators, which may account for what I interpret as a limited ability to empathise with those in situations of need. They were not confronted directly and therefore did not feel directly involved – the distance between them and the events in question was deceptively infinite in their conceptions of global phenomena. However, regarding events that were perceived as being closer to home and, as such, may have direct implications for them, such as inward migration, attitudes were less disinterested and took a decidedly defensive stance to the point of hostility. An interesting point to raise here is that while migration is conceptualised as being closer to home, in reality it is not. Not one of the learners could account for ever having a meaningful exchange with persons of foreign origin – positive or negative – and therefore migration was as far removed from their lived reality as any other perceived phenomenon. Yet, an overall hostile attitude towards inward migration persisted, falling into stereotypical understandings and fears associated with crime and job losses, with none of the learners stopping to consider the human dimension of migration. Inward migration was perceived as a ‘thing’ in the Lukácsian sense of reification – apparently devoid of human relations and social exchanges.

### **6.2.2 Desensitisation**

Desensitisation towards violence poses a highly complex situation that does not necessarily afford one the luxury of a straightforward answer. The learners displayed a sensitivity towards violence and understood it as a negative phenomenon – in other words as a non-constructive means of action. Violence was mostly conceived of as direct, overtly expressed physical acts of aggression, which for the most part they interpreted as something not to be encouraged, with the majority of learners avoiding exposure wherever possible. In this sense, these were not violent children. Physical conflicts between learners were for all intents and purposes non-existent at this particular institution.<sup>14</sup> Their attitude towards violence may be approached from two distinct angles. Firstly, their attitude towards violence may be approached from within the immediacy of their day-to-day lived

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<sup>14</sup> This is not to suggest that conflicts between learners do not arise, but rather that conflicts between learners are resolved through other means afforded them. Depending on the severity, conflicts are resolved within the student body or may involve intervention on the part of educators or school management.

environment – in other words, their attitudes are delineated by what they experience outright in their daily communal interactions. Here attitudes towards violence were grounded on their understanding of violence as non-constructive phenomena and violence was actively discouraged. Secondly, their attitude towards violence may be approached from within the broader macro social environment. Once again, violence was perceived as negative and as non-constructive; however, it was perceived, understood and accepted as an inevitable part of life, which I may argue is pretty much the same as the rest of us. Differentiating between their attitudes towards violence on the micro and macro level may boil down to their perceived levels of control over the situation. Within their micro environments they are able to actively exercise their control by choosing not to engage or to encourage violence, but on a macro level they possess little control over violence and the only option available to them is avoidance. An area of concern, though, is the learners' inability to recognise in their own attitudes an undertone of hostility and violence towards migrants, which I interpret as being tantamount to desensitisation towards violence and indicative of what Cho (2009: 91) refers to as the 'cold streak within'. Combining the latter with the assertion that violence is an inevitable part of life indicates a certain level of desensitisation towards violence. They know violence is out there, but as long as they are not involved in it or do not have to experience violence or brutality directly, it is no concern of theirs.

### **6.2.3 Autonomy**

Autonomy in the Adornian sense of the phrase was expressed in some regards – mostly in terms of their personal attitudes regarding global cultural exchanges through mass media. Their comprehension of the asymmetric nature of these exchanges was guided by a certain level of scepticism and caution – they did not consider themselves mere passive consumers. However, to what extent does this equate to what Adorno truly meant by personal autonomy? In other regards, autonomy was decidedly lacking. This was particularly evident in the discussion on migration. From the group's perspective, the discussion was approached with the collective assertion that migration is a threat – not a single learner opposed this contention. This was a small, casual group discussion where learners were well acquainted with one another, even though they were in different grades. In the case study school, hierarchies are neither as well defined nor are they reinforced as in a conventional

school environment, and therefore the threat of ostracism from the rest of the group for holding a different view was minimal – yet once the notion of migration as a threat entered into the discussion, no resistance was offered and no alternative explanations were proposed.

Reflecting upon what this study has revealed, I would argue that collectively, attitudes towards globalisation do to a large extent exhibit tendencies of reified consciousness. This was evidenced in the group's overall lack of empathy towards the concerns of others within broader macro environmental contexts, the group's overall desensitisation towards violence as an accepted part of life, their inability to recognise within themselves a hostile attitude towards migration and their lack of personal autonomy with respect to the collective ideal of migration as a threatening phenomenon. As stated earlier, their perceptions of globalisation were inward-oriented; in other words, conceptions and attitudes tended to be formulated according to how globalisation and related phenomena may affect individual interests first and foremost with an express lack of curiosity, interest or inquiry in topics deemed to be of no concern as these do not involve them. In many respects, this encompassed their collective attitudes towards globalisation as a whole.

### **6.3 CONCLUSION**

In closing, I would like to return briefly to art practice, its role in contemporary society and its relation to critical citizenship. As stated at the beginning of this thesis, I have always approached art as being first and foremost a communicative experience. Art serves as a conduit through which values, beliefs and ideas are circulated to a broad audience across a wide spectrum of interests and contexts. I believe that a reified attitude towards the world at large is fundamentally at odds with what art is and what it strives towards. Essentially, an interest in art is by its very nature an interest in the ongoings of the world at large. In addition, an interest in or curiosity about the world is in many respects the foundation upon which notions of critical citizenship are constituted. Owing to the fact that meaningful and sincere art is so profoundly reliant upon an interest in worldly concerns, it also serves as one of the pre-eminent avenues through which to nurture such interests and in doing so, it is



able to dialectically address concerns of reified consciousness and promote the values instilled in critical citizenship education.

High school learners will soon take their rightful place as independent adults within their respective communities. They will soon be faced with a reality completely alien to their current perceptions and attitudes. They will face a globalised reality increasingly at risk to socio-economic and socio-political transitions and constant technological change. If they are to have any real hope of negotiating this highly contested terrain, they need to begin looking outward by taking an interest in current events, both locally and internationally, beyond what is on offer in terms of sporting franchises, entertainment and consumer goods. This needs to happen sooner rather than later. While we may do our best to foster notions of critical self-reflection and critical citizenship, educators such as myself are by circumstance restricted in our capacity to foster interests and understandings of current events by the limited amount of time we are afforded with learners. Perhaps a possible solution may lay with working with the parents and encouraging parents to take a more proactive role in inspiring their children to look beyond what is merely placed in front of them.

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Addenda



Addendum 1. A selection of poster collages produced by the participants



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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

05/07/ 2017

Dear Mr Janse van Rensburg

**RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT FALSE BAY HIGH SCHOOL**

I am completing a Master's degree in Visual Arts through Stellenbosch University.

The working title of my Masters is: **Perceptions of Globalisation: How Young Learners conceive and express understandings of globalisation through the medium of art**

The proposed research will form part of the art curriculum and will take place in class time in the middle of the third term.

My hope is that the project will enhance learners' understandings of globalisation and how it may or may not influence their daily lives.

My sample size consists of Grade 9 - Grade 11 Visual Art and Design learners

Essentially, the project consists of:

- Two or three art lessons
- Creating artworks about globalisation
- Discussions and reflections on the art project
- Short interviews with the learners - should they agree to participate

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to make contact.

Mr Sean Cameron: [seancameronart@gmail.com](mailto:seancameronart@gmail.com)

Dr. Elmarie Constandius: [elmarie@sun.ac.za](mailto:elmarie@sun.ac.za)

Thank you for your time. Please sign below if you give permission for this research to be conducted at your institution.

I, H. L. Janse van Rensburg agree to the proposed research.

Signed: 

Kind regards

Sean Cameron (18873690)

**Addendum 2. Permission to conduct research**



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**STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY  
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

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**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Perceptions of Globalisation: How Young Learners conceive and express understandings of globalisation through the medium of art**

**REFERENCE NUMBER: N/A**

**CONTACT NUMBER: 0767612937**

**RESEARCHER: Ms. Sean Cameron  
Gordon's Bay 7140**

**ADDRESS: 29 Mountain Breeze Crescent,**

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is Sean Cameron, I am a master's student at Stellenbosch University and Visual Arts and Design educator at False Bay High School. I would like to invite your child to participate in a research project entitled: ***Perceptions of Globalisation: How Young Learners conceive and express understandings of globalisation through the medium of art.*** Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project and contact me if you require further explanation or clarification of any aspect of the study. Also, your child's participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline permission for him/her to participate. If you say no, this will not affect him/her negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw him/her from the study at any point, even if you do agree that they take part. This study will be approved by the **Humanities Research Ethics Committee (HREC)** at Stellenbosch University **and will be conducted according to accepted and applicable national and international ethical guidelines and principles.** It is standard procedure for any postgraduate research to gain permission from parents if learners are part of the research project.

The study aims to investigate the different ways Secondary school learners conceive of and express their perceptions regarding globalisation through the medium of art. The study will take the form of ordinary art classes and will fall within the art curriculum. The art classes (3 to 4) will take place during school time set aside for art education. Learners will not be negatively affected by anything during the art class and all care will be taken to keep learners safe and comfortable. The classes will consist of creating art works expressing globalisation. Learners will be asked to talk about their artworks and to take part in a class discussion about the artworks. All artworks created remain the property of the learners and will be stored in their portfolios at school. Learners may benefit from participation in this research in terms of learning more about themselves as an individual, in a group, and learning more about other learners in their class. The aim of this is to foster a greater understanding of globalisation and how it affects our lives and that of others. It is hoped that this research may lead to improved art education practices in the future. There will be no cost involved for learners who participate. The lessons and questions will be recorded using an audio recorder. This will be for the purpose of transcribing and analysing data. Data will also be collected through questionnaires and interviews. This information will be stored in a locked drawer and only the researcher will have access to it. This is to ensure confidentiality. The identities of the school and the learners will be protected and will not be published in the thesis or resulting academic articles.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher or supervisor:

Researcher: Mr Sean Cameron - [seancameronart@gmail.com](mailto:seancameronart@gmail.com)

Supervisor: Dr. Elmarie Constandius - [elmarie@sun.ac.za](mailto:elmarie@sun.ac.za)

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:** You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your child's participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research

subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché[mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.  
You have the right to receive a copy of the Information and Consent form.

**If you are willing for your child to participate in this study please sign the Declaration of Consent below and send it to school where the class teacher will collect it can send it to me. I will make a copy and send it back to you.**

Yours sincerely

Sean Cameron  
Principal Investigator

**DECLARATION BY LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE**

By signing below, I ..... agree that my child.....may take part in a research study entitled **Perceptions of Globalisation: How Young Learners conceive and express understandings of globalisation through the medium of art** and conducted by Sean Cameron.

I declare that:

- I have read the attached information leaflet and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions via email and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** for my child and I have not been pressurised to give consent.
- I may choose to withdraw my child from the study at any time and my child will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked that my child leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my child's best interests, or if my child does not follow the study plan, as agreed to.
- All issues related to privacy and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide have been explained to my satisfaction.

Signed at (place) ..... on (date) ..... 2017.

.....

**Signature of Parent/Guardian/Legal Representative of minor**

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to \_\_\_\_\_ via this letter. [He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions via email. This communication was conducted in English and no translator was used.

Humanities REC Information and Consent.

2



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## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM



**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:** *Perceptions of Globalisation: How Young Learners conceive and express understandings of globalisation through the medium of art*

**RESEARCHER'S NAME:** Sean Cameron

**ADDRESS:** 29 Mountain Breeze Cr. Paradise Place Gordons Bay

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 0767612937

### **What is RESEARCH?**

Research is something we do find **NEW KNOWLEDGE** about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about children and teenagers and the things that affect their lives, their schools, their families and their health. We do this to try and make the world a better place!

### **What is this research project all about?**

*This project is about how young people perceive globalisation We are going to hold discussions and produce an artwork which explores our relationship towards globalisation.*

### **Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?**

*You are in the art class that is part of this project. I would like to know how you and your peers feel about globalisation.*

### **Who is doing the research?**

*I am doing the research so that I can learn more about what young people think about globalisation. I would like to use this information to write a thesis (a long essay) for the University of Stellenbosch so that I can get a master's degree.*

### **What will happen to me in this study?**

*You will participate in the art class. You will make a piece of art. You will be asked questions about your artwork and the artworks of other participants.*

Assent template. Humanities REC Stellenbosch University 2013

**Can anything bad happen to me?**

*It will be like a normal art class, so nothing bad can happen to you. You also don't have to worry about getting answers wrong, because there are no wrong answers. Everything will be done to keep you safe. If you don't feel like taking part during the lesson, you may say so and then nothing bad will happen to you.*

**Can anything good happen to me?**

*You can be part of a fun art class and make your own art. You can talk to me and to your classmates about your art. You may learn more about yourself and your friends. In the future this can help art teachers to make art classes better and more fun for other children.*

**Will anyone know I am in the study?**

*Only I, your parents, your teacher, and your classmates will know that you take part. Your name and surname will not be told to other people.*



**Who can I talk to about the study?**

*You can talk to me. My telephone number is: 0767612937 You can also talk to me during class time or break time on the days that I am at school.*

**What if I do not want to do this?**

*You can choose whether you want to be part of this project. If you don't want to take part, you will not get into trouble. Even if your parents already signed the form, you may still choose not to take part. When we are busy with the project and you feel that you don't want to take part anymore, you can just say so and then you may stop taking part without getting into any trouble.*

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

YES

NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES

NO

Do you understand that you can STOP being in the study at any time?

YES

NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Assent template. Humanities REC Stellenbosch University 2013

