

Chapter 1: Context and Rationale

This study focuses on the experiences of young South Africans that are negotiating their lives and identities in a transforming society. In an effort to contextualise the study, the current state of South Africa will be addressed, with particular emphasis on its impact on youth.

“Only an inveterate denialist or a fool will maintain that the new South Africa as a political and social entity is not currently facing one of its deepest crises” (Alexander, 2012, p.39).

Alexander goes on to discuss the social ills and current crises that continue to impact on the growth and development of this country. Issues around the continual crime and violence, the economic crisis and the education crisis will be discussed below, with a particular emphasis on understanding the impact or effect these current crises have on the development of youth.

The study focuses on youth who have been labelled “NEETS”, Not in Education, Employment or Training. Although this category of jobless youth originated in the United Kingdom (Genda, 2007) it has been adopted and understood in our South African context (Upton, 2011). In the United Kingdom, NEETs are often characterised by low levels of aspiration and motivation and although they seem to come from diverse backgrounds those at higher risk seem to have similar socio economic and family backgrounds, including parents with lower levels of education, poorer residences, parents’ lack of interest or availability in their children’s education etc. (Attewell & Newman, 2010). Similarly, the context of NEETs in contemporary South Africa, twenty years into democracy, is characterised by extreme inequality in access to services, including particularly education, and very high levels of unemployment. Maharaj (2000) discusses how, in poor South African communities, the severe stresses placed on families may result in young people dropping out of school for a number of reasons, e.g. lack of money to travel to school or for basic necessities including food, poor school facilities, resources and teaching, and the need to earn income from temporary work to help support the family.

One of the major determinants of youth unemployment, and their justification for leaving school in South Africa, is poverty. Taylor (2011) states that poverty has devastating effects on children's lives and this is most strongly experienced in their schooling. The schooling system is impacted by lack of home support, the poverty of the community, the level of school resources and the lack of expertise of principals and teachers. It has been suggested that an individual's socio economic background matters less for their schooling performance than the area that they live in or the school that is attended (Taylor, 2011). In other words, the schooling facilities available to a child could have a greater impact on their learning than their socio economic status within the family unit. However, in South African society, the legacy of Apartheid architecture means that socioeconomic status and location generally coincide to create unequal life opportunities. What is important to note is that in many townships in South Africa schools remain under resourced with poorly trained teachers and high teacher – learner ratios (Laher & Cockcroft, 2013).

Recent evidence of the high dropout rate in South Africa can be seen in the release of the 2013 matric results, which states that the dropout rate between grade 10 and matric is over 40% ("Politicsweb - Matric 2013"). This is an alarmingly high percentage and the reality in South Africa is that many of these youth, because of the high unemployment rate and their low levels of education, will remain unemployed and hopeless. "In 2011, close to 3.2 million persons aged 15 to 24 years were not employed and not in education and training (NEET). This figure represents about 31% of the 15 to 24 year old population - hence the importance attached by government to the problem of NEETs" (Ramose 2013, p.4). The link between school drop-out and employment opportunities is clear: "During the ... timespan (2008–2012), ...[a] dishearteningly consistent trend was evident: among the unemployed, the large majority - about two-thirds - lacked a matric qualification" (Babson, 2014, p. 35). In their study on South African high schools learners' perceived barriers to learning, Stead, Els &

Fouad (2004) discovered that learners perceived financial constraints and other socio economic factors as the primary barrier to their career aspirations. It is thus clear, that the issues of inequality and unemployment in South Africa are both cause and effect of the large number of NEETs that exist in society today.

Bray, Gooskens, Moses, Kahn & Seekings (2010) argue that the neighbourhood or the environment that children live in shapes their lives, their understanding of what possibilities exist for them and the ways in which they view the world. Although South Africa has experienced almost 20 years of democracy the majority of black people remain in poorly resourced and under developed townships. These township dwellers face multiple daily challenges including poverty, violence, poorly resourced schools, limited infrastructure, limited recreational activities, crime and fragmented family structures (Ramphele, 2002). This context shapes the lives of the young NEETS who are the focus of this study. Considering the context of individual lives entails thinking about the many levels of the social system in which individuals are embedded (Kruger, 2006); most importantly, both historical and geographical dimensions, or the time and place in which people live. Social life is systematic and is structured by what has come before (Giddens, 1984) and in South Africa, with our history of discrimination and segregation, the social structures that exist today systematically continue the socio-economic inequalities of the past despite the dismantling of racist legislation. In this way, townships that were constructed in a particular time for the purposes of segregation and discrimination continue to exist as under-resourced segregated racialised spaces, distant from the centres of cities and work opportunities.

“... South Africa has passed onto these children a legacy of racism and inequality that will continue to be a part of their lives for the foreseeable future” (Barbarin and Richter, 2001, p.

2). According to Richter (1994), there are severe consequences for families: single parents, absent fathers and female headed households are common features of many resource poor, black families in South Africa. This situation causes much strain on these families and may cause many families to be fragmented or partially parented because of the need for waged labour away from the home. The high incidence of school dropout could also be primarily attributed to this poverty, where many of these children are needed to assist their families and take on more adult roles, either by being involved in waged manual labour, or being available to look after younger siblings (Hunter & May, 2003).

In many townships in South Africa, scarce resources and unequal distribution of opportunities, unemployment, and poverty can lead to group conflict and hostility. Often the attainment of goals like employment, wealth and access to opportunities seems impossible because of the social structures that the apartheid era has caused coupled with the current poor service delivery that many of these townships face. Alexander (2012) in a book reflecting on the new South Africa sums up the social breakdown facing the nation as,

... the ever more blatant examples of greed and corruption involving public figures, who are expected to be the role models of our youth; the unspeakable abuse of children, of the aged and of women; the smug dishonesty, indiscipline and slothfulness of those who are paid to render public services; the lack of respect for life-preserving rules, such as those of the road; the unthinkable violence in so many communities, unknown even in conditions of conventional warfare; the boundary-crossing abuse of all manner of drugs in all layers of society; the massive number of deaths caused by AIDS; the trashing of the public health system; in short, the general mayhem and apparently suicidal chaos that ordinary people experience in their daily lives. These things are our everyday reality (p.39).

One could argue that the social breakdown is experienced by all, but experienced more intensely and with more detrimental effects on those that are defenceless and are often heavily relying on the social system for support and survival. The youth are often left frustrated with the desire for opportunities and freedom, but unable to attain these goals

through the social breakdown that is spoken of above. This may cause frustration and increased levels of aggression which could be further perpetuated by the increased levels of shame that these youth experience when they are unable to reach their goals. In work involving American prison inmates, Gilligan (1997) suggested that the cycle of violence was possibly perpetuated by the inmates' desire for pride, dignity and self-esteem. This suggests that often these criminals are struggling to repress possible shame that they cannot bear. The violence then becomes a way of getting rid of the shame and replacing it with pride. In the South African context, many young men are dealing with abject poverty, unemployment, often poor school performance, high school dropout rates, fragmented family life and possibly even an inability to read and write. These could all exacerbate underlying aggression and shame.

Gilligan(1997) goes on to propose that when a person is overwhelmed by these feelings of shame, they are in effect “experiencing a psychically life-threatening lack of love, and someone in that condition has no love left over for anyone else” (p. 113). This, however, would be difficult to admit especially in circumstances, like in many poor communities, where men are often perceived and expected to be tough or hard. These vulnerable feelings of wishing to be loved by others would then need to be hidden. According to Gilligan (1997) the way in which these feelings are hidden is through revealing the opposite wish, which is the wish to be invulnerable to others, by expressing only hate and rage towards them. In this way the violence further pushes the other away and alienates the aggressor, which causes them to feel more alienated and further shame, and in turn the cycle continues. Although this may not account for all kinds of violence, it does offer a way of understanding the underlying aggression that is expressed by many youth. That South Africa is a particularly violent

society is undeniable. This on-going cycle of violence also impacts on the way in which individuals perceive and respond to it.

Simply by being a part of the society, the lives of all are touched – and tarnished – by violence: perpetuating it, legally or illegally; being a victim of it directly or indirectly; and being a witness to it; first-hand or via the media. The nation has been caught up in a destructive pattern of violence, both repressive and revolutionary, and in the process many South Africans have come to accept violence as an ordinary, normal, legitimate solution to conflict (Mckendrick & Hoffman, 1990: p.161).

More than 20 years after democracy, the law continues to inflict violence on civilians and, in their efforts to be heard and taken seriously, civilians continue to use violent means to protest against injustices in society. Furthermore the social ills like poverty, injustice and corruption that continue to plague our society may provide further explanation for this continued violence.

Youth in townships are often prone to criminal activity and this criminal activity results in further crime and often imprisonment. Research done on township youth and their involvement in crime gives insight into the reasons for and factors that cause many of these youth to be involved in crime (Segal, Pelo & Rampa, 2000).

In the study mentioned above (Segal et al, 2000), many of the youth involved in crime gave the main reasons for their criminal activity as: broken homes and feelings of rejection and extreme poverty. Others described their involvement as due to racial inequalities and others attributed their criminal activity to their desire for independence as they came into manhood. There were also reasons that involved drug abuse, peer pressure, gang related pressures as well as pressures from girlfriends to provide materially. But what was most interesting was that the criminal activity did not seem to yield any serious consequences for these young men. The police were described as being involved in the criminal activity and corruption, creating feelings of little consequence and a lack of faith in the legal system. They described

experiences of being able to get off easily, and often times working with the police to commit the crimes. Furthermore, many of the youth described prison as a “school to learn about crime” (p.26). There did not seem to be much of a stigma attached to going to prison and whilst some described the hardships and pain of prison life, it was also described as a place where status could be gained (Segal et al, 2000). This explanation offers an understanding of the complexities of crime in these communities. Often in societies where there is poverty, frustration at the lack of service delivery and on-going corruption, the consequences of criminal activity seem to pale in comparison to the experiences of pain that many of these individuals continue to face in their daily lives. The experiences of crime and violence may offer restitution or a way of dealing with an otherwise hopeless situation. Whilst this account does not serve to justify the behaviour of any individuals it does attempt to offer an understanding as to how these youth perceive and act on their environment. In a cyclical way, crime is impacted by and has a negative impact on the economy.

Although there have been some shifts in the economic development of black people in South Africa, the disparity between the rich and the poor is still noticeably large, with the majority of the wealth remaining congruent with the economic intentions of the apartheid regime. Alexander (2012) argues that the gap between those that have and those that don't is ever widening, and seems unbridgeable. The rise of capitalism, according to Alexander (2012,) is upon us, and has been hurried along by technological advancements and globalisation. This level of inequality continues to benefit only a small portion of the population. As a result, the on-going social research on the plight of our country, coupled with our very own experiences and observations of our nation, makes it evident that inequalities between the rich and the poor have devastating and long term effects on the disadvantaged. The rise in unemployment,

and the state of many schools in townships, has an impact on the opportunities as well as the experiences of youth in South Africa.

In a paper on the ideologies of masculinity, Salo (2007) argues that due to unemployment, poverty and other social ills that plague the nation post-apartheid, many black men have begun to support their families through illegal activity. The paper explains that previously the main purpose of gangs was about protecting local communities but they have now been redefined as economic units. Salo (2007) suggests that the impact of local media, particularly through soap operas, has impacted on a growing desire for wealth. This pull of young people aspiring to be rich encourages a capitalist economy of individualism. In a sense, the growing capitalist society is modelled in communities, where gang members, through selling drugs and other illegal activity, have immense wealth, amidst poverty. Their historical power and the respect or fear that they demand in the community, as well as the corruption of the police (Segal, 2000) makes it difficult to challenge this in community. This seems to be somewhat of a parallel process with what is going on in the larger context of South African society. Furthermore, those in government, with their reputation as freedom fighters, liberators and saviours are often deemed untouchable and continue to play a part in the widening of the gap between those who have and those who don't (Alexander, 2012).

There is a crisis in South African schools. The social issues affecting learners in many poorly resourced communities, such as poverty, unequal access to opportunities and services, violence and abuse as a microcosm of society, is characterised by these same problems. (Taylor, 2011). Research on school performance has highlighted the massive disparities between schools within the South African system. Those schools characterised by a history of poverty and deprivation, performed poorly (Taylor, 2009).

Many disadvantaged schools have employed teachers with low levels of teacher training, which results in poor performance of learners, which further demotivates teachers and causes both frustration and higher levels of anxiety for both learners and students (Iwu et al., 2013). The stress related illness and absenteeism experienced by teachers can also be explained by exhaustion and lack of motivation.

The debilitating anti-educational inheritance of demotivated, underqualified, unselfconfident, dependent, textbook bound and let's face it, often ill-disciplined teachers, generally speaking, because there are thousands of expectations, is a fact of post-apartheid life and will be with us for some time to come (Alexander, 2012, p.59).

Alexander goes on to say that the plight of the education crisis is not the fault of individual teachers, but rather that of a failing system, and that many are putting in heroic efforts despite the circumstances. According to McKenzie (2009), the teachers that are most likely to experience burnout are the high achievers who are willing to go above and beyond but are constrained by their resources and are unable to fulfill their personal goals. Interestingly, teachers that put in less effort, and are less passionate about their work are less likely to burnout. This implies that the teachers willing to make a difference are met with immense constraints and challenges.

Furthermore, the lack of discipline and violence amongst children in schools can be stressful for the learners and may leave teachers feeling overwhelmed (Choe, Zimmerman & Devnarain, 2012). The increase in violence in schools, and the challenge of discipline, due to various factors such as those discussed in the previous section, will impact on the stress levels and psychological well-being of both learners and teachers. Violent learners also victimize teachers, and this can further exacerbate the feelings of frustration and stress in teachers. This may result in teachers finding ways to avoid teaching or punishing learners prematurely, as a result of their own fears.

Corporal punishment in schools was banned in 1996, however it is still a relatively common form of discipline in many township schools (Morrell, 2001). It is argued that the high levels of violence and ill-discipline of learners, coupled with the lack of alternative discipline methods, makes it difficult to abolish corporal punishment. Furthermore, the fact that many parents still employ corporal punishment as a legitimate form of discipline in the homes, and have an increased involvement in school affairs, seems to reinforce or legitimise corporal punishment at school (Morrell, 2001). There seems to be an entrenched culture of corporal punishment in many township homes that perpetuates the meting out of corporal punishment in school. This in turn perpetuates the idea that violence is an appropriate way to manage discipline and enforce respect. This does not encourage democratic processing and just conflict resolution. Morrell (2001) suggests that it is particularly black boys in township schools that are the victims of corporal punishment. Particularly in township schools, there is a close link between violent masculinities and schooling (Bhana, 2005).

Another factor that impacts on schools and learning is the changes in policy that are often not explained to teachers, and their training in these areas is sometimes not adequate in dealing with the problem. For instance, the continuous changes in education and the fairly recent inclusion of learners with 'barriers to learning' in mainstream classrooms, will have an impact on the teacher, and her teaching methods, but many teachers in South Africa are not properly resourced to carry out this feat (Alexander, 2013). Also, as classrooms become more diverse with learners of various ethnic, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds, teachers must ensure that there is proper cohesion in order for all students to have the opportunity to learn (Amachi, 2011). Often these challenges are not properly understood and teachers struggle to gain support in dealing with this process.

Due to the Bill of Rights (1996), every child has the right to learn. Thus, no child may be turned away from a school. Although this is a fundamental principle ensuring all children have access to an education, schools often have to accommodate more children than what the classroom is designed for (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). Therefore, some classes have become extremely overcrowded which impacts on the quality of education and often results in demotivated and frustrated teachers and learners.

Lastly, limited resources have led to teachers feeling helpless and demotivated (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). For example, in 2012, the department of education failed to deliver textbooks to Limpopo province in time. Students only received their textbooks for the first time on the 11th of October 2012, going almost a whole year without them (Veriava, 2013). This speaks of the frustration around service delivery, which goes beyond education and seems to have the greatest impact on those living in disadvantaged communities. The gap between the rich and the poor thus significantly affects children's access to education.

Inequalities, with regards to access to education, remain a concern and have not showed significant improvement since the abolishment of apartheid (van der Berg, 2008), (Alexander, 2013), (Taylor, 2011). This alerts one to the fact that access to opportunities remains with those that have, and those that don't, have limited opportunities to improve their circumstances.

Swartz (2010) mentions in her work on the moral ecology of youth that almost 90% of black South Africans are raised in townships and are crippled by poverty, inadequate schooling, 'partial parenting' and segregation. It is then not surprising that many youth from these townships would lose hope and interest in school. This could account for the alarmingly high dropout rate of Grade 10 and 11 learners, and in turn, dropping out of school in the context of

unemployment and poverty where there are no alternatives further increases feelings of hopelessness and apathy about their own agency and ability to transform their lives and that of their communities. However, instead of tackling the systemic social problems that have created this situation of hopelessness for so many young South Africans, many are more concerned about the potential threat posed by these young people, blaming them for risky behaviour, violence and crime, and argue “that NEETs constitute one of the greatest threats to the social stability of society” (Ramose, 2013, p.2). Anger towards an unjust system can be understood as hopeful, as it provides the possibility for change. When an individual can be moved emotionally by a set of circumstances, it provides hope that something might be done to rectify the injustice. However, what happens when this hope is met with immense obstacles and impenetrable structures? A theory of Dollard’s “rests on the assumption that individuals are motivated to achieve certain goals, and that when the attainment of these goals is blocked, the individual experiences frustration which in turn induces aggressive energy” (De la rey, 1991, p.35). More research needs to be done to explore young people’s experiences, highlight the challenges they face and give voice to those that have been marginalised. A space needs to be provided for this significant proportion of the population to exercise their democratic rights and to discover new meanings to their experiences so that they are empowered to affect change by developing alternative ways of seeing their world and living out their experiences.

This study will explore the ways in which, particularly disadvantaged youth in South Africa, are constantly navigating their identities into their possible futures whilst fighting off and pulling with them both their individually carved and our socially orchestrated histories. In a sense these youth are saying: “regardless of how boldly we call the future into being, the recurring echoes of the past are often alarmingly resonant” (Bradbury and Clarke, 2012: p.

176). Bradbury and Clark (2012, p.177) go on to explore the idea that there are “tensions between the idea of youth as a resource for imaginative new ways of being in the world and the acknowledgement that young people’s lives are shaped by narratives of disempowerment and constraints of the past that echo in the reassertion of rigid categories of identities”. The effects of poverty, disadvantaged education, fragmented family life and the other atrocities that the Apartheid regime has instigated has impacted on the way in which youth are able to envision and plot out their futures. This battle needs further exploration and interrogation.

Although socio-political and economic structures highly constrain the lives of individual people, the social structures that exist are open to interpretation and other meanings and this allows for the possibility of change (Giddens, 1984). However, Freire (2007, p.xi) argues that in order for this change to take place, people must believe that “impossible dreams can be made possible”. ‘Dreaming’ and existing in the world as active participants allows us to continue to make ourselves into beings that fight for freedom and democracy. This theory, although positive and to some extent idealistic in nature, implies that people are active agents that can challenge and transform their own individual lives and their collective community conditions. This action research project is framed as an attempt to engage a group of young NEETs in this way, creating an opportunity for them gain some skills, to document their own experiences, and create new possible versions of their individual and social worlds.

The community that the study focuses on is located in Northern Gauteng, and for the purpose of this study will be called, Settlers. It was previously regarded as a coloured area¹, under the apartheid regime, and remains largely a coloured area today. Coloured communities are stereotypically characterised by substance abuse, gangs, violence and poverty. Like many

¹ “The Group areas act legislated race-based residential segregation in 1950 and caused the forced removal of approximately 750 000 people in urban areas between the 1960s and 1980s” (Salo, 2007, P.219)

other disadvantaged prostitution, dire communities in South Africa, it is poorly resourced, is characterised by poverty, unemployment, poor schooling opportunities and other inequalities (Swartz, 2010. Ramphele, 2002). An area in Settlers, which will be called Willows, is characterised by drug abuse, poverty and informal housing. All the participants in the study lived in some part of Settlers, and mostly in Willows.

More than decades after the abolishment of apartheid, racial discrimination and racial segregation continue to characterise South African society. It is argued that the centuries of colonialism and white supremacy that has been a feature of the country's history, remains deeply entrenched in the social structures and the way in which the people of South Africa, interact with others, and construct their identities (Alexander, 2013). Bulhan (1985) suggests that racism acts as structural violence that impacts on the way in which South Africans construct their identities. "There is perhaps no society in the world today that better illustrates the results of a violent compartmentalization of people this violence impacts the psychology of the oppressed. The way in which black South Africans are categorised into races, "... is structural violence in its crudest form" (Bulhan, 1985, p. 166). After explaining the lethality of structural violence, Bulhan (1985) goes on to explain the way in which this violence impacts on the psychology of the oppressed. For the purpose of this essay, black² South African's experiences, and the way in which race impacts on their identities will be discussed. Finally, the aim of the research is to create a space for NEETs to explore their identities in relation to their context, and to give voice to these experiences.

2. "the term black is used "in the inclusive sense to include state designated racial groups, coloured, indian and African"(Salo, 2007, p. 218).

Research Questions

1. How do NEETs narrate or explain the way in which they come to be NEETs?
2. What are the personal experiences of NEETs living in a township and how might these be represented?
 - 2.1 What social / collective problems do NEETs identify in their community?
 - 2.2 What aspects of their township and their lives do they value?
3. What possibilities do these NEETs imagine for the future, and how are these represented?

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The review of literature that frames this study will address the following inter-related fields for thinking about the identities and experiences of unemployed South African youth: 1) Theories of Adolescent Identity Development ; 2) Place and social others in the construction of identity; 3) Narratives, hope and possibilities for agency. A closer look at the crisis of the adolescent identity, the risks entailed the complexities of forming this identity in a multicultural society and also a brief look at other ways in which adolescent identities are formed, will be explored. A particular focus on fatherhood, and the impact of absent fathers on feelings of belonging and development will be included. The dynamic nature of identities will be discussed, as well as the complexity of the multiplicity of NEET's identities and the way in which they are navigated in post-apartheid South Africa will be explored. Finally, the use of narratives in defining lived experiences, as well as the possibilities of hope and agency will be explained as a contribution to how NEETs can find new meaning, and begin to challenge their lived experiences.

2.1. Adolescent Identity Development in a South African context

“We cannot separate personal growth and communal change, nor can we separate ... the identity crisis in individual life and contemporary crises in historical development because the two help to define each other and are truly relative to each other” (Erikson, 1968, p.23). Following Erikson, according to Thom & Coetzee (2004), if identity is formed without resolving the conflicts created during the process of identity formation, this will result in an identity crisis. During Erikson's developmental stage, identity versus role confusion, the risk of role confusion would be higher in a neighbourhood where the lack of resources and the absence of positive role models are more apparent (Thom & Coetzee, 2004). The context of poverty, unemployment and a lack of education, as experienced by NEETs living in a

township, will often exacerbate the risky quality of adolescence and prevent young people from finding their identity and participating as active adults in the social world. The ways in which adolescents form their identities are contextual. Adolescents raised in townships that are poorly resourced, will then be impacted by those experiences, and the kinds of identities that are produced in that context will be constrained by the context.

“Identity formation relies not only on society’s expectations and recognition of the individual: it also depends on the individual’s expectations and recognition of society” (Thom & Coetzee, 2004, p.183). Thus, the way in which the NEETs growing up in under resourced townships view their environment, and what they expect from this environment, impacts on the way in which they form their identities. Thom & Coetzee (2004), explain Erikson’s ‘crisis’ in identity formation, as being resolved when there is “mutuality between the individual and society” (p.183). NEETs forming their identities in impoverished and unequal societies will be under exacerbated pressures to navigate this crisis in a positive way.

2.1.1 Youth at risk and masculine roles in poor communities

It is important to consider the possible risks faced by youth growing up in these environments. In a study on the relation of family and school attachment to adolescent deviance in diverse groups and communities, Dornbusch, Erickson, Laird & Wong (2001, p. 399) explain that “... economically disadvantaged communities, characterized by high poverty, high concentration of single-parent families, and high unemployment, threaten different aspects of the family and school environment of the adolescent and produce greater risk of negative outcomes.” As is evident above, adolescents in deprived environments often are at greater risk. “A neighbourhood characterised by poverty and unemployment is more likely to produce a child who is at high risk of engaging in misbehaviour” (Bezuidenhout &

Joubert, 2008, p 30). In their discussions on youth at risk, Bezuidenhout & Joubert (2008, p. 30) illustrate the nature and extent of youth 'misbehaviour' in South Africa, "... nearly half of South Africa's youth may at one time or another make contact with the criminal justice system." The risk also seems to be higher for boys, and more especially those from a lower socioeconomic community (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2008; Langa, 2012). NEETs are youth that have dropped out of school, and are not actively involved in any formal activities on a daily basis and this poses further risk for antisocial behaviour.

In his study on township adolescent boys, Langa (2012) argues that these young men's masculinity is fluid, and differs in different contexts. The study suggests that when the boys were at home their masculine roles were less stereotypical than they were at school or amongst their peers, where pressure to conform may increase risk taking behaviour. Langa (2012) identifies interesting power dynamics amongst these township boys in which 'tsotsi boys', engaged in more risk taking behaviour, have negative attitudes towards schooling and objectify girls and have more status and power. Although in terms of hierarchy the 'tsotsi boys' were still dominant and their risk taking behaviour was seen as an idealised form of township masculinity, this masculinity is being challenged by the more 'academic boys' and different voices of masculinity are being explored in townships today. However, masculinity associated with violence, oppression and risk taking behaviour is still dominant in townships.

"It is likely that in a racially stratified society like South Africa, adolescent identity development is unlikely to be homogenous but will be determined by the way in which the legacy of apartheid affected adolescents' racial group" (Norris, Roeser, Richter, Lewin, Ginsburg, Fleetwood & Van Der Wolf, 2008, p.52) Adolescents in post-apartheid South Africa develop their identities within the socio cultural context characterised by inequality,

racism and multi-culturalism (Thom & Coetzee, 2004). Adolescents are forced to construct their identities in a society that is still undergoing transformation, and in a sense, “adolescents growing up in such a society may experience a dual identity crisis – an individual as well as a cultural identity crisis” (Thom & Coetzee, 2004, p.185). Norris et al (2008) argue that this can cause role confusion, rather than identity cohesion, and explores the idea that adolescents of different races are forced to make sense of the changes in accessibility to resources and privileges in the new South Africa. For NEETs that have grown up in a democratic South Africa, and are aware both of their racial and national identity, their experiences as NEETs might further exacerbate their role confusion. Although they are aware of the opportunities afforded to them through democracy and affirmative action, many NEETs will also be aware of the lack of resources and opportunities that are apparent in their communities. This frustration and inability to connect their identities positively to their environments could cause disappointment and a sense of hopelessness and apathy amongst NEETs.

2.1.2 Fatherhood

According to Morrell (2008) and Spjeldnaes, Moland, Harris & Sam (2011) African men from socio economically disadvantaged communities understand their masculine identities differently to men from middle income communities. In poorer communities, fatherhood seems to be intertwined in masculine identities in a particular way. Spjeldnaes et al (2011) go on to state that, through the apartheid regime and the political and social power dynamics that it created, white masculinity played a significant role in silencing and marginalising black masculinity. In this way it is clear how the journey from boyhood to manhood is greatly impacted by socio-economic circumstances.

“The legacy of apartheid, unemployment, poverty and inequality in post-apartheid South Africa, gender inequality and the burden of HIV/Aids and violence-related

mortality may have negatively affected family and parental practices with a significant number of children growing up without biological fathers, either through premature death or abandonment” (Ratele, Shefer & Clowes, 2012: p8)

Whilst Ratele et al (2012) suggests that a social father could often represent the notion of fatherhood, including extended family and other social male figures that were present and active in the community, this does not negate the significance of the absence of fathers in many communities in South Africa. The notion of fatherhood and fatherlessness requires much debate and can be explained and understood by colonialism and migrant work (Bozalek, 1997). The shame of not being able to provide, early death, alcohol abuse and the legacy of the apartheid, all contribute to father absence (Ratele et al, 2012). The lack of fathering or the impact their marked absences may have particular significance for young men.

Absent fathers seem to be a common feature in South African homes and in different ways seem to be increasing (Richter & Morrell, 2008, Spjeldnaes et al: 2011). In their study on young men, and their experiences of growing up without fathers, Spjeldnaes et al (2011) suggest that young men desired closer connections to males in their communities. However, the males seemed to be silent or absent members of the families. The absence of a male presence impacts on the way in which these young men perceived manhood. Richter & Morrell (2008) discuss collective fatherhood and suggest that “the African notion of fatherhood, then, is a man who enacts the responsibility of caring for and protecting a child” (p. 152). Interestingly the young men in the Speldjenaes et al (2011) study suggested that being ‘man enough’ involved respecting women and taking responsibility for their families. Their description of taking responsibility included providing guidance, financial support and emotional support for their families. In the study the young men expressed their desire for guidance from a male figure, and a longing for an emotional closeness to a father or a male figure that none of them had experienced. Being a responsible father is brought to the

attention of children at an early age in disadvantaged families. This is possibly due to the immense strain that single parent households place on family life (Morrell, 2007, Spjeldnaes et al, 2011).

It is evident from the research that absent or silent fathers are prevalent in South African societies and one cannot ignore the extensive research on the importance or benefits of present and involved fathers. Research suggests that children with present fathers do better cognitively, young men are less likely to be aggressive, and children are less susceptible to abuse from outside the homes (Spjeldnaes et al: 2011) and (Richter, 2006). Richter (2006) further proposes that fathers' active and healthy presence in the home seems to have a modulating effect on boys' aggression by providing a model of culturally acceptable male behaviour. Households that have present and available fathers seem to be protected from poverty and offer support for the mother. It was also suggested that fathers in closer proximity to their children are more likely to provide and protect the child in the home, particularly in instances where the mother acts punitively, is overly stressed or is an overwhelmed mother (Richter, 2006). This notion is supported by psychodynamic thinking, which suggests that the presence of an available other, (a father, or partner for the primary caregiver) is able to emotionally support the active caregiver, so that she/he is able to contain the overwhelming or difficult experiences and feelings for the infant (Ogden, 2004).

Conversely, households categorised by father absences usually produce children associated with less social security and a lack of dignity, poorer school performance and impaired emotional stability (Spjeldnaes et al, 2011). The maternal stress placed on the single caregiver could impact both the emotional and cognitive wellbeing of the child negatively. It could also increase the family's susceptibility to poverty. This will, in turn, as seen in the Speldjenaes et al (2011) study on young men, have an effect on their social competence and often times their behaviour.

2.1.4 A sense of Belonging

A close relationship with a parent or having stable relationships in the family contributes to one's sense of belonging. "Belonging is about emotional attachment – about feeling 'at home' entailing a sense of hope for the future" (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p4). It is also described as a dynamic process that is multi layered. When the identity of someone is threatened, they may become less secure in themselves and their sense of belonging becomes central to them (Yuval-Davis, 2011). In a sense, relational belonging, as in belonging to a family, impacts on the way in which our identities are constructed and when, under threat, are central to our sense of who we are in the world.

"One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure where one belongs; that is, one is not sure how to place oneself among the evident variety of behavioural styles and patterns, and how to make sure that people around would accept this placement as right and proper so that both sides would know how to go on in each other's presence" (Bauman, 1996, p. 19).

Bauman (1996) suggests in this extract that identity and belonging are connected, and are particularly relevant when one of these notions are under threat or being challenged. In this way, belonging is central to developing an identity and in understanding one's identity, the idea of where one belongs becomes quite central. This notion of belonging in relation to the family is also relevant to wider contexts of social belonging, particularly active recognised roles on citizens' identity (Yuval, Davis, 2011).

This idea of social belonging is also mentioned in the work of Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern(2005), on reclaiming youth at risk. Their work suggests the circle of courage, which looks at core values, in intervening with youth at risk. The four values on the circle are

Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity. These four core values will be explained in some detail:

Belonging: Brendtro et al (2005) explain that youth function well in a society that they feel they belong and their sense of belonging is impacted by fractured family life, hostile schooling environments and rejecting peers. Brendtro et al (2005) suggests that in order to foster this sense of belonging, opportunities to establish trusting connectedness is required, as well as understanding the importance of relationship.

Mastery: is impacted by limited opportunities and competition for resources. In order for mastery to be achieved, youth need to be given opportunities to solve problems, meet goals, take responsibility and develop and utilise their skills (Brendtro et al, 2005).

Independence: this seems to be dependent on healthy relationships, and is impacted by deprivation and strong sense of identity and self-youth. Youth must be given opportunities to build self-control and responsibility in order to build a greater sense of independence (Brendtro et al, 2005).

Generosity: this is said to be negatively affected by capitalism and a sense of injustice and is developed when youth are given opportunities to show respect for others, serve others, and share their gifts and talents with people (Brendtro et al, 2005).

2.2. Place and Social Others in the Construction of Identity

Our identity speaks of who we are in relation to others, and the identity which we employ is selected for the 'audience' with which we are engaging. In this way, our identities are dynamic and able to change in different social contexts. In the same way, exposure to different environments or a 'different other' allows one to challenge current identities. For the

purpose of this project it is argued that the identities of the NEETs can be challenged, through their interaction with the researcher and their interaction with each other.

According to Hall (2000, p.6), “identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation”. The way in which our identities are constructed is through interaction with our past selves, or others that are different from, and similar to, us. In a sense, this ‘mirroring’ of ourselves, allows us to look retrospectively and introspectively at who we are and recognise ourselves. Hall (2000) suggests that the self can be seen in the shared history and identities of others. Furthermore, Hall (2000) argues that these identities are constructed in discourses, or in relation to the social structures of our context.

Hall (2000) enriches this argument by showing that identity construction is a constant process in which one develops in relation to others and the differences one perceives between oneself and others. Identity is thus a social construct that can be transformed and reworked through our interaction with the world and our exposure to different experiences. In this way, the individuals and the social context cannot be separated and must be understood in relation to each other. Understanding townships and the way in which the youth experience their social environment provides a richer understanding of their identities.

According to Sundstrom (2003), ‘cognitive mapping’ refers to the way in which people come to know the places they experience on a regular basis, and is a representation of the social meanings attached to these places. Brown(2009) illustrates how in order for us to understand place we need to understand identity and in order to understand identity we must consider place. When we incorporate place into our understanding of categories of people, we gain a

more comprehensive understanding of who they are. Brown (2009) views place-identity as fluid.

“If we want to arrest the production of questionable human kinds, then we must address the production of spaces that create, maintain and represent them” (Sundstrom, 2003, p.93). The implications of this, is that social forces must be challenged and addressed in order for us to address the products that they create.

“Sometimes the places in which the poor and oppressed live start off as bounded and prison-like stalags. But there are times when rebellious inhabitants seek to transform the stalag into a space of their own upon which their meanings are imprinted and whose boundaries become the defiant barricades which keep the authorities out, rather than the symbolic walls which keep the persecuted in” (Bozzoli, 2010: p.48).

In townships that are characterised by gangs, drug lords are notorious for illegal activity. These places seem to be actively involved in keeping authorities out and keep community members bound. The community members, particularly the youth, may be trapped in the boundaries of the community. Whilst the apartheid regime created these disadvantaged and poorly resourced townships, the inhabitants, or particular inhabitants, have transformed the space into a space that benefits them. Salo’s (2007) study sheds light on the way in which gangs seem to protect their communities, in the absence of police protection. The boundaries they create, however, both keep authorities and rival gangs out, and keep community members trapped in place.

In townships, places have been transformed or adapted to meet the needs of a few. “Social space is not merely the consequent of the social, it is constitute of the social ... to transform the social, space must be transformed” (Sundstrom, 2003, p. 83). This implies that places can

be challenged, and in a sense the social ills that exist in this space and the identities of those that exist in these places, need to be challenged.

Sundstrom(2003) distinguishes between social spaces and places, by stating that spaces are the locations that people move through everyday whereas places are particular social spaces, that are infused with social use and meaning. In other words, a 'place' is a location that has a particular purpose and is understood to have a particular function by those that experience it. Sundstrom (2003) shows how categories of people are created by connections between different social forces, including political, economic, cultural and government factors that are expressed in various institutions. These social forces create a place and in a sense, this place produces a category of people. To illustrate this idea, one could argue that, as townships are produced through the interaction of various social forces, so too NEETs are produced as a social category.

Using Sundstrom's (2003) argument about place, we need to recognise that although youth from deprived townships might want an end to unemployment, crime and poverty in their townships, they do not want an end to their community. In a sense, the township is part of their identity. Place attachment, according to Sundstrom (2003) evokes an emotional bond between people and place, which incorporates the individual memories of a place, with the expectations for future experiences of that place. He argues that place acts as a way in which communities view themselves and how others view them. There is a "looping effect between our identification of places and our identities" (Sundstrom, 2003, p.90). This is noticeable when one travels to a different place. Often the identity that one carries is particular to the place in which it was constructed, and as we move to new places this identity is challenged.

Furthermore, these identities that are created in particular places can have devastating effects on the opportunities and psychological wellbeing of people.

“The distribution of public goods and access to them, have direct effects on the quality of life, life chances, and even the physiological and mental health of individuals” (Sundstrom, 2003, p.91). According to Sundstrom(2003) the life chances and health of people is central to individual and community identity. In this way, place produces identity and identity produces a place, and in an effort to challenge identities, like those of NEETs, one would need to challenge the perceptions of places, in this instance, townships, associated with racial inequalities and class. In South Africa, because of the Apartheid laws, many places remain racialised and segregated by class. Like ‘race’, place is a part of our identity (Brown, 2009) and recognising this history is part of opening up possibilities for the future, the possibility for new narratives or stories to be told.

2.3. Narrative Identities and possibilities for agency

Fay’s (1996) summing up of the relationships between stories and lived experience shows how the way in which we understand the world, ourselves and others is through stories, and in a way the act of living is inherently narrative. In this way, the stories we tell are able to change, based on the meanings that we attach to past events. When we interpret and represent experiences, we create connections across time and generate new understandings across these connections.

“Stories are lived because human activity is inherently narrational in character and form: in acting we ‘knit the past and the future together. But stories are also told in that with hindsight we can appreciate narrative patterns which we could not appreciate at the time of acting. We tell stories afterwards about the actions we have performed ... we might say that our lives are enstoried and our stories are enlived” (Fay, 1996, p.197)

This gives insight into the way in which the lived experiences of youths and the stories they share can be used to understand their identities and provide meaning for their experiences. Furthermore, through sharing their stories, people are able to create meaning for themselves, across a trajectory of past, present and future.

Giddens (1984) would argue that the social structures, like politics, education, race and economic deprivation, must be seen as processes of influence that socialise us. However, these social structures are not fixed and can be influenced by people. Although social structures impact on our identities, people can still act as agents of change on these social structures.

The role narratives have in constructing identity is to produce the human experience of time (Polkinghorne, 1988); (McAdams, 1993); (Squire, 2008). Narrative is then the medium through which our identities are constructed.

“If you want to know me, then you must know my story, for my story defines who I am. And if I want to know myself, to gain insight into the meaning of my own life, then I, too must come to know my own story” (McAdams, 1993: p.11).

For Polkinghorne (1988) narratives act as the primary way in which we construct meaning in our experiences. The stories that we tell about ourselves existed before our telling, so in a sense what we say about ourselves is intentional and the way in which we tell our stories, what is omitted and remembered is attached to the meaning that we have given to our story (Fay, 1996). In a sense, storytelling is more than retelling events, our story telling allows us to understand parts of ourselves through the way in which we connect the past to our present experiences and point it towards a future. Fay (1996) argues that in order for a person to exercise agency, they must create a time sense in which past, present and future are related into a narrative. In this way, the agent is able to understand their experience, and decide on

how to best to move forward. “Only when a person can experience the present moment as connected to the past and as pointing to the future can that person act” (Fay, 1996, p192). In a sense, the argument here is that failure to connect the past, present and future, will impact on the agency of the person. By ‘storying’ our lives, or representing them for others, we are able to access meaning and act on the world more deliberately. This storying allows the possibility of agency and change. This notion implies that the very telling of one’s story, and finding new meaning, may enable one to become more actively involved in the social environment.

Yuval Davis (2006) suggests that through narratives we create versions about who we understand ourselves to be, as a way of making sense of our experiences. Similarly, Bourdieu(1986) argues that through speaking about our experiences we impose meaning and logic onto these experiences, and in this way it is an “artificial creation of meaning”(p.298) that is imposed on the story, in that through telling the story, the narrator provides links to events, after the event in an effort to give the event a purpose.

Bradbury (2012) presents the notion that by thinking in this way of stories of the past, gives people a place to exist in a social environment, as in a resourced poor township, and this in a way allows one to gain an understanding of their private self. The youth, in this way, through sharing past stories and placing them into a historical space and time, are allowed to make sense of their lives and begin to envision a new future.

“through the distance across which the stories of our past must be read, we may be able to incorporate new versions of ourselves for acting in the present toward the future ...but in recognising that the past need not have been what it was, we are better able to generate options for how to live now and the kinds of futures that may be possible” (Bradbury, 2012, p. 346).

This looking back opens up an opportunity for re-inventing the future. Through the notion of remembering the past, creating meaning from those experiences, the individual is able to reconstruct the past in a way that can be projected into the future. As mentioned before, the

past continues into the present, and the present is made up of the past, so by recreating the past, as it enters the present and transcends the past, the meaning that has been created can be built into the future. The future individual and the future world are (re)created through the retelling of the past.

As mentioned earlier, there is a paralysis that can prevent young people from acting on the world because of the oppressive nature of their social world. This is evident in the experiences of youth in a South African context, where unemployment, poverty and poor education seem to paralyse these youth. However Bradbury(2012) argues that what causes the paralysis is the failure to look back at the past, to incorporate stories of the past into the understanding of the youth's personal story, and in this way the failure to tell the story of their past, both social and individual, clouds the possibilities for envisioning a future. Crites (1986, p.158) suggests that "the remembered past is situated in relation to the present in which it is recollected". He goes on to explain that the present, whilst recollecting the past is always orientated towards the future. This notion implies that the present is in a way constant state of recollecting past events, and projecting into the future. Crites (1986, p.166) suggests that "hope is that openness of the present towards the boundless horizon of possibility". However, that hope is constrained or limited by the past circumstances.

"There is no tomorrow without a project, without a dream, without utopia, without hope, without creative work, and to work toward the development of possibilities, which can make the concretization of that tomorrow viable" (Freire, 2007, p.21). The way in which one can envision the future is through actively engaging in hope. Bradbury (2012, p.341) states that "we act toward the future with an orientation of hope and in creative anticipation of possibilities". Creating a space for these youth to envision a different future, and to hope for a

new experience, provides a starting point for them to develop new ways of being in their social environment.

Freire(2007) suggests that change is not possible without dreaming of it, and there is no dreaming without hope. The argument is then, that for change at both an individual and social level to happen, hope is necessary. For Giddens (1994, p.249), “developing a coherent sense of one’s life history is a prime means of escaping the thrall of the past and opening oneself out to the future”. The way in which we make meaning of the past and our present circumstances, reveals alternatives and creates the possibility of imagining the world differently.

Freire(2007) supposes that there is a need to believe that part of the turmoil and frustration that people experience is in fact, also the pain of a dream that has come apart, and those that hope for a better world and see the dream being pulled apart, must make every effort to remake the dreams of transformation possible. “We have to apply ourselves to creating a context in which people can question the fatalistic perceptions of the circumstances where they find themselves, so that we can fulfil our role as participants in history” (Freire, 2004, p.5). Freire explains these fatalistic perceptions as the hopelessness experienced by those living in poverty. The way in which this is possible, according to Freire (2007) is through education. The idea that dreaming of a better life is more than an idealistic fantasy but rather that it is hidden in a clear understanding of the reality we live in.(Freire, 2007) The role of education then is to suggest that there are these hidden truths that offer possibilities for transformation.

However, this dreaming and this hope is more than remaining optimistic, according to Freire (2007), it involves agency. This agency does not come easily, it must not only be striven for

but there must be an effort to exercise the reflexive knowledge that has been learnt. In this way, to be agents we need to understand, interpret and then act on this new understanding. Our main responsibility, according to Freire (2007), is to act on the world, challenge our realities and to keep up the hope. However, Fay (1996, p.67) poses that “part of being an effective agent consists of recognising that one is indeed an agent.” Freire’s (2007) argument for the role of education then becomes one that calls for other human beings (educators) to engage with ineffective agents in ways that enable them to recognise their own agency. In this way, by offering these NEETs alternative ways of understanding, and pushing their thinking further, they are able to recognise their own ability to act on their social environment rather than remain a mere product of it.

Chapter 3 - Methods

This chapter will begin by introducing the methodological approach that will be employed. This will include Youth participatory action research and Narrative Inquiry. The advantages of these approaches will be explored, as well as the ways in which these methods complement each other. The participants will also be discussed, how they were recruited and a summary of who they are will be included. The chapter will then focus on the methods of data collection that were used in this study. The data collection involved photo elicitation as a first layer of data collection, followed by individual interviews and a focus group including all the participants. The ethical considerations that were taken into account will also be discussed in this chapter, as well as the authorial voice of the researcher, and its impact on the analysis on discussion will be explored. Finally, the methods of data analysis will be discussed. Narrative analysis and Thematic Analysis were utilised to provide two different modes of analysis.

3.1 Methodological approach: Action Research and Narrative Inquiry

The approach was collaborative, using participatory action research, to explore the experiences of NEETs in a township in South Africa. A group of NEETs together with the researcher were involved in active engagement with their social worlds, through photographic documentation, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. This process intended to get the participants involved in rereading and ‘restorying’ their own social worlds and themselves in this context. It was designed to invite them to think about possibilities for social change by voicing their stories to develop new possibilities for the future.

Action research allows for a dynamic interaction of theory and practice (Reason, 2006).

Although the research was focused on the everyday experiences of these NEETs, there was also an attempt to link these everyday accounts to theory (Reason, 2006). Reason (2006) further suggests that in order to conduct a democratic and participatory research project, an effort must be made to involve the participants. He argues that “participation is important because self-evidently one cannot study and improve practice without deep involvement of those engaged in the process, for the necessary perspective and information is simply not available” (Reason, 2006, p.189). To understand the identities and experiences of these NEETs it was thus necessary to actively engage with them.

“Action research, although highly exploratory, allows researchers to integrate learning, skills building, data collection and action into an empowering process and allows participants to recognize and assert their own agency” (Edwards-Jauch, 2012, p.33). This is an important quality of this research, as the participants were offered the opportunity to gain basic skills in photography as a mechanism for documenting and deepening their understandings of their own experiences and the place where they live. This approach is particularly important, given that the participants are poorly educated and lack skills for employment.

The empowerment approach allows the researcher to learn about the participants through their culture, experiences and the way in which they see the world. It is about working with the participants to understand their world and meeting them where they are at (Zimmerman, 2000). “Participatory action research as a process for personal and social transformation in other words, as a process of “opening” our own eyes and seeing the world through “different eyes”, coupled with a desire to open others’ eyes” (Camarota & Fine, 2008, p.90). In this way, as the youth attempted to find meaning in their present and past experiences, they were given an opportunity to think differently about their experiences, and the researcher also

gained insight into their experiences. This seemed particularly important to give insight and a voice to marginalised youth that otherwise have little opportunity to be heard. As Reason (2006, p.195) argues:

“... sometimes in action research what is most important is how we can help to articulate voices that are not being heard. How can we draw people together in a conversation that is not taking place? How can we create a space for people to articulate their world in the face of power structures that silence them?” (Reason, 2006, p.198).

This kind of research allowed for self-questioning and the possibility to rethink the meanings of their experience. In this way, the collaborative structure of this research allowed not only for a broader understanding of the social discourses that exist in this particular community, but also for self-transformation and the possibility for the individuals that participated in the research, and others with similar experiences, to see things differently, creating a new sense of possibility for envisioning the future.

“PAR ... assumes that those who have been most systematically excluded, oppressed or denied carry specifically revealing wisdom about the history, structure, consequences, and the fracture points in unjust social arrangements” (Camarota & Fine, 2008, p.215). This approach thus frames a specific sample of the population that will both benefit from, and contribute to, the research. Those that have been disadvantaged become necessary research agents both for the development of their own individual agency and to create meaning, and possibly for the societies in which they exist. The project provided participants with the opportunity to tell their own stories and, in this sense, the action research framework articulates very well with narrative research.

Narrative research has become more popular in social research over the past few decades (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008) because it provides an opportunity to read the data

differently and sometimes opens up contradictory layers of meaning, thus allowing one to understand more about the individual and social change (Andrews, 2008). This method allows one to explore how stories are structured, how they work, who produces them and the way the stories are produced. Looking at which stories are produced, which are contested and which are silenced gives insight into different aspects of one's social world, and the ways in which people interact with it.

Riessman (2008) proposes that the significance and usefulness of narratives is that, through interpretation, they reveal 'truths' about the narrators' experiences and give insight into how they want to be understood. In the context of these young people, where judgement and blame seem to be common ways in which they are perceived, an understanding of their experiences from their perspective will not only prove meaningful for them, but will also offer an alternative way to read their lives.

The stories that we tell of the past and our social context or place in the world help us to make meaning and makes new understandings possible, creating the possibility of dreaming of a new future. "We need to think about the past in ways that will enable us to rethink the present and construct the future" (Bradbury, 2012, p.342). Often in resource-poor contexts, with the demands of everyday life, it is difficult to think of a future. The significance of narrating individual stories, may allow participants to rethink the present and build this new future. For these NEETs living in a poorly resourced township, the process of telling their stories offers them the possibility to rethink their present circumstances, and aspire to challenge their identities and develop new possibilities for their future.

“Narrative inquiry attempts to collaboratively access participants’ life experiences and engage in a process of ‘storying’ and ‘restorying’ in order to reveal multidimensional meanings and present an authentic and compelling rendering of the data” (Leavy, 2009, p.27). Through offering multiple platforms for the participants, to think about and tell their stories (through selecting pictures to shoot, during the interviews and retelling their stories in the focus groups) to themselves, the researcher and each other, the project allowed the youth to tell their stories in different ways. In this way, the research allowed participants to participate actively in the research process, and to share their ideas with each other, and come up with ways to story and ‘restory’ their collective experiences. This process of “... building democratic, participative, pluralist communities of inquiry is central to the work of action research” (Reason, 2006, p.193) and allows participants to make meaning out of their experiences and gives voice to the hopeless experiences that are encountered by many other youth.

YPAR and narrative inquiry “... engage[s] the transformative potential of collective responsibility to contribute to social change” (Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p.92). The project aimed to allow the youth to exercise their democratic freedom to act on the world, create meaning from past and present experiences and, through taking photographs, telling personal stories and making new meaning, allow for the possibility to think about or challenge social structures.

3.2 Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for this project. The participants were coloured male NEETS that had dropped out of school and were unemployed, from a resource-poor township community in Gauteng. Participants were sampled through a Non-

Profit Organisation, (OFY- Organisation for Youth) that works with youth development in various capacities. Their work involves a diversion programme for youth that are in trouble with the law, crime prevention work in the schools, and skills development. In an effort to offer further assistance to the community, the organisation created a 'job corner' for unemployed individuals from the community, between the ages of 18 – 35. Their services include typing up CV's, assisting NEETs with emailing their CVs to various employment agencies, accessing job opportunities through the local newspapers and the internet. It is a voluntary programme: people sign up and join the organisation's database and any skills training or job opportunities are advertised through this database. The participants for the project were accessed through this 'job corner'. The research was proposed as a collaborative project to carry out research in their own community from their perspectives and offered the opportunity to gain basic skills in the process. The following steps were followed to access participants:

Step 1: Participants were contacted through the OFY database, and invited to participate in the research. The criterion were that they should be male and between the ages of 18 and 24, and not in employment, education or training.

Step 2: All the participants were contacted, and a meeting was arranged, where the research purpose and processes was explained more clearly. Many of the participants did not show up for the initial meeting even though they had agreed to be a part of it. When the research was explained, one of the participants suggested that he go and call a group of young men that were sitting under the tree with him before he had come for the meeting. The meeting took a 30 minute break, and reconvened with the new snowball recruits. Although a translator was present in this initial meeting, it was established that all participants were keen to use English to include the researcher in the conversation. It was decided in this meeting by the participants that English would

be used and if language became difficult, they would code switch and translate amongst themselves. As a way of introducing the idea of using pictures, photographs obtained from a professional photographer were distributed amongst the group. They each chose one and explained how the picture depicted something of them or their life experience. The researcher and translator were taken aback by the depth and honesty at which they carried out the task. After these reflections and a discussion on the way in which they would like to tackle the research, we discussed the logistics of the next meeting. Consent was explained and attained at this meeting. (See Appendix A) The offer of counselling was also explained. Six participants completed the entire research process, all were NEETs living in the same community, and would have been classified as 'coloured'³ under the apartheid regime, however this racial identity is problematic and complex⁴. Six participants were recruited at this stage.

Step 3: These six participants were taken to a photography workshop (I was shot in joburg) and were given cameras to begin the study.

Step 4: Due to a number of different reasons, only two participants from the original group, Keith and Deon, took photographs and completed their interview process, and follow up meeting.

Step 5: Through snowball sampling, the remaining four participants, Alan, Dylam, Wade and Michael were recruited. They all completed their interviews and follow up meeting.

Table 1 on the next page presents a profile of the 6 participants who participated in the study

³ "In terms of the Population Registration Act the people of South Africa were categorised in different racial groups, viz. White, Indian, African and Coloured. Coloureds and Africans were further divided into sub-groups" (Dalo 2007, p.219)

⁴ Salo (2007) further suggests that Coloureds were negatively defined as neither Black nor White, which complicated and still complicates their identity.

3.3 Data Collection

The qualitative design of the study included four methods of data collection. Each participant was provided with a disposable camera to take photos of their experiences in a township. They then participated in individual interviews in order for their personal stories to be shared and understood. One of the participants offered to take the researcher on a mobile interview after his individual interview. This gave the researcher an understanding of the context and allowed the participant to share his personal experience in greater detail. A follow up meeting was held, where each participant shared personal stories about what they had photographed and the meaning they attached to their images to the other participants. The group then discussed and created a collective digital storyboard that represented their experiences of their township home and community for an external audience.

The process of data collection was as follows:

We met at the '*I was shot in Joburg*'⁵ studio in Johannesburg central. The founder of the organisation explained how he got started and also encouraged the participants with valuable life lessons. He then explained the power and importance of photography and gave an interactive workshop, using the images that were taken by members of his group, to share principles and techniques in photography. He then gave time for interaction and discussions

⁵ *I was shot in Joburg* started off as a community project in June 2009. Providing a platform for youth at risk to learn skills and generate an income. It was started by Bernard Viljoen, and he explains how he used his photographic skills and talent and gave of his time and resources to make a positive contribution to and enrich the lives of kids who might otherwise not have had the exposure nor the opportunity to develop their own photographic skills and talent. Teaching and enabling them to see the world through different eyes. Teaching them to look, to see, to compose, to capture what it is they see in a such a way that they can be proud of it. He worked with a group of 15 students from [Twilight Children](#), a shelter for street children in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. They met once a week on a Monday afternoon for a workshop. They learned a new skill using disposable cameras. They how to search for beauty, composition and interesting subject matter where we thought there were none. They now have a studio at Arts on Main in the Maboneng District For more information see <http://www.iwasshot.com/>

with the 'I was shot in jozi' staff. The participants were inspired and interactive and enthusiastic throughout the workshop. When asked by the founder what they all did, the response from the group was, "Niks, ons is rond" (Nothing, we are around). Photo documenting was adapted from the work done by Langa (2008) and Bradbury and Kiguwa (2012). Documenting township life from the perspective of these NEETs offers the possibility that social structures would be identified and possibilities for change and a more hopeful attitude toward the future might emerge. Through the collaborative process, the research remained dynamic, and the data that were collected emerged from the way in which the participants/ co-researchers chose to select data and found meaning in their community and experiences. The photographs were used to trigger new ways of seeing a familiar context and narrating experience. Langa (2008) argues that photo narratives allow the participants to create new meanings and use the photographs to guide their stories. He explains that the photographs aid them in sharing their experiences and allow them to be the 'experts' in their narrative without feeling pressured about telling the 'right story'. "Photo-narratives seemed to offer a gratifying sense of self-expression, as participants in this study were able to express and educate the interviewer about the photographs taken" (Langa, 2008, p.10). This method is also helpful in furthering the aims of YPAR. Riessman (2008, p.143) argues:

"the power of the camera is turned over to research participants to record the images they choose and to story their meanings collaboratively with investigators" (Riessman, 2008, pg.143) Using the photographs as a means of data collection allowed the participants to be more active in the process of data collection.

A short ceremony was held outside the studio where cameras were distributed and a short question and answer session was held. As it was a Friday, the group then decided on the next meeting date, the following week, where we would meet as a group to share findings, and return the cameras so that the pictures could be developed for the next session. There seemed to be much difficulty getting the cameras back, for many different reasons. It was then

decided, for the sake of time and convenience that individual interviews would be held, when the cameras came in. During this process, it became evident that some of the participants had become overwhelmed by the workshops about techniques and felt ashamed of their pictures. Others were struggling with more personal problems and eventually dropped out of the research. Out of this initial group, only 2 of the participants completed the process.

Individual interviews took place at OFY. Each participant was able to tell their story using the photographs that they had taken of their individual experiences. Through this process, the researcher was able to hear the story from the participant without directing what the participant would bring or focus on and the interview was thus directed by the images that were selected by the participants of their environment. Often the selected photos elicited long narratives, or stories about their experiences. The use of narratives in this particular project was effective because it is person centred and allowed participants to tell their own stories, in the order they chose, by including and omitting what they chose to (Squire, 2008). Also, this approach allowed for rich interpretation as one story is layered with many sub-stories and meanings that make the data richer. Participants were thus able to discuss things that the researcher didn't ask or mention because of her own limitations. Narratives allow people to go deeper, to make sense and meaning for themselves and in this way, this process could become a way in which these youth could re-position themselves and develop their identities or agency in the world. The research remained dynamic and open-ended.

As the numbers were low a second recruitment process took place through the OFY. These new participants had not attended the workshop, and went from the original presentation of the research into taking photographs of their experiences. A further four participants were added to the study. The six participants who are represented in the study comprise of the two

participants who partook in the full process, and the four who were recruited after the visit to *I was shot in joburg*. The interviews varied in length, some lasting 50 minutes and others lasting 2 hours. In one instance, the interview resulted in one of the participants taking the researcher on a mobile interview of the community, allowing the researcher to further engage with and understand his experiences. Unfortunately due to a heavy storm, the interview mostly took place in the car, and although it was recorded, the recording was inaudible.

A few weeks after the last individual interview was conducted, the final meeting and workshop were arranged. In this session each participant was able to share their story by selecting four of their pictures that they felt depicted their life stories. What was interesting in this session was the way in which they interacted with each other and with the researcher. They challenged each other, at times agreed with others stories and at other times had very different perceptions of their world. Once everyone had presented, using the pictures that they had pre-selected we attempted to create a shared story of their experiences that everyone resonated with. The participants were given a crash course in PowerPoint and were shown how to create a digital story board. Each participant created their own story board, using the pictures that they had selected. We then created a collective story together in PowerPoint. During the reflections it became apparent how proud they were of what they had accomplished, and spoke of doing more of this, and how they could continue this process. They also had ideas of how this could be shared with others, through Facebook and posters. See Appendix B for the full structure of the research programme.

This final meeting also allowed for democratic participation and allowed the participants to push their thinking further throughout the session. Through their interaction and in their efforts to provide meaning, the participants encouraged each other to rethink attitudes and

beliefs and create a shared meaning of their experiences. Through carefully constructed guidelines for the working group, everyone was given an opportunity to share their experiences through the photographs that they selected. Although the final meeting was recorded and used to provide a platform for the group to construct a digital storyboard (See Appendix C), it was not transcribed and analysed for this study, due to time and length constraints. It did however give the researcher insight into the dynamics of the group, and allowed the participants to debate and struggle with the sense they make of their experiences, both personally and collectively. It also points to the life of this project beyond the thesis.

3.4 Ethics

One of the selection criteria was that the participants were over 18 years old, and would therefore be able to provide consent. This was obtained through a signed informed consent form (See Appendix A). Participation in the project was completely voluntary and participants were allowed to withdraw at any stage during the project. A letter was given to all those that expressed interest, explaining the research, the time that it took and the value that the research would offer the participants (See Appendix D). Permission to record the focus group discussions was also requested and signed consent obtained (See Appendix E). Although these letters were written in English, and most of the research was conducted in English, these letters could have been translated into Afrikaans if necessary. I consulted with the NPO, once the participants were selected and it was ascertained that translating the letters and consent forms was not necessary.

The participants had the choice to remain anonymous in the research project. Pseudonyms have been used to maintain this anonymity. Pseudonyms were also used to disguise the place and the organisation where the research was held, to further ensure anonymity.

Confidentiality was discussed in the focus group discussions, and participants were encouraged to share only what they felt comfortable with. Both in the individual interviews and the focus group discussion, participants were informed that they were free to omit any pictures or stories that they did not want to share.

Participants were offered optional counselling support through the Emthonjeni Centre at the University of Witwatersrand and transport was offered for those that were not able to access the clinic on their own. OFY, the community based organisation that we worked from was also informed of the nature of the research, and the previous mentors of the participants were aware of their involvement of the project. This seemed to be containing for the participants, and, at different points in their interviews, the participants made reference to their mentors.

3.5 Reflexivity

My position as the researcher, an educated woman, largely English speaking, had an impact on the research. In all of these characteristics, I was different to the participants, and was outside of their experience, looking in (Fay, 1996). When the language became problematic, the participants were encouraged to speak in their mother tongue (Afrikaans), and the data were later translated into English. Conversely, in another way I was the same as my participants, sharing the same racial identity. As a young coloured South African there was a sense of something shared in our experience, although this in itself was complex. Whilst they were aware of my 'colouredness', me being from Kwa Zulu Natal, and not speaking Afrikaans complicated our shared 'racial' and cultural identity. During the focus group discussion, whilst discussing sports, one of the participants switched languages, and said something colloquially. I responded to him in quite a familiar way. All the participants laughed hysterically. Although I was aware of what they thought was funny, I enquired as to why they were laughing. They informed me that it was weird that I understood what was

being said, both because it was about sport and also because of how it was said. I enquired further about why that was weird. One of the participants then jokingly explained that it was weird because it was 'very coloured'. When I then questioned that statement, and asserted that I too was coloured, they then all laughed hysterically. I understood the laughter to mean that I wasn't a real coloured to them, because I couldn't speak the language and because my background was so different to theirs. The issue of language thus seemed to 'other' me in relation to my participants. Throughout the interviews, when I encouraged them to speak Afrikaans, or responded in Afrikaans, they giggled or smiled. This seemed to suggest the strangeness in our connectedness or the way in which we seemed to be connected and disconnected through our shared racial identity. "It is clear that the key elements of a context – the place and the people present – play a vital role in determining how young people identify themselves, and what they say about themselves and others" (Pattman & Chege, 2003, p. 131). According to Pattman and Chege (2003), the way in which youth identify themselves is partly dependent on the researcher herself and is representative of who they are in relation to the researcher, and the particular context in which they are presenting their experiences. It was therefore important that the researcher remained aware of her position, and allowed the participants to share their experiences without any perceived judgement.

Because the participants were 'at risk' males, the researcher's safety could have been a concern. As a safety precaution, the mentors at the OFY, were present at the initial focus group discussion, and were supportive and aware of the participants' interview dates and times. One of the mentors also accompanied the researcher on the mobile interview. The individual interviews also took place at OFY, and the personal contact details of the researcher were not shared with the participants. All correspondence with the participants was via OFY. (See Appendix D)

3.6 Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interviews were transcribed as completely and unedited as possible, including silences and as much of the nonverbal interaction as possible. According to Wengraf (2004) the transcribing is the beginning of the analysis and without a verbatim transcript it is difficult to analyse the interview as a communicative interaction, filled with gaps, hesitations, inconsequentialities, etc., all of which add to the meaning and possible state of mind that the informant is in at the time of the interview. Two types of analyses were conducted, narrative analysis and thematic analysis of photographs and interviews. Although visual analysis will be discussed separately, this analysis of the photographs was done through the thematic analysis and is combined with the verbal data.

3.5.1 Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis focuses on how the story is told (Riessman, 2008) and was used to focus on the participants' stories of how they came to be NEETs. For the purposes of this study, an adaptation of Wengraf's (2010) biographic-narrative-interpretive-method (BNIM) and Squire (2008)'s personal experience narrative (PEN) was used to analyse selected narratives from the interviews.

In describing the photos to the researcher, many participants often digressed into detailed stories about recollected events. Wengraf (2010) calls these smaller stories 'particular incident narratives' (PINs) and he defines them as "an account of a particular experience that the person has lived through – The best PINs are narrations in which the person appears to be at least in part reliving the experience that they are talking about" (Wengraf, 2010, p547). These PINs were selected from the interviews of two particular NEETs who offered these rich personal narratives.

Stories offer insight into what may have been and are action orientated so they have the possibility of shaping future action (Wengraf, 2004). What was interesting to note was the progression of the understanding of the narratives for the narrator and for the researcher in analysing the unfolding structure of these stories.

In an effort to understand how the story was told, the analysis of these PINs focused on how meaning was made during the story telling, the context in which it was told and the language, both verbal and nonverbal that was employed. Furthermore, what was of particular interest in this analysis was what the PIN revealed about the individual and the broader context in which they live. This kind of analysis allows for the exploration of narratives as a means of understanding identity (McAdams, 1996), looking particularly at the following elements of these stories, 1) a trauma trigger, 2) the form of talk, 3) non-verbal cues and 4) the context in which the story is told.

a) Trauma Trigger

The temporary conflation of an earlier recollected event, or the way in which the story is relived and retold, acts as a trigger for the current identity, and the way in which the participants view themselves. In a sense, the focus was on the way in which the participant used the trigger event (PIN) to make sense of or explain their current situation, the way in which they fit the particular incident with their sense of identity. McAdams (1993) suggests that we understand ourselves to be who we are because of the events that lead us to our present selves.

b) The form of talk

The way in which the narrative was told was analysed. For example the use of repetition, code switching, detailed and complicated speech, as well as tone was looked at to understand the meaning that is made out of the story. Andrews et al (2008) suggests that one examines the structure, style and meanings of language as a way of constructing realities.

c) Non Verbal Cues

Verbatim transcripts are important as the narrative analysis is not only focussed on words that are spoken, but also on the nonverbal clues, such as pauses, silence, body language, laughter and hesitations (Wengraf, 2010; Squire, 2008). Some analysts would argue that the paralanguage is necessary for understanding experiences, as some aspects of the human experience cannot be storied (Squire, 2008). In particular, the nonverbal language could offer clues to the emotionality of the story and offer important opportunities for interpretation.

d) Context

The idea that the narratives were told to a particular person/people also impacted on what narratives would be shared, and which narrative would be left out. This co-construction of the narrative was also analysed. Furthermore, the story is always told in a context (Andrews et al, 2008). In most instances, the stories that emerged in these interviews were impacted on by the context of taking pictures of spaces and places. This seemed to direct the trajectory of the narratives in particular ways. No story is told the same way twice, and may be told and understood differently in different social contexts (Squire, 2008).

3.5.2 Visual Analysis

When analysing the photographs, what interested the researcher was what places, pictures or objects were selected by the participants, what they chose to photograph and, at the same time, what was omitted. Kvale (1996) proposes that the researcher develops the meanings of the discussions, as well as the images, by incorporating the subjects' own understandings as well as providing new perspectives and interpretations by the researcher. In this way, the researcher and the participants co-researched and created new meaning from their experiences of their community and the first layer of interpretive analysis was the photos and the narratives. The researcher attempted to illuminate these stories, and at the same time, place them in a certain theoretical framework, influenced by the literature review. In this way, the analysis was a combination of the researcher's interpretation, which was informed by theory, combined with the NEET's personal stories.

Langa (2007) offers an understanding of visual analysis, as more than simply describing the images. It involves analysing the image more deeply, including social context, the personal meaning and the manner in which it is presented. This visual analysis was conducted jointly in the interviews using the photos as triggers for the participants to narrate their experiences. Selected photos are presented in combination with the thematic analysis.

3.5.3 Thematic Analysis

Riessman(2008) describes thematic analysis as focussing on the content of the story, on 'what is said'. What is said is then interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework, in this case, theories of youth identities (Thom & Coetzee, 2004, Dornbusch et al, (2001), Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2008, Langa, 2012) and structural analyses of South African society (Alexander,

2013, Swartz, 2010, Maharaj, 2000, Bray and Goosen, 2010). Analysis of these data was conducted using thematic analysis as described by Hayes (1997). Hayes (1997) argues that using themes to structure the stories for analysis, (a) gives the researcher a technique for managing the very large amounts of messy material, which can emerge from conducting in-depth rapport interviews; and (b) it makes it possible to examine a few key thematic threads and to undertake meaningful comparisons between different accounts. This process of analysis, therefore, involved being vigilant for particular themes, that is, those that had already been 'preset' through the process of reviewing the literature around adolescent experiences within the South African context, e.g. the issue of fatherlessness or the impact absent fathers have on identity development was highlighted in the literature as a possible cause for risk taking behaviour.

The themes or patterns that developed through the data analysis were dependent on their significance to the research question and aims (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as well as the connection to the literature discussed to understand the NEETs and their experiences in a South African township. For the purpose of developing meaning from the stories told, the thematic analysis focused on discovering patterns of meaning, in order to construct a shared story of NEETs. "... thematic analysis involves the searching across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.91).

Secondly, once the data had been read and re-read to gain understanding of the meaning, and to make use of the themes that emerged, these themes were reviewed and refined. In this phase of the data analysis, the themes were reworked and reorganised so that there were "clear and identifiable distinctions between themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.91). The themes attempted to reflect the full data set, and provide insight into the richness of the data,

through the photos, and the narratives around each photo. “At the end of this phase, [one] should have a fairly good idea of what [the] different themes are, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). The clustered stories or themes create meaning and provides a rich interpretation of the full set of data.

Thirdly, these themes were properly defined so that the themes “... [identified] the essence of what each theme is about, and [determined] what aspect of the data each theme captures” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). The themes were then appropriately named, so that they carry the richness of the data, and the coherence and meaning that the story epitomised was formed. The themes followed a chronological pattern, depicting the story of a life from the past experiences of childhood to their future aspirations and plans, following a loose trajectory through time. The thematic analysis is presented in two chapters, following the narrative analysis. The first thematic analysis chapter focuses on analysing themes around the context of the participants lives. These themes were alluded to in the narrative chapter, through the stories that the two participants’ share. These particular themes emerge across all the interviews and gave a sense of how the participants experience or represent their context. The second thematic analysis chapter focuses on the possibilities in the future or rather the alternative versions of their identities that the participants imagine are possible.

Chapter 4 : Narrative Analysis – Life events and trajectory

This chapter focuses on two PINs to explore narrative accounts of *how* the participants understand how they came to be NEETs. Focusing on a PIN helps to understand the complexities of identity and how it is formed in narratives of past experiences. These PINs will be analysed structurally (Andrews et al, 2008). In some instances, the way in which the story is told, gives insight into unconscious or unstated meanings that the narrator is trying to convey (Wengraf, 2010). The elements that will be focused on is a) a trauma trigger, which the participants relive in the PIN and use to explain how they came to be NEETs, b) the form of talk, or how they speak, for example, repeating words or parts of the story, silences, etc. c) the non-verbal cues, for example, laughter, silences, putting head down etc. and lastly d) the context in which the story is told. Riessman (2008) suggests that looking at the way in which the story is structured, aids the analyst in interpreting the relation between the meaning that the narrator is trying to convey, and the way in which it is told. Each element has been colour coded in the data, to illustrate for the reader how these elements are used by the participants to tell their stories.

4.1 Dylan's PIN - I don't care anymore

Dylan's event narrative of what happened when he was knocked over by a car at age 9, epitomises his experience of being neglected by his parents. This will give insight into both the individual experience of Dylan, and possibly shed light on the experiences of these young people within the wider society (Andrews, 2008).

Hayley: Tell me about that, your experience.

Dylan: My experience personally, my dad was never there for me. My dad used to live in Durban for 8 years, [silence] and I used to live with my mum, me and my mum had lot of issues. In grade 4, ... ya, in grade 4 I think I was 10 or 11 years old. When I came from the, I used to attend the German school, and I came from the German school I got bumped by a car. [Swallowed hard] And most of the time my granny used to wait for me, and assist me home and stuff like that but that day it didn't happen, and it's what happened, it's like my experience there weren't assistance and stuff, so I decided ok I got bumped what what, my parents weren't there, I'm doing my own thing. I don't care anymore. That's what happened. [puts head down]

Hayley: Ja, that sounds painful and you ...?

Dylan: Ya, and my dad weren't there, coz he is the one that supported me. [silence]

Hayley: and before that someone used to walk with you and on that day, no one walked with you?

Dylan: actually in that year, in grade 3, in grade 1, 2 and 3 I was at Willows primary school but when I started attending the German school and stuff like that coz I got chosen in grade 3, and I used to attend Saturday school and after the Saturdays school when you are in the top 10 achievers, they choose the top 10 achievers to come and go to school then I went to the German school and I got bumped that year, I was in a car accident.

Hayley: the first year ... tell me about that ...

Dylan: there were never people with me, so we used to cross the roads [laughs] like we want to, we didn't learn about crossing roads and stuff like that so ya ...

Hayley: and then ... what happened ... the story ...

Dylan: the story of the bump ... I got off the bus that day, it was me and my friend a other boy, we were close and we still are Dennis Richards and we got off the bus that day, and that day we decided we are hungry and we ran, we raced to see who can across the street first, and the car came from the top, and he bumped me [clapped his hands], and I fell there basically, ya, [silence] and that man picked me up, he didn't wait for the police or the ambulance, he drove me home and when I came at home, and he told me to walk on my leg that was broken, and I couldn't, and my mum weren't at home it was only my grandmother, ja, and I came at home and they went to call my mum because she was busy drinking somewhere, and after that they rushed me to hospital, no ambulance nothing involved [swallowed hard] that's what happened that day [silence]

Trauma Trigger

This extended PIN about being knocked over by a car seems to act as a trigger for his current identity, and in some way he uses this event to explain parental neglect. In his mind, the event

is indicative of the neglect, and as a result of the neglect, he decides not to care. The very long narrative is recapitulated into one statement, “I got bumped, what, what, my parents weren’t there, I’m doing my own thing”. This narrative of being bumped by a car, is understood as a result of a lack of parental care, and Dylan’s evaluation of this situation, or the meaning that he deduces, is that if others don’t care for him, he will not care either.

Form of talk

The repetitive way in which he tells the story seems to convey the meaning. He seems to be trying to convince the researcher and himself why he just won’t care anymore, “I don’t care anymore”. He seems to repeat the incident five times in this PIN, which may suggest a feeling of regret about losing out on the opportunities that were afforded to him. By sharing the details of attending Saturday school, he asserts how hard he had worked to achieve selection to the prestigious German school, escaping poor township schooling and how that then seemed to have been spoilt or lost with the car accident. Throughout the narrative he repeats the event, “I got bumped by a car”, “I got bumped”, “I was in a car accident”, “the story of the bump”, and “the car came from the top, and he bumped me” all seem to suggest that this ‘bump’ may also be somewhat of a bump in his life narrative. In a way, the meaning that he makes about this incident suggests a jolt in his life that affected his attitude and trust in adults.

The repetition of the event, and the stop start and repeat way in which it is told, may also be in a sense Dylan’s way of expressing how hard it is to come to terms with the impact that he perceives this event to have had on his life. The continuous ‘stop-starting’ of the narrative may also speak of the difficulty in sharing this story and how deeply personal it is. Also the use of the word, ja, seems to be significant in this narrative. At times it seems to denote his

thinking; he says, “grade 4, ja, grade 4” as though he is recollecting the facts from somewhere in his mind, and at other times the use of the word ‘ja’, seems to be a way for Dylan to distance himself from this experience. After speaking of the bump he would say, “so ja”, which seems to be a way of normalising the experience. He also says, “I got bumped, what, what” which suggests that it wasn’t that serious, yet he repeats the story of being knocked five times. He may be struggling to come to terms with the impact that this event had on him, in terms of it revealing his feelings of being neglected. Whilst he says, “I don’t care” it appears as though he cares a great deal, and has been affected by the neglect that he has experienced as a child.

Non Verbal Cues

Dylan’s nonverbal cues also offer insight into what meaning is made in the story. He concludes the narrative by saying that he will have to care for himself, and his non-verbal resolution, [silence] seems to suggest that that was the end of him caring, similar to the earlier ending of the story when he puts his head down. He swallowed hard twice during this narrative. This also suggested that there was something painful about this event, or the event brought up something painful for him. The first time he swallows hard is when he mentions being bumped for the first time, and the second time was when he mentions that there was no ambulance involved. The no ambulance may also be symbolic of no help available, which seems to be a very prominent feeling for Dylan, that he doesn’t get enough help. Whilst Dylan laughs often during other narratives in the interview, the absence of laughter in this PIN, and rather the slow pace of his speech and the silences, seem to communicate how serious he takes this event. In other instances, not in this PIN, his laughter indicated some admission of guilt or possible embarrassment. The only time he laughs in this story is when he talks of himself and his friend racing across the road. In a sense, this may indicate some

admission of guilt, but overall is suggestive of the fact that he sees himself as the victim in this instance. He sees the situation as happening to him, and out of his control.

There are quite a few silences and pauses in this narrative, which can be seen highlighted in the narrative. This seems to suggest a subdued tone, and is indicative of the sadness with which this story was told.

Context

This narrative is co-constructed, and the researcher's personal interest in the emotional world of the story teller, impacts on what is said and the way in which meaning is made (Riessman, 2008). The researcher's comment, "that sounds painful" encourages him to repeat the story and elaborate on the even more. The researcher seems to be responding to the fact that Dylan clearly wants to talk more. When Dylan puts his head down, this provokes the researcher to say that it sounded painful. It appears that the researcher's interventions seem to occur when Dylan goes silent, and seems sad. The researcher seems to encourage him, and in a sense interprets for him. When he talks of his father not being around, "Ya, and my dad weren't there, coz he is the one that supported me" and then goes silence, suggests that the researcher's comment allows Dylan to associate the reason for his pain, i.e. the absence of his father in his early years. He then goes on to further explain the context of this incident, as a way of convincing the researcher of the impact this event had on him. The researcher interprets his comment, and offers "and before that someone used to walk with you and on that day, no one walked with you?" almost questioning the meaning that he was making. He then responds by reorienting the researcher to the context of his school and retells the story of the bump.

This narrative speaks of the context in which it is told, in that Dylan does not explain to the researcher why the driver who bumped him did not wait for the ambulance, but rather acted quickly to get him help. He takes for granted that as a fellow South Africa, the researcher is aware of the poor service delivery, and will understand that by not waiting for an ambulance, the driver was acting in his best interest. The fact that the researcher understands the driver as being benevolent, speaks of the fact that the story is told in a particular way to a particular audience, i.e. the researcher. Dylan's narrative has offered a way of understanding the sense that he makes from this traumatic experience, and the way in which he connects this experience to his current identity as a NEET. This way of speaking about his life attempts to give it meaning and logic, in a way that gives this trauma purpose in his life (Bourdieu, 1986, McAdams, 1993). This narrative also seems to convey how the construction of his identity is impacted by his familial sense of belonging or lack thereof.

4.2 Alan's PIN - I wasn't a robber

Alan shares a story of why he became a criminal. He attributes this 'decision' to one event - that of being violated and taken advantage of by a criminal.

- A: *You can't forget... I wasn't a robber, I was quiet, always looking, they call it **stil skelm**, [quiet and passive / petty thief] I was a skelm and thief and something but I never, no one did know, **but one day** I was on my way to school, one guy came there ask us to help him with his car, [silence] **and I'm a nice guy, I have to help him** because he asked us nice, even give my friend cigarettes, I don't touch his cigarettes, I don't like cigarettes, but dagga I will smoke ya, he did give my friend cigarettes, we did go with him and **walk and walk** he talk with us like we are gonna push the car, then he... [silence] **[stands up and gestures a push then violently grabs at his shirt]***
- H: ***He attacked you?***
- A: *Mmmm, **I feel like cry**, yah, I was trying **it was still scary**, my first time, **big** screwdriver, a **big one**, **the biggest** screwdriver you can find, **not a biggest one**, I*

don't know is it the biggest one but it was so long. He say he is going to put it through my neck and my friends neck, the one I call Jameel, from that day he take my phone his phone and our spending, ten rand from me. And that one he is also like in a cheese boy [privileged boy] he is a nice guy but not a disciplined guy, he is not a clean clean guy, but he is, he have, he have brains clever, clever, he have a seven rand on him and I have a ten rand he take our money and I start praying, [swallows hard] he say 'come', he make his belt loose, like he's gonna rape us now, [pause] you can't run now because we are in the bush, we are at the back. You see the train, where the train ride in that bush, there is no one only vabriks [factories]. People's busy working they can't hear if you are gonna scream and if you like scream it's like he is gonna stab us dead. Ay, I pray and I walk, we walk after him, his belt is loose now, after that I think I have to run but my friend... I can't run without my friend. I can run very fast but my friend, I'm an athlete, I'm very fast, you won't find me, you won't catch me, ya, you won't catch me, I know myself you see, [laughs] he just changed his mind and say [pause], 'F julle hierse, waai julle', he swore us, because I did pray [clicks his fingers] then we run, I run fast fast fast, didn't even worry about that phone, but I still cry as I run, thank you lord, fast fast, my friend scream, stop help, wait for me, and I know he is the one who, they gonna catch him, I stop and I him, I shout at him again, kom aan [come on], moenie so stadig [don't be so slow], hy se moenie worry hy is ver [don't worry he is far], [laughs] hy worry nie [he wasn't worried] because his phone wasn't nice and my phone was nice, and I did worry, hy [he] put his bag on and he walk, sussy [colloquial for weak] look of mine, vertraagider guy [slower guy], but he is clever, he just walk and go back to school, I didn't go back to school, I go home, tell my mother and now they shout at me, because they tell me not go with the phone to school, and I never listened. I steal it at the charger, in my pocket, and my mother see me, she say, jy wil nie worry [you will not worry], gee die phone, [give the phone] then I see she put it on the wardrobe there, and I wait wait wait, gaan skool toe [go to school], and I was my mond [wash my mouth], she did see me washing my mouth, but I go and wash it again, just to steal the phone, and I steal it and put it here [gestures] and I say kyk [look], ek het nie a phone nie [I don't have a phone], ma, jy kan bel of [ma, you can call it], ek het nie n foon nie [I don't have a phone], daars nie n phone [there is no phone here], she se ja, gaan nou skool toe, [she says ya, go to school] give me ten rand and I go, that what then, that guy came, he rob us... from

that day, I did rob people, from that day, also a big screwdriver and I did hear what he said that day, come and help us, nou, [clicks his fingers] I also did steal from people, I help them, they have to come and help me then if I catch them in a nice place, I rob them [clicks his finger], but I don't tell them I'm gonna kill them and just like is a game I play with them but if I say the game is nice I did rob and see a lot of money, a bag full of money, and phones and watches and rings, I see this is a nice game but ghoo... [gesture: slams wrists together, as if he is being handcuffed] prison.

Trauma trigger

He starts the PIN with, 'You can't forget' suggesting that he was going back in his mind and possibly reliving the event that he explains had changed his personality. He magnifies this event, and allows it to act as a trigger for why he became an armed robber in the future.

He also explains how the feeling of being ashamed and made powerless also seemed to impact on the way in which he viewed reality. He explains that he is a nice guy and that he felt it was important to help someone in need, but that he felt exploited and taken advantage of in that situation. Giligan (1997) suggests that when one's dignity is taken away so violently, it evokes anger and can result in the person becoming violent or abusive, so that they do not have to deal with the feelings of being shamed. Alan's account seems to suggest that he was quite passive, a 'stil skelm' [whilst this can't be translated directly, it suggests that he was a petty or unassuming criminal] but the experience of being violated left him so angry, that it altered his way of being. In a sense, his identity has been shaped by this traumatic trigger experience.

Form of Talk

His form of talk was detailed, complicated and fraught with contradictions. Alan shares some feelings when the researcher questions what happened, illustrating how scared he felt. He

then gets very caught up in his own narrative and talks for a very extended time (about 10 minutes) about this traumatic, abusive incident that he pinpoints as the ‘cause’ of his descent into crime. While he wants to convey how scary the incident was, he seems to be aware that he may be exaggerating the ‘bigness’ of the screwdriver, like a childhood recollection of fear. As he relives the experience, he is attempting to draw the researcher into his experience.

He also repeats words, “walk and walk”, “big screwdriver, a big one, the biggest screwdriver”, “clean, clean”, “clever, clever”, “fast fast, run fast, fast, fast”, “fast, fast” , “I wait, wait, wait”, which seems to be his way of drawing emphasis on, or upping the intensity of the narrative. In this way, Alan gives insight into the experience and the intense feelings, and possible anxiety that this narrative brings up for him. At times he also jumped around in his story, and it was difficult to know who he was talking about, “he put his back on and he walk, sussy [colloquial for weaker] look of mine, vertraadiger guy [slower guy]”. It was difficult to know when he was talking about himself and when he was talking about his friend. This was also indicative of how he used his friend’s experience to distance himself from the intense feeling that he had. Whilst he suggests that his friend was weaker, the enmeshed way in which he talks about he and his friend could be a way of sharing his experience and thoughts about himself without saying it directly. In this way, the way in which the narrative is told, gives insight into Alan’s unconscious experience.

The confusing way in which he tells the story may be indicative of the way he felt during the incident, and is also typical of trauma or abuse narratives. He talks of a big screwdriver, not the biggest one, of his friend being clever, but then says he is slow, and then says again that he is clever. This could also be suggestive of his ambivalent feelings about the experience.

The narrative also reveals contradictions to the stereotypical ideals of masculinities of young

men in townships. He speaks of being compassionate, wanting to help someone in need, of caring about his friend's safety "after that I think I have to run but my friend... I can't run without my friend" and also of crying and being afraid "I feel like cry", "it was still scary", "but I still cry as I run". This also illustrates Alan as a multi-faceted being, not a stereotypical criminal. He shows emotion and is capable of compassion and honesty which is contradictory to being a hard and angry criminal.

His tone in this narrative is also different to his tone throughout the rest of the interview.

Throughout the interview, Alan was excitable and spoke quite fast and animated; however, at this point in the narrative he speaks slower and seems to have a restrained or passive tone.

This may be indicative of his feelings of being victimised and the importance that he accords this particular experience is forming his life trajectory.

The constant switching of language and tenses also suggests that he is reliving and re-experiencing the event (Wengraf, 2010). Every time he speaks of a conversation or an interaction in the story, he uses direct speech and code switches to Afrikaans. When he explains how the perpetrator chases them away, he says, "F julle hierso, waai julle", when he explains his interaction with his friend, trying to hurry him along, he says, "kom aan, moenie so stadig, he se moenie worrie hy is ver" and when he shares his interaction with his mother and how he tries to convince her that he doesn't have the cellphone, when he actually does have it, he says "kyk, ek het nie n phone nie, jy kan bel of, ek het nie n foon nie...". In this way, he seems to be going back to the event and reliving the interactions between him and the perpetrator, him and his friend and him and his mother. It is as though he gets submerged in the story, and offers a raw account of these interactions, as though they were happening in

that moment. The code switching, in those instances, could also be a way of reconnecting to the experience, and coming closer to the emotions that this experience brought up for him.

Nonverbal cues

The fact that his narrative has very few breaks, as well as the brief silences, suggests that he was thinking very hard about the events and possibly the version of the events that he chose to share. When he says, “he is going to rape us now”, he pauses, possibly thinking about the event and how he will share it. He then laughs, the only time in the narrative, when he suggests that the perpetrator changed his mind. This laughter may indicate his embarrassment, and then the pause after suggests that he possibly changed his mind about how he wanted to tell his story. He also gesticulates quite a few times in the narrative, [stands up], [motions a push, and violently pulls at his shirt], [clicks his fingers], which suggests the intensity of emotion that the story evokes. The standing up and the gesturing also seem to emphasise these intense feelings and possible anxiety that is evoked. The dramatic effects of demonstrating the attack also suggests an intensity, and possible attempt to convince or pull the researcher into the story. This could also be indicative of Alan reliving the event as he tells the story.

Context

This narrative is a co-construction between the narrator and the researcher, and seems to create new meaning from this event. Whilst in the beginning of the narrative he explains that this event is the reason he became an armed robber, it seems that talking about the event may have given him an opportunity to rethink his story. He realises at the end of the narrative, when he speaks of his mother’s response, she shouted at him for taking his phone and not listening to her, that he may have had some agency in this situation. Possibly the presence of

an audience, in this case the attentive yet unobtrusive researcher, allows Alan to question his narrative, and rethink his narrative and the meaning that he has created.

The presence and brief verbal communication by the researcher seems to aid Alan in narrating the feelings and details of this event. Alan can't seem to find the words to say what the perpetrator had done, and chose to gesticulate. The researcher was then prompted to put words to the enactment by questioning, "He attacked you?", and this prompts Alan to share his feelings, "Mmmm... I feel like cry, yah, I was trying it was still scary". In this way, Alan's narrative is co-constructed by Alan and the researcher, in that they collectively give meaning to this traumatic event.

The context in which the narrative is told, the end of the interview, directly after he has shared a long narrative about his family seems to be significant. He does not have a picture to trigger this narrative, and waits for the very end of the session, when he has shared all his stories and experiences, which suggests that this traumatic event found its way into Alan's account, and the meaning that he seemed to be making during narrating his identity. Alan's narrative shows how, through narrating his story, his past traumatic experience, "is situated in relation to the present in which it is recollected" (Crites, 1986, p.158). Through narrating his story, Alan recollects the past, and makes meaning out of the past experience of being violated or abused, in his present context of being a criminal.

The narrative offers an understanding of Alan's complex feelings and experiences. His narrative produces an account of vulnerability and his experience of being a victim is what forces him into a life of crime. In his narrative of his criminal activity, there is a sense that

there is some adventure, excitement and he is able to regain some power. However, he understands that the consequence of his actions could possibly mean going back to prison.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter focused on understanding the complexities of these young men's identities. It offered two traumatic stories, Dylan's story of neglect and Alan's story of violation, and how these two young men understand the impact of these events. They both seemed to inflate these traumatic stories giving them substantial time and weight in the story of their lives, as a way of explaining why they became who they are. For Dylan, getting knocked by the car was as a result of being neglected, and this resulted in him not caring either. For Alan, being violently robbed and sexually violated by a criminal, made him rethink his petty crime, and led him to commit more serious theft. The intensity in which the stories are told, suggest that these accounts are significant in shaping the identities of these young men. The way in which meaning is constructed through the telling of stories (Bourdieu, 1986, McAdams, 1993), was also highlighted. For instance, Alan began by blaming the perpetrator for why he became a criminal but by the end of his narrative, seemed to be willing to take some responsibility, and also acknowledged some of the poor decisions that he made leading up to the incident. The context in which the story is told, also aids in the meaning that is constructed. The researcher's interactions in the interview, also seem to impact on the kind of meaning that is created in both PINs.

In their PINs, Alan and Dylan's narratives of how they land up as NEETs are also suggestive of broader themes that cut across all the participants stories and will be discussed in the next chapter. These themes that seem to contextualise their experience, and offer a broader understanding of how these participants become who they are. For example, Dylan's personal

narrative of his experience of not being cared for or supervised, also speaks of a wider social narrative. This narrative offers an understanding of many young children from disadvantaged communities. Even after 20 years of democracy, opportunities of a better education still exist outside of many impoverished communities, and the gap between those that have and those that don't is ever widening (Alexander, 2013). At such a young age, Dylan is forced to travel on his own, outside of his community, in order to access better schooling opportunities, and then this opportunity is further limited due to a lack of familial support and the lack of services – no ambulance. Throughout their PINs, both overtly and subtly, Alan and Dylan mention the lack of familial support, inequality, schooling constraints, the role of friends, the environment in which they live and their involvement in crime. These two individual stories account for how these young men land up as NEETs are also suggestive of broader themes that cut across all the participants' stories and will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Place and (non) belonging

This chapter is a descriptive analysis, using thematic and visual analysis to describe or represent the context of NEETs, as they see and experience it. Swartz (2010), Alexander (2013), Hunter & May (2003), Richter (2007), Ramphela (2002) explain the context of disadvantaged youth in townships, as crippled by poverty, violent, disadvantaged schooling opportunities, limited infrastructure and fragmented family structures. The data analysed below are drawn from the six participants as well as a selection of their photographs that depict their stories. The chapter is organised into two overarching themes, 1) NEETs interaction with place, and will focus on their current context, in terms of what it looks like, the problems they see in their community, and also what they value about the place in which they live and, 2) NEETs interaction with people, and the relationship that they form in their contexts, by looking particularly at the relationships or people that they see as problematic, and those that they value. The focus of the chapter will be on how these interactions with place and people, impact on the ways in which they construct their identities. Each of these two themes includes sub themes that will describe the context of place and the context of their relationships further.

5.1 Interactions with place

The way in which youth interact with their environment shapes their identities, and impacts on the way in which they view themselves and others. Understanding townships and the way in which the youth experience their social environment provides a richer understanding of their identities. This connects to the way in which the participants engaged in the research by selecting and shooting pictures for an audience. The researcher became the 'other' or a target audience that became a part of the meaning process for the participants. Through taking photographs and selecting a narrative to share about the pictures, they shared a part of their

stories and were provided with an opportunity to both explore and challenge these identities, both through their story telling, and through the way in which they understood and acted on their environments.

5.1.1 Place identity

Dylan's selection and account of the picture below allows him to see and experience his environment from a distance or from the projected view of the outsider. This distance allows him to think about this place, and offer some kind of explanation of what happens there and how it is perceived by others.



Figure 1 - The other side of Willows (Dylan)

Dylan: And this is Willows but this is from the other side of Willows, not the side where you came in. this is at [the other side] now, it is also one of the busiest streets in [the community]. And mostly, everyone in that street smokes drugs, majority. That's where the street, where everything is happening, you get people that smoke nyowpe, people that smoke drugs. It is also busy busy busy, at night, day.

Hayley: mmm ... tell me more about it?

Dylan: It's a busy street, it's near a river, when you come in from [the other side], mostly the youth is involved in drugs, others are involved in stealing. Everything happens in that street.

Dylan defines Willows as a location within Settlers that has a particular character primarily as a place identified as that of drug abuse and business (Sundstrom, 2003).

Sundstrom (2003) shows how categories of people, in this context, NEETs, are created by connections between different social forces, including economic, cultural and government factors. These social forces create a place and this place produces a category of people. In this way, Dylan's account of this place, suggests that the social forces have created this place and the meaning attached to it, and in a sense, this place produces a certain category of people, i.e. criminals and drug users. Dylan's identity is formed or established by his presence and involvement in the community.

Dylan: Willows is the busiest place in Settlers... [laughs] its quite a fun place, but what makes it the most busiest, it has, ok, they say it has a secret behind Willows, but they don't tell us what it is [laughs] that's what the old people say. In Afrikaans, die geheim van [the secret of] Willows. [laughs] Ja, but it's a busy place, since then, since we were small, It's that busy, and now its developed like most of the drug areas, ja, it's the highest percentage in [this area] with drugs ... all the drug lords are in Willows, everyone comes to Willows to buy drugs, that what makes it the busiest place.

Sundstrom (2003) explains that despite the challenges in their community people don't necessarily want an end to their community. Dylan seems to share these sentiments when he explains that it is a fun place. In a sense, the township is part of his identity. Place attachment, according to Sundstrom (2003) evokes an emotional bond between people and place, which incorporates the individual memories of a place, with the expectations for future experiences of that place. Dylan laughs a lot whilst talking about Willows, this laughter may suggest his affection for Willows. There is a "looping effect between our identification of places and our identities" (Sundstrom, 2003, p.90). Dylan's account of his community puts forward an idea that it is a busy place that is occupied with drugs and drug lords, but also full of secrets, possibilities and 'fun'. Again his laughter may suggest his identification with, and possible ambivalent feelings regarding his desire to be identified with Willows. Whilst he can clearly see the version of his community as outsiders see it, as drug infested, poor and disadvantaged,

he also seems to have an ironic sense of pride in its reputation. Kevin similarly suggests that Willows is 'a nice place' that may just be in need of a 'few upgrades'.

Kevin: [talking about Willows] Ja, it's a nice place ... just needs a few upgrades

This suggests that he has some hope for this community and, possibly himself. He may be signifying that he too is a nice young man, in need of a few adjustments, and a little bit of support.

5.1.2 An environment of barrenness

Another way in which Willows was identified was through the empty spaces, and photographs of barren land. In a way, Deon's picture and his description of his life and the picture seem to sum up the idea of the relationship between place and identity.



Figure 2 – Nothingness (Deon)

Deon: It didn't come out nice. As you can see there, laying under the tree. I dunno why these people there but everyday there is people laying there.

Hayley: Ok. Laying under the tree.

Deon: I dunno why but everyday. I took it because I need a job actually because I don't do nothing at home. I am just tired of sitting at home cleaning, doing the same stuff everyday. And, that people reminds me of my own life.

Hayley: Mmm.

Deon: Because they are doing nothing every day.

His picture suggests open land, and nothingness, and he also shares about his day to day experiences of doing nothing. However, the emptiness of the picture may also speak of

possibilities, and he later suggests what could be built in the area (a shopping mall), and his desire to find a job. This is quite a depressing, consumerist view, but possibly the only likely alternative that he can envision. Deon's selection of this photograph reminds him of his own life, these people seem to be doing the same thing every day, and he is suggesting that he is frustrated with doing nothing.

By acting on the social world, in this context – the township, and challenging the social ills that exist in this space, the identities of those that exist in these places, are given an opportunity to re-form their identities (Sundstrom, 2003). In a sense challenging the unemployment or the mundaneness of his life, Deon gives himself an opportunity to rethink who he is and who he wants to be. By seeing his place and himself, through the lens of a camera, allows some distance between himself and his experience so that he is able to rethink or challenge his actions. Furthermore Deon's selection and active engagement with the picture below suggests that he is thinking about or creating possibilities for the future.

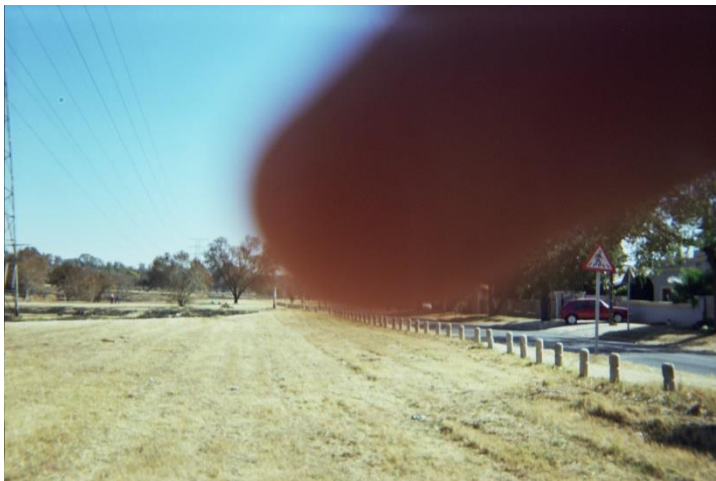


Figure 3 – An empty space (Deon)

Deon: this is my finger, just to see, this is an empty space here, empty plot, not a plot, you can see it 's, there needs to be something done.

The open space offers him some hope, Bourdieu's (1986) suggestion that "hope is that openness of the present" (p. 166) seems to be illustrated by Deon, and offers a way of understanding his present situation, as moving unendingly towards future possibilities

(Bourdieu, 1986). He suggests that something can be done in the open space. Kevin's picture below, of informal settlements leads him into a discussion about what he believes the community needs.



Figure 4 – Upgrading is needed (Kevin)

Kevin: umm ... I don't know the exact location, but in the picture it represents that the community needs upgrading.

Hayley: mmm ... Why do you say that it needs upgrading?

Kevin: because people are living in shacks

Hayley: ok ... this is like an informal settlement, people in Willows?

Kevin: Ja ...that, that's many risks, if strong winds come, knocks it down, if you leave the candle, it can burn down

Hayley: So it's a health risk

Kevin: ja, its unsafe. If you have a baby, the baby is gonna get sick

Kevin names the social ills of his community, particularly the issue of housing and, in this way, opens up for himself the opportunity for change. His suggestion that “strong winds could knock down the house” could be looked at metaphorically, and possibly even be compared to his own identity. In a sense, his experience of a poor education and difficult family life are factors that make his ‘house’ unstable. His plea for new housing speaks of

both the ills of his community as well as his own desire for something new and different.

However, Alan suggests that this cycle is not easily broken:

Alan: you see Willows, this is just everything go around and around nothing get better, same old shit just a different day

This commentary suggests that he is desperate for change, and the repetition of “around and around” is suggestive of cycles that cannot be broken.

5.1.3 Policing and corruption

This blurred picture of a police van, taken by Alan speaks of the absence of the police presence in many communities, and the ambivalence around police protection.



Figure 5 – Police absence (Alan)

An issue that many of the participants raised was that of police corruption. Whilst this is a national issue that continues to frustrate and perpetuate violence and crime in communities, it also speaks specifically of the constant constraints and hopelessness that is experienced by youth living in poor, disadvantaged communities (Alexander, 2013; Sundstrom, 2003). Kevin and Deon share their frustration with the poor service delivery of the police.

Kevin: We need more police enforcement, because if they break into your house,, because it takes them like 2 or 3 hours to respond

Deon: Some police are also involved with it, that is the problem

Hayley: So nothing is really done

Deon: the police take money, some smoke drugs

However, one cannot ignore the irony of these observations by the participants, given that they are sometimes the ones doing the housebreaking and committing the crimes, in this way, they are both victims and perpetrators of crime.

These observations accord with a study on youth involvement in crime conducted by Segal et al (2000), who found that criminal activity did not seem to yield any serious consequences for young men. The police were described as being involved in the criminal activity and corruption was what created feelings of little consequence and a lack of faith in the legal system. (Segal et al, 2000). Possibly the participants in this present study have similar feelings, and have realised that there is little consequence for committing crimes. The experiences of crime and violence may offer restitution or a way of dealing with an otherwise hopeless situation. Whilst this account does not serve to justify the behaviour of any individuals it does attempt to offer an understanding as to how these youth perceive and act on the environment.

Michael: nothing, nothing, even the police can 't even help. Police are always taking money from the drug dealers. How you gonna get them.

Wade: I don't know, I really don't know. Yor, Even the police can't even get rid of it [drugs], so how can we?

Michael and Wade state their distrust in the police. This indicates the lack of faith that these young men have in the state to support or protect them from the injustices or atrocities that face their communities.

5.1.4 Drug abuse

The place of Willows was described as riddled with drugs conforming to stereotypes of 'coloured townships'. The participants in the study all shared their own thoughts on the devastation of drugs in their community. In an attempt to depict the drug use in the community, Alan presented this picture.



Figure 6 – Preparing the drugs (Alan)

The picture, which Alan is careful to claim, is *staged* using chalk not real drugs, shows two young men, friends of Alan, preparing their drugs. Alan's desire to include the drugs in his pictures, speaks of the impact that the drugs has on his everyday life and the central role they play in the community. Dylan offers possible reasons for the crime and the gangsterism, and seems to be suggesting that is in fact the use of drugs that perpetuates both these problems.

Dylan: Drug problems, it's the main thing in [this community] , everyone smokes drugs, even the youngest children smoke drugs, and there isn't a solution to prevent drugs, so now [this community] is focused on drugs, ja, gangsterism came down, but there is still that few gangsters, and stealing, also that's a big problem coz most of the children wanna go steal, they want money for drugs, and that's when you end up like, look at me, going to jail ... ja

Alan also comments on the pervasiveness of drugs in the Willows community

Alan: *This is my brother [picks up another pic] this, he is the naughtiest one now at home and he do the stuff that I do, taking roshies tablets and using drugs ... drugs ... what's your name again?*

Hayley: *Hayley*

Alan: *Hayley ... drugs Hayley ... whose just gonna break up your body you you gonna, You see that one who was here before I [previous interviewee] he was fat, fat, fat, fat, fat, it's the drugs, he is gone [laughs] ... it's not nice ... but its life in Willows*

Alan's use of the researcher's name to emphasise his point, also speaks of the effect that the drugs have on their experiences. This account suggests that Alan is aware of the effects of taking the drugs, but also speaks of the struggle to stop taking these drugs. All the participants, at different times in their interviews attributed the challenges facing young people in their communities, to drug abuse, and all of the other participants also speak about drugs in their stories of place. He also repeats the word 'fat', five times to emphasise the effects that drugs have on weight loss, possibly signifying the impact that the drugs have on the person's wellbeing.

Michael: *99% in Settlers ... really*

Hayley: *tell me about that*

Michael: *What? Drugs?*

Hayley: *mmm*

Michael: *you don't wanna know*

Hayley: *What's going on in Settlers?*

Michael: *mmm ... there is 15 year olds, 16 year olds doing drugs*

Hayley: *using?*

Michael: *53 year old aunties using drugs, 99%.*

Hayley: *99% is a lot of people*

Michael: *using, really ... young girls, selling themselves for drugs*

Wade: *Like they can't stop them. You can't stop them. You go to this house where they sell drugs, but next to that house they are selling also drugs, so it's impossible to stop.*

Deon: *It is a little bit rough there. A lot of drug addicts, a lot of the drugs is just that side. A lot of people is just there. They sell drugs. People go and buy their stuff there. It is not rough but the people use a lot of drugs.*

Kevin: *... like, I'm speaking now say 90% of Settlers are on drugs, just because things aren't going the way of youngsters*

The participants' unofficial statistics and accounts of the drug problems are not dissimilar to the community's official account of the drug problem. "The community" has sent many requests or outcries to the government, regarding the drug trafficking in their community. Michael's account, which highlights that, "53 year old aunties using drugs, 99%" and "using, really ... young girls, selling themselves for drugs" also points to gender stereotypes. He seems to be stressing the seriousness of the drug problem by declaring that the women too are using the drugs.

5.1.5 A place of Violence and Aggression

Giligan (1998) suggests even the most violent people are not violent all the time. Violence, according to Giligan (1998) occurs in brief spurts, and often occurs in incidents where the person feels intense humiliation, disrespect or when they feel as though their sense of self is being threatened. Michael's admission about his temper alludes to the fact that, only in instances where he is humiliated, does he react.

Michael: I got a short temper

Hayley: tell me about that

Michael: when people tease me, I get aggressive

Kevin's explanation of why people lash out, also speaks of circumstances where the person feels disrespected or their sense of self is threatened, either through emotional or physical abuse:

Kevin: umm,, like I said, it's all about the bullying, physical and mental abuse, children just start lashing out

Mckendrick and Hoffman (1990) offer a view that no one is excluded from the effects of violence in our society. Many South Africans, if not perpetrators are, victims or witnesses of this violence. In different ways, South Africans continue, even today, to be caught up in

patterns of violence, and seem to have accepted it as a legitimate way to resolve conflict. It was evident that the participants' feelings of anger, rooted in feelings of inadequacy, frustration with the structural pressures or personal issues, were often expressed violently. Alan and Dylan's accounts suggest that the built up aggression and frustration experienced by youth often resulted in violent attacks or outbursts.

Alan: ja, sometimes I get angry, I don't have to show you that stuff but ill show you that stuff, sometimes I get angry and I cut myself with a knife

Dylan: people hate each other, when you have something others are jealous towards you, there is a lot of hatred and jealousy and they kill each other for that ... [later] you going to seek attention mostly, you going to do everything to get that love that you don't get at home [silence]

Many of the youth in this study are still impacted by the ramifications of apartheid. The notion that violence breeds violence coupled with the belief that structural violence (Bulhan, 1985) in the form of poverty, inequality, racial discrimination, unemployment and corruption still exists in this country, provides a back drop for the experiences and feelings of youth growing up in communities affected by this violence. In a sense, through family and through personal experiences the violence suggested above continues to plague South African communities. Whilst not explicitly stated, the accounts that children are violent, is telling of schools being places of violence.

5.1.6 Schooling Histories

All six participants shared stories of why and how they dropped out of school and have become NEETs. What became clear in their stories of schooling was that the state of the schools, the violence and threat posed in schools and the schools inability to accommodate learners with varied learning abilities. Dylan and Michael offer an explanation for why they are no longer in school. Their accounts suggest that their misconduct was the cause of their expulsion. However, both accounts also suggest a level of injustice.

Dylan: uhuh ... im not in school, I didn't finish, I dropped out of school ... I was a naughty child, I was a problem at school and came last year September, August when I got expelled ... coz there was this

teacher, she never liked us, it was me and my friend Thomas. So we decided, ok she didn't sell our textbooks to anyone, so we decided that day, she made us pay for our textbooks and everything, and so we decided to steal her money [laughs] and we stole her money ... but a week later someone told her, then we got expelled and I got into a fight with the disciplinary officer, that is why I got expelled. Ya, [laughs] ... Silence

In a study on teachers working in a gang-violent community, the notion that teachers may be experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, due to the high levels of violence they are exposed to, was explored by Choe et al (2012). With this in mind, it could be hypothesised that many of the teachers have become numb, or have lost interest in the individual stories of their learners. As a way of coping with the high demands placed on them, regarding changes in curriculum, high learner – teacher ratios, lack of resources and increased levels of violence, teachers seem to be overwhelmed or cut off from their learners.

Michael: oh ... [laughs] yoh ... eish ... uhhm .. I was at the school, about 4 years, 5 years back, they caught me with a gun at school [laughs] so they sent me to court, the court give me a sentence here ... for 6 months, and that's why I came to complete my sentence here ... [later] I don't know now, that time, that principal was so corrupt eish, [laughs] she was really really corrupt.

Hayley: explain that

Michael: she gave only me a sentence of 6 months, what about the other guys, they all stayed in school, they got matric, here I am struggling, looking for a job, doing absolutely nothing

The lack of discipline and violence amongst children in schools can be stressful for teachers to cope with on a daily basis (Choe et al, 2012) but children are also aware of injustices in the schooling system. The increase in violence in schools, and the challenge of discipline, due to various factors makes the load of the teacher heavier, and will impact on their stress levels and psychological well-being. Violent learners also victimize teachers, and this can further exacerbate the feelings of frustration and stress in teachers. In both Dylan and Michael's cases their behaviour, stealing from the teacher and coming to school with a loaded and unlicensed firearm, are two very alarming acts, that could leave the teacher feeling distressed and threatened.

One of the challenges of discipline in schools is commonly understood as the removal of corporal punishment from schools without providing alternative methods of discipline (Reckson & Becker, 2005). In many instances, the teachers either continue to use corporal punishment illegally, or do nothing and avoid dealing with the children at all. Dylan shares his experience of corporal punishment in school.

Dylan: But at my old school it is a thing about power, and here I don't know, children are corruptive, some even threaten the teachers, and they use punishment still, they use a whip still [laughs]

Hayley: ok ... and does that work?

Dylan: mhuhuh ... [shakes his head] coz children threaten teachers. And I think it's mostly because children are involved in gangsterism here. So that's why.

In Dylan's case, he explains that the teacher used corporal punishment as a way of disciplining violent learners. It isn't clear what comes first but in a way his account demonstrates the idea that violence breeds violence and that this is a typical cycle in schools. Dylan's laughter around the use of corporal punishment could be highlighting the fact that he is aware of the fact that it shouldn't be used but is, or his laughter could also be letting us know that he doesn't really take this form of discipline too seriously. The laughter may also be a way of masking the seriousness of the abuse to which he was subjected as a child, and now that he is older and not as vulnerable, he is able to laugh about it. Or the laughter could be a macho dismissal of something that he experienced as painful as a child. In the case of Kevin, his account suggests that the teacher has avoided disciplining, by alienating the majority of the class and only teaching a select few.

Kevin: The teachers at the previous high school that I was, didn't care about the children, there can be two children in the class and the rest is out of the class

Hayley: sho ... outside doing what?

Kevin: smoking, others are just hanging out

As mentioned earlier, when the teacher does not have the resources to meet the needs of the learners, the teacher can often become overwhelmed and this often leads to high stress levels and burnout (McKenzie, 2013). Many teachers are also faced with the daily stresses and constraints of learners raised in poorly resourced environments coupled with the teacher's personal stress and psychological well-being (Vazi et al, 2013). We see in Kevin's case that the teacher possibly manages her own anxiety by refusing to teach the learners that may be disruptive or be struggling in different areas. This further exacerbates the difficulties for the learner and possibly further distances him or her from learning.

Alan's admission of his school difficulties and the way in which they were handled epitomises the plight of many disadvantaged South African schools. It seems that his and Kevin's schools were not equipped to include learners with any kind of barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001). Furthermore, in Alan's case, the teacher uses corporal punishment rather than encouragement and support to get him to read.

Alan: ... You see I am not that intelligent really, I can't read well, and I can't write well, and I told you, why that bother me, coz I have to still go but in[tis community] if you can't read ne, the teacher will say, read Alan and you will see all the faces come, I like to sit at the back of the classroom because then you can see everything what happens, and you can hear some nicely, you have everyone who talks and you an hear everything if you sit at the back and then everyones head is like [gestures head movements] and they gonna laugh now, and its not nice, how would you like it, mumbles, look the book, LEES (READ) Alan [shouting] she did have a pipe in her

Hayley: she's got a pipe

Alan: mmm ... if you don't read for marks, you gonna be in big trouble and you will get some on your bums and I have a sag [soft] bums, I don't like to be hurt [both laugh] ja, but ... I leave the school because of that worry about people, nice ladies and nice friends, but they say its not always in the school, in the streets now, they like me that children also laugh at me now they come and talk to me and I don't down them I don't say hey they aren't for a what what, I take them I say come here, because they an see I didn't know my homework and my school work but in the streets, money and stuff I can do it, I know how to survive in the streets

This narrative of Alan's tragic lack of basic skills development in schooling also speaks of the frustration of the teacher and her lack of capacity and sensitivity in dealing with learners

with possible barriers to learning. Alexander (2012) explains that the education crisis that the nation now faces, impacts on teachers ability to perform aptly in the classroom. The story is filled with Alan's feelings of shame. His statement, "I leave school because of that worry about people" seems to echo these feelings, and convey his regret. However, he quickly moves on from these feelings, and offers a different interpretation of intelligence that is acquired in the street, possibly in an effort to avoid dealing with the shame. Gilligan(1996) suggests that human nature is such that one will go to great lengths to avoid sitting with the perceived shame of inadequacy, especially for men from disadvantaged backgrounds. Alan's need to assert himself as intelligent and competent may have been intensified by the fact that the researcher was a young female. Kevin also admits that he did not cope well in main stream school and insinuates that he could possibly thrive in an environment that was better suited to his strengths.

Kevin: [talking about him leaving school in grade 9] because I ... umm ... I'm not a good writer and I like to work with my hands. If they can give me a course, just to do something with my hands, its fine, but writing exams and, its not for me, I am a slow writer

Both Alan and Kevin admit to difficulties with their learning. Alan explains that he was humiliated and ridiculed by the teacher for having learning difficulties, rather than being encouraged to improve. Kevin suggests that his strengths were not harnessed. Both were assumed to be unintelligent and this seemed to have impacted on their attitude towards learning and the apathy towards school. Alexander (2012) suggests that teachers' demotivation and lack of professionalism, which is impacted by the ills of the past, add to the education crisis. Unfortunately the impact of our education crisis is one that will continue to impact on the development and wellbeing of our youth in disadvantaged communities for a long time to come.

5.1.7 Stereotypical forms of Masculinity in a township

Dylan's reason for why learners seem to be ill-disciplined speaks of the stereotypical views of masculine identities as having more power.

Dylan: Ok ... the education system is awesome and stuff .. yoh but it's out of control ... coz the children take over ... maybe it's because the principal is a girl, a female, so they take over, they do what they want to, there is no control.

Hayley: Why do you say maybe it's because the principal is a girl?

Dylan: Coz obviously boys have more power [laughs] and there is a lot of black children and coloureds there, so Ja, and we don't like being, we don't like when they tell us, do that and do that, we don't like that

Interestingly, Dylan references race when trying to make sense of the power dynamics in his school. Dylan's account suggests that the way in which he constructs meaning from his understanding of gender relations is layered with his experiences of his racial identity.

Despite the fact that we are more than 20 years into our democracy, black youth are still dealing with the frustrations, racial power dynamics and are often forced to make sense of the changes in accessibility to resources and privileges in the new South Africa.

Michael suggests that the way in which one proves his manhood with his friends or peers is to join a gang. This stereotypical view of masculinity as macho, or that boys are unafraid and don't cry, is played out in a scenario amongst friends (Langa, 2012).

Michael: [on why he joined a gang] I really don't know, I was so naughty, eish [laughs] and childish ya, just to show the guys im not scared, you know ... jah

Hayley: not scared of?

Michael: of anything ... I just wanna show them I am a man, jah, back then

Another dominant masculine discourse is around coming into manhood, by becoming independent, but for these participants, their family lives were such that they were never able to be dependent. Segal's et al (2000) findings on why young boys become involved in crime, suggested that their desire to be independence, was about being initiated into manhood.

Dylan's selection of this picture below, as well as his account expresses this desire for independence.



Figure 7 – A house and a car. (Dylan)

Dylan: And this picture is basically it's also one of the it's like a goal that I have set for myself one day, because most of the youth here, when you get old, we live with our parents and that's a thing I don't want, I want to be independent, I want to have my own house and car, that's what I have told myself, I don't want to depend on my parents, I don't want to live with them. I wanna experience life.

Hayley: tell me about that, about being independent

Dylan: I don't want to ask my parents for something, like when I was growing up coz it's hard to get stuff from parents, you have to do things and stuff, ja, so I want be independent, I want to be on my own I don't want to count on someone else.

Dylan seems to be in conflict; on the one hand, he does not trust that he can depend on his family and on the other hand, he seems to be frustrated with the dependence. His desire for autonomy speaks of the adolescent phase that he is navigating, but also of his desire to be a self-sufficient man. This speaks of Erikson's (1968) developmental stage of adolescent identity crisis, which involves developing a healthy identity or independence versus role confusion (Thom & Coetzee, 2004). This may also be indicative of the growing exposure of media and popular western culture. The desire for wealth and independence that Dylan speaks of is not dissimilar to that spoken of in Salo's (2007) article on the way in which gangs have evolved today, because of the influence of media. Just as the gang members are

more focussed on gaining wealth, over protecting the community, so too Dylan seems to be preoccupied with becoming wealthy.

Deon: ok ... my dream is to be successful in life, work hard for my own money, to be independent, yet I can be happy. I have my girlfriend who supports me a lot, she knows my situation, she is very supportive, she works, ja, and she don't live here, she lives in joburg. At the moment I just want a job, and from there I can keep on trying and running for my goal, I'll come there eventually

Hayley: which is ...? Your goal, just to be working and

Deon: working, and to be successful in life, stop depending on my family, because they are not going to be there always, so I just want to be successful and be a man who can do stuff for myself

Deon seems to equate independence and being able to provide for a family with manhood.

Dominant masculine discourses suggest that men lose their potency in incidents where they are unable to provide financially (Morrell, 1999).

Kevin also points to this idea that masculinity is in some way determined by the way in which women perceive and accept you. Dominant discourses of masculinity suggest that many young men are under pressure to impress and win the affection of women (Segal et al, 1999). In this way women are objectified. Dylan shares his women. Langa (2012) identifies interesting power dynamics amongst these township boys in which 'totsi boys', engaged in more risk taking behaviour, have negative attitudes towards schooling and objectify girls, have more status and power.

Dylan: [laughs] we chill, most of the experiences is just parties, bashes and drinking and having fun with girls, that's all. [Silence]

Later he explains what he does for fun:

Dylan: like having fun, that's what I do, chillax smoke hubbly, sometimes drink, and ja, and with girls [laughs] but that's something I love, girls, so that's basically what I do.

Whilst these accounts above seem to set women up as objects, merely for men's pleasure, Alan's account suggests a more complex relationship between men and women:



Figure 8 - A girl I dated (Alan)

Alan: ja, I'm standing across the road and take a picture but I was dating with this girl, nice lady, but now she is using drugs heavy, I was dating her even have sex with her, but I don't even care about her anymore. I don't want to talk about this one, takes memories [it brings back memories] [silence]

Alan seems to both want and not want to talk about her; this suggests that their relationship was more than casual sex. His silence, and also the fact that he didn't want to talk about it anymore suggests that Alan had real feelings for her. According to Langa (2012) Masculinity associated with violence, oppression and risk taking behaviour is still dominant in townships; however there are different voices of masculinity that seem to be challenging the dominant ones. Alan's account suggests that his vulnerability and affection towards this young woman is not easily accepted, and as a result it is difficult for him to explore or deal with these feelings.

Dylan shares his dreams for the future whilst showing the researcher the picture below. His selection of his cricket shirt spoke of his desire to be a South African cricket player, and to be successful one day but also of previous success and how hopes were dashed.



Figure 9 – A famous cricketplayer (Dylan)

Dylan: to see me on TV one day [laughs] yah ... to travel because mostly of the cricket players travel, and I wanna be a part of my country, that is why I want to be a cricket player, and I played cricket since grade 1, I started with bakers mini cricket then I moved up to [the next level], then I started eventually going to [my high school], then I started my trials, grade 8 I was the best batsman, and I got a merit award certificate and for grade 9 I got best all rounder and I was the captain in grade 9 I started playing senior and junior, and I was the captain at both teams. And I went to trials but I lost my trials, I made it through, but at the final round they test you, then when you make the team they drug test you, so they test me, and they found drugs in my system, then they said I cant play ... so my dream is to be a cricket player, but if I don't make it I will go into business, I don't like working with my hands, I rather do the thinking, I can do IT technician or chartered accounting

The ever widening gap between the elite and the masses, another effect of the apartheid regime, seems to cloud the perceptions and dreams that youth have for their future. Alexander (2012), suggests that the gap is ever widening in post-apartheid South Africa. This impacts on the way in which youth envision their future, and rather than holding onto the notion, spoken of by Alexander (2012), of seeing 'enough as feast', the youth imagine that only immense wealth would suffice to make one happy. Dylan's dreams are vague and unrealistic. Capitalist ideals, perpetuated by the media, have negatively affected the way in which youth envision a better life (Salo, 2007). In this way, Dylan's dream is idealistic and rather unattainable. Alan also shares his dreams of having a more financially successful life in the future.



Figure 10 - Symbols of success (Alan)

Alan: mhh this one [picks up figure 10] I just, I did take a picture because I want to live in a big house you see and have already grown, I want to drive a nice car, this guy did get angry if I take a picture, you see the windows were up and have, he roll it because I take a picture [laughs] but I did take it ne I want to drive a nice car, but not so nice, but first now I want to drive a car like this a BM, at now, at the age of now, if I grow, maybe 23 or 32 im going to get BM, or a ar like that, that's a dream .. 23 ... 32

Alan's account suggests the close proximity, through media and also the growing capitalist society that we live in despite the gap that exists between the 'haves' and the have nots'.

Kevin describes his dream for the future, in terms of excessive wealth.

Kevin: My goal is to be a billionaire, because I can fix computers, I can design software, so ja, that's my dream

Deon attempts to provide his own definition of success indulging not only ownership of commodities but also choosing to do 'good things'.

Deon: successful for me it's like, uh ... you have everything in life and you ... just keep on doing the best in life, ya, and things that's good, not bad, only positive

All three participants suggest that success is about having excessive amounts of wealth. The yardstick with which wealth is measured seems to be skewed by the inequalities that youth plagued by poverty are forced to witness (Salo, 2007, Alexander, 2013).

5.2 Interaction with people

The context of these participants, in terms of the relationships that they form and the ways in which they seek out a sense of belonging will be discussed (Yuval-Davis, 2007, Brendtro, 2007). The analysis will shift, to focussing on the way in which the participants interactions with people in their context, impact on their identities. The way in which our identities are constructed is through interaction with our past selves, or others that are different from, and similar to, us. Focusing on these young men's interaction with people, particularly the context of their familial relationships, relationships with friends, role models and also their involvement in gangs, will give insight into the way in which their identities are constructed.

5.2.1 The breakdown of family and a lack of love

According to Richter (1994) and Spjeldnaes et al (2011) single parents, absent fathers and female headed households are common features of many resource-poor families in South Africa. It was evident that, in different ways, the childhood experiences and family situations that these young men were raised in impacted on their development. Although they had varied experiences of family life, all the participants came from non-nuclear families and all had periodically absent or absent fathers. This could be explained by Ratele et al's (2012) claim that black families have been negatively affected by the legacy of apartheid, unemployment, poverty and inequality.

Dylan's selected picture below encapsulates his explanation as to what he understands as the cause for all the violence and hatred in his neighbourhood.



Figure 11 – No Love (Dylan)

His selection of this graffiti picture, to depict his views of the absence of love, speaks of his inner conflict but also speaks to the wider community's notions of love and the questions that are asked by youth today. His account is not dissimilar to Gilligan's (1997) account that violence is as a result of feelings of shame and feelings of being unloved. He says of the image:

Dylan: ...and this picture is a picture of love, that's not a thing, it's a thing that is not in Settlers, there is no love for each other, people don't have that towards each other, ja, they on their own, and it's also a thing I didn't grow up with, actually I only got it from my grandmother and my great grandmother, when my grandmother died then I was with my great grandmother. That's the only place I got love, not from my mum, coz most of the time my mum was out, doing her own stuff, groove, having fun, she didn't care. That's what that picture means.

Dylan then goes on to explain his personal experience of not feeling loved and protected by his mother and how this left him feeling angry and rebellious.



Figure 12 – Walking home (Dylan)

Dylan: And this is a picture of school children coming from school it was on a Thursday afternoon when I came from OFY. It is like the same experience we had, coming late from school and your parents doesn't care. And that is primary school learners, its about 5 o clock in the afternoon when they walking home to school. No adults, no assistance and their parents doesn't care what happens, that's what happened to us. We used to walk from school that time and our parents didn't even care what time we came at home and stuff like that.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Dylan shares an account of when he was knocked down by a car when. Like the learners in the photo, he was walking home from school, a long distance as a small child of 9 years old. He seems to have internalised his perceived lack of supervision as his family not caring about him. He describes that his mother was not interested in his wellbeing and that this has left him feeling frustrated. In this way, Dylan's experience of a distant and unavailable parental figure left him more vulnerable (Ogden, 2004). The presence of another parental mind may have offered Dylan and his caregiver, in this instance his mother, support and protected Dylan from these feelings of abandonment and neglect. Dylan suggests that he was left vulnerable to his mother's neglect, as his father was absent and unable to protect him. Likewise, Alan shares his experience of going without.

Alan: but I don't stand up every morning, sometimes I leave it and go, you know I don't stand up the same person every day and this morning I did stand up. It was bread but only two slices, I don't like two

slices, I like four , but two was ok, coz I like my mum she did buy it, I'm growned now and I still have to ask ma, waar is brood? [Where is the bread?]Shout at my mother and it's not nice.

Alan's narrative is about the frustration of poverty. He gives an account of not having enough food and how, even though he is aware that he is a grown up that should be providing for himself his frustration of not having enough to eat is taken out on his mother. The impact of poverty and unemployment result in much frustration and strain on the family (Richter , 1994; Maharaj, 2004; Taylor, 2011; Ramphele, 2002; Dornbusch et al , 2001). Alan's narrative suggests his frustration and shame at not being able to provide for himself, as a grown man, and how this results in an aggressive attack on his mother. Giligan (1997) would explain that Alan's shame at not being able to provide, may result in him reacting aggressively, in an effort to repress his feelings of shame.

Often fragmented family life leaves young people alienated. In the case of Kevin and Wade, there is a sense that they felt completely unsupported by their families and whilst Kevin felt that his family was working against him to complete his schooling, Wade felt that his mother did not care enough for him. Interestingly, both Kevin and Wade are the oldest children, and have a strong desire to take care of their younger siblings and to provide for and support them. Maharaj (2000) explains that part of the reason for the high school dropout is as a result of older siblings leaving school and taking up employment, in an effort to take more financial responsibility in the home.

Kevin: Ja, if you get enough support, you won't leave school

Hayley: and for you? Tell me about your support, family support?

Kevin: Well I had none ... because if I wanted to get money to climb the bus, it was always a problem, they even burnt my books

Hayley: Who burnt your books?

Kevin: I don't know, because ...when I came home, the bag was empty, the books are burnt ... ja, they dragging, dragging you down.

Kevin seems to distance himself from his family, and refers to them as 'they'. He doesn't seem to see himself as belonging to his family, and rather than experiencing them as loving and caring, he perceives them as 'dragging' him down, or standing in the way of his success. Both Wade and Kevin suggest that their family's lack of care for them as small children made it harder for them to succeed. Deon's account also suggests the impact of poor family relationships on youth. He explains how he feels so frustrated with the situation but is also powerless. This may also perpetuate the feelings of helplessness.

Deon: yes, but usually you can say 2 months I think a lot my life, coz this thing with my stepdad is not actually nice, I think on it everyday, its killing me actually but its life, you just need to accept the fact that he is my stepdad

Michael offers a seemingly more playful description of family and he seems light hearted when he speaks of the lack of financial support that he receives from his family although this joking tone may be self-deprecating or to lessen his vulnerability with the researcher.

Michael: some of them [family are nice and some of them are full of nonsense, they are like the weather, they change, now they hot then they are cold. [laughs] especially when it comes to money. Whorrr!!! You rather ask a devil for a bible. They don't like to give money.

In discussing the importance of family, Michael equates it to their ability to provide financially. This also alludes to the perceptions that Ratele (2012) mentions, that often support from particularly fathers, but possibly both parents and the wider family, is equated to financial support and seems to neglect the emotional and social support that can be provided in the family.

With varied accounts of family life and the way in which family is perceived and experienced, it is clear that the quality of family life has an impact on the psychology of these young men. It also alludes to their continued experiences of shame and possible roots for

their aggression, violence and criminal activity. Dylan's account of a lack of family life also suggests a longing for a cohesive sense of family that seems to be lost.

Hayley: and tell me about family life in Settlers

Dylan: oh ... there is no such a thing, coz most of the time everyone is their separate ways, your dad is maybe, most of the guys drink, and some of them smoke drugs, your dad is with his friends out, you with your friends, your mum is out, so there is no actually family life, there is no, not that time when you can come and say its Sunday, we are going to have a proper family meal, you come in eat your food and you out again [laughs] so there is no such thing.

Dylan's laughter may suggest an element of shame or pain that he may be feeling about the absence of a sense of family, for which he seems to be longing for. He speaks of a 'Sunday lunch', a typical practice in many South African families and often an after church ritual. His reference to it seemed to emphasize the gravity of the situation, highlighting his despair at the absence of such an important family practice, and as a fellow South African, this reference seemed to be away for him to help me to understand how disconnected his family really was.

5.2.2 Lack of fathers and the importance of social fathers

"The African notion of fatherhood, then, is a man who enacts the responsibility of caring for and protecting a child" (Richter & Morrell, 2008, p. 152). This definition suggests that other role models or father figures in the community can play the role of fathers for many children. However, there seems to be very few father figures present in South African townships (Segal et al, 2000). In this picture below, Michael identifies his uncle as very important to him.



Figure 13 – A very nice uncle (Michael)

Michael: Ja ... [looks at figure13] that's my uncle [my grandfather's brother], he is very nice to me, he owns a take away shop, see, he is busy eating here [laughs] ya

Hayley: ok ... and he is very important to you

Michael: he is very important to me, because if I need something he is always there.

Despite the fact that he did not grow up with his father, Michael's selection of this picture and the account that follows speaks of the important role that an uncle plays in his life.

Michael expresses his affection for an old uncle on whom he feels he can rely. Often in the absence of fathers, other family members in the extended family offer that fatherly role and provide young people with positive role models. Ratele et al (2012) suggest that a social father could often represent the notion of fatherhood which included extended family and other social male figures that were present and active in the community. Alan shares a picture and a narrative about his friend's father.



Figure 14 – Big hands (Alan)

Alan: *[laughs] see this uncle with the big hands, he have a son he love his son but he don't see his son anymore, ok, he is a plumber and he have big big hands [laughs] can you see [both laugh] I like him that uncle, he is a nice uncle, I know his son, you see, he and my brother are the same age, they used to fight every time, but now my brother use drugs and his son doesn't use drugs, now he is [gestures big] his son is ...*

Alan's account suggests his admiration for an older man in the community, his friend's father. His laughter suggests his amazement and wonder at this older man, and his comments about him loving his son suggests something lacking in his own experience. Alan's narrative seems to connect a healthier lifestyle to the presence of a loving father. He compares this man's son to his brother, and explains that his brother takes drugs and has lost weight, whilst this man's son is bigger. He also suggests that his friend doesn't appreciate his father, he explains that he doesn't see his son anymore, and this also seems to suggest that he longs for a father like him, he says, "I like him, that uncle, he is a nice uncle".

Deon: *His [one of Deon's friends] grandfather he speaks with, him and he speaks with me in one manner and in one way but he speaks to the both of us but yet he don't listen to his own grandfather. Yet I listen to him and I take note of what his grandfather says. He just keeps on doing the same stuff every weekend.*

Michael and Deon both said that they had never met their fathers and in fact didn't know much about who they were. Although neither of them said much about this experience it was clear that it was a painful experience and they had lots of questions about their fathers' absence. According to Richter & Morrell (2008) & Spjeldnaes et al (2011) the absence of fathers for different reasons seems to be increasing rather than decreasing post-apartheid, with more than half the households in South Africa being characterised as being fatherless.

Michael: *ay, my mum did a lot for me man, a lot a lot a lot, alone, without my father, she was there for me, my mother and my father, she was there, I was shot she was there, I was caught up, she was there, yah,*

Hayley: *... and ... you don't know who your father is?*

Michael: *I never meet him, I never meet him, I really want to meet him, but I don't know where he is, I can't find him, so just let it go, ja, just let it go, there is nothing I can do [laughs]*

Michael uses laughter to mask his painful feelings. Similar to Deon, Michael also seems to make light of, or avoid thinking about his absent father. He says, ‘there’s nothing I can do’ which seems to suggest his hopelessness at the situation. Deon says, “it’s just how it is” suggesting that he didn’t want to really speak of it, as he felt quite hopeless about the situation and may have been dealing with very painful feelings.

Deon: My father is around but not actually...we speak but he was never there for me...so it is just how it is. My mother and my grandmother was there for me.

Michael and Deon both express love and gratitude for their mothers (and grandmothers) who they explain have been there for them and supported them. It would appear that despite their painful experiences of not having present fathers they have convinced themselves that they did not need their fathers and have idealised their mothers’ roles in their lives. Wade and Kevin’s fathers died whilst they were very young.

Wade: My father passed away... I don’t know him. ... [I’ve] never seen him so ja ... I was still young – a baby... when he died.

Kevin: my father passed away when I was 2 years old

Later in the interview Kevin explained that it was difficult for children to grow up with a single parent.

Kevin: mmm ...the problem is ... I dunno ... but there’s lots of young girls or other people that’s pregnant, and the fathers just leave, and for a child its hard, to grow up with a single parent

This is true also for Wade who mentioned that he spent a long time in a children’s home as a result of an incapable mother and a deceased father. Morrell (2008) & Spjelhaes et al (2011) suggested that in a way, fathers protected their children from poverty and offered support for

the mothers, especially in difficult or overwhelming circumstances. It was also suggested that fathers in closer proximity to their children were more likely to provide and protect the child when mothers were unable to.

Dylan explained that his father was away for the first few years of his life and still works away a lot so he didn't have much of a relationship with his father. Alan also spoke of a father who worked away, however, his experience of his father was more complicated because of his relationship with his mother.

Dylan: My experience personally, my dad was never there for me. My dad used to live in Durban for 8 years, and I used to live with my mum, me and my mum had lot of issues. In grade 4, ja, in grade 4 I think I was 10 or 11 years old.

Although Dylan explained that his father was not around at first when he had dropped out of school and got involved with drugs he still felt that he had let his father down. The presence of his father seemed to motivate Dylan to do better and stirred up a desire to make him proud. Richter & Morrell (2008) & Spjelnaes et al (2011) suggests that children with more involved or present fathers showed improved cognitive development, intellectual functioning and school achievement. It was suggested that the father's presence had a dramatic effects on boys, on their social competence, behaviour control and school success.

Alan: ja, sometimes I get angry, I don't have to show you that stuff but ill show you that stuff, sometimes I get angry and I cut myself with a knife

Hayley: mmm ... what makes you angry

Alan: when my father, when my father did blame me for stuff, I did hate it when someone blame me for stuff I didn't do so ja, three brothers who like to steal but I am the one, who tell myself stop because I know they they gonna steal now and then the blame is on me, and its not my father, I don't know, its in my heart, I cannot but I don't worry, because I am old now, im grown, im my own father

Although this narrative offers many complexities and layers of meaning, what can be noted is the idea that under the stereotypical stories of absent fathers and delinquent boys is a deeper

story that speaks to the complex way in which young people experience pain and frustration and expressed a desire for fathering. Furthermore, Alan's struggle with his identity also speaks of the complexities of belonging, and how his experience of belonging is compromised. Yuval-Davis (2011) suggests that when the identity of someone is threatened or questioned it destabilises the person's sense of belonging and can impact on their self-esteem. In a way Alan's longing for a place to belong also impacts on his inability to manage his emotions and feelings of confusion.

Wade also shares his experiences of where he lives, and the way in which he was forced to fend for himself. His account explains how the absence of a father has left he and his family vulnerable, with less social security and in his case, he was forced to be removed from the care of his mother. Spjeldnaes et al (2008) explain that the presence of a father reduces the financial strain on the family and renders the family less vulnerable to poverty. Wade shares his very painful experience of being placed in a children's home because his mother was unable to take care of him.

Wade: *Mmm every other guy's mother can look after him. My mother doesn't look after me, I must look after myself and I want to look after them as well.*

Hayley: *Has that always been even from young, has she not been able to look after you?*

Wade: *Uhuh, just the time when I came out of the kinderrhuis (Children's Home), ja, the time when I came out things weren't the same anymore*

Hayley: *Why were you in the children's home?*

Wade: *Umm, They said something about my mother couldn't look after us when we were small, she was drinking all the time. So then I don't know someone took us to the [place], that social workers, so ja. when I came out, the time when I was 18, I went home so things weren't the same anymore. My mother told me I must work for myself I must buy my own clothes and all the stuff, so ja, I think that's the thing that made me the person I am.*

Alan explains that his feelings of not belonging and his confusion about who his father is have left him feeling very angry. In a way he attributes his rebellion and even turning to crime and violence to his feelings of frustration.

Alan: *in Willows, it begins in Willows, that life, we were, children who like to play, I was a athlete, I'm still a athlete I still uh oefen [exercise] and I do my stuff but my brother he doesn't do it, he is shouting, and do his stuff like he want to, I think we are not from the same father, I don't know now sometime I jus feel I don't belong there in that house and that's where the danger come, I want to rob again coz I have that anger, because of that tattoo, when we were small we did jus rob people, sometimes I feel I don't want to be there, not my home because ... im not feeling the same person, I have another big brother and a sister. I didn't take pictures from them coz they're grown people ... and they are still staying in my mother's house*

This seems like a confusing and incoherent narrative and Alan seems to make a connection between being confused about where he belongs, his angry outbursts and his decision to rob people. In this way, he deals with his own deprivation by depriving others (Gilligan, 1997). He explains that he feels robbed, and in a way he is robbed of the truth of who his father is, as a way of dealing with this frustration or anger he robs others. He projects these feelings outside of himself by robbing strangers.

5.2.3 The importance of positive role models

Many of the participants also spoke of the ways in which young people longed for role models and were often negatively influenced by the gangsters and drug dealers that were idealised in the community. Deon attempted to explain the cycle that is often perpetuated. Younger boys seem to desire a relationship with older boys, and this then often results in them being attracted to the gangs and life of crime.

Deon: *I can't say maybe they have their own problems or maybe they don't want to be like people, that is what I can see a lot of young boys want to be like older guys. You see older guys been like that and you also want to be like that. So they go and do the same thing yet he is bumping his head.*

Deon's account suggests that often times these young boys don't realise that their desperation for a role model, and their poor selection of their role models results in them bumping their heads. Kevin's understanding of the way in which role models are selected is through admiring the fear that the dangerous or notorious drug lords elicit.

Kevin: *ja, and he is like a role model to all the youngsters, because they have nothing to do, so he is the only one to look up to*

Hayley: *mmm ... and he is wealthy?*

Kevin: *not actually ...*

Hayley: *no ... so why do they look up to him?*

Kevin: *because he is the guy that everybody is scared, you just say his name, other people shivers*

Hayley: *and that for young people is ...*

Kevin: *he is like a super hero to them*

Hayley: *mmm*

Kevin: *someone to look up to*

Dylan's view on role models suggests that young boys select 'bad' role models because they have little or no other option. Due to the lack of father presence in their lives, these young men seem to model their lives on older brothers' or older boys in the community.

Dylan: *And we were also like this, we used to entertain gangsterism and all that kind of stuff. Make the same signs.*

Hayley: *Why do you think, do you think it's because of what they see?*

Dylan: *Ya. And some of them their brothers and stuff are into that stuff. They don't have role models to look up to.*

What seemed to be lacking was positive role models to whom young people could look up to. Although not explicitly stated, Wade's involvement in sport and Alan's talk of his relationships with the mentors in the rehabilitation organisations, spoke of more positive role models and responsibilities in the community.

Alan: *this morning before I came here I was at SANCA before I came here before, before I am here, I like SANCA because they learn me about the lungs of people, you can see if you smoke zoll or if you smoke gwaais [cigarettes] or if you use drugs nyowpe, heroin, even inject yourself, I did see it with my own eyes and I talk to them but they wont listen, no ... its not my life, its their life, so let them destroy the temple*

Hayley: *what are you doing at SANCA, you just go there on your own?*

Alan: *ja, I was there before because of drugs, you see and like I come to OFY*

Hayley: *oh ok and now you just go and visit them*

Alan: *ja, talk to them about my life, I did leave stuff and some of the stuff I still do it [silence]*

Later in his interview, Alan speaks of his relationship with the OFY mentor (Talia), he explains that when he is struggling with peer pressure, he often pops into OFY and talks to

the mentor. In his case, the presence of an available other, offers him an alternative option in difficult situations.

Alan: ya, when things get to hectic there in Willows, everyone tell me lets go do wrong, let's go and steal, I say, kom ons a bietjie OFY toe en praat a bietjie, [come lets go to OFY for a little bit and chat a bit] then mense hoor nie wat ons doen en sy nie, nee man julle, [then my friends don't listen and they say no] like n mamma aan gaan, like a girl, toe se ek, gaan julle [They accuse him of being like a little girl, and he tells them to go on without him] I come to Talia, talk to her, even she have always time for me, she know I talk straight, I talk, she will sit even if she was busy now, she will just leave her stuff and listen to me because I talk to her, in Afrikaans.

Alan's exposure to OFY, and his relationship with Talia, seems to offer him another possibility, and in a sense could aid him in creating or imagining a different version of himself. His identity as a criminal is challenged through his exposure to OFY and his relationship with Talia. Alan suggests that his relationship with Talia, and her availability and presence in his life challenges his actions, and offers him an alternative way of being. Similarly, Wade's love for soccer and his commitment to the sport offers him an alternative way of identifying himself. He also shares a picture of his primary school kit, which he keeps and speaks very fondly of.



Figure 15 – My laerskool(primary school)kit - wade

Wade: mmm ... I love soccer

Hayley: tell me about that ...

Wade: it's just something that I love too much ... like I'm the captain of the Easterust team ...

Later ...

Wade: *this is my ... oh this writing, this is my skipper that I had from laerskool, the time when I was at laerskool, when I went out, this is my whole team on it and my whole friends, all of them*
 Hayley: *oh ... [laughs]*
 Wade: *I can always remember that skipper because I did play number three that time [laughs]*

Later he speaks of the responsibility he has of waking up early, being at practice first and also that he can set an example for his teammates. Playing sport and being part of a team, seems to offer Wade the sense of belonging that he doesn't seem to get from home.

5.2.4 True friends are like family

One of the challenges of adolescent development is the desire for autonomy but this is coupled with the desire to be accepted by peers (Segal et al, 1999). This also speaks to the idea of belonging and wanting to fit in with a group. Alan selected this image of his friends.



Figure 16 – Friends chilling (Alan)

The picture seems to suggest that these young men are comfortable where they are sitting and with each other, and there seems to be a relaxed familiarity about the way in which they arranged. Somehow the picture also seems to capture the filial connections and a sense that this is their ordinary and everyday experience of being together.

Alan: *Ja ne, there is they sitting again, I like them, they argue and argue and argue everyday, but when I am around they are still arguing but when there is dagga and stuff and like then we are a family again ...*

family, true friends make you always feel good, that's why I go to the., Sometimes at home you won't feel that good but if you go to your friends they talk about you straight they say him, hy is weg, hir kom hireso, kom mag, ok bras, whose mag wants to ek het geld, jy het geld kom ons koop, [He is gone, come here, come join us, who wants something, who has money, I have money, come let's buy something] true friends, they can shout at you, they can laugh at you, they can talk about you when you are gone but it still my true friends I don't know who but I take him as my friends we are lots [gestures many by hitting his fist against his palm] yesterday was just a day of them, I take a picture of them [silence]

Alan suggests that his friends play a significant role in his life. Whilst he admits having complicated and strained family relationships, his relationship with his friends offers him support and comfort and he likens them to family. Dylan's account seems to concur with what Alan had suggested.

Dylan: actually now, I don't do a lot, most of the time I sit at home and I smoke hubbly, ja you know mos hubbly [He nods] that's what I do most of the time, I chillax[relax] with friends, if I'm not with friends I am at cricket practice or I'm with my girlfriend. That's what I do, that's what I do. Chilling with friends ... like having fun, that what I do, chillax, smoke hubble, sometimes drink, and ja, and with girls [laughs]

Both Alan's picture and Dylan's account suggest the amount of time that these young men spend with their friends and the value of these relationships. Although both these accounts suggest the presence of drugs, illegal activity and non-activity, emotional closeness and the effect of belonging also seem to be strongly interwoven in these stories and most significant. Participants seemed to have conflictual feelings about the role of friends in their lives. This photograph taken by Alan, tells the story of his brother and his friends, on their way to buy drugs, and the story around their fights with other youth. It depicts these young men in action. Deon also suggests that friends are like family, and shares how he is there for his friends when they need him, even he simultaneously distances himself from their illegal activities.



Figure 17 – Going to get high (Alan)

Deon: For me what I can see it is only drugs, people they use drugs maybe it is me and my family on drugs but my friend he is very naughty, stealing and yet me I don't do, I don't steal and yet when he is in a bad situation and then he comes to me so that I can always help him.

On the one hand Deon sees friends as a bad influence that could encourage him to take drugs or become involved in criminal activity, whilst on the other hand he has a desire to be there for his friends, and to be there for them despite their negative behaviour.

Deon: I know a lot of people live by their friends, just they feel very how can I say very supportive and they care for them. And yet they say, just come and live by me and stuff like that.

He uses the story of his friends to establish himself as a non-drug user for the researcher. The narrative that he shares is co-constructed in this way, due to the presence of the researcher.

Kevin points to the difficulties of finding 'true' friends.

Kevin: because it's very rare that you get a good friend that there is good and bad times ...

Hayley: mmm ... what are friends usually there for?

Kevin: for money ... and to benefit from everything that you got ... it's like a leech, sucking the life from another person

Kevin seems to view his friendships very negatively, and doesn't seem to see any value in trying to support them. His experience of friendships seems parasitic and toxic. Michael and Wade also share their feelings regarding the role of friends in their lives.

Michael: ja, it was better there than [here]. Bad influences here, friends, eish. Dope friends. [Here] there is rules there, house rules ... the bad influences, I don't know why you doing that. It depends on you, you can say yes, you can say no, noone can force you to do something. ... you can say so, ja. Maybe it is better without friends, its better without friends

Hayley: because?

Michael: of bad influences, that's all, my friends, I used to walk with are all on drugs, all of them

Wade: Yor, Life is fast here jong, yor, eish, I don't know what to tell you but yor, life is too fast here, I don't know how I can say it, but ja, I'm thinking of going back home, because here I think I'm going to do wrong stuff and all of that. But [this organisation] has learned me to say yes and no to all the stuff around me, so I think I can go on with my life. (Giggle) But it's bad here, [colloquial for - you know].

Michael and Wade seem to be in agreement that friends are a bad influence, and try to separate themselves from their friends in order to stay out of trouble. According to Hall (2000, p.6), “identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation”. The way in which our identities are constructed is through interaction with our past selves, or others that are different from, and similar to, us. Grappling with the ways in which these young men differ from, and are similar to their peers, possibly allows them to construct and reconstruct their own identities. Wade’s giggle may suggest the difficulty or mixed feelings around trying to separate from the group and to do something differently. The giggle may also suggest some doubt whether he can in fact say “no to all of the stuff”, and go on with his life. Hall (2000) suggests that the self can be found in the shared history and identities of others. In a way the ambivalent feelings around their relationships with friends, speaks of the way in which they are conflicted with their present and past selves. The social structures of poverty, unemployment and drug abuse seem to hover over the identities of these young men and, although in different ways they are struggling to fight against these structures, they do seem to remain a part of their identities even if as a ground against which counter-narratives are generated. One of the ways in which they understand or develop their identities is through their relationships with friends, and their sense of belonging.

5.2.5 Gangsterism as a way of belonging

In a comparative study on gangs and prison life, Ortiz (2015) offers an understanding that gangs are often formed as a way of overcoming the blocked access to means. Through gang membership, youth are able to create innovative ways to achieve their goals. In a sense, the involvement in the gang offered a way of fighting against marginalisation and structural violence. The argument is thus that individuals experiencing structural violence would resort to reacting with physical violence. In a sense, the gang helps to mediate the tensions experienced in society, such as poverty, alienation and oppression. The participants in the study suggested that involvement in gangs was both common and desired by many young boys. Furthermore, gangs offered a sense of family and belonging, for which many of the participants and young men in townships are desperate (Segal, et al, 2000). In this picture Dylan explains how children from a very young age seem to romanticise gangsterism.



Figure 18 – Pretending to be gangsters (Dylan)

Dylan: Gangsterism, it's a lot in Settlers. For example this picture, the pose of the children are, they mostly into gangsterism, they entertain that stuff, the signs they make and stuff like that. They entertain that stuff.

Kevin reiterates that gangsterism remains a problem in their community.

Kevin: and stop gangsterism

Hayley: is that a big problem

Kevin: ja ...

Whilst Kevin and Dylan seem to distance themselves from gangs, and speak more in general terms about the impact on the community, Michael shares his personal experience of being in a gang. He also explains that gangs are a common feature in the community. All three accounts seem to suggest a negative attitude towards gangs.

Michael: you see, I was joining a crew, they call them Dingers yah [laughs] they call it Dingers ya, we were fighting with the Dingers

Hayley: like a gang

Michael: ja, like a gang, ja

Hayley: is that common?

Michael: yah, it is common yah [laughs]

Ortiz (2015) suggests that gangs have various functions. Although not explicitly stated, it appears that membership of the gangs spoken about in this community entails being involved in criminal activity, as a means of survival. Alan connects his experience of gangs to criminal activity and being in prison.

Alan: That's why people get in gangster stuff, so like my tattoo here [shows me his tattoo] I don't have tattoos, is the only one coz of my friends, we are gangsters, all of them don't have a tattoo because they Meeno and Jama, new guys, the other one is in prison, our boss, we call him the main guy, but I do tattoo myself, I don't want someone to hurt myself and the struggling of that, ne, when life goes on I was sixteen, no seventeen I go to [prison], when I was at [prison]

Alan's account also suggests the hierarchy or social order that exists in gangs (Lambrechts, 2012). He also highlights the relationship between gangs and prison life. Gangs could also offer a sense of familial support, a sense of belonging or affirmation that many of these young men seem to be seeking. This idea of belonging, and a strong desire for relational belonging is central to understanding and developing an identity (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Furthermore, according to Lambrechts (2012) gangs, or organised crime units (syndicates that don't refer to themselves as gangs), are an illegal power that often services community and also creates a kind of social control. In this way the gangs diminish state control, and take

over the community. This idea could also be used to understand police corruption, as well as the prevalence of drug use. Drug lords are both feared and revered for their omnipotence in the community. Alan explains how he got involved in criminal activity, through his involvement in a gang, and how that landed him in prison.

Alan: *ja, and the, know I'm the one with the pluck, I don't think, I think, now I think twice but before I didn't think twice, I just go and just break in and take, robbing people, it wasn't nice and [a mentor at this organisation] told me I must stop and I have listened to her [Later when discussing his time in prison] it's a prison ... not nice, not nice, it's a prison, a prison, I did break in here, in this street, gulleys, bottle store, I did break in there, and after that [a mentor at this organisation] told me, is it nice to broke someone's heart because if someone steals my stuff I won't feel nice*

Michael, also a former gang member, explains how he escaped prison, and was sentenced to six months on a diversion programme.

Michael: *coz I was very naughty, really, very naughty. Eish, you see what, I was shot once ..*

Hayley: *shot, while you were still in school*

Michael: *ja, so I wanted revenge, so, the school came, and caught me with a gun, took me to the cells, I spent three nights there, after that I went to court, my sentence was 6 months here at [this organisation], after that no more, until now*

Michael describes a situation where his desire for revenge, and possibly his need to be recognised as standing up for himself, resulted in him being arrested. The study on township youth's criminal activity suggested that accruing status and wanting to be seen as a man was also a reason that some youth got involved with crime (Segal et al, 2000). Wade, also sentenced to six months on a diversion programme, explains that his criminal activity was not about gang involvement, but rather about supplying his personal needs or taking care of his family.

Segal et al (2000) offers that prison inmates often attributed the reasons for their criminal activities were about keeping up a certain image. The study explained that many of the inmates interviewed feared losing their status or image, if they did not keep up with the latest trends. However, the majority of them offered that broken homes and poverty were the two

main issues that influenced their decision to do crime. Likewise, Wade offers both these explanations for why he steals. It is interesting as he engages in a lot of laughter when he offers these justifications. This laughter may indicate some acknowledgement of guilt, or possible embarrassment at admitting that he had stolen. In a

Wade: *I don't know, when I steal, I just want to buy me something like takkies or giving my mother the money. But I don't do that anymore (laughs) ... Buying me a phone... something ... So that's why I think I did steal (laughs).*

Deon also shares his experience of crime and prison life.

Deon: *ok, [laughs] I was a very naughty guy. I did lots of stuff man, we went to go steal with my friends, stole his grandpa's bakkie, lot of stuff man, and that wasn't nice, I went to jail twice, and ... it's not nice there ...*

Deon's motive for criminal activity seems to be influenced by his friends. Segal et al (2000) imply that crime could also be a form of initiation into manhood for some young boys growing up in townships. Although Deon was also a victim of poverty and had a difficult family life, his decision to be involved in criminal activity may also have been impacted by his peers. Again, Deon uses laughter, possibly to diffuse or make light of his criminal activity. As with Wade it may also be indicative of his shame around admitting his guilt.

Conclusion

The impact of place on identity has been explored in great detail in this chapter, and the way in which the environment and its elements of drugs, violence, corruption, gangsterism, poor schooling and barrenness seems to have a bearing on the creation of NEETs as an identity has been explored. The chapter has also looked at the way in which the participants interact with people impacts on their identity development. The breakdown of family life, absence of fathers and experiences of neglect and abuse seem to impact on these young men's sense of

identity in very discouraging ways. However, the way in which these young men navigate relationships with friends in an effort to create the sense of family they did not experience at home, suggests ways in which these young men are creating their own opportunities.

There are very big structural constraints that impact on the way in which these young men construct their identities. The context in which these identities are framed is largely negative and is evident by the way in which they have documented about where and how they live. Their interaction with the place, characterised by drug abuse, crime, a lack of opportunities, poor schooling, violence and corruption gives insight into why it has fed into their development as being involved in crime, drugs, gangsterism and essentially becoming NEETs. Their descriptions of the way in which they interact with people in their context also appears despairing. Fragmented family life, absent fathers and a lack of positive role models in their community further exacerbates their situation. The state of their context delivers the stereotype of what we expect of them, however, surprisingly and extraordinarily, these young men have found ways to challenge the atrociousness of their context and there are glimmers of hope in their stories where they imagine and present alternative versions of their lives. These alternatives will be discussed and elaborated on in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Versions of future selves

This chapter will focus on the alternative versions of life that these young men imagine as possible. They seem to challenge the stereotypical version of their identities that are constructed through their interaction with place and with people. They offer other versions of themselves that offer a glimmer of hope in their devastating and crippling contexts. They seem to be imagining and moving towards alternative selves in different kinds of ways that are other than what would be expected or imagined for them. Brendtro et al's (2007) core values of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity will be considered in understanding the ways in which these young men create more optimistic versions of themselves.

6.1 Alternative versions of masculinity

Whilst the previous chapter explained the ways in which these young men subscribe to the stereotypical masculine identities, there were also ways in which they challenged these stereotypical views of masculinity. Despite the fact that Michael displayed some stereotypical masculine versions of himself, later in the interview we are exposed to a more domesticated Michael. At home he is involved more with the household chores. The image of Michael washing his cap, and the significance of him selecting this picture as a part of his narrative speaks of a different version of Michael's masculinity.



Figure 19 – washing my cap (Michael)



Figure 20 – shining my shoes (Michael)

Michael challenges the stereotypical notions of masculine identity when he shares his interests and hobbies.

Michael: [laughs] ja. This is my garden, I love my garden, the chillies, spinach, ja, ja, I love my shoes to be clean [looks at another pic] ya ... I'm a hard working guy, im a handyman [laughs]

Michael: no ... [looks at pic] this is a second one, my cap, I was busy washing it [laughs]

Hayley: [laughs] keeping it clean

Hayley: mmm

Michael: ya, coz in summer, it's very hot outside [laughs]

The account coupled with the picture produced by Michael speaks of the multiple layers of masculinity that exist amongst youth in township. Michael, in this account is portrayed as domesticated, taking care of household things. Langa's (2012) study on township adolescent boys suggested that in their home environments, masculine identities are more fluid. Boys are seen doing household chores etc, however more dominant risk taking forms of masculine identity were portrayed in public. This was also evident in the way that the participants in this study viewed their masculinity, including typically female household activities:

Michael: I love cooking, and baking, ja

Deon: Ja, when I finish clean and clean the house, then I am just watching tv and make myself busy.

Alan's selection of the photo display a more sensitive side to the criminal, tough exterior that was displayed at other times during the interview.



Figure 21 – House-proud (Alan)



Figure 22 - The view of the tree (Alan)

Alan: And here, I look to check this view sometimes ne, when I'm lonely, I just stand there by the sliding door, at the back, there is two sliding doors at the front and one at the back and I stand there, every day watching this view, if I stand up in the morning make my bed, nice.

He shares his vulnerability when he admits that he gets lonely sometimes, and the fact that he enjoys nature, or a beautiful view, suggests that Alan's interests are not as stereotypically masculine as one would imagine. He also mentions that he makes his 'bed nice', which suggests that he takes pride in keeping it neat. In understanding or exploring the notion of pride, Kevin shares a picture and an account of what he believes young men are searching for.



Figure 23 – Respect, dignity and peace (Kevin)

Kevin: Ja and in [figure 23] – there is a symbol and is says respect, dignity and peace and that's what we need in Settlers, because there are a lot of youngsters that think they are gangsters, ja ...

Hayley: Tell me about that?

Kevin: Ok ... like they think that girls won't notice you if you don't be the tough guy, that is what motivates them to bully on younger guys and do this wrong

Gilligan's (1997) work with prison inmates suggested that the cycle of violence was possibly perpetuated by the inmate's desire for pride, dignity and self-esteem. Kevin, a former inmate, suggests that often times the strong desire for respect and dignity results in violent behaviour and many young men work hard to prove their worth or self-esteem through violence. The dominant discourses around masculinity suggest that it must be asserted, especially where it is threatened. In these discourses around masculinity, men expect to be powerful, controlling, worthy of respect, but their everyday experiences often deny them desires, particularly in instances of poverty or oppression (Vogelman, 1990).

According to Freire (2007), the way in which one can envision the future is through actively engaging in hope. This implies that in order for these young men to begin to imagine a brighter future, they need to be actively involved in keeping their hope alive, and not allowing their personal circumstances as well as social constraints to hinder their hope. Deon shares his motivation for taking the picture of his bath.



Figure 24 – A clean world (Deon)

Deon: Yes, and as you can see here is a bath, with shampoo there, lots of stuff, I need to be clean, and there is people who doesn't have homes, they homeless cant wash, that's a big, how can I say, uhh ... ill come to it now, but it's a lot of blessings for me because I don't do nothing actually

Later in his interview Deon describes his experience of being in prison and how uncomfortable that experience was. In a sense that past experience allows Deon to see his present circumstances differently, and the meaning that he makes of his current experience is impacted by that past experience. Bradbury (2012) suggests that in order for us to construct a different future we have to make new meanings out of the our past experiences in the present. In this way Deon has had an awful experience in the past that has made him grateful for his current reality, and may possibly help him to make better choices in the future. In this way, his past has helped him to appreciate his present situation, and this will inform his future experiences.

Deon seems quite fixated on 'being clean'. This may allude to the way in which he views his past experiences, and his desire to be cleansed from those experiences, that of drug abuse and criminal activity. Also, many of these young men are stereotyped as bad or 'dirty' and this desire to be clean may also be an expression of his desire to be seen as more valuable.

Furthermore his account of what he does on a daily basis and the sense of routine domesticity it suggests, may contradict or challenge the stereotypical view that youth-at-risk are constantly involved in risk taking behaviour (Segal et al, 2000). Another interpretation regarding Deon's narrative could include the way in which Deon feels he is perceived by the researcher, an effort to provide a positive image.

Deon's decision to take a picture of his bathroom speaks of his desire to live a cleaner life, but also suggests gratitude in the midst of poverty. An appreciation of the bath, with all the toiletries to clean up his act suggests a desire to change and also gratitude in the face of deprivation. This picture and account also speaks of a desire to maintain his sense of dignity and pride, which as mentioned before is central to our sense of self-worth (Gilligan, 1997).

6.2 Caring for others

In the case of some of the participants it seemed possible that their experiences of fatherlessness and more involved and committed mother or grandmothers, made them more sensitive to their own maternal function. Some of the participants felt responsible for the livelihood of their siblings, as well as other deprived children in their community, and lead them to take on father roles because they did not have this themselves (Morrell, 2008).

Kevin: Because there are lots of young children there, and I can't see them go hungry ... I can rather go hungry, than the children

Kevin's generosity suggests that he has made a decision, despite his situation to show concern, care and generosity for others. Kevin seems to be reclaiming his own life, as Brendtro (2007) suggested is the desire of all youth. He creates his own opportunity to be generous and compassionate to the younger children. Alan shares these same sentiments.



Figure 25 – A tough life (Alan)

Alan: [talking about a little boy in the neighbourhood that he entertains and gives money to] he buy matches for his mum, his ouma or with the other fifty cent that other chocolate thing, he's a nice child, he live a hard life, a tough life, he live a dark life like I was living

Alan proceeded to share the story of this little boy's life, his comment mentioned above, "he live a hard life, a tough life, he live a dark life like I was living" expresses explicitly how he identifies with him, and has a lot of compassion for him. He shared stories of how he entertains and spends time with him. He also took many other pictures of this little boy, but could not include them as his face was visible. He explains how he eventually got a picture of him.

Alan: nou you see this small guy here I wanted to take a picture of him ne, but Lisa (Social Worker at OFY) said I mustn't take children, that's why I did wait, I lied for him I said they call you there, and then he looks there, then I take a picture, tick, and he want the camera, the whole time he did want the camera

Alan's efforts to take a picture of this little boy, speaks of his genuine affection for this little boy. Michael also chooses to take a picture of the little boys that he cares about.



Figure 26 – these boys that I love so much (Michael)

Michael: ja, very, but im praying, ja, and this boys here ... [laughs] I love them so much, ay, their mother left them since they were 5 months, so I just got them, come sitting , give them some food, ja,

Furthermore, in different ways, the participants seemed preoccupied with providing for their families and had actively taken on the father role in their households and in relation to young fatherless boys in their neighbourhood. Their stories suggest that their families lack of care for them as small children has made them determined to do better as adults now. Spjeldenaes et al's (2008) study suggested that often difficult family backgrounds may motivate young men to search for better lives and encouraged them to become independent. Many of the participants suggested their desire to care for their families. Their stories may also be suggesting that these young men are recapitulating their own childhoods and, in different ways, see their own childhood selves in these little children. In an effort to reclaim their own lives, these men have found ways to be generous with their time and limited resources, and have found ways to support those more vulnerable than they are (Brendtro et al, 2007).

6.3 Efforts to earn an honest living

The reputation of these youth as delinquents is often explained as a result of them dropping out of school in the context of unemployment and poverty. Whilst this may further exacerbate their feelings of hopelessness and apathy about their own agency and ability to transform their lives and that of their communities, what is not highlighted is the way in which they find inventive ways of creating their own employment and livelihood. On further exploration, it is quite clear that many of these young men are motivated and despite their many obstacles are empowered to affect change by developing alternative ways of earning a living. For example, Kevin fixes engines and computers at his home, in an effort to earn money.



Figure 27- An engine I'm working on (Kevin)

Kevin: you see, I like working on engines, and I like to working with my hands ... I'm working with computers at home, I'm self-employed.

Kevin dropped out of school in grade 9 because he did not fit into the mainstream education system and was largely unsupported by his family and the schooling community. Despite his learning barriers, he has managed to harness his own strengths and use them to earn a living. In this way, Kevin has found a way to develop his own sense of 'mastery' (Bredntro et al, 2007). Michael also shares his efforts to earn a living by utilising his talents, and incorporating his interests.



Figure 28 – Weekend Djay (Michael)

Michael: No problem, ja, I love sound, I am dj-ing during the week, and on weekends, at parties [I have] my own system, my own records and everything

Michael, also a high school dropout, uses his passion for music to create an income for himself. In the same way as Kevin, he has identified a strength of his, and combined it with a demand in his community and used it as an opportunity to earn money. Although both have desires to study and have further aspirations, they are able to provide something for their families and the children around them with the money that they earn. Similarly, Wade has also found a creative way to earn money and use his talents.



Figure 29 – Business is Operating (Wade)



Figure 30 – Barber shop (Wade)

Wade: *they, like my mother is not staying here, im staying by my aunty, so they, they don't give me money and stuff, I must make my own money, so I just thought to myself, I can cut hair and I can make tattoos, so let me, and ja, business is operating ... [later] uhh ... I started off by always cutting my brother's hair, and then um I started cutting people's hair and this is the prices, the board and the prices, something like that*

Hayley: *ok*

Wade: *and pictures of tattoos that I can make and did make*

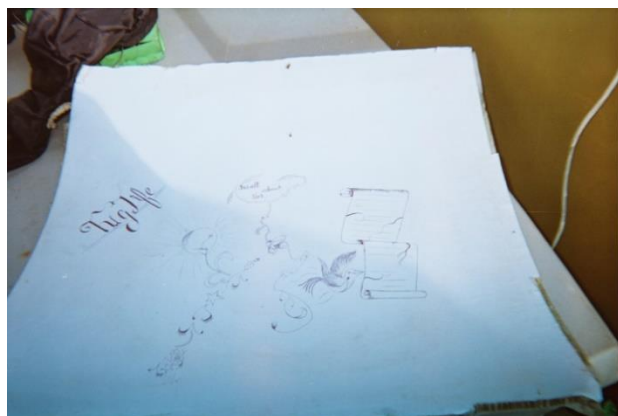


Figure 31 – Art work for a tattoo (Wade)



Figure 32 – The finished (Wade)

Wade: *that is a picture of a tattoo that uh, that someone did said he wants. I must make it like that so, ya, that's why I took that*

Wade combined his desperation for survival with a talent that he had acquired in the children's home, to earn his own income. Many young people are burdened with the financial constraints of the their family and are forced to take on the financial responsibility at a young age (Segal et al, 2000). Despite their low levels of education, each of these young men have identified a demand in their community and have begun to provide a service. However, their efforts to earn money are not stable, are reliant on people in the community trusting them, and not sustainable long term.

Deon: *And now and then [my friend's grandfather with a glass company] asks me just to help him and he gives me R200 and so*

Hayley: *and then you go and work there whenever he ...*

Deon: *And then he gives me pay. Rather not to go and steal and take peoples stuff.*

Deon's account of why he chooses to do piece work suggests the pressure that these young men are under pressure to earn money. Often the social constraints like unemployment, low levels of education and poverty make it difficult for these young men to surpass the temptations of quicker ways of making money (Segal, et al, 2000). However, these young men are to be admired for their entrepreneurial efforts, especially in the face of peer pressure, economic constraints and social structures obstructing their success.

6.4 Providing for the family

Although many of the participants had experienced much hardship and had difficult childhoods, which they shared throughout their interviews, what was significant was the way in which many of them dreamt of providing for their families. Michael explains why he took the pictures presented in figures 17 and 18 below.



Figure 33 – building the house (Michael)



Figure 34 – materials to build (Michael)

Michael: Ja, its common here, and this one [points to figure 18] I really want to help my mother to build her house, she is just struggling, no income

Hayley: So is this her cement?

Michael: No, I bought it for her, with the job I had, so ja, for a month or 2 months

Michael's selection of the pictures of his building materials gave insight into his experiences in two ways. It spoke of his desire to work and rather than viewing this young man as a drop out, involved in risk taking behaviour, this picture depicts him as hardworking and ambitious. The picture also speaks of his desire to be *seen* as industrious and worthy, by the audience, the researcher. Giligan (1998) suggests of prison inmates, that their desire for pride is often defended against and replaced by violence. In many instances, unemployed men, like Michael, from impoverished communities have little opportunity to be proud, and easily feel shamed. In this instance, Michael acknowledges his ability to provide for his family, and has a great sense of pride. Similarly, both their fathers died when they were very young and Kevin and Wade, both had a strong desire to provide for their families. Giddens (1994, p.249), "developing a coherent sense of one's life history is a prime means of escaping the thrall of the past and opening oneself out to the future". The way in which we make meaning of the past and our present circumstances, reveals alternatives, and creates the possibility of imagining the world differently. In this way, understanding their own plight, gives these young men opportunities to imagine a different world for their siblings, and create possibilities to change their circumstances. Whilst talking about their future plans, Kevin and Wade add in their intention to take care of their families. This generosity is quite remarkable, considering that both Wade and Kevin shared stories of being ill treated by their families.

Kevin: its in Settlers ... but its more in the rough side of Settlerst, so ... I am going to move back in there with my 2 younger brothers, and I'm gonna go study, go get my qualifications, so I can start my business

Wade: My dream is to to buy me a house. Ah ah, first find me a job then buy me a house, support my mother and sisters and them, and JA and that's my dream ... That is my only thing I want to do now

Michael also shares his desire to take greater responsibility for his new family, as he has recently become a father.

Michael: see ... I have a new born baby man, only 7 months now, mother is not working, grew up without a father, living in a 2 room, it is very very difficult
Hayley: ... so you looking for a job to support your family
Michael: really, I really am

Michael's desire to provide for his family and find employment also speaks of a preservation of self-worth. Morrell (2008) suggested that in some instances, young men that were not raised by their fathers would become committed and present fathers for their own children. This seems to be so in the case of Michael, despite the many obstacles that he faced, as well as the absence of his own father from his life, he is determined to be an involved and supportive father to his daughter. He uses the picture below to illustrate his desire to find employment.

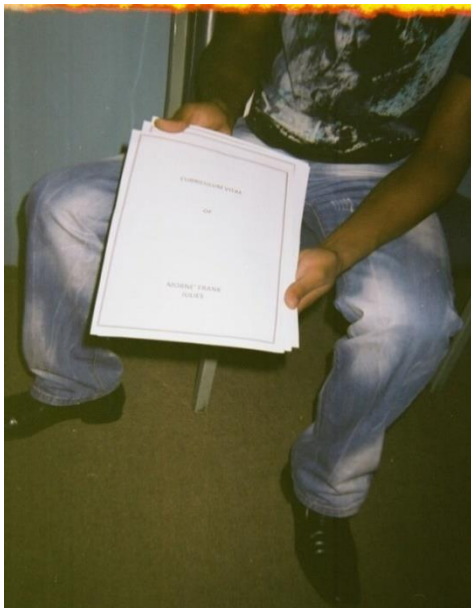


Figure 35- looking for a job (Michael)

Michael: ja, obviously I am looking for a job, seriously, ja,
Hayley; this is what...? [looking at figure 22]
Michael: the cv, ja ...

Despite the obstacles, Michael's desire to find employment also speaks of his hope for a better life. Freire (2007) suggests that change is not possible without dreaming of it, and there

is no dreaming without hope. In speaking of his dreams, Michael expresses this hope, by photographing his CV, illustrating his desire and efforts to find work.

6.5 Dreams or goals - hindered by the past

The context of poverty, unemployment and a lack of education, as experienced by all the participants in the study has an impact on the way in which these young men participate in the social world. Their identities and dreams will be limited by the contextual factors that constrain them. In a discussion on their future plans or dreams, Alan and Dylan explained that this would be impacted by their lack of education and illustrated the way in which this was understood. Alan shares the dilemma that he has to negotiate and, at the same time, illustrates the complex reality of holding onto a dream whilst keeping in mind the constraints of his present reality.

Alan: ja, and my father was a soldier ... and my dream was to become a soldier

Hayley: ok ... before, it's not your dream anymore?

Alan: mmm ... maybe but not uh, I still want to be a soldier but I didn't go to school, how will I be

What needs to be considered is what happens when this hope, of a better life, is met with immense obstacles. De Le rey (1991) suggests that “that individuals are motivated to achieve certain goals [and when] the attainment of these goals is blocked, the individual experiences frustration which in turn induces aggressive energy” (p.35). Alan's story gives insight into this reality, and can help us to understand the frustration and hopelessness that he may experience. Dylan also expresses his dream and the challenges that he foresees in reaching his dream.



Figure 36 – The goal of finishing school (Dylan)

Dylan: Ja, [laughs].. Silence... Ok, and this is a picture of a school [figure 23] it is mostly one of my challenges, to finish school. That is what I have planned to, coz I have made a lot of disappointments. I was in primary school, I was one of the top achievers but when I reached high school things changed. I became naughtier started smoking drugs and last year I ended up in a court case. So I disappointed my dad, so basically I want to finish my school. That is all that picture means to me.

Hayley: MMm ... the dream, the goal, like the cricket picture

Dylan: Ja, it is actually a challenge for me to finish school. Not a goal

Hayley: What do you mean it's a challenge not a goal

Dylan: Because I don't feel like going back to school, but it's something I wanna do, so its a challenge that I set up for me to finish school.

Hayley: and that is different to a goal

Dylan: ja, in a way because a goal is a thing that you can achieve in a few years time, and a challenge is a thing everyday.

Dylan's distinction between a goal and a challenge suggests the ownership he takes for his plight, but it also offers an understanding of the way in which the constraints of poverty and poor schooling plague the everyday experiences and possibilities of the participants.

Although they are aware of the opportunities afforded to them through democracy and the affirmative action, these young men also be aware of the lack of resources, their level of education and the lack of opportunities that are apparent in their communities. This frustration and inability to connect their identities positively to their environments could cause disappointment and a sense of hopelessness and apathy amongst them.

Freire (2007) offers an idea that dreaming of a better life is more than an idealistic fantasy but rather that it can be seen in by gaining understanding of the reality we live in. The role of education then is to explore or provide opportunities to imagine the hidden truths and offer

possibilities for transformation. Both Alan and Dylan realise the importance of education, and understand that without an education their dreams will remain distant from their reality, however they are also aware of the fact that they have limited access to education. Bradbury & Clarke (2012) suggest that the South African youth are faced with the dilemma of being able to imagine a better future, but at the same time being plagued by a personal and social past that creates obstacles. Michael also shares his more long term hope or dream.

Michael: It is my dream to be a chef

Hayley: wow

Michael: ya, it is my dream [laughs]

Michael's hope of finding a job (mentioned earlier), seems to overshadow his dream of becoming a chef. Whilst the dream may seem unattainable, he continues to hold onto hope. Michael uses laughter in his account, possibly as a way of acknowledging the magnitude of the dream, and how far from his current reality it is. The laughter may also be linked to some kind of embarrassment at his chosen career, as he may think the researcher does not really approve, or the laughter may be as a result of the researcher's surprised response.

Conclusion

The notion that adolescents are actively involved in creating their identities, and seem to be in a stage of identity formation (Erikson, 1968) can be seen in this chapter. Despite the constraints of place and the environment riddled with immense social ills (Thom & Coetzee, 2004), these young men are able to act on their environments and have created multiple, layered and complex versions of themselves. In summary this chapter has looked at how these young men have found ways to reform, or recreate different versions of their identity. According to Brendtro et al (2007) youth at risk are deemed courageous when they are given

opportunities to achieve a sense of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. It is very clear that these young men are reclaiming their own lives and are using similar kinds of values to inform and create different and more complex versions of their identities.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The present study has focussed on youth who have been labelled NEETs in a South African township and sought to understand and give voice to the experiences and identities of these youth. These youth have been characterised as dropouts, delinquent and likely to be involved in risk taking behaviour. According to the literature on youth in contemporary South African townships, the effects of poverty, high levels of unemployment and poor schooling opportunities impact on young people's experiences. As a result many township youth have lost hope. Rather than trying to understand the complexities of their situation and challenging the hopelessness, much of the research seems to be concerned with the threat that these youth pose to the economy and to society.

The study aimed at exploring the identities of these youth, in relation to their social context, and to offer ways for their experiences to be read differently. Through photographing their community and the telling of their stories, the hope was that this research would allow these young men to rethink their world and begin to challenge it. In a sense this research allowed the young men to take ownership of their stories, actively engage with the meaning-making process and starting to rethink and relive their experiences. Through sharing their stories and photographs, the researcher and the young men co constructed past, present and possible future meanings of their stories.

The way in which the research attempted to reach these aims was through attempting to address the research questions. In concluding this research, those questions will be revisited, and the ways in which these questions were addressed will be summarised.

How do NEETs narrate or explain the way in which they come to be NEETs?

A chapter of the research focussed on particular incident narratives, PINs, of two of the participants to illustrate how the participants make sense of how they became NEETs. These stories revealed the ways in which their traumatic experiences of being neglected and abused impacted on their identity formation. Whilst the stories were told in different ways, they both seemed to highlight the impact of early trauma on identity development. The way in which they each told their stories, also revealed the intense feelings that these stories evoked, and how they seemed to relive these experiences in the retelling of them. This process of retelling these traumatic incidents revealed the way in which meaning is constructed and reconstructed through story telling (Bourdieu, 1986; McAdams, 1993). The way in which they were reconstructed was impacted by the context in which they were told (Squire, 2008). The researcher's presence and interactions in these PINs also impacted on the way in which their stories were told. Finally, these incident narratives highlighted broader issues and experiences that seem to be representative of the context in which these young men develop their identities. This leads to the second research question:

What are the personal experiences of NEETs living in a township and how might these be represented?

The research focused on the place in which these young men lived, and through their photo documentation, they were able to highlight the way in which their environment hindered their development. Many of the participants expressed their frustration with the environment, and spoke of the lack of opportunities, the unemployment rate and the impact of drug abuse and poverty on their community.

The study offered an understanding of the complexities of these young men's identities. Through exploration of their context, it was clear that these young men seem to be trapped by the social constraints that bind them. Poverty, unequal access to resources, lack of education and the constraints of an environment riddled with drugs and familial breakdown, seems to be passed down from parents, and continues to render these young men helpless. This illustrates the impact of the apartheid on communities, 20 years after its abolishment. Their desire to belong (Yuval-Davis, 2007; Brendtro et al, 2007), impacts on the way in which young people construct their identities. This seemed to be impacted by both place, and also by the lack of familial support. These young men showed resilience and innovation, in that they found ways to create their own sense of belonging, through their friendships and their relationships with 'mentors' in the community. The social constraints were described by the participants in different ways throughout their interviews and attempt to the next sub-question:

What social / collective problems do NEETs identify in their community?

What was alarming, and appeared very obviously in all of the cases was the effects of drug abuse in the community. All of the young men were exposed to and affected by drugs. This idea that communities seemed to represent the larger social context, of a growing capitalist society, wrought with corruption and other social ills, may give insight into the use of drugs and other illegal activity that appears rampant in this particular township.

The multiple layers of masculine identities, and the ways in which their masculine identities are challenged and understood also emerged as important in the study. Interestingly, the idea that their feelings of shame, anger and losing their dignity seemed to be a cause for their violent or aggressive behaviour was explored. However, these young men also expressed less stereotypical forms of masculine identities.

Whilst raced identity was not the focus of this study, it was explored and dealt with in two particular ways. Firstly the way in which the structural violence of racial discrimination (Bulhan, 1986) continues to perpetuate inequality and skewed access to opportunities was explored, with particular reference to the way in which it shaped their identities. Secondly, the impact of the researcher's shared coloured identity, also impacted on the way in which these youth were able to engage in a shared racial identity, and this aided in the construction of meaning for these young men. Whilst the researcher was in many senses an 'outsider' looking in objectively, her subjective experience of being coloured (Fay, 1996), for the participants meant that their shared identity could be explored in the interview, and added to the richness of their stories.

The role that poor schooling opportunities played in forming their identities was explored by these young men. In some instances, the violence in schools, apathy and demotivation of teachers and learners, and their own violent behaviour and crime resulted in them dropping out of school altogether. Others expressed their barriers to learning, and the ways in which the schooling system failed to address these barriers. The shame of being devalued, because of these learning difficulties, as well as the use of corporal punishment by teachers, gave insight into why others dropped out of school.

Fragmented family life, the lack of familial support and the absence of fathers seemed to be common features of all their experiences. It was clear that poverty, impacted on by the legacy of apartheid, has had a devastating effect on family life, and that this has negatively impacted on the way in which these young men develop their identities. Their stories highlighted the lack of belonging that many of them experienced in their homes.

Whilst their circumstances look bleak, and the problems of their community may weigh heavily on their development, these young men spoke of their context in ways that

emphasised the value that they place on it. The way in which they represent their community, is not only through the problems that they are faced with, but is also filled with their thoughts on what they see as valuable and meaningful in forming their identities.

What aspects of their township and their lives do they value?

The participants shared stories of their context that shed light onto what they found meaningful and important. The core values of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity that Brendtro et al (2007) suggested as a way of intervening with youth at risk, seem to be shared and represented by the participants in the study. Whilst the participants were not given many opportunities to encourage a sense of *belonging* in their families, through their relationships with friends, these young men found ways to belong. Also their relationships with mentors, and their desire for positive role models, spoke of a desire to form connections with people. Many of them spoke of friends as being like family, and shared stories of how they were there for each other in the absence of parents. Their stories of using their skills to make money, like cutting people's hair, d-jaying, building houses for their families, fixing engines and computers and doing domesticated work around their homes speaks of a sense of *mastery* that these men value. In different ways throughout their narratives these young men spoke about their desire for *independence*. Making their own money, through piece work and providing services in the community speaks of their efforts to gain this independence. Whilst some only spoke of wanting independence, many were making an effort, despite the constraints on their lives, to gain this independence. Lastly, all of the participants seemed to share the spirit of *generosity*. They spoke of caring for their families, providing materially, offering support to their younger siblings, and even making time for and providing for the less fortunate children in their community.

The literature suggested that unequal schooling, fragmented family life, the impact of the environment, crime and gangsterism and the role that the economic and historic context of South Africa would impact on the way in which identities and experiences of these young men. This was supported by the participants' narratives. However, the way in which these factors affected the individual lives of these young men gave new perspective and understanding to their behaviour and the way in which they perceived themselves and others. This leads to the final research question:

What possibilities do these NEETs imagine for the future, and how are these represented?

What was discovered through this study was that, despite the social constraints and their own internal struggles with the social and personal crises, these young men have found ways to present glimmers of hope in their stories. Far from a one-dimensional picture of hopelessness, angry and violent youth, the research reveals complex versions of their identities. What has been discovered is that these young men have compassion for others, a desire to help and support their current and future families, and are willing and able to take responsibility for their households. Furthermore, their multi layered stories illustrated the vulnerabilities of these young men, and their belief in possible futures for themselves and their communities.

Multiple layers of meaning and identities were recognised through the study. This suggests that these young men had complex and nuanced stories and experiences and the stereotypical views of their identities were challenged. Identities of masculinity, unemployed apathetic youth and visionless young men were challenged and an understanding that masculinity is more fluid, many of these young men are involved in some kind of informal employment, or effort to earn an income and in some ways despite their challenges, they are invested in hope and the possibility of envisioning a different future.

The tension spoken about in Bradbury and Clarke(2012) seems to be influenced heavily by both the past and the ramifications of the past on the present which seemed to cloud possibilities for possible futures. In this way, the journey that these youth are on, fraught with challenges of belonging and identity, seems to result in apathy towards the future, not because they have no hope, but rather because the past seems to be hindering their agency.

Limitations of the study

The research involved many different phases and modes of data collection, resulting in a large amount of data. Due to the limit in the scope of this research, and also the time constraints of the researcher, a lot of the data was not utilised, and the richness of the process and data collection methods was not adequately showcased.

The participants in the study were at risk youth and as a result the reliability of participants was a challenge. This slowed down the progress of data collection, and at times became time consuming and costly. The support of OFY was valued and appreciated in managing this issue.

One of the difficulties I faced during the project was the fact that narrative interviews require the interviewee to speak for an extensive amount of time, and because these youth were not first language English speakers and I am not fluent in Afrikaans, it became tiring for the participants. Also it was at times difficult for us to understand each other, and the participants became frustrated with themselves when they could not properly articulate themselves. If this research were to be extended it should either be done in the participants' first language, or there should be more than one interview so that questions could be re looked at and clarity on certain issues could be achieved. Ongoing interviews with the two participants who were

selected on the basis of their PINs, could provide a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the complex experiences of that these young men have experienced.

Recommendations for further research

There is not enough research on understanding the high levels of drug abuse in townships today. During the interviews it became clear that the drug use impacts on the social structures and how that further exacerbates the poverty and feelings of apathy in the community. More research needs to be done on the impact and aetiology of drug use in communities.

A closer look at the narratives of youth experiences in these circumstances will be useful in gaining a greater understanding of the situation. The narrative analysis that focuses on a number of different youths' stories would provide opportunities for comparison and a greater understanding of the ways in which youth perceive themselves and are perceived by others. This kind of study would help to gain a deeper understanding on the plight of youth in this country. In this way, interventions and strategies to reduce the current risk and plight of youth in these circumstances can be addressed.

Lastly, race and its impact on the way in which identities of youth differ should be explored. Whilst this study focussed on a homogenous cohort of young coloured males, this part of their identity was not discussed or explored in much detail. In a sense the sense of identity, of 'coloured' South Africans is a non-identity and conjures up many feelings of belonging and exclusion that seems to add a complication to their construction and development of identities. Furthermore, the ways in which the identity formation of this particular group compares to the other racialized groups may provide insight into the impact of race and

culture on the ways in which identities are perceived and navigated in post-apartheid South Africa.

In conclusion, the narratives of personal experiences of these young men offer an opportunity for the researcher and those that are working with youth to understand the complex contextual constraints that they face, and provides us with a way of understanding, rather than judging their decisions and experiences. The hope is that this study offers us a way of rethinking the way in which we view these young men. Whilst the study's aim was to help these young men read the world through different eyes, what was discovered or realised is that these young men can be read and understood through different eyes, when we take their viewpoints on their lives seriously. Freire's suggestion that people need to believe that impossible dreams can be made possible is both relevant for these young men and also for the wider society. This notion set out by Freire (2004) that we need to actively engage in creating a context in which people can challenge the fatalistic realities of their circumstances, so that we matter in history, suggests that the responsibility of transforming the experiences of youth is a task for us all. Challenging their realities and imagining new possibilities for the future, requires more than just individual action, dreams or hopeful agency.

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APPENDIX A

Consent form to participate in interview



I have read the attached letter and understand the nature, purpose and procedure of this study, and recognise that participation in the study will not advantage or disadvantage me in any way. I understand that confidentiality is guaranteed and I have a right not to answer any questions that I feel uncomfortable with, and to withdraw from the study at any time. I also understand the researcher can make use of direct quotes. I would like to participate in this study.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

APPENDIX B

Research procedure – Schedule of sessions

Session 1: Worksoop Introducing and setting up research plan (1-2 hours)

Discussion:

- expectations of the project
- our values
- what they identify as important community problems
- Planning and orientation to photo documenting

Cameras to be distributed and the instructions for photo documenting to be clarified. Each person will use the cameras to document a typical day in their life. (a week day)

Worksoop on basic photography (2 hours)

Session 2: Individual Interviews with 6 participants on discussing the photos and objects; (1-2 hours per interview)

Emphasis on personal experiences

Discussion:

- the meanings and stories of certain pictures
- the reasons why certain pictures were taken
- what we understand about our surroundings and stories of different places
- What opportunities are available in our surroundings

- Identifying themes or common stories

Session 3: Workshop on representing their place and experiences in creating a digital storyboard

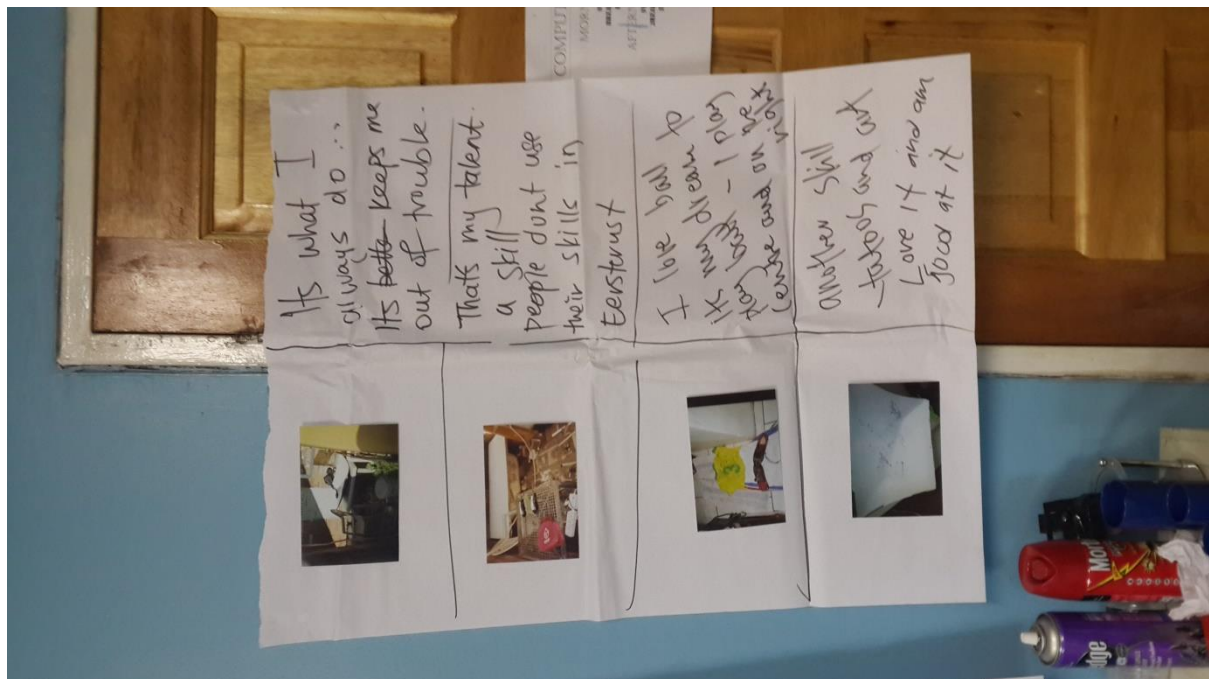
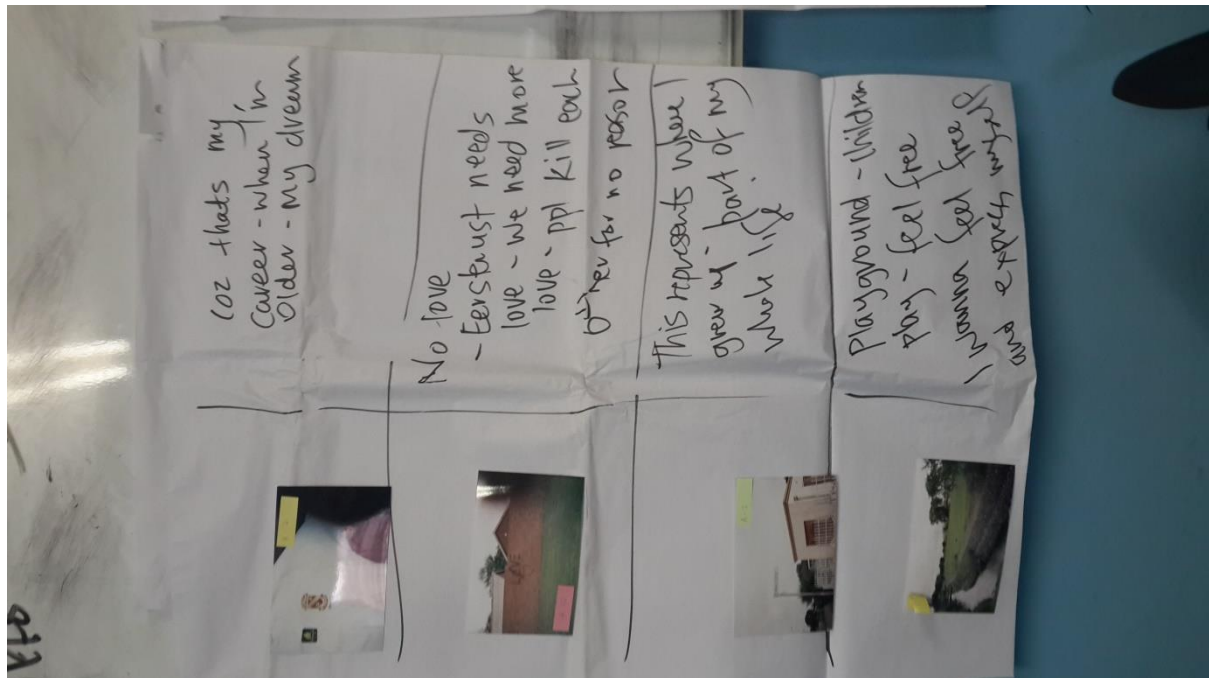
- Combining common stories, in the form of photographs, into a collective story that will be represented on the story board. (2 -3 hours)

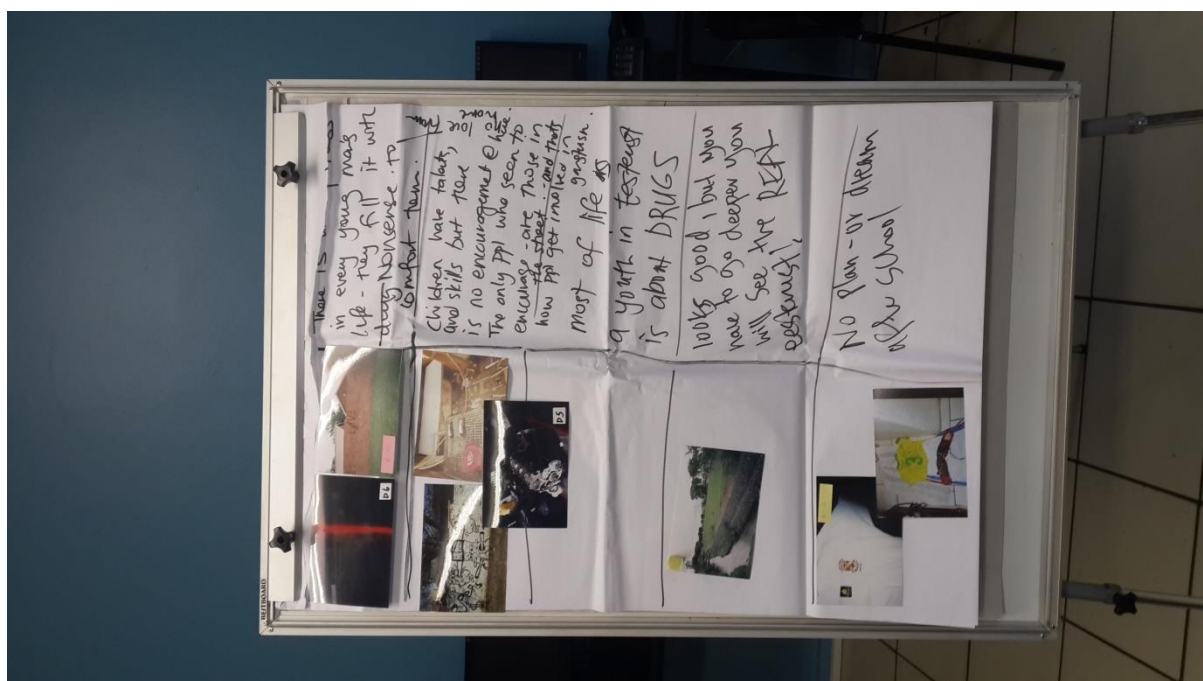
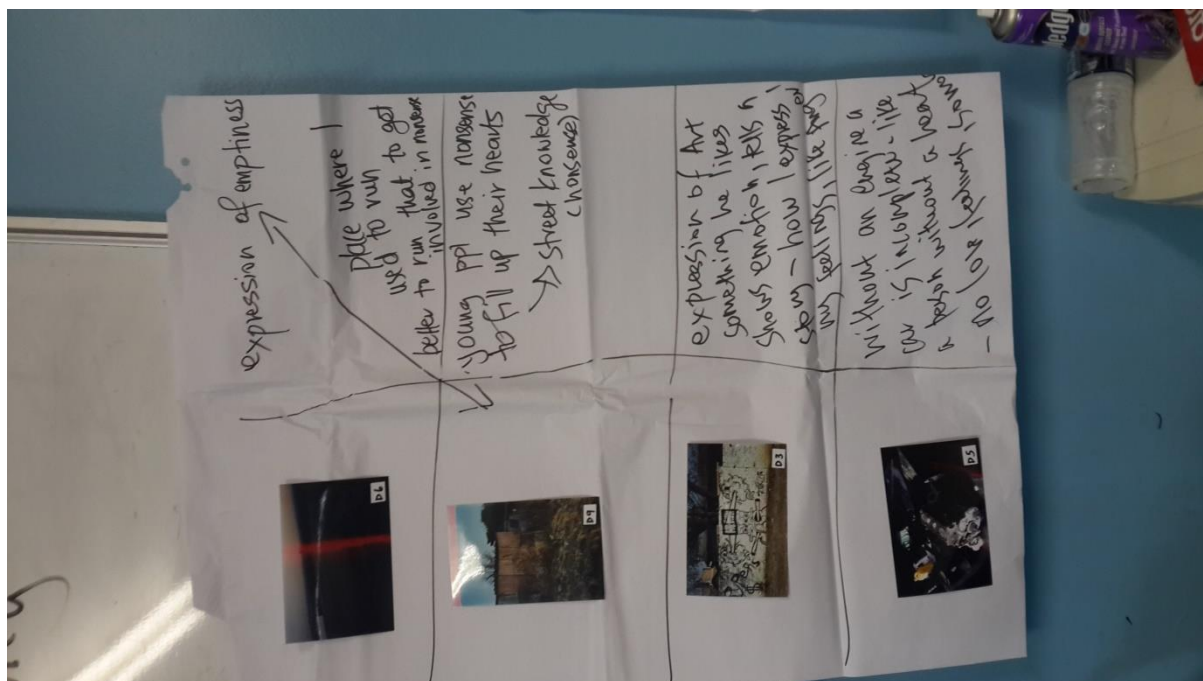
Session 4 – Focus group on analysis of the story board (2-3 hours)

Emphasis on a collective story and the possibility for change

- Developing a strategy to represent their experiences collectively
- Discussions about future plans
- Discussion on whether we can use our story to make a difference - How?
- Discussion on what we would like to share with others?

APPENDIX C – Pictures of the Focus Group Discussions (creating the story Boards)







APPENDIX D

Invitation to Participate in a Research project

I am a student at the University of Witswaterstrand and I am interested in finding out how young unemployed people in Settlers experience their community. I would like us to participate together in taking photographs of different places and objects that represent your experiences of Settlers. You will be offered some basic training in photography and computer skills. Please understand that your participation is voluntary and you are not being forced to take part in the study. The choice of whether to participate is yours alone. However I would really appreciate it if you would share your experiences with me.

We will have three group meetings to discuss these photographs and I will audio and video record these conversations. The recordings of our conversations will be kept securely locked up and will not be shared with anyone outside of the project. I will not record your name and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. I will ask questions about your photos and your experiences living in Settlers. If I ask you a question or if we have a conversation that makes you feel sad or upset, we can stop talking about it. There are also counsellors whom I can put you in contact with, who are willing and able to talk with and/or assist you.

If you have any questions about this research you may contact me via the Job Corner at OFY on ##### . If I am not available at the time, please leave a message and your contact details with Theresa Cooper and I will call you back. You are also welcome to contact my supervisor, Professor Jill Bradbury, at the **University of Witwatersrand** in Johannesburg Jill.Bradbury@wits.ac.za or on 011 – 7174515.

Many thanks,

Hayley Haynes-Rolando

APPENDIX E

Consent form to be audio recorded



I grant permission for this interview to be audio recorded. I understand that the content of the tapes will be transcribed for the purpose of further analysis and that **my, and my teams**, identity will be protected; access to tapes will be restricted and the tapes will be stored in a secure location. I understand that the tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the research study.

Signed:

Date:



APPENDIX D

To OFY Management

This letter serves to inform you of a research project in the Settlers community. The project is targeted at NEETs (youth not in employment, education and training), and I am aware that you have access to this particular group of young people, through your job corner. I am particularly looking for males that are between the ages of 18 and 24. The research is about understanding the experiences of NEETs in Eesterus, from their perspective.

The participants that volunteer to be part of the project will be given disposable cameras and asked to take photographs of places and objects that represent their experiences of living in Settlers. They will be offered basic training in photography skills and computer skills, particularly with regard to the internet.

They will be invited to participate in three sessions, involving focus group discussions about the meanings they make of their photographs and workshops to create a collective digital storyboard.

I am requesting that you please pass this information onto young people who use the services of the job corner. Once again, this should be completely voluntarily and the participants will be asked to sign an informed consent form if they wish to participate in the study.

If you have any questions about this research you may contact my supervisor, Professor Jill Bradbury, at the University of Witswaterstrand in Johannesburg, Jill.Bradbury@wits.ac.za or on 011 –7174515. Please feel free to contact me at anytime to discuss this research. My email address is hayleylisahaynes@gmail.com and my cell phone number is 0828168540.

Many thanks,

Hayley Haynes-Rolando