

**Negotiating Identity and Belonging:
Perspectives of Children Living in a Disadvantaged
Community in the Eastern Cape Province**

Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements of the

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by

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ABSTRACT

Developing an identity with self-esteem and a sense of self-worth is a child's fundamental right (Vandenbroek, 2001). To encourage identity formation children need to ask and answer questions such as: 'Who am I?', 'Where do I belong?' and 'Is it ok to be who I am?' A child's identity is shaped largely by his/her experiences with regards to relationships and belonging within communities and familial structures. However, South Africa faces a host of problems, including poverty, violence, HIV/AIDS, all of which contribute to the breakdown of these familial and community structures. Utilising a participatory action framework, this research aims to provide insight into how children living in a disadvantaged community negotiate identity and belonging. This insight into children's perceptions of identity and belonging is useful for identifying resources within the community which promote a positive sense of identity and belonging, and also to identify areas where support and intervention are required.

Keywords: identity, belonging, children, South Africa, participatory research.

DECLARATION

I am the sole author of this mini-dissertation.

No part of this mini-dissertation has been published or submitted for publication.

To the best of my knowledge, my mini-dissertation does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights. Any ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other material from the work of other people that I have included in my mini-dissertation, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines.

This is a true copy of my thesis, including my final revisions, as approved by my supervisor.

This mini-dissertation has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university.

Tamerin Amy Ridley

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You must tell everyone that it is good for us to speak. I want everyone to know that my story is important. You must put that in your book for everyone to see.

(C11- boy, 10 years old)

My mommy used to say that I am beautiful, now my Sissie says that. My mommy is gone, but she is still my mommy, and I am still her baby. This makes me sad and heavy, but that is who I am.

(C22 - girl, 10 years old)

Who am I? Hm, maybe I am like superman, I like to help. No wait, I am more like Ben 10, I will zap the baddies so that we are all safe. We need to feel safe.

(C13 – boy, 10 years old)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| ABSTRACT..... | i |
| DECLARATION | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | iii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | v |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | vii |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | viii |
| LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS..... | viii |
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| The importance of doing this research..... | 2 |
| The research question | 3 |
| Aims and rationale of the research..... | 3 |
| Research setting..... | 4 |
| Participatory research..... | 5 |
| Key features of participatory research | 6 |
| Positioning..... | 8 |
| Concluding remark..... | 9 |
| CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW | 10 |
| Negotiating identity and belonging | 11 |
| Relational identities | 13 |
| Conceptualising belonging..... | 15 |
| Contextualising disadvantaged childhoods in South Africa..... | 17 |
| Identity and context..... | 18 |
| Vulnerable childhoods | 19 |
| Historical context | 20 |
| Socio-economic contexts | 21 |
| Social dynamics underpinning identity and relationships with others..... | 24 |
| Opportunities for belonging and identity within a disadvantaged South African community | 27 |
| Households as a primary source of belonging..... | 29 |
| The importance of neighbourhood membership | 32 |
| The ameliorating potential of the school environment..... | 34 |
| Conclusion..... | 36 |
| Participation and belonging..... | 37 |
| Conceptualizing child participation..... | 38 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Concluding remark..... | 41 |
| CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY | 42 |
| Case study research | 42 |
| The participatory research paradigm | 43 |
| Participatory research with children..... | 44 |
| Participation is a scaffolded process..... | 45 |
| Initiating the study and strategies for participation | 45 |
| Where the initiative began | 46 |
| Characteristics of participants and participant selection | 47 |
| The scope and duration of participation | 48 |
| Structure for participation | 49 |
| The methods of data collection | 53 |
| Photovoice | 53 |
| Visual techniques | 54 |
| Platform theatre | 55 |
| Focus groups | 56 |
| The methods of data analysis | 57 |
| Thematic analysis..... | 58 |
| The thematic analysis process | 59 |
| Ethical considerations..... | 62 |
| Informed consent..... | 62 |
| Voluntary participation | 63 |
| Confidentiality..... | 63 |
| Physical and psychological safety and wellbeing..... | 63 |
| Feedback..... | 64 |
| Critical reflection and limitations of the research | 64 |
| The participatory research framework..... | 65 |
| Specific challenges of the research project | 66 |
| Personal Reflection | 68 |
| Concluding remark..... | 69 |
| CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS..... | 71 |
| Negotiating familial belonging..... | 72 |
| Defining mothers | 74 |
| The absence of fathers..... | 83 |
| The positive effects of living in an extended family | 86 |
| Negotiating gender and stereotyping..... | 91 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Restricted movement | 92 |
| Care-giving experienced by siblings | 97 |
| Negotiating vulnerability | 104 |
| Interpersonal violence | 106 |
| The impact of sickness | 109 |
| The security, stability and safety of school | 111 |
| The ameliorating role of my friends and peers..... | 114 |
| Concluding remark..... | 119 |
| CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION | 121 |
| Discussion..... | 121 |
| How relationships and belonging guide identity | 122 |
| Important relationships guiding identity | 123 |
| Negotiating familial belonging | 125 |
| Gender and stereotyping influences identity and belonging | 128 |
| Negotiating vulnerability and protective relationships | 129 |
| Concluding remark..... | 132 |
| Noted differences between the literature and data | 133 |
| Looking ahead and recommendations | 134 |
| How children’s identities can be fostered in South Africa..... | 134 |
| Participatory research and children..... | 136 |
| Future scope for research | 137 |
| Concluding remark..... | 139 |
| REFERENCE LIST | 141 |
| APPENDICES | 151 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1: Definition for a child who is vulnerable | 20 |
| Table 2: Characteristic of participants..... | 48 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1: I miss my mommy..... | 76 |
| Figure 2: I miss my mommy, continued..... | 77 |
| Figure 3: When my mommy beated me | 82 |
| Figure 4: Here is my family | 87 |
| Figure 5: I like living in a big family | 87 |
| Figure 6: What the girls spend their time doing..... | 93 |
| Figure 7: What the boys spend their time doing | 96 |
| Figure 9: Playing ball with my boetie | 98 |
| Figure 8: Skipping with my little sister | 98 |
| Figure 10: What we spend our time doing | 100 |
| Figure 11: Putting my sissie to bed | 102 |
| Figure 12: Looking after my baby sister | 102 |
| Figure 13: Nurse | 110 |
| Figure 14: Nurse | 110 |
| Figure 15: Doctor | 110 |
| Figure 16: This is my friend..... | 116 |
| Figure 17: I am happy playing ball and sad when my friend hits me..... | 117 |

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Photograph 1: Group discussion regarding the children’s daily activities and timelines..... | 50 |
| Photograph 2: Giving an account of people who help me..... | 51 |
| Photograph 3: Platform theatre; enacting an experience at the doctors... .. | 56 |
| Photograph 4: I love my mommy because she looks after me and my sissie..... | 75 |
| Photograph 5: Friends are important..... | 118 |

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Theories regarding identity have slowly evolved to recognise that identity is neither static nor secular. We now know that children are active beings who are socially constructed and position themselves in relation to others (Dawes & Donald, 1994). This dynamic process of identity formation is dependent upon relationships and a sense of belonging within these relationships. This study regards the interaction with others for identity formation as pivotal. It will argue that a vital component of identity is relational identities whereby identity is guided in relation to the relationships of significant others in one's life (Boucher, Parker Tapias, & Chen, 2005). As noted by Goncu (1999, p. 23) identity is the "construction, co-construction and reconstruction of the child through his or her interactions with parents, teachers, peers and others."

From birth, children are constantly exposed to new and exciting experiences. The opportunities to engage in the world are derived, firstly, as a result of the secure attachment between the infant and her mother and, secondly, upon the engagement with others and the natural world. As the child grows, her (the feminine form of personal pronouns will be used throughout this document for the sake of convenience) formative relationship with parents and siblings is gradually extended to incorporate increasingly wider circles of relationships. These interactions with others aid in guiding identity formation (Ashmore & Jussim, 1997). Children begin to develop a more sophisticated concept of their identity from school going age (between the ages of 7 and 8), largely due to ever increasing relationships with significant others within their worlds (Louw & Louw, 2007). This further encourages the development of identities which are flexible, multiple and complex.

Today, the recognition that children's identity and the context in which they reside are closely interlinked is universally accepted (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008). Most notably are the historical, socio-economic and social contexts within which one resides (Castells, 2000). The importance and

influences of these contexts will be examined in relation to how they affect the child's identity formation. The emphasis will be placed upon how these contexts affect the relationships of the child. It will argue that, when the opportunities for meaningful engagement with the world and others are restricted, the holistic development of the child is affected.

Utilising a participatory research framework, this study will critically examine how identity is negotiated, as well as examining the context within which relationships and belonging are fostered and achieved. It will serve to highlight the necessity for a movement away from Westernised theories regarding research and identity, thus emphasising that when it comes to issues such as child identity and belonging, there is no-one better to answer this question than the children themselves.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOING THIS RESEARCH

The issue of childhood identity needs to be scrutinised in a South African context whereby, for several reasons, children often do not reside with their biological parents. It is estimated that in the Eastern Cape 32% of all children live with neither of their parents, and that, of these, 27% are orphans (Meintjes & Hall, 2012). Recently there has been a great deal of criticism and research surrounding institutionalisation. Movements such as 'Save the Children' recognise that it is better for children to remain in their community, thus validating the fact that identity is best developed within a familiar environment which fosters loving and caring relationships. While this has been a vital move, researchers have spent a minimal amount of time looking at how children living in a disadvantaged community develop their sense of identity. This is reflective of the findings by Richter, Manegold & Pather (2004), who noted that, in a South African context, inadequate attention is given to children's emotional and relational needs compared to their material needs. Arguably, children's emotional needs are not responded to in ways which foster self-esteem and identity. Within this situation, even less research has adopted an explicitly participatory approach. South Africa desperately requires more projects that encourage child participation. One such project is the

'Memory Boxes Project', a project in Pietermaritzburg which encouraged children to collect a box of memories, thus providing practical solutions to building a sense of identity and affirmation of belonging.

In a foreword for UNICEF Archbishop Tutu (2011, p. 1) notes, "As a nation we have made remarkable progress in building the legal foundation for ensuring children's best interests. Now it is time to put policy into action by listening to the children." This research positions itself within this context of listening to the children by investigating how they negotiate their identity and sense of belonging within the Eastern Cape context.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The question framing this research is, 'How do children living in a disadvantaged community in the Eastern Cape perceive and negotiate their own identity and belonging?'

AIMS AND RATIONALE OF THE RESEARCH

This research aims to gain insight into how children aged between eight and ten years develop a sense of identity and belonging while living in a disadvantaged community in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. In order to do this, I examined various factors within the children's environment that contributed to the development of their identity and sense of belonging. These included: the people in the children's lives, the nature of these relationships, and the places that are important in the children's daily lives.

Utilising the participatory research paradigm, the research took the form of a case study to investigate how children living in a disadvantaged community negotiate their belonging and identity. The application of a case study utilising thematic analysis allowed more complex layers of meaning to be drawn from the data collected. Due to the cyclic nature of the research, the outcomes from

each session with the children were analysed to guide the structure of the following research session.

It was hoped that the child participants would have an opportunity to develop their own understanding of 'Who am I?' and that 'It's ok to be me'. The research additionally aimed to recognise strengths within the community and to identify where possible support is required.

RESEARCH SETTING

The research took place within a disadvantaged community in the Eastern Cape. According to the 'South African Child Gauge' (Meintjes & Hall, 2012) the Eastern Cape is ranked as one of the three provinces where conditions for children are amongst the harshest in the country. Poverty within the Eastern Cape is widespread; 44% of South Africa's citizens live in poverty, but within the Eastern Cape 57% of the province's population live in poverty. Building upon this, the province has been criticised for lagging behind in the fields of human rights and support for orphans and vulnerable children (Meintjes & Hall, 2012). This includes challenges such as limited access to basic amenities, most notably education and health.

The community within which all the child participants reside is termed 'disadvantaged'. Disadvantage occurs when resources, values and policies do not satisfactorily meet the needs of the individual (Peirson, 2005). Although disadvantage can be attributed to a variety of different sources, the impact of low-income or poverty and their associated risks are regarded as primary causes of disadvantage for both children and families.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

The participatory research paradigm often functions under several different labels. However, there are certain key elements evident amongst all of the labels; namely participatory involvement, action, changes, encounter and dialectic dialogue (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). This paradigm involves the movement towards a closer relationship between the researcher and the researched. Hall (cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2005, p. 58) notes that participatory research "...emphasises the necessity to involve those persons who are the supposed beneficiaries of research in the entire research process." This is specifically with regard to those who have historically been seen as un-empowered, marginalised or disadvantaged.

The foundational underpinnings of participatory research are traced back to two influential individuals, John Heron and Paolo Freire. The philosopher and psychologist, John Heron, introduced the concept of co-operative experiential inquiry (Reason, 1994). The prominent principles of this co-operation ultimately form the cornerstones of participatory research, namely the belief that the person is an active agent. Increasingly people were recognised as self-determining, able individuals with the capacity to elicit change and self-development. Reason (1994) argues that valid and reliable results are yielded only when the overriding agenda of research is the development of an active relationship, whereby the behaviour being researched is self-generated in a context of co-operation. This co-operation is a joint collaborative process, whereby the primary source of knowledge is the participant's real and lived experiences within the community and not simply the re-lived dialogical experience of participants. According to Penzhorn (2006), Paolo Freire developed the term 'conscientisation', thus emphasising the influential role of the researcher to encourage marginalised and deprived individuals (and communities) to develop critical insight into their situation, as well as exploring ideas regarding themselves and the society in which they reside, thus challenging their positions of inequality (Penzhorn, 2006).

According to Penzhorn (2006, p. 5) the participatory research paradigm can be defined as:

... equity and active involvement of the subjects taking part in the research process; resulting in knowledge generation and the development of critical awareness; leading to identification of needs and priorities, empowerment, self-confidence, decision making and problem solving.

Thus it is based upon the recognition of human potential, respect for people and communities and their democratic right to participate in the development of their communities. In South Africa participatory research came to the fore in the early 1990s. With the dissolution of apartheid structures, people were actively searching for ways to empower previously disenfranchised communities. Mouton, Muller, Franks and Sono (1998) note that researchers have slowly begun to recognise the role of the participants and to empower them through their participation, from the implementation to the evaluation of the project. Only recently has there been a gradual move in South African research towards providing children with more autonomy to participate in research that directly affects them, which is cognisant with this methodological approach.

Key features of participatory research

The tradition of participatory research is that it is a flexible approach, with few methodological guidelines and sequences (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). It is the philosophy of empowerment and participation underlying the research that is of most importance. As noted by researchers such as Kemmis and Mc Taggart (2005) and van der Riet and Boettiger (2009), the criterion of success is not whether a specific process has been adhered to, but, instead, it is about the process itself and whether the participants have developed and evolved in the understanding of their own knowledge and situation. Based upon these philosophical underpinnings, participatory research is generally viewed as a spiral of self-reflective cycles. These cycles involve collaborative and continuous reflection and action, both the researcher and the participants move repeatedly between these two stages thus ensuring a cycle of increasing in-depth awareness, knowledge and understanding

regarding the participants' situation (Mouton, Muller, Franks, & Sono, 1998). As this spiral process occurs, the researcher aims to further empower the participants by encouraging increasing degrees of participation, ultimately ensuring that the participants guide and control all aspects of the process.

Within this spiral certain additional features facilitate the process. Firstly, it is a social practise, "It deliberately examines the relationship between the realms of the individual and the social" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 566). Thus it is the recognition that any problem, including psychological and psychosocial ones, has to be contextualised and recognised as a symptom of both social and cultural circumstances. Participatory research utilises each participant's local knowledge, encouraging critical reflection to increase collaboration and understanding of the issue on a wider societal level.

Secondly, and as previously noted, this process is jointly practical and collaborative (Clark, 2004). It encourages participants to explore the social practices that link them with others through the process of social interaction. This requires the investigation of the current situation in order to engender change, thus it is necessary for this process to be reflexive. This constant reflexivity required by both researcher and participants, is acquired through the process of learning with others, by doing and not simply by talking (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Therefore, the research is conducted utilising a variety of non-verbal and verbal techniques. This ensures that language is not the only medium for expressing opinions and views. This allows participants to explore their own knowledge in a variety of ways, to examine their knowledge alongside others, as well as, ideally, providing a voice to all within the situation (including children and the marginalised).

Lastly, it is necessary to emphasise that participatory research aims to transform both theory and practice (Penzhorn, 2006 and Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). It is essentially a bottom-up process whereby the practice, examination and reflection of participants' knowledge is the dominant

viewpoint. It is not about the examination of this knowledge in comparison to widely accepted (and generally Western constructed) theoretical frameworks, but rather a process of transforming both the participants' and researchers' knowledge about a situation that is unique and applicable to the local context from which it is derived.

Positioning

Research in the Western world has traditionally adopted a positivist, empirical paradigm in the search for the ultimate truth, thereby distancing the researcher from the research, making her a so-called 'objective' bystander. Participatory research is the recognition and merger of increasingly post-modernist ideals which see the researcher as an active participant within a cyclic process of empowerment, discovery and research. The utilisation of this paradigm requires the researcher to examine critically her own role and influence upon the research process. Kelly and van der Riet (2001) argue that it is impossible to overcome the influences of the researcher; instead one should acknowledge these influences, making them both visible and reflexive. Additionally, Butler (in Lenzo, 1995, p. 18) notes that the "...reconceptualization of identity as *effect*, that is *produced* or *generated*, opens up possibilities of *agency* that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed." The theories that are developed in research, as well as the self-understanding that individuals and communities cultivate through this process of self-enquiry, influence the actions of those being researched (Kelly & van der Riet, 2001). This reflexivity can and should be utilised to address change, creating a circular relationship between understanding and practice. This praxis allows the researcher not only to address the power imbalance of research, but also recognises that understanding and analysing are the beginnings of this process of action.

As noted, this particular methodology and framework forces the researcher to critically examine her own role and position within the research. One is forced to challenge the traditional approach of neutrality and objectivity by being explicitly engaged in contending with change (Kelly & van der

Riet, 2001). To address this concern, Lather (in Lenzo, 1995, p. 2) proposes that as researchers we need to adopt an acceptance of self-reflexivity, thus providing the catalyst to transform the “falsely conscious” participant into a “truly conscious” researcher. Accordingly, subjectivity and identity are necessary sites when utilising participatory research through interaction, listening, observing, reflecting and questioning. The fundamental role of the researcher is one of empathy and developing an understanding of the community through the process of involvement. As a result the researcher represents herself, where necessary in the first person, thus enhancing the research process through the positioning of self as an emphasis of the methodology and my role as part of the process.

CONCLUDING REMARK

Participatory research emphasises participation and empowerment through the generation of local knowledge (van der Riet & Boettiger, 2009). Van Vlaenderen (1999) emphasises the importance of utilising local knowledge as the starting point of the research process, whereby both local and scientific knowledge are able to merge effectively. Arguably this needs to be done through processes of flexibility and creative adjustment. This theoretical framework is not without its perils and criticisms; these are acknowledged and will be examined and discussed in later chapters. As noted by researchers such as Zeng and Bordeaux Silverstein (2011), participatory research is a dynamic, exciting form of research; however, it does not lend itself easily to the traditional organisation of an academic manuscript. This difficulty is largely due to the fact that the researcher is required to negotiate her role as an enabling, empowering researcher to ultimately ensure a bottom-up process. Additionally the write up, conducted in a linear fashion, will inevitably fail to adequately reflect the unique spiral nature of participatory research. It is my hope that this manuscript delicately and sensitively navigates this paradigm by providing a holistic orientation to the research and the children involved, thus giving justice to the vibrant and dynamic experience of the entire research process.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is about the realities of childhood identity and belonging in a South African context. Identity is one of the most commonly studied constructs within the social sciences (Cote, 1996 and Schwarts, Luyckx, & Vignoles, 2011). The various definitions and conceptualisations regarding identity are as complex, diverse and problematic as identity itself. In contrast to essentialist models of identity, which portray identity as rigid and uniform, the anti-essentialist paradigm emphasises fragmentation, multiplicity and fluidity as vital aspects of identity. This literature review will adopt an anti-essentialist approach, thus emphasising sociological understandings of identity. Relational identity, or the importance of interaction with others for identity formation, is regarded as pivotal. The concept of identity and belonging will be initially examined, highlighting the importance of relationships which foster children's identity. Secondly, a disadvantaged childhood will be contextualised by examining factors such as the historical, socio-economic and social contexts. Lastly, the opportunities for belonging and identity will be discussed. This will be done by focusing upon the pivotal relationships surrounding a child.

Childhood in South Africa is a construct dictated by inequality and divisions. Although apartheid has been abolished, the effects remain evident in a society that remains largely fragmented. We face a host of problems, including abject poverty, violent crime, HIV/AIDS and substance abuse, all contributing to the breakdown of familial and community structures. In the light of this it becomes necessary to question the psychological effects that these problems have for children today, most notably in the development of a sense of belonging, well-being and identity.

Contemporary research on children's identities in South Africa focuses on children in disadvantaged circumstances. In addition to the research reviewed in this chapter, a number of books have also been published on the topic. These includes books such as 'Growing up in a Divided Society: The

Contexts of Childhood in South Africa' (Burman & Reynolds, 1986), 'Childhood and Adversity: Psychological Perspectives from South African Research' (Dawes & Donald, 1994) and 'Addressing Childhood Adversity' (Dawes & Donald, 2000). More recently 'Mandela's Children: Growing up in Post-Apartheid South Africa' (Barbarin & Richter, 2001) has examined the realities of everyday life from birth to age ten of a cohort of children born in the surrounds of Johannesburg. Addressing hardships such as neglect, poverty and schooling, as well as negotiating belonging, is 'Steering the Stars: Being Young in South Africa' (Ramphele, 2002). Most recently, 'Growing up in the new South Africa: Child and Adolescence in Post-Apartheid Cape Town' (Bray, Gooskens, Moses, & Seekings, 2010), builds upon the earlier literature and findings by focusing on a cross-section of youngsters and their everyday life in the Fish Hoek Valley.

Books such as those above serve to highlight the adversities that children in South Africa face. However, the question remains, how can we assist the children? Arguably, our first step is to acknowledge the challenges that children are facing, but also to search for opportunities to engender and support psychological development. Research into South African childhoods has begun this shift by examining children and their 'normalcy'; thereby acknowledging the current challenges facing childhood, but also searching for a way forward. As noted by Ratele and Duncan (2008), one way to do this is through the examination of how children negotiate their identities in South Africa.

NEGOTIATING IDENTITY AND BELONGING

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, cited in Vandenbroek 2001) affirms that every child has the right to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as legally recognised. However, identity is a great deal more than simply a legal prerequisite. It involves the recognition that an infant has a distinct identity which slowly evolves through her participation with the world. The cornerstone of this participation is based upon

interpersonal relationships that influence behaviour (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). As noted by Uprichard (2008) identity is both a state of 'being' and a process of 'becoming'. Guided by surrounding interpersonal relationships, a child's identity changes, develops and adapts as she encounters new experiences, activities and broader social situations. This contributes towards the development of multiple, fluctuating identities. Whereby the actual, anticipated and remembered evaluations and concerns of significant others are continually incorporated, shaping one's identity. Through interpersonal relationships her sense of belonging is contextualised. This influences her understanding of the world, subsequent behaviour and future relationships.

Individuals do not possess a single identity, but have different identities according to the context from which they operate or belong (Cote, 1996). Thus, identities are a set of "...multiple, not necessarily well-integrated current and possible identities" (Oyserman & James, 2010, p. 120). Isin and Wood (1999, p. 17) contend that "... identities are made up out of partial fragments, implying the existence of a multiplicity of identities." These identities are dependent upon the contexts within which an individual operates. Thornton (1996, p. 150) builds upon this by noting that individuals have "... multiple identities in common contexts and common identities in multiple contexts." For example, language identities may be salient for Xhosa-speaking children when they are being addressed in English, or gender identities may be at the forefront when performing household duties. However, all of these children share the common identity of factors such as being young and having to attend school. Thus, identities are multiple and cross-cutting, they overlap a range of contexts or a common context. As a result of this they can also be revised, amended and even abandoned according to the context within which the individual is living.

It can be argued that Western research regarding identity has traditionally focused upon aspects of identity which are based along lines of Westernised ideals and thought processes. From this perspective, individualistic, autonomous and capitalistic ideals are emphasised. Firstly, this fails to

fully acknowledge the 'connectedness' of human beings to each other (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Secondly, this fails to take into account the role of context and belonging within these contexts. This is particularly pertinent in a context such as Africa. The majority of African cultures emphasise interdependent relationships, as opposed to more independent, Westernised cultures (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008). The individual is not separate from the social context, but is, instead, inextricably interlinked and shaped by her various interpersonal relationships.

Relational identities

The importance of relationships and human connectedness has often been overlooked by traditional, Westernised psychological approaches (Sharma & Sharma, 2010). It can be argued that relationships with significant others are as vital as individual aspects of identity (Boucher, Parker Tapias, & Chen, 2005). Additionally in non-Westernised contexts such as South Africa, where cultures emphasise relationships and connectedness above individual autonomy, relational identity is arguably even more important. Relational identity is defined as the self that is experienced in relation to the significant others in one's life (Boucher, Parker Tapias, & Chen, 2005). Thus identity develops within the context of relationships which shape individual's daily social lives. When individuals adopt a relational identity, their self-concept incorporates their own characteristics, as well as the attributes, qualities and inclinations of their close friends and families (Sharma & Sharma, 2010). Building upon this, Tice and Baumeister (2001) note that the interpersonal aspect of identity is not confined to the fact that self-knowledge is derived from the social world, but, additionally, that developing and relating to others is one of the most vital functions of identity. It is through relating to others that an individual is exposed to various experiences and is subsequently able to develop increasingly complex and multiple identities.

As far back as the early 1930s, Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian linguist and psychologist, noted that we are contributors to each other's identity (Bakhtin, 1986 cited in Madigan, 2007, p. 179). He noted, " I get

a self that I can see, that I can understand and use, by clothing my otherwise invisible self in the completing categories I appropriate from the other's image of me." Bakhtin's view emphasises the vital role of social interactions and the other in constituting one's understanding of self. Without the ongoing relationships with others we would be "invisible, incomprehensible and unusable" (Bakhtin, 1986 cited in Madigan, 2007, p. 179). It is acknowledged that identities are comprised of personal, collective and relational aspects, however, it is the interpersonal aspects which this literature review serves to highlight. In explanation of this, Hall (1991, p 21) asserts that "[identity] has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself." Thus identities evolve out of the dyadic interactions with others. This aids to guide an individual's pattern of interpersonal responding with significant and new others (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000).

Turner and Oakes (1990) as cited in TcGarty & Haslam (1997, p. 357) argue that "... minds belong to individuals [...] but their content, structure and functioning are nonetheless socially shaped and inter-dependent with society." Markus and Cross (1990), as cited in Boucher, Parker Tapias, & Chen, 2005), argue that identity is largely interpersonal, based upon three factors. Firstly, thoughts feelings and behaviours may be internalised and experienced as one's own. For example, a child may internalise a parent's attitudes and behaviours as part of the socialisation process. Secondly, others and subsequent experiences with others are utilised in the evaluation and maintenance of an individual's identity. This provides the catalyst for identities to be constantly revised and adapted. Lastly, the self is only able to exist in the context of others.

Identity is a multi-dimensional and complex phenomenon. The importance of relationships and human connectedness has often been overlooked by traditional, Westernised psychological approaches. In many non-Western cultures, such as the African cultures, identity is viewed as interdependent with the surrounding context (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus relational identity largely serves to guide one's sense of self, thereby affecting one's personal and collective identities.

In recognition of the South African context, relational identity has to be emphasised. This refers to conceptions and aspects of one's identity which occur in the context of relationships (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000).

Conceptualising belonging

As previously noted, identities are confirmed through their existence in relation to others. This existence is largely influenced and guided through a sense of belonging. Belonging is defined as "a sense of being accepted, valued, included and encouraged by others" (Woodward, 1997, p. 24). Additionally, one's values are derived from negotiations with others and are then signified through shared meanings (Ratele & Duncan, 2008). Most importantly, it is the quality of these everyday, interpersonal relationships from which children are able to derive encouragement, support and a sense of self-efficacy when these relationships are guided by trust and reciprocity (Bray, Gooskens, Moses, & Seekings, 2010). Markus and Kitayama (1991, p. 226) build upon this by noting "... the sense of belongingness to a social relation may become so strong that it makes better sense to think of the relationship as the functional unit of conscious reflection."

Aber, Gephart, Brooks-Gunn, & Connell (1997) propose that a child's sense of belonging develops in accordance to increasing complex relationships with others. Each new meaningful relationship assists in expanding and developing multiple identities for the child. These, termed developmental epochs, are additionally influenced by the child's physical and psychological maturation, as well as by new tasks set by society (Louw & Louw, 2007). For example, a young child entering school has joint influences from both home and school guiding her identity formation, thus highlighting how a child's identity develops parallel to her increasing awareness and involvement within a variety of relational contexts.

Prior to formal schooling, primary relationships are home based. Other influences, for example, the community are largely indirect and guided by the home based individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). During this period emotional development and trust are vital for psychological and emotional wellbeing (Dawes & Donald, 2000). A consistent and predictable environment, paired with a receptive caregiver, fosters the development of self-esteem and identity. A child who grows up in a secure and stable environment is far more likely to develop these qualities of self-regulation. This enhances the likelihood of more successful future relationships.

Upon entering school, at the ages of 7 – 11 years (the ages of the children in this study), the child negotiates a wider set of influences. Schaffer (2006) notes that between the ages of 7 and 8 years differing identities distinctly begin to emerge and develop. Of particular importance is the influence of the school and the relationships (teachers, peers and others within this primary system) which guide self-concept and identity formation. Children who have not been exposed to adequate, caring relationships are far more likely to be perceived as aggressive, lacking concentration, socially inept and having behaviour problems (Dawes & Donald, 2000).

This model, similar to Bronfenbrenner's, emphasises children as active participants in their own development. If new 'secure' opportunities to interact are consistently presented, the child will develop more social knowledge providing new possibilities to learn about the world and themselves (Dawes & Donald, 2000). Garbarino (1992) argues that the involvement of children in increasingly complex social settings provides opportunities to establish caring and nurturing relations. However, these relations can also prove to be detrimental to the child's sense of belonging if the interactions are not supportive and caring, thereby provoking anxiety and creating an insecure sense of self-esteem.

CONTEXTUALISING DISADVANTAGED CHILDHOODS IN SOUTH AFRICA

This section aims to contextualise a child's identity by examining the historical, socio-economic and social contexts of a disadvantaged childhood in South Africa. This includes defining vulnerability and the effects of historical and socio-economic contexts upon childhood. However, alongside these realities is the fact that identities develop from specific dyadic interactions with significant others as guided by societal cues and values (Boucher, Parker Tapias, & Chen, 2005). Muller (2000) terms these underpinning social dynamics as pivotal 'markers of difference', which may arise in social exclusion, marginalisation and the ordering of social groupings into a hierarchy. Thus it is also how a child belongs within these groups which influence her identity. The latter half of the section aims to examine these social dynamics which influence identity and relationships. This includes gender and role expectations, as well as the influences of culture and religion.

A child's identity formation develops from birth. Her relationship experiences serve to guide her sense of belonging and negotiation in the world. Thus, development cannot be viewed as primarily universal but is a highly contextualised and variable phenomenon (Aber, Gephart, Brooks-Gunn, & Connell, 1997). Castells (2000, p. 7) asserts:

There's no such thing as an empty cultural space. We always start history with some kind of identity. People from the very moment they exist have meaning and this meaning comes from something and this something is shared experience... [so] it's really the interaction and experience that make people's minds, individually and collectively.

Reflective of this, Holloway and Valentine (2000) as cited in Bazuin-Yoder (2011) argue that in today's context researchers of childhood need to examine children's experiences and perspectives, but also undertake analyses and understandings of the unique social structures that shape children's lives, thus jointly emphasising individual agency as well as acknowledging the wider structures within which the child operates.

For the purpose of this study, context is understood as an active agent that serves to influence the relationships within (Soudien, 2007). It is the historical, socio-economic and social contexts within which children exist that serve to shape their identities. It is these contexts which determine the particular meanings that we attach to behaviour in any given situation and, in turn, these meanings serve to determine the development of identities. When children live within a family, community or society which is characterised by inequalities or conflicts, the quality of their relationships and, thus, their identities are affected. This includes a sense of who they are, where they belong and whether they feel valued and respected (Uprichard, 2008).

Identity and context

An ecological model, as proposed by theorists such as Bronfenbrenner (1979), notes that any influences upon the community directly or indirectly affect individuals within the system (Visser, 2007). It is inclusive of all systems within which the child and her family operate, reflective of the dynamic nature of belonging (Swick & Williams, 2006). Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes the child's sense of belonging as fitting within different systems of interaction. These systems filter out from the microsystem, which is any context of immediate experience of personal interaction, to the macrosystem, which is the widest system of social institutions and ideologies particular to a specific group (such as an ethnic group or social class). These systems may be viewed as surrounding and influencing one another (Swick & Williams, 2006).

This process of shaping and developing identities depends not only upon the spatial and temporal context in which individuals are situated, but also on the amount of power that they are able to exercise in a particular context (Sharma & Sharma, 2010). Rutherford (1990, p. 19) notes that "... identity marks the conjuncture of our past with the social, cultural and economic relations we live in now ...[identity] is the intersection of our daily lives with the economic and political relations of subordination and domination." The relationship between context and identity are elaborated upon

by Woodward (1997) and Hall (1991) whereby identities are developed according to the subject-position occupied in a particular context. This determines how much power or control one is able to exercise in a particular setting, thus accounting for different identities and the various roles ascribed to these. For example, a child's identity will be noticeably different when she is amongst her peers (a more egalitarian relationship) as opposed to being with her parents. This has implications for self-definitions, definitions of others, interactions with others and also how we identify with others (Woodward, 1997). If the meaning attached to a particular situation is not shared, it is unlikely that strong identification will occur with others, while 'perceived similarities' in terms of shared meanings may encourage identification with others.

Vulnerable childhoods

It is universally agreed that for optimal development a child should experience feelings of well-being or wellness, whereby a child's basic needs are combined with cogent values, and satisfactory psychological and material resources (Peirson, 2005). When these are not adequately met, a child may be considered disadvantaged. The impact of low-income or poverty and their associated risks are regarded as primary causes of disadvantage for both children and their families. One of the most common consequences of a disadvantaged childhood is that the functionality of the family and those within are often affected. For this reason, concerns regarding disadvantaged childhoods are often acknowledged as precursors to child vulnerability.

According to Smart (2003), there are two definitions for a child who is vulnerable. These definitions are provided in Table 1 (below):

| Providing a definition for a child who is vulnerable | |
|---|--|
| Local/community definition | A child who is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orphaned, neglected, destitute or abandoned • Has a terminally ill parent/guardian • Is born of a teenage or single mother • Is living with a parent or adult who lacks income-generating opportunities • Is abused or ill-treated by a step-parent or relative • Is disabled |
| Working definition for rapid appraisal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child who is orphaned, abandoned or displaced • A child under the age of 15 who has lost his/her mother (or primary caregiver) or who will lose his/her mother within a relatively short period |

Table 1: Definition for a child who is vulnerable

The vulnerability of a child is based upon the fact that children are largely dependent upon others to meet their needs (Peirson, 2005), thus relegating them to a subordinate position and removing political and economic power from them. The actualisation of a child’s rights is largely dependent upon the willingness and ability of others to provide her with education, healthcare, protection and adequate resources.

Historical context

As a newly elected president, Nelson Mandela (cited in Bray, Gooskens, Moses, & Seekings, 2010, p. 21) noted that “... as we set about building a new South Africa, one of our highest priorities must be our children.” This was an affirmation of the role that children play in society; in addition, it serves as a reminder that historically children have actively participated in the absolution of historic injustices (such as the Soweto uprisings). The vision, guided by Nelson Mandela, was for children to be afforded equal opportunities in a democratic and free society. However, the divide between privilege and poverty has widened, extending the barrier of race to become increasingly one of class and elitism. Basic amenities such as healthcare, schooling and basic services serve to re-inforce historical divides and act as an enduring indictment of post-apartheid South Africa. Today, the legacy

of apartheid still shapes daily life, whereby South Africa remains largely segregated, guided not only by the historical segregation of race, but increasingly, also by financial and educational divides.

Bozalek (1997) argues that, within South Africa, sentimentalism regarding childhood has always been reserved for white families. Under apartheid, black African children were not represented as needing nurturing and protection from the state. Historically, childhood ended at 15 years of age for a black male, but 18 years for a white male; this has large repercussions for how a male individual regards himself (Bozalek, 1997). Dawes and Donald (1994, p. 12) argue that "... images of childhood and accepted practices in relation to children [...] have not shifted with societal and historical change", thus emphasising the fact that, while apartheid has been abolished, it is still largely relevant and influential for children in South Africa today.

Socio-economic contexts

Poverty

As previously noted, childhood is still largely dictated by past injustices; however, it is the resulting poverty that is the largest adversity within South Africa (Visser, 2007 and Ndebele, 2006). Visser (2007) argues that poverty is a multidimensional concept which needs to be understood to incorporate not only income but also factors such as: education, living conditions, health and participation in community life. A handful of studies specifically examining the content of possible identities with regards to socio-economic status have been conducted (Oyserman & James, 2010). It was found that those from poverty stricken areas are associated with lower expectations regarding family and employment. Additionally there is increasingly a recognised link between acts of violence by men and their feelings of disempowerment arising from unemployment and poverty (Bray, Gooskens, Moses, & Seekings, 2010).

James, Jenks and Prout (1998) emphasise that for children poverty affects every sphere of their lives. It becomes an integrated way of life. Due to the psychological, economic and physical implications, poverty is generally regarded as a perpetuating cycle. This cycle can largely be classified under three main themes: malnutrition, cognitive development and personality, and motivational dimensions (Sinha, 1990). For impoverished individuals, chronic under-nutrition, often resulting in developmental and growth delays, is widespread. Extensive research has also indicated that perceptual and cognitive processes such as memory, learning, linguistic skills and academic performance of children are often impaired in poverty-stricken areas. This is largely due to inadequate schooling and necessary developmental scaffolding. Lastly, poverty has been associated with anxiety, mental health issues and low self-esteem; these can contribute towards a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness which largely affects an individual's motivation and overall well-being (Visser, 2007).

Violence

Although contemporary concerns regarding safety are not new in South Africa, the nature and motives of violence have shifted noticeably from 1980 to the present (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). We have moved away from political violence, opposing segregation and white hegemony, towards an increased development of violence and abuse within the community and family. The level of crime in South Africa, especially violent crime, is regarded as amongst the highest in the world; this includes rape, robbery, violent theft and murder (Visser, 2007).

While the statistics are not known, abuse, sexual violence and child molestation are considered daily occurrences for many living in South Africa. Social and cultural beliefs often exacerbate the problem. This includes beliefs such as HIV/AIDS can be cured by having sex with a virgin or the use of genitalia for traditional 'muti'. Studies, such as the one conducted by Lewis (1997) as cited in Visser (2007),

have found that, within the community, the majority of rape cases of children are opportunistic, often occurring in the child's everyday environment, during the day and by individuals that the child knows.

A great deal of recent research has involved an examination of the possible long-term effects that violence may have on children's development. Worldwide evidence from studies have highlighted that the effects on children's functioning occur in two domains; developmental regressions and post-traumatic stress (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). Children exposed to violence may exhibit symptoms that include: difficulty concentrating, anxiety and anxious attachment to caregivers. Some children may become more aggressive (often acting out scenes of violence that they have witnessed), or act in an uncaring way because they have to deal with feelings of anxiety and hurt. Children exposed to violence may also reduce participation in some activities due to fear. Exposure to community violence, however, influences aggressive behaviour of parents and children (Ramphela, 2002).

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is has wide reaching impacts on all levels of the community. This includes the workforce, social welfare, health services, family life and the composition of communities. Arguably, however the most devastating impact is on children. Children in regions with a high HIV prevalence are likely to be affected by associated deterioration of services, high levels of stress and overall weakening of social services (Visser, 2007). Other children are indirectly affected when a member of their household, often a parent/carer, is ill, dying or deceased due to AIDS. Apart from the psychological effects of this loss, it can also result in serious financial implications for a household that is already under the financial strain of looking after an ill individual (Richter, Manegold, & Pather, 2004).

Substance abuse

Many children are either witness to, or participants themselves, in substance abuse. Common types of substance abuse include alcohol, tobacco and marijuana (Flisher & Gevers, 2006). Between 1999 and 2007, 89 published studies have reported this association between substance abuse and psychopathology amongst adolescents (Flisher & Gevers, 2006). In addition, substance abuse is often linked with increased levels of violence by the abusers. On a community level the deficiency of support structures, changes of familial structures, high levels of unemployment and uncertainty, and high crime rates are all considered contributory factors (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). The influence of peers and a lack of positive role models also contribute towards the problem. These factors have a strong correlation with mental ill health.

Social dynamics underpinning identity and relationships with others

Relational identities serve to orientate and provide meaning to an individual by imparting meaning to the social and cultural contexts within which one operates (Boucher, Parker Tapias, & Chen, 2005). As previously noted, these identities develop from dyadic interactions with significant others as guided by societal cues and values (Boucher, Parker Tapias, & Chen, 2005). Muller (2000) terms these underpinning social dynamics as pivotal 'markers of difference', allowing for social exclusion, marginalisation and the ordering of social groupings into a hierarchy. It is how a child belongs within these groups that influences her identity. This includes gender and role expectations, cultural curriculums and religion. Influences such as patriarchy and Christianity serve to emphasise power hierarchies, and these are deeply engrained within society, thus shaping relationships and the nature of many of these relationships. They are, therefore, uniquely informative about people's patterns of interpersonal responding to significant or new others (Boucher, Parker Tapias, & Chen, 2005).

Gender and role expectations

Patriarchy and a wide division between the two genders are common features of South African communities. These stretch across wealth, language and cultural divides (Bray, Gooskens, Moses, & Seekings, 2010). However, how these are expressed differs greatly in terms of the communities within which they operate (Visser, 2007). This is largely as a result of early childhood socialisations. Primary school age children begin to understand that gender is not determined simply by description, but instead they view gender as a set of expectations for behaviour (Louw & Louw, 2007). For example, a 6 year old boy may note that 'boys don't cry' and that they are rougher or that girls are quiet and shy. It is around the age of 8 years that children develop increasingly elaborate perspectives regarding gendered roles and stereotypes.

Oyserman and James (2010) argue that identities differ with regard to gender due to the fact that gendered norms and expectations are an integral part of society. In traditional, patriarchal, African communities women are socialised to focus more upon connections, relationships, dependence and passivity (Oyserman & James, 2010), while men are socialised to focus on autonomy and independence with dominance and aggression as accepted, even encouraged, practices. This increases the likelihood that men will act aggressively towards women in stressful situations (Barbarin & Richter, 2001).

Gender identity is prescribed alongside traditional male-dominant and female-submissive roles. When men do not possess the perceived 'superior' resources required, such as a steady income, intelligence or resources, their self-esteem is affected, resulting in perpetrations of violence and abuse against men and women (Visser, 2007). Current research into low socio-economic black families in South Africa has indicated that black families are increasingly female-dominated households (such as by mothers). This leaves fewer avenues for men to prove their masculinity, thus aggressiveness is increasingly utilised. It is vital to emphasise that patriarchal norms normally do

serve to protect children, but it is the associated social and economic factors (such as unemployment, low wages and substance abuse) that significantly contribute to conditions and relationships where children endure violence.

Gendered behaviour and identity play a role in South Africa's violent crime (Visser, 2007). Findings, such as by Bray et al. (2010), indicate that girls are more likely to be kept in or around the home due to fears for their safety. While boys are encouraged to be 'tougher' and are seen as able to look after themselves, they are also afforded increased freedom to explore their neighbourhood and play outside the home. Research by Duncan and Rock (Louw & Louw, 2007) has noted a clear relationship between gender and the child's reaction to violence, whereby pre-adolescent boys are more likely to display stress-related symptoms subsequent to exposure to violence. This can largely be attributed to the fact that parents are more likely to show aggressive behaviour in front of boys. Additionally, girls are able to develop more supportive friendships than boys. This enables them to cope better with the impact of violence.

Cultural curriculums

Cultural demands, values and norms determine how children's social behaviours are expressed and interpreted. A child's identity is influenced not only by belonging to a specific cultural group but also by how they see themselves in relation to others within that cultural group. A cultural identity is regarded as the feeling of 'belonging together' experienced by a group of people. As children develop they learn a 'cultural curriculum', this is based upon observing and learning from those around them (Nsamenang, 2004). As previously noted, within many African cultures, this 'cultural curriculum' emphasises the interdependence and connectedness of individuals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This 'cultural curriculum' gives rise to context-specific conceptualisations of the self, personal agency and competence (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). Within South Africa the large majority of children are exposed to individualistic beliefs and ideals through media, cross-cultural peers and the

schooling system. However, their initial 'cultural curriculum' as derived from their families is still considered of primary importance. This includes values and moral codes for behaviour (Nsamenang, 2004).

Religion as meaning making

Religious beliefs and practices are considered to be a central aspect of many urban African families (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). It assists in the development of meaning-making, offering ideologies or guidelines regarding daily and moral life. These religious beliefs are considered to be a foundation from which social cues and expectations are derived, guiding how interactions and relationships are conducted. Building upon this, religious beliefs are considered a primary method of strengthening identification with and loyalty to others, particularly family members. Through observations, imitation and active participation with others, a child acquires a set of values and cultural resources that serve as a vital guiding resource.

Barbarin and Richter (2001) argue that the influences of religion, similar to culture are often not directly observable. Most notably, family religion and support can be construed as a vital coping resource, particularly in times of difficulty. These beliefs influence family functioning, serve to guide relationships and hence play a large role in developing a child's identity. Religion is also associated with higher levels of cohesion and satisfaction within family life and low levels of conflict (Bazuin-Yoder, 2011) thus serving as a protective mechanism for the child.

OPPORTUNITITES FOR BELONGING AND IDENTITY WITHIN A DISADVANTAGED SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY

A community is regarded as a system consisting of various networks of relationships that operate upon different levels (Visser, 2007). Building upon this, a disadvantaged community is one in which resources and values do not satisfactorily meet the needs of the individuals within (Peirson, 2005).

Previous sections have discussed the importance of relational identity and belonging. In order to situate identity and belonging the various historical, socio-economic and social contexts specific to a disadvantaged childhood within South Africa were examined. This section attempts to integrate the previous sections by discussing the three most commonly utilised opportunities for belonging and identity, namely, households, the school environment and the neighbourhood. Within these contexts certain relationships can be viewed as having primary influences upon the child's identity.

Woodward (1997, p. 21) notes "We participate in institutions or fields, exercising what we may see as varying degrees of choice and autonomy, but each of them has a material context, in fact a space and a place." Thus while individual's play an active role in guiding their own identities; their identities are restricted according to the opportunities within the spaces and places that they exist. For example, a child who feels a sense of belonging and pride in her family, peers and community is far more likely to be emotionally strong, self-assured and able to deal with other challenges and difficulties which they may face (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008).

Bray and Brandt (2007) identify certain factors that assist in developing a child's sense of identity within the community. These include, firstly, factors such as the familiarity that develops in the context of a shared language, cultural practices and everyday participation in social relationships which assist children in developing a sense of belonging within a community. Secondly, there are factors such as faith and membership of a church, allowing children to develop certain moral codes, connecting them with others in the community. These create opportunities for children to feel a sense of belonging outside the home environment. This is deemed particularly important for children living in a community that is considered disadvantaged. Lastly, there are the characteristics such as race, place and behaviour, which can be undermining or exclusionary (whereby children are unable to develop alternative identities by joining other clubs or organisations).

Children living in disadvantaged communities in South Africa are seldom given the opportunity to socialise meaningfully and interact with children in other communities (Moses, 2006). This not only limits a child's opportunities to develop alternative identities but it also serves to perpetuate traditional apartheid-type ideologies and beliefs.

Households as a primary source of belonging

The foundation for a child's identity, as well as the first place that a child should experience unconditional belonging and acceptance, is the family and household. Familial (and, arguably, household) processes are pivotal to identity formation, whereby interpersonal connectedness and self-definition initially occur (Marcia, 1980 and Nsamenang, 2004). Early learning within the family largely determines how children view themselves and their subsequent engagements with the outside world. This early learning includes factors such as social cues, role expectations and requirements for acceptable behaviour (Louw & Louw, 2007). This assists the child to belong within the norms and rules governed by society.

Family life in South Africa has increasingly changed. Some of these changes are due to recent trends, while others can be traced back to political-historical effects. Of particular importance is the rate of urbanisation occurring in South Africa. This places further pressures upon employment, housing, education, health and transport systems (Peirson, 2005). These pressures are experienced by the whole family, directly creating social and health problems. These include poor quality housing, overcrowding, unstable family relationships, patterns of household dissolution and reconstitution (often involving the development of female-headed households) and a general breakdown of traditional familial structures and expectations (Louw & Louw, 2007). However, within the household the 'traditional' familial structures of parental and sibling relationships maintain primary importance.

Within the family, violence is today often sanctioned as a core means of socialisation, discipline and social control (Moses, 2006). Thus children are growing up in a climate of fear, danger and intimidation. Violence against women and children, particularly occurring in the home, has increasingly been recognised as a serious and extensive problem (Visser, 2007; Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Dawes & Donald, 1994). This ranges from verbal insults and threats to physical injury and even death.

Parents

The influence and role of a child's parents are the foundational cornerstone from which a child operates. The General Household Survey (2008, cited in Meintjes & Hall, 2012) indicates that in South Africa only 35% of children (0-17 years) live with both of their biological parents. Building upon this, in the Eastern Cape alone 32% of children live with neither parent. When living with neither parent, the child will turn to her primary caregiver to foster her sense of belonging and identity.

Parent-child (or adult carer-child) relationships are based upon a hierarchical system of parent as knowing and dominant (Trawick-Smith, 2006). It is largely from the parents that children learn vital skills such as social rules and behaviour. Thus the values and cues deemed acceptable by the parents will inevitably be taught and passed onto the children within the family. Additionally, how the parents interact and convey these cues to the child can have an effect upon identity formation. A study by Botha (1996) as cited in Louw & Louw (2007) found that parents' exposure to community violence and the associated aggression levels negatively affect their own parenting styles, making them more aggressive, punitive and rejecting of their children. In essence, optimal parental/caregiver and child interactions are based, firstly, upon the adult's love, care and responsibility for the child, and, secondly, upon their desire to bring pleasure to the child and their attempts to positively influence a child's future prospects (Barbarin & Richter, 2001).

Traditional perspectives upon the influence of parents have often failed to adequately examine the influence of single parenting upon a child's identity and belonging. Within South Africa, single parenting is widespread. It is estimated that 43 % of black children in South Africa live in single parent households, generally headed by their mothers (Meintjes & Hall, 2012). This is attributed to factors such as divorce, separation, migrant labour and non-marriage (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). Research has indicated that children from single-parent families are more likely to maintain poor relationships and have poor self-images (Louw & Louw, 2007). However, many single parent families do function well and assist children in developing their identities positively.

In South Africa children and adolescents living in lower socio-economic conditions are far more likely to experience absent parental figures (Bray, Gooskens, Moses, & Seekings, 2010). However, findings have indicated that these children work hard to sustain and enhance connections with their absent parents. Ramphela (2002) argues that with regards to young African children there is a large gap between the idealised or perceived nuclear family and the realities facing the family. In South Africa, it is estimated that approximately 50% of black children live with both of their parents, as opposed to 90% of white children (Meintjes & Hall, 2012). This can be particularly confusing for black youngsters who are attempting to make sense and negotiate their belonging within the community and society.

Sibling relationships

Research has indicated that sibling relationships also play a vital yet differing role from that of parents and peers. Sibling relationships provide an opportunity for children to test their sense of belonging in a protected, secure way. Sibling conflicts become a means of understanding social relationships, ultimately carrying these conflicts over to relationships outside the home (Louw & Louw, 2007). In many cultures within South Africa the accepted social system is to take care of

younger siblings. Thus care-giving and teaching by older siblings serves to foster reciprocal feelings of belonging for the siblings, as well as contributing positively towards the children's identity development.

The importance of neighbourhood membership

The immediate space around a child's home has particular practical and social relevance for children living in disadvantaged communities (Moses, 2006). Findings by Ramphela (2002) have indicated that children in poorer neighbourhoods tend to express a positive sense of membership amongst members of their local neighbourhood. An increasing number of studies, such as by Moses (2006) and Henderson (1999), have demonstrated that adult neighbours often serve as a vital ameliorating factor for children. In Henderson's study of a disadvantaged community, New Crossroads, he noted that boundaries between the home and neighbourhood homes are often blurred. This occurrence is increasingly noted when children are unable to derive the necessary emotional and physical support from within their own households.

The safety in neighbourhoods is something that greatly concerns both adults and children. Findings such as those by Barbarin and Richter (2001) have indicated that young children and girls are particularly concerned about their safety. Most noticeable are issues such as muggings, encountering drunken violence and rape. Community and neighbourhood norms are generally those adopted by the child, thus children who are constantly exposed to violence, crime and antisocial behaviour have been found to be more likely to engage in similar acts themselves (Visser, 2007).

Peirson (2005) argues that for neighbourhoods and communities to develop in ways which foster care, compassion and support, necessary provisions and adequate resources to facilitate personal and communal goals are vital. Areas of historical and current disadvantage require professionally trained individuals to provide factors such as adequate mental and physical healthcare, policing and

basic service delivery. In poor neighbourhoods, the inaccessibility to adequate health and social services for children is a noted concern (Ramphela, 2002). The role of HIV/AIDS in the community is especially noticeable. A great deal of literature suggests that the emotional experiences of both children and adults in this regard largely hinge upon the degree of social support available to them from within the community. Strong links and a sense of belonging to a community are vital when assisting children to cope with challenging circumstances.

The neighbourhood is also a vital space for the development of peer-group relationships. Bray and Brandt (2007) note that for children under the age of 11 the immediate neighbourhood is especially vital. However, in disadvantaged communities and neighbourhoods this is often restricted due to safety concerns. Additionally, there is often a lack of adequately resourced and manned leisure facilities (Bray et al., 2010). In the majority of disadvantaged communities and neighbourhoods children are restricted to friends' homes (often unsupervised), soccer pitches and the 'bush' on the outskirts of the neighbourhood. For boys in particular sporting activities centered upon the soccer field are deemed a vital aspect in their routine, identity and personal resource base.

Peers

Peers are generally regarded as companions who are similar in age and developmental level (Louw & Louw, 2007). As opposed to parent-child relationships, peers enable children to experience social rules along more egalitarian lines of compromise, competition and co-operation (Trawick-Smith, 2006). Peers serve as a natural comparison allowing children to measure their own accomplishments. These relationships contribute to the child's identity through feedback regarding factors such as social and emotional proficiency. Findings by Connolly (2002) as cited in Brooker & Woodhead (2008) have indicated that children tend to demonstrate clear preferences to develop peer relationships from within the cultures and traditions of their own respective communities, arguably reflecting the development of strong in-group preferences.

As the child gets older, factors such as faith in God and participation in religious activities serve to enhance self-efficacy, thus peer groups serve to culturally validate certain behaviours, norms and goals. Increasingly a great deal of research in South Africa is based upon peer relationships, especially with regards to the ameliorating role that they provide. This is particularly vital in South Africa where unconditional positive regard and acceptance are often lacking in the home environment. Additionally, peers can serve as a constant, secure source of belonging, lacking in many households dominated by flux and change. In cases where there is a significant lack or absence of parental figures, either physically or emotionally, peers serve to cushion the effects of this. This is particularly noted in studies regarding South African street children and the associated relationships (Clacherty, 2010). Arguably this serves as a move away from more traditional understandings of peer relationships, whereby one child in the group may adopt a more parent-dominant role.

The ameliorating potential of the school environment

Outside of the family a child's sense of belonging derived from the school environment is one of the most significant in aiding the development of identity. Schooling can play a critical role in assisting to develop integrity, dignity and the ability to make sense of one's life. Sinha (1990, p.94) adds that "if proper interventions are made at the appropriate time, the disadvantaged child need not remain in the condition of poverty but can acquire appropriate skills". Findings by the Department of Education (Survey, 2001) indicate that the vast number of children attending school in South Africa require additional support due to financial and home situations. This support includes factors such as school nutritional programmes, parenting classes and general mental health/life skills guidance. This also includes programmes such as the 'Head Start Project', an NGO initiative in operation for 12 years. It is aimed at the holistic development of pre-primary school children by exposing them to early learning programmes.

The daily social interaction that occurs at school is a vital component of children's developing identities. Findings have increasingly also noted that school provides an opportunity for children to establish a measure of control over and safety in their environment (Bray, Gooskens, Moses, & Seekings, 2010, and Soudien, 2007). As observed by Soudien (2007) a great deal of time spent at school revolves around the navigation of peer relationships (discussed above) and relationships with teachers.

Teachers

Within South Africa the role and influence of teachers is increasingly being recognised as both a pivotal and ameliorating role for disadvantaged children (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). This fact has historically been recognised by theorists such as Freire (1983, cited in Wallerstein, 1987) whose central premise was that education is not neutral. The interaction between children and the teacher can either reinforce or challenge existing social forces and the child's sense of belonging. Building upon this are models, such as the transactional model and developmental epochs, both indicating the importance of a teacher-child relationship which fosters feelings of self-worth and esteem. Arguably, this importance may, in part, be attributed to the consistency, routine and clear boundaries emphasised by the teacher.

A handful of studies have found that children from disadvantaged neighbourhoods are more likely to have school-focused possible identities (as opposed to children from more advantaged neighbourhoods) (Oyserman & James, 2010). This is indicative of the fact that children in disadvantaged areas may have fewer adults to aspire to be like or to identify with. It is also indicative of the fact emphasised earlier that schools and the teachers within play a vital role in shaping children's identities.

CONCLUSION

All psychological approaches, with the exception of behaviourism, view an individual's psychological mental health as being influenced by self-esteem, self-conceptions and the possession of valued relationships (Sharma & Sharma, 2010). 'Injuries' towards self-esteem and identity are regarded by many theorists as precursors, even markers, of mental ill-health. Children who feel worthy and capable are more likely to be optimistic and to do well in school and other social settings. As noted, identity is multifaceted (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008; Schwarts, Luyckx & Vignoles, 2011), thereby enabling children to call upon various strengths in different circumstances that they meet. In order to do this a child is required to feel a sense of both individuality and belonging, which is done by developing appropriate social competencies, knowledge and skills, to achieve emotional well-being.

The necessity for a child to establish relationships which foster a sense of belonging and well-being is emphasised when examining children who have been institutionalised. In a report published by 'Save the Children' (2009) findings regarding institutionalised children include developmental, psychological and social implications. Children in institutions are generally cut off from everything that they previously knew. This 'identity severing' results in the child re-creating themselves in ways that ensure survival, not growth. Within a South Africa context there has been an increased attempt to move away from institutionilisation. Controversially this has resulted in increased support for child-headed households and small-scale foster homes within the community.

Within South Africa, a great deal of research is currently being conducted regarding the coping mechanisms of children and their families who reside in disadvantaged areas (Ndebele, 2006 and Dawes & Donald, 2000). The findings have increasingly indicated that a *positive* sense of identity is a precursor to resilience that enables a child to meet the challenges of growing up in adverse or disadvantaged conditions. Krovetz (1999) defines resilience as age appropriate development under adverse or difficult circumstances. A child who is resilient is socially competent, has a sense of

purpose, is able to problem solve and be autonomous. A resilient child is one who has a secure environment and relationships which foster a sense of belonging which is sufficient to enable them to face new challenges (Ndebele, 2006).

The foundations of childhood resilience should stem from a child's family and home life; however, in South Africa this is often not possible due to a variety of reasons. Thus, as noted by Dawes and Donald (2000), these resilient attributes can be derived from other secure and supportive relationships. This transactional model argues that a child who has not established an affirmative sense of identity at an early age can later in life develop accordingly if exposed to other supportive relationships, such as a teacher or neighbour. Additionally, findings have linked resilience to the development of emotional intelligence (Biersteker & Robinson, 2000). Goleman (1998, p. 318) defines this as the "...capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships."

In South Africa, the psychological health of youngsters is often overlooked; programmes concerned with children's material needs are generally afforded more attention (Richter, Manegold, & Pather, 2004). In many contexts children's emotional needs are not responded to in ways that enable the child to cope. Further research and programmes are vital to foster children's mental health, including raising awareness and providing psychosocial support systems that educate everyone involved with children (such as parents, carers, teachers and child care workers).

Participation and belonging

The concept of belonging is closely linked to that of participation, whereby to participate (through talk, action and exploration) fosters a child's sense of belonging within that social context. This should, ideally, include opportunities for children to participate meaningfully in decisions pertaining to them. The South African Constitution is regarded as one of the most progressive in the world; it

gives full recognition to children's rights at the highest level. In theory, children are viewed as full participants in society, as well as legitimate rights bearers (Moses, 2006). In addition, the right for children to participate in matters and decisions affecting their lives is clearly articulated in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989, ratified by the South African government in 1995) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (2000). The necessity for children to be heard is both an ethical and legal one. However, ultimately participation is a vital method of enhancing self-esteem and developing identity.

South Africa has implemented child participation in a limited and sporadic way; there has been little attempt to synthesise current knowledge and practise regarding what is happening in South Africa with regard to child participation (Clacherty, 2010 and Moses, 2006). A scattering of research initiatives have only recently begun to examine the details of child participation and to subsequently question factors that enable or hamper children's abilities to make decisions, act in their best interests and be involved in decision making processes in a variety of contexts (these range from within the family and amongst peers to school and community) (Clacherty, 2010; Swart-Kruger, 2000 and Bray & Clacherty, 2010).

Conceptualizing child participation

One can argue that participation, just like identity, begins from the moment that a child enters the world and realises the extent to which she is able to influence events by crying or movement (Hart, 1992). Although a broad statement, this serves to highlight a necessary point, namely, that through these infantile negotiations with the world, children soon realise the extent to which their own voices influence the course of events in their own lives. However, it is the degree and nature of these influences that vary greatly, often in accordance with cultural and familial norms. Bray, Gooskens, Moses, & Seekings (2010, p. 71) argue that children's participation in a wider social arena, such as decision making at schools, in neighbourhoods and in the community, assist in engendering a

child's political identity and "sense of democratic responsibility." However, before this is possible children need to be given opportunities for self-discovery and to question 'Who am I?' through processes such as participation.

Children have certain expectations regarding participation (Viviers, 2012). Firstly, they expect that, as participants, their individuality, knowledge and capacity to share their views will be respected. Secondly, they would like participation that is authentic and genuinely useful. Lastly, they would like adults to respect their confidentiality and consent. The right to participation (understood as the right to be heard and taken seriously) was ranked by children as the third most commonly violated right, after the right to a safe environment and the right to protection from abuse (Clacherty & Donald, 2002). In discussing this children added that parents and the home environment were the areas where this right was generally violated. The extent of child participation in South Africa is often limited to the nature of the adult-child relationship. In a South African context, participation appears to be viewed largely as the role of the child as helpful participant within the family (Hart, 1992; Kellett, 2005 and Moses, 2006). From an early age the child may contribute by working in the house, assisting to care for siblings, and so forth. However, children are seldom given an opportunity to give voice to their views and to engage in social dialogue with others regarding factors that directly affect them. Cultural diversity contributes towards a situation where the place of childhood and the role of children within the home vary considerably. Adult authority across South African cultures indicates that the majority of children are not able to participate fully and meaningfully in both their home situations and wider contexts (Moses, 2006).

Clark (2004) argues that "...for a young person becoming a researcher can change their identity" (p. 8). This is attributed to the fact that through carefully scaffolded participation children's sense of self-worth and self-esteem increase. Additionally, it is recognised globally that participation develops children's sense of responsibility and social competence (Clacherty, 2010). Children add that

participation contributes towards their growth and development by enabling free expression to learn from peers and to speak out in public about important matters. In addition, children learn new skills such as problem-solving, assertiveness, negotiation, collaboration, sharing and how to deal with social problems.

Bray and Clacherty (2010) note that participation in social dialogue encourages resilience by enhancing self-confidence, communication skills and a sense of agency, thus empowering children to make decisions regarding their own well-being. Through the process of participation children are exposed to a variety of different views and opinions which encourages critical self-thought and reflection. It also teaches children to respect different views and to take others seriously. One such example is 'The Soul Buddyz clubs', an innovation of the 'Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication'. This is one of the largest children's participation programmes in South Africa, whereby 6500 'Soul Buddyz clubs' operate across the country. These clubs, which involve trained teacher facilitators, focus on activities to enhance individual growth and assist children to organise projects in their community. There have been a number of observed benefits. The long term benefits have included an increased sense of resilience and have fostered a strong sense of belonging and identity.

As a nation, South Africa appears to lag behind other countries in terms of debating various forms of child participation. There has been a gradual move in South African research towards providing children with more autonomy to participate in research that directly affects them; however, it is not enough. Tutu (2011) notes, "As a nation we have made remarkable progress in building the legal foundation for ensuring children's best interests. Now it is time to put policy into action by listening to the children." The issue that we today are faced with is how, in a South African context, can we best negotiate child participation on a realistic and practical level?

Concluding remark

'Who am I?', 'Where do I belong?' and 'Is it ok to be me?' are all questions that children ask of themselves. However, these questions become increasingly complex when faced with the challenges of disadvantage. Children are social, active beings who are highly sensitive to the wider context in which they develop. With a focus upon relational identity, this literature review has highlighted the necessity to contextualise identity and belonging within the historical, socio-economic and social context of South Africa. The concepts of childhood identities in South Africa require constant reassessment as South Africa has experienced and still is experiencing a long transitional period. In spite of the challenges our children are faced with, they have found numerous ways to belong and cope with their challenges. Many display a resilience that is remarkable and inspiring. This literature review has critically examined the challenges that children are faced with, how identity is formed and how belonging, which is closely linked to identity, is fostered and achieved. However, it is the responsibility of all South Africans to listen to the voices of our children, and to encourage and allow them to participate as meaningful contributors towards society. By doing this we can begin to break the cycles of disadvantage and poverty, thus enabling and encouraging all our children.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Kemmis and McTaggart (2005, p. 21) argue that in research, “It is the process and not the end result that is most important.” The participatory research paradigm is reflective of this belief, thus serving to emphasise the importance placed upon the entire process and, importantly in this study, the experiences of the children. Reflective of the importance of contextual factors upon identity, participatory research acknowledges the specific context within which the children operate. Additionally, by providing children with the opportunity to participate in an exploration of their identities and where they belong, it was anticipated that their understandings of who they are would be developed. By applying the case study method to the process and subsequently utilising thematic analysis, more complex layers of meaning could be drawn from the data collected. The discussion that follows provides a description and justification of the methodological approach utilised. Features of the research design that were taken into consideration will be examined, including; case studies and their values, the utilisation of the participatory research paradigm with children, and the research framework and process. This chapter, then, proceeds to outline how the data was collected and analysed. This chapter aims to highlight the research process and both the strengths and limitations of the research design and methodology.

CASE STUDY RESEARCH

The case study method, as defined by Cresswell (1994, p. 12) allows the researcher to “explore a single entity or phenomenon (the case) bounded by time and activity (a program, event, process, institution or social group) and collect detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time.” This allows one to generate complex layers of meaning within the phenomenon being studied. Building upon this, Stake (2005, p. 448) notes that an instrumental case study is the study of a person, group or enterprise with a ‘valued particular’. It investigates “a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 12). For this

study, the 'valued particular' included the children's unique knowledge of their identities and experiences of belonging. Thereby providing the opportunity to observe, explore and examine the children's identities and sense of belonging within the context in which it occurs.

This case study draws upon specific participatory research underpinnings. Firstly, the types of data collected from the case study are reflective of the underlying paradigm of participatory research whereby the children and the researcher establish "joint collaboration within an ethical framework" (Rapaport, 1970, p. 234). This collaboration was centred upon themes or key issues during each encounter with the child participants. Secondly, a case study aims to examine a phenomenon in its entirety or wholeness (Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000). This provides the opportunity for the researcher to obtain a holistic, in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. This is of particular importance due to the variety and complexities of possible data that may be collected during participatory research. By utilising the case study method, specific identified themes are then able to be focused upon. Lastly, both these approaches serve to explore, in context, the children's descriptions of their experiences from their own perspective in a variety of ways (Neuendorf, 2002). This serves to provide a variety of data which revolves around a specific theme, such as identity and belonging.

THE PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PARADIGM

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the principles underlying this methodology include, firstly, that participatory research is a spiral process, involving continuous reflection and action. It is a social practise involving the production, exploration and critical reflection of the participants' local knowledge (a 'bottom-up' approach to research). Secondly, it is about participation, ideally both collaborative and practical with a gradual move towards increased degrees of participation from those involved. Lastly, reflexivity from both the researcher and participants is necessary to ensure the success of the research. The discussion that follows aims to examine how participatory research

principles can be utilised with children. Additionally, it will argue that utilising this paradigm is contingent upon scaffolding and supporting the children throughout the process.

Participatory research with children

The underlying philosophy of the participatory research methodology is that it allows those being researched to have a 'voice'. From an international perspective the concept of children as active participants in research is slowly gaining credence. Arguably this is attributed to the changing perspectives on children's status in society, as well as the recognition that every individual, regardless of age, race and gender, is entitled to a 'voice' within their community (Bray & Clacherty, 2010). Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC necessitate the need for children to be informed, involved and consulted about all decisions that affect their lives (Kellett, 2005). Participatory research seeks to address this by allowing marginalised or 'voiceless' groups the opportunity to be heard in a meaningful and productive way.

Participatory research does not adhere to a strict methodology regarding planning, observation and evaluation (Penzhorn, 2006). The methods employed are guided by the unique conditions of the individual project. For this research study, the following unique factors were considered: the role of children as participants and the degree with which they could participate; the role of various stakeholders such as the teachers, parents and community; how to structure the process in accordance with participatory principles; and my own role in the research as the researcher, adult and participant.

The benefits of this methodology are that it can produce pragmatic and contextual knowledge at a grass roots level. The adaptation and utilisation of factors unique to the study ensures that the research is age appropriate and contextually relevant to the children. Additionally, the emphasis is

not simply on the outcome or knowledge generated at the end of the research, but instead the emphasis is on the process of the knowledge production.

Participation is a scaffolded process

Van der Riet and Boettiger (2009, p. 4) emphasise the complexities of participation by noting that participatory research is “an emergent process.” How participation is engendered and fostered becomes a vital consideration. This becomes even more complex when working with children; factors such as the maturity, age and the level of schooling have to be considered and accounted for. Hart (1992) proposes that child participation has to be a gradual, supported process. Reflective of this, during the study, the children were gradually given an increasing amount of autonomy and independence to participate and guide the research. As anticipated, this gradually scaffolded and guided the research process as a partnership between researcher and child. Thus, many of the ideas and common solutions were collaboratively formulated and shared.

During the study, the children’s participation occurred within the data collection phase. The collaborative discussions with the teachers at the school ensured that I, the researcher, designed and established the research question and proposal. The workshops provided the opportunity for the children to collaboratively participate in an investigation of their identity and belonging. This collaboration was largely focused upon the techniques utilised and themes identified by the children. As the week progressed, the children became increasingly confident and autonomous regarding the process.

INITIATING THE STUDY AND STRATEGIES FOR PARTICIPATION

As noted above, the process of participation with children involves a gradual process which encourages co-operative participation. Cohen and Uphoff (cited in Kelly & van der Riet, 2001) argue that, for a participatory research process to be successful, one is required to examine this process of

co-operative participation critically. This section aims to do this by, firstly examining the point at which the research initiative begins, as well as the structure and channels of participation and the way in which participants are involved. Secondly, it will examine the scope and duration of their participation.

Where the initiative began

The research was conducted at a local school which is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) within the Eastern Cape. The children who attend the school are all members of a local disadvantaged community. This is based upon the definitions of vulnerable children as described in the Smart Report (2003) and discussed in this document; a number of the children at the school can be classified as vulnerable. This is due to the fact that many of the children are orphaned, some have reported neglect, have terminally ill parents/carers, and have parents/carers who are unemployed.

Traditionally participatory research is initiated with a defined problem (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Upon discussion with the school the problem identified was two-fold, namely, the need to assist the children with exploring their identity, thus fostering an increased sense of self-esteem and belonging; secondly, to assist in identifying the strengths and weakness within the community, thus providing the NGO an opportunity to see where they can assist within the community.

The utilisation of the school as the point of contact was largely due to accessibility. Due to time constraints the negotiation into the community proved to be a particular challenge, thus the school as an established community organisation was utilised (Huston, 1994). It was my hope that this project would lay the foundations for future similar projects. Additionally, as noted by Hart (1992), children living in adverse conditions cannot be expected to initiate participatory projects without first making sense of their own lives in a safe and secure setting. Thus, the school was utilised as it

was a safe and secure setting and children were encouraged to make sense of their own lives through self-exploration of their identity and belonging.

Characteristics of participants and participant selection

Based upon the participatory research paradigm, participation and involvement by the children was regarded as pivotal for the success of the study. The aim was to give as many children as possible the opportunity to participate freely in a dynamic and enjoyable exploration of their identity and belonging. All of the children in Grade 2 (8-10 year olds) were invited to participate in the research process. This class was identified by the school, based upon their age and an identified need to assist them in exploring their identity. As previously noted, upon entering school, children's identities develop and evolve in accordance with the increased opportunities to build relationships. For practical reasons it was decided to limit participation to one class.

The process was explained to the children in a brief introductory talk which took place within their classroom. It was emphasised that participation was voluntary and that the children could choose the afternoons and workshops in which they wished to participate. Consequently, there was some variation in the number of children participating in each research activity, and the gender profile of the participants in each activity. In total, twenty-four (n=24) children participated in this research and no less than twenty-one (n=21) children participated in any one day.

| Code | Age | Gender | Code | Age | Gender |
|-------------|------------|---------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| C1 | 8 years | Male | C14 | 8 years | Female |
| C2 | 8 years | Male | C15 | 8 years | Female |
| C3 | 8 years | Male | C16 | 9 years | Female |
| C4 | 9 years | Male | C17 | 9 years | Female |
| C5 | 9 years | Male | C18 | 9 years | Female |
| C6 | 9 years | Male | C19 | 9 years | Female |
| C7 | 9 years | Male | C20 | 9 years | Female |
| C8 | 9 years | Male | C21 | 9 years | Female |
| C9 | 9 years | Male | C22 | 10 years | Female |
| C10 | 9 years | Male | C23 | 10 years | Female |
| C11 | 10 years | Male | C24 | 10 years | Female |
| C12 | 10 years | Male | | | |
| C13 | 10 years | Male | | | |

Table 2: Characteristics of participants

The scope and duration of participation

The research took place over the period of one week with daily workshops lasting between two and three hours. While this proved to be intensive, it ensured continuity and assisted in enabling the children to make connections and links with what they had experienced the previous day. Following the nature of participatory research, the children assisted in guiding the process by indicating what they wanted to talk about and experience in each session. My role as the adult in charge, researcher and co-participant was to ensure that the experience remained physically and emotionally safe for the participants. As a result I conducted the closing and reflective discussion at the end of each workshop. I also prepared the material, as guided by the children, for the subsequent day.

Following on the recommendations of child participation as proposed by Hart (1992), the involvement of the participants was scaffolded to engender increased autonomy and independent participation as the week progressed. This was done by allowing them to share their thoughts, collaboratively select techniques utilised and to guide the themes discussed. The children were encouraged gradually to take charge of the process by being given increasing amounts of freedom to guide the research.

Structure for participation

The participatory research process of co-operative enquiry is a spiral process which can be described through the phases of reflection and action. Walker (cited in Mouton, Muller, Franks, & Sono, 1998) notes that this cyclic process additionally consists of mini cycles within this cyclic process. These two overall phases involve both reflection on a specific issue and action taken in response to insights derived from the reflection. These phases are not independent, sequential stages, but are, instead, closely linked and develop largely as a result of each other (Mouton, Muller, Franks, & Sono, 1998).

Reflective phase

The children were encouraged to constantly reflect, examine and give feedback on their own experiences regarding identity and belonging. At the end of each workshop, the day's process was discussed and reflected upon by the group. This provided an opportunity for me to further explore and clarify the prominent themes and issues from the workshop, providing, as well, the opportunity to debrief and ensure closure as required. The workshops were structured in the following way:

Workshop 1: Introduction to the research and the topic, 'Where do I belong?'

The children were introduced to the project and shared their expectations and suggestions for what they would like to learn and do. Some suggestions were to draw pictures, paint, and act and use

music. There was a group discussion regarding the concept of 'Who am I?' and 'Who lives with me?' A Venn diagram was utilised to illustrate who lives at home with the children. At the end of the session the children were each given a disposable camera. I explained how to use them and that they were required to take photographs of people, places and things that were important to them. During this session the children repeatedly referred to the things that they did when they were not at school, thus it was suggested and then unanimously agreed upon that workshop 2 would revolve around 'what I do during the day?'

Workshop 2: 'What I do during the day?'

The children were asked to share with each other what they do on a daily basis when they are not at school. They drew timelines and pictures to illustrate their daily lives. Based upon the gendered themes occurring in the timelines and pictures, some children volunteered to participate in two focus groups. These provided the opportunity to investigate the gendered differences noted by the researcher. At the end of the session the children discussed what they would like to do in the following session. They voted that they would like to explore things that make them happy and sad.



Photograph 1: Group discussion regarding the children's daily activities and timelines

Workshop 3: 'What makes me happy and sad?'

Many of the children opted to draw pictures of experiences and issues that make them happy and sad. The subsequent discussions exploring these drawings were centred upon children's relationships with others, particularly their parents, peers and siblings. A theme that repeatedly occurred was the influence of contextual factors upon the children's relationships, for example, how alcohol affects a child's relationship with her parents. A number of children opted to video their feelings – with my assistance, they did this in front of the video camera. At the end of the workshop it was decided that we would continue to explore people who make them happy by focusing on people that help them.

Workshop 4: 'People who help me'

During this session the children explored how their sense of belonging is guided by people who help and assist them. Many of the children composed short role-plays to illustrate how people in the family and community assist them. These were shared with the class and elicited a great deal of discussion. Some of the other children opted to explore this theme by drawing people who help them. With assistance, these were then ranked according to the degrees of help they received. During the groups closing reflection it was further explored how individuals within the children's families assist the children and shape their sense of belonging.



Photograph 2: Giving an account of people who help me

Workshop 5: 'People, places and objects that are important to me'

With the utilisation of the photographs, the children discussed and shared people, places and objects that are important to them. Through these discussions, the children were able to share relationships and experiences that have contributed towards their sense of identity and where they belong. There was a great deal of discussion about their community and how they feel safe and unsafe in certain areas of the community. Three of the children opted to draw maps to illustrate where they can and cannot go in their community. At the end of the session, the children discussed their experiences from the week, giving advice and suggestions for my research, as well as recommendations for future similar workshops.

Action phase

Due to the fact that the action and reflection phases do not occur separately, it is necessary to note that the action within this project occurred by allowing each child the opportunity to explore their own questions of 'Who am I?' and 'Is it alright to be me?' The role of the action phase should ideally involve a far wider reaching, ecological type attempt at change (Kelly & van der Riet, 2001). This research served to highlight certain strengths and weaknesses within the community. It is acknowledged that the scope of change was not necessarily as wide reaching as other participatory research projects. These limitations will be further discussed later in the chapter. However, it is useful at this point to note that one of the limitations with participatory research with children is the fact that for wide reaching action to take place a great deal of time and scaffolding for the children is required (Hart, 1992). Most importantly this process appeared to strengthen the children's understanding of their identity, increasing self-esteem and an understanding of where they belong. This evaluation was based upon personal accounts, group and private discussions with the students at the end of the research activities.

THE METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

All of the data that was collected is reflective of the participatory research emphasis on local knowledge. Participation with others in everyday activities in a local setting is both empowering and yields the most valuable type of knowledge (van der Riet & Boettiger, 2009). The combined utilisation of participatory research and a case study can allow for a variety of different types of local knowledge to be collected. When a variety of evidence is collected it allows the local knowledge to be cross-checked, examined and explored by the participants (Yin, 2003).

Participatory research with children enables the utilisation of techniques that are specifically designed and adapted for the child participants (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998). The children's age and context were taken into consideration and served to guide the techniques utilised. The selected techniques were also based upon joint collaboration with the children. It is recognised that each of these techniques yields a great deal of information. Based upon the scope of the study, the purpose of utilising these techniques served to enhance and emphasise themes occurring in the research. For the purpose of this study, these techniques were utilised to elicit discussion, particularly the reflective discussions at the end of each workshop. These discussions were recorded and subsequently analysed.

Photovoice

Wang (2006) notes that photovoice enables individuals to record and represent their everyday realities through the utilisation of photographic images. These photographs promote critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community strengths and weaknesses. This technique enables children to exercise autonomy and express creativity while documenting an aspect of their lives. It allows children of any age and opportunity to engage and represent their communities (Hart, 1992).

The children were each given a disposable camera to take photographs of people, places and objects that are special to them. Of particular importance to this study were the photographs which involved significant people within the children's lives, as well as the physical spaces that were included. The photographs highlighted the everyday realities that the children face. This evoked important discussions and ideas, many of which the children had not thought of or noted during the other workshops, serving to add further levels of meaning and understanding, particularly regarding relationships that are important to the children and why they are deemed important.

Visual techniques

Visual techniques, including drawings, diagrams, maps and timelines, are common in participatory research. Children, including the very young and illiterate can utilise these techniques to describe their environment, life situations, preferences and past histories (Wilkinson, 2000).

Timelines

The children created their own linear timelines depicting a day in their life. This is a common participatory methodology which yields rich information regarding how the children's daily routines shape their sense of identity (Wilkinson, 2000). The children all drew their own timelines that documented a day in their life (when not at school). This assisted in highlighting what factors, occurring on a daily basis, served to shape the children's sense of who they are.

Drawings

The children were given the opportunity to draw pictures about people and experiences that make them happy and sad. This highlighted the children's psychosocial well-being with regards to aspects of their identity and belonging that make them happy and sad. It also served as an opportunity for an in-depth exploration of experiences that guide the children's sense of identity and belonging.

The children also drew pictures to illustrate 'Who helps me?' With the assistance of the researcher each child's pictures were then ranked. This served to illustrate who each child felt was most helpful in their lives and community. Additionally, it served to highlight places where the children belong, indicative of strengths within the community.

Platform theatre

Platform theatre is an increasingly popular participatory research method which is guided by the participants themselves. It provides the opportunity for the participants to act out their experiences in a phenomenological and experiential way (Boal, 1992). This technique allows children to communicate their experiences through the utilisation of drama.

Through the use of platform theatre, in pairs, the children discussed situations where they required assistance. The emphasis of this exercise was the creation of real characters within the children's environment. For example, these included being helped by a nurse when sick or being taught soccer by a coach. Some of the children then volunteered to enact their chosen experience in front of the group. A great deal of discussion regarding other children's similar or dissimilar experiences ensued. This served to highlight the type of assistance that children are obtaining within their circles of belonging and how these affect their sense of who they are. It also served to highlight who is pivotal in the children's lives and why they are deemed as such by the children.



Photograph 3: Platform theatre; enacting an experience at the doctors

Focus groups

The utilisation of group forums and discussions is a widely utilised participatory research method. It is often less intimidating than one-on-one discussion and interviews, thus assisting in shifting the power balance and encouraging participation (van der Riet & Boettiger, 2009). The utilisation of focus groups often served to clarify my own understanding of an aspect of the children's identity or sense of belonging. Wilkinson (2000) warns that, if focus groups are not undertaken carefully, there is a danger of a few individuals dominating the process or that a false consensus may be reached. Thus different facilitators were elected, the group's focus groups were kept relatively small and the information discussed was generally cross-checked through questioning, individual discussions and other visual techniques. The focus groups served to assist the exploration of different aspects of belonging that were deemed most important by the children.

Focus group 1: Belonging in the family

A picture (in this case a picture of a child holding a younger sibling) was shown to the children. The children volunteered for the discussion and were a cross section of four boys and four girls. The children were encouraged to talk about how their families differ to the picture and where they belong in relation to their family. The aim of this task was to establish an in-depth understanding of children's sense of belonging within their familial setting.

Focus group 2: Being a boy or a girl

This involved two separate discussions, one with a small group of boys and another with a small group of girls. This provided the opportunity for the children to share and discuss perceived differences between the genders. More importantly it was the opportunity for the children to explore their own experiences of how they see themselves within a specific gendered group and how this affects their interactions and relationships.

THE METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis process was a continuous process of reviewing the information as it was collected. This reviewing was a twofold process, firstly, the children (facilitated by the researcher) noted and discussed the pertinent themes that occurred during the workshop. Clacherty (2010) notes that during this process, the children will often draw links and make insightful conclusions that often yield another round of data collection and analysis. Secondly, the data derived from the case study, which draws on discussions and activities in the workshops, was then subjected to a thematic analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2006) note that thematic analysis is a useful method when working within the participatory research paradigm. It is a method that is largely independent of theory and

epistemology, but can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches. As a result of this 'theoretical freedom', thematic analysis becomes a flexible tool which can provide a detailed, rich and complex account of the data. This flexibility is particularly with regards to the methods of identifying patterns or themes within the data, whereby the researcher is able to determine themes in a number of ways.

In fitting with the participatory approach, thematic analysis allows an emphasis to be placed upon the voices of the children, but, also, provide the opportunity to further explore these voices. The following section aims to conceptualise thematic analysis, serving to unpick its suitability within the participatory research paradigm. It will then proceed to explain how thematic analysis was utilised within this study.

Thematic analysis

For the purpose of this study, thematic analysis was utilised to provide a detailed and nuanced exploration of a particular theme, namely childhood identity and belonging. This approach allows the depth and complexities of the data to be explored. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79) can be defined as:

A method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes the data set in (rich) detail. [...] therefore, thematic analysis can be a method that works both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of 'reality'.

Building upon this, thematic analysis, similar to participatory research, recognises the 'active' role and influence of the researcher. Within thematic analysis, this includes identifying patterns/themes, selecting those that are of relevance to the research in question and subsequently reporting upon these (Taylor & Ussher, 2001, cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006). These patterns/themes are grouped together utilising analytic interpretation. Additionally, the reporting of these patterns/themes

attempts not to rely upon paraphrasing; instead, it attempts to remain true to the participants' voices.

It is recognised that, for academic purposes, the process of data analysis is deemed particularly important. Emphasis upon rigorous analysis is recognised; however, it is also recognised that the paradigm adopted for this research study moves away from the traditional emphasis upon the rigorous, measurable process of data analysis. The thematic approach provided the opportunity for me to analyse the data, while remaining true to the participatory research paradigm. Reicher and Taylor (2005), as cited in Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 86) note that, for thematic analysis, "... rigour lies in devising a systematic method whose assumptions are congruent with the way one conceptualises the subject matter." This involves being clear and explicit regarding what is being done, and what you say you are doing and whether these remain consistent.

The thematic analysis process

The systematic approach recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) was utilized when analyzing the data. It is necessary to emphasise that neither participatory research nor thematic analysis is a linear process involving movement from one phase to the next. Instead, they are both recursive whereby movement back and forth is necessary. The thematic analysis process will be discussed below:

Phase 1: Familiarization with the data

The initial familiarisation of the data subsequent to the research week involved transcribing the data. The workshop and daily reflective discussions (at the end of each workshop) were recorded, transcribed and utilised as data for the thematic analysis. The visuals (such as the photographs and drawings from the children) and recordings aided in enhancing and emphasising the themes that arose. The transcriptions, while time consuming, assisted in establishing my familiarity with the data.

Due to my constant engagement with not only the research process and data transcribing, but also with the children's own processes, patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest had already been initiated. However, in accordance with thematic analysis, the data transcriptions were read and re-read for further familiarity. The visual and audio data was also extensively examined to ensure familiarization.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Thematic analysis allows themes or patterns to be determined in two ways, namely, inductively or deductively. For the purpose of this research it was important that the theme categories reflect the underlying paradigm of participatory research, thus keeping as close to the children's voices and local knowledge as possible. As a result, the data was encoded inductively into themes generated from the raw material. An inductive approach strongly links the identified themes with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus it is a 'bottom up' process whereby data is not essentially determined according to previous theoretical ideologies. This is in keeping within the tradition of participatory research's 'bottom-up' approach.

Coding is a process whereby certain segments of text are attached to meaningful key labels or codes (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Due to the familiarity with the data, codes were developed to identify specific features of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These codes were specifically related to themes and patterns identified, serving to be more specific than my ultimate themes (units of analysis).

Phase 3: Identification of themes

For the purpose of this study an analysis of semantic themes was adopted whereby themes are explicitly identified and the analysis is focused primarily upon this explicit level. Many of these themes were identified by the children themselves, while others were pointed out by myself and

subsequently discussed by the children. Thus, I was not searching for anything 'beyond' what the participants had said or given during the workshops. When utilising semantic themes in thematic analysis, the process involves the movement from 'description', whereby the data has been organised to highlight the semantic content, towards subsequent interpretation in an attempt to theorise the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications (Patton, 1990).

Phase 4: Defining themes

Once coded, the data was then categorically grouped together according to potential, broader themes. The aim of this grouping was to reduce the number of categories by identifying those that are similar or dissimilar into broader categories or themes (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). This serves to increase understanding and to further generate knowledge. Headings and notes were written down in the margins, serving to identify the most prominent themes and sub-themes. For example, the children identified the importance of their mothers. This theme was then broken down into various sub-themes.

When formulating categories by inductive analysis, the researcher bases the categorisation upon her own interpretations (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). Thus it was the researcher who decided which data is placed into specific categories. This served to be vital for this research process, due to the process of the participatory research. It allowed pictures, observations and other data collected to be placed into the categories identified. When working within the premise that participatory research recognises the researcher as an active participant, the utilisation of notes and headings also allowed for the addition of reflexive observations and interpretations.

Phase 5: Re-viewing, defining and naming themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) note that, at this point of data analysis, the data should be re-viewed in two ways; thus accounting for an 'accurate reflection' of the data. Firstly, the data is again re-read to

ensure that the themes identified accurately reflect the data. Secondly, any additional data which was 'missed' can now also be coded. Once this was done, the 'essence' of each theme was defined and identified. The themes were then named with the aim of providing the reader with a sense of what the theme is about (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research rigorously followed the ethical code of conduct as outlined by the University of Fort Hare. Further ethical consideration was vital due to the fact that children, many who can be defined as 'vulnerable' participated in the study. It is necessary to emphasise that the research at all times provided the school, parents and children with honest, accurate and open information regarding the process. The following ethical considerations were utilised:

Informed consent

Prior to commencing the study, several meetings between the school and me occurred; this ensured jointly collaborated understanding and expectations regarding the study (see appendix 1). In accordance, signed consent was obtained from the school board and principal. Subsequently the children were invited to participate. Those eager to volunteer took letters describing the process to their parents. In keeping with the school policy, the parents with limited English (as identified by the school) were telephoned by the school translator. She explained the process and answered any questions pertaining to the research. Signed consent was obtained from both the parents and the children (see appendix 2 and 3). The children who participated also signed consent forms; these were written in an age appropriate manner. The consent forms were verbally explained and read out to the children prior to each workshop.

Voluntary participation

The voluntary nature of the research was emphasised to all involved. At the beginning of each workshop, the children were reminded of this fact. The children were given the option of withdrawing their participation at any time during the process.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the participants remained a pivotal consideration throughout the research process. This was discussed with the school, parents and participants. Firstly, all records were kept in a confidential manner and were not available to anyone other than myself. A number code was assigned to each participant thus serving to protect the participants' names. As discussed with the various stakeholders, audio and visual recordings were utilised. These were safely and confidentially stored. Any identifiable data, such as photographs, were altered to ensure confidentiality.

Physical and psychological safety and well-being

The well-being and safety of the children was of paramount importance. It is necessary to note that, as a teacher with 6 years' primary school experience, I felt confident in working with and managing a group of children. However, a teacher from the school also jointly participated and assisted during the research process. It had been agreed that if any child protection issues or emotional concerns were noted, it would be handed over to the teacher involved in the research (thus following the school policy regarding child protection).

Kotze (2002) questions whether these 'prescriptive ethics' are enough. In recognition of the participatory research framework, I would like to add another dimension of ethical considerations; namely, what Kotze (2002) terms 'participatory ethics'. This is the recognition that in research a respectful approach is required, one which regards the participants as empowered individuals with

not only a voice but also a right and necessity to be heard. Thus the challenge of this research project was to 'open up ethics' to the children by giving them the chance (albeit in a protected way) to create their own ethical considerations, thereby ensuring that ethics is situated within their own culturally shaped context. These considerations, as decided by the group, included: group rules and the right to voice their own opinions, to participate freely and voluntarily, to always be respected, and to be respectful and mindful of each other. This assisted in setting a respectful tone and equalising the power differential between researcher and participants.

Feedback

Due to the nature of participatory research, feedback and open discussions with the children regarding the process was on-going throughout the research process. Feedback to the parents and teachers during the week, where appropriate, was relayed; however, this was done in a manner which ensured the children's confidentiality and maintained their trust. At the end of the research, the findings were fed back to the children. The teachers and parents were also invited to attend and listen to the findings. This provided an opportunity for the children to discuss their process and to further contribute towards these findings. Once complete, the school will also be given a copy of the full study and findings.

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Visser (2007) and Mohan (2002) note that, although participatory research is rewarding for the researcher and the community of participants, the challenges involved need to be examined in order to encourage further utilisation of this methodology. This will be done by examining the participatory research framework, as well as through an examination of the specific challenges unique to this research project.

The participatory research framework

The aim of this examination is not to enter into a specific methodological debate regarding participatory research; however, a few issues are necessary to highlight and consider. Participatory research attempts to provide an answer for Western and positivist type methodologies which fail to adequately contextualise and recognise the integrated system within which an individual operates. Arguably the largest issue, the namesake of the paradigm, is that of participation. The process of participation is problematic (van der Reit & Boettiger, 2009 and Mohan, 2002); questions such as who talks, whose language is utilised, whose knowledge is produced and whose perspective dominates, are all questions that the researcher has to monitor and question. As noted previously, participation is in danger of being viewed as a romantic construct if one fails to recognise the importance of scaffolding in allowing meaningful participation. Additionally, one needs to remain critical with regards to who is doing the talking and how one can ensure that the more marginalised and 'voiceless' are given the opportunity to share their experiences.

The contentious principle of empowerment also needs to be examined. Mohan (2002) argues that power dynamics always exist and the researcher will always be viewed as holding expert knowledge, thus placing him/her in a position of power, regardless of the degree of participation. This needs to be recognised and acknowledged. Arguably, this power shifts as the participation increases; perhaps, as noted by Mohan (2002), we should view participants through a lens of differential power as opposed to one of powerlessness.

Despite these dynamics, the various exciting research techniques utilised in participatory research allow those participating to examine and explore their own knowledge. The importance of verbal fluency is de-emphasised and individuals who are traditionally unable to express their views (marginalised, poor, and uneducated) are afforded the opportunity to participate in a meaningful and valued way. However, it is up to the researcher to ensure that all participants are afforded an

opportunity to share their views and that power differentials, such as gender, standing in the community (in this research: popularity amongst peers) and varying levels of education are recognised and taken into consideration.

Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) emphasise that for participatory research to continue to grow there needs to be an increase in both the theory and participation in the research. This is vital to ensure that this methodology continues to adjust and develop in a way that is documented and best practise is shared. This requires the careful documentation of the entire research process including the experiential details of the participatory and empowerment processes. We also need to recognise that genuine dialogue requires both a 'bottom up', as well as a 'top down' approach. Mohan (2002) emphasises this by arguing that for true empowerment the researchers are also required to share their own knowledge as the withholding of this knowledge is, in itself, a form of power.

Specific challenges of the research project

Arguably one of the largest challenges facing this research was the level and degree of participation from the children, paired with the fact that this research was also an academic requirement. Although participants in this study were involved both in the reflection and the action phase, true participation was limited due to this study having to meet the requirements of a Masters' research report. This involved the choosing of the topic and writing of a proposal without the collaboration of the participants. Furthermore, the post-workshops analysis of data and the writing of the report were undertaken by the researcher alone. Additionally, this is also attributed to time limitations, the age of the children and the fact that they had never experienced participatory research before.

One of the vital aspects of participatory research is the recognition that it is a time consuming process. Its reliance on local knowledge means that the researcher is required to negotiate belonging within the group, thus becoming an equal participant (Kelly & van der Riet, 2001). This

challenge was alleviated by utilising the school as a starting point. However, it is acknowledged that to embed successful participatory research takes a great deal of time, often years. By utilising the school as the entrance point, it is vital to note that I was previously a volunteer teacher at the school. As a result of my associations with the school, it took a while for some of the children to view me as a participator in the process, not simply as a teacher. Thus it emphasised one of the cornerstones of participatory research, whereby the shift from 'top down' to 'bottom up' is required. Due to time constraints I feel that this shift, although initiated was never adequately embedded.

This research was about allowing the children the opportunity to explore their own identities and belonging. They were afforded this opportunity in a way which placed the emphasis upon their own local knowledge. However, this paradigm made it difficult to clearly understand how the children regard factors such as self-esteem and self-worth. This issue was discussed with the children and together attempts were made to define and delineate definitions. In line with this paradigm, the data and findings are not easily generalizable.

Participatory research involves the recognition and movement away from more traditional, rigorous and western research methodologies. This serves as a contrast to both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies; both demanding the research to be objective, neutral and rigorous (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). As a result, the challenges, particularly of utilising participatory research and thematic analysis, became noticeable during the research process. While attempting to remain true to the participatory research framework, a merger of the two was utilised. It is acknowledged that thematic analysis is traditionally systematic and objective (Boyatziz, 1998), while the underlying philosophies of participatory research serve to move away from this. Thus the research process became a two-step process. Firstly, was the process of the research week itself, closely following the participatory

research paradigm. Secondly, for academic and research purposes the data was again analysed in a more rigorous and systematic manner.

Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) note that the criterion for success in participatory research is not necessarily whether the participants have followed the cyclic process of action and reflection but, instead, it should be their own sense of development and evolution in their understanding and practices of their world. I feel that the children explored, in-depth, their sense of identity and where they belong. Clacherty (2010) adds that the participatory research approach is a useful tool in that it allows for the cross-checking of data through the exploration of the same topic utilising different techniques. During the research process, this observation became apparent, but it also became apparent that the utilisation of different techniques allowed the children to develop a depth of understanding regarding their own local knowledge. Through this process I was able to identify both strengths and weaknesses of the community; these were fed back to the school. However, the children were not given adequate time to address or assist with this problem on a community level. It is hoped that the school and the NGO will utilise this research to assist with this endeavour.

Personal Reflection

As noted above, reflexivity is central when working with children. As the researcher, I was required to critically examine my own role and assumptions, as well as the choice of methods and subsequent application. I considered three areas of potential difference between myself and the children. Firstly, childhood is a social institution which is guided and constrained by adult society (Punch, 2002). The very nature of childhood requires children to be marginalised within an adult-centred society, arguably experiencing unequal power relations with adults through the control and limits exerted by the adults within their lives. Punch (2002) notes that the main complication is not that of children's inabilities or misconceptions; rather, it is the positions ascribed to them as a result of childhood. Secondly, adults perceive children as inherently different, thus our own fears,

assumptions and attitudes affect how we interact with children. James et al. (1998, p. 45) argues that children are “thought to possess somewhat different competencies and abilities.” Subsequently, it is the role of researchers to be constantly reflexive, questioning our own ‘adultist’ attitudes. Thirdly, it is vital to remember that children are developmentally different from adults; their vocabulary, attention spans and life experience will be far more limited than that of the adult researcher. These broad areas of concern need to be constantly revisited to remind one of the implications when working with children.

Kotze (2002, p. 18) argues that “What we fear most is losing control and in western discourse control is seen as a primary, unspoken value.” This is of particular importance to me, having been a teacher for a number of years; I had to be reflexive regarding my position as participatory researcher within this process. My concern regarding this ‘loss of control’ was largely due to the fact that I was unsure about how the children would handle the co-constructed process of joint control.

I found the research process with the children a challenging and thought-provoking process. The children participated enthusiastically; they were eager to share their experiences, think and discuss their identity and belonging. I was repeatedly astounded by their ability to take charge and guide the process. There were many stories of triumph, many of heartache and many of resilience. As these were told, I was repeatedly struck by the fact that our largest resource truly is our children.

CONCLUDING REMARK

Children’s participation in research affords us access to essential information that we are unable to obtain from any other source. This provides a realistic and contextualised lens of childhood from those that matter most, the children themselves. This chapter has critically traced the methodological process that was followed during the research. This was done by emphasising the underlying tenets of participatory research. This chapter has also critically reflected upon the

research process itself. There is a great deal of scope and potential for this type of research; however, the adoption of a critical, transparent and reflexive research process is vital. The limitations and shortfalls have to be recognised and noted. Regardless of what the critics have to say, participatory research is a *step in the right direction* as it recognises that issues such as empowerment and participation are vital. As noted in the literature review, children need and want to participate. Participation, when scaffolded appropriately, enhances children's self-esteem and worth, thereby positively contributing towards a child's identity. Thus the issue becomes not whether participatory research is necessary, but why it is not being further utilised, examined and explored within South Africa.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Questions around identity and belonging constitute the key focus of this study. As the week progressed, the children's level of understanding regarding their own identity was explored in various ways. Based upon this, it was discovered that the children's identity is primarily guided by their ability to interact, connect and foster relationships. Reflective of the arguments that have been made in the literature review, is the fact that identities are not formed in a vacuum. Instead, it is the relationships surrounding the child and how the child views herself in relation to others which contribute towards her identity. There are also various context-specific influences which affect these relationships. This chapter is about the voices of the children and how they answered the questions of 'Who am I?', 'Where do I belong?' and 'Is it ok to be me?'

This chapter aims, firstly, to present the findings and, secondly, to discuss these findings in a manner that illustrates the complexities of the process and the multiple links between the identified themes. The data utilised in this section is primarily derived from the workshop discussions and focus groups. As previously noted, these discussions were recorded, transcribed and analysed. Where necessary, the themes that were noted were further emphasised by the various other participatory research techniques utilised. In recognition of the dynamic and diverse process of participatory research, the participants' own words, the researchers' own observations, photographs and drawings will be utilised in this chapter. Where necessary, these will be described.

Based upon the data analysed, this chapter will encompass three broad themes. Firstly, negotiating familial belonging will be discussed by defining mothers, particular attention will be paid to mothers as primary caregivers, and how maternal acceptance fosters belonging, as well as the impact of the mother's ability to instil discipline. The often absence of the father figures and the role of the extended family, particularly grandmothers will also be examined. The second theme, negotiating

gender and stereotyping, examines the noticeable differences between the genders, with special attention focused upon restricted movement, particularly for girls who are then limited to the house environment, and the caregiving experienced by siblings. Lastly, negotiating vulnerability will be examined, whereby growing up in a disadvantaged community often creates vulnerability, but that within the community certain protective features are often pivotal. The themes covered include: interpersonal violence both in and out of the home, the impact of sickness and the ameliorating role of health care professionals, the security, stability and safety of school and the teachers within and, lastly, the vital influence of peers and friendships.

NEGOTIATING FAMILIAL BELONGING

A child's sense of identity is largely based upon her family constellation within the household. All of the children, regardless of their home-life experiences, ranked their family as the most important group within which to belong. As noted by Marcia (1980), familial processes are pivotal to identity formation, whereby interpersonal connectedness and self-definition initially occur. Reflective of this, within the research, the pivotal core of a child's sense of identity is derived from her familial and household interactions. These interactions can be either affirmative or non-affirmative (the children called it a 'good' or 'bad' home life).

Dawes and Donald (2000) argue that a consistent and predictable household, paired with a receptive caregiver, fosters the development of self-esteem and identity. A great deal of emphasis in this section is reflective of the above, i.e. the importance which the children place upon security, stability and consistency. This stability is derived from the household routine and composition and from the emotional consistency of certain relationships. When security, stability and consistency occur, the child regards herself in a more affirming manner, enhancing feelings of self-worth and esteem.

Early learning within the family largely determines how the children view themselves and their subsequent engagements with the outside world (Nsamenang, 2004). Ideally, these early learning's and negotiations with the world should be derived from a secure sense of belonging. A sense of belonging, as previously noted, is defined as feeling completely accepted, valued and included by others. These feelings result from high quality, everyday interpersonal relationships, guided by trust and reciprocity. When this occurs, feelings of being encouraged supported and of self-efficacy are derived (Woodward, 1997). When a child experiences these feelings, she is more likely to regard her environment as secure and stable.

The findings of this study indicate that this early learning involves the acquisition of social cues and expectations regarding acceptable behaviour. These are largely derived from parent-child relationships, whereby the adult teaches, supports, educates and disciplines (Trawick-Smith, 2006). Arguably, love and acceptance, as derived from affirming relationships, provide a platform from which children are then able to enter new and different relationships in a more confident manner.

As discussed in the literature review, familial life has undergone a number of changes. Some of these changes were evidenced in the research, for example, the size, structure and composition of families. However, the vital role of both the parents, particularly the mother, was evidenced throughout the research process. This section aims to discuss how the children in the study negotiate familial belonging. Firstly, the vital role of mothers will be examined, most noticeably how the children conceptualise their mothers, their influence and guidance, and the importance of feeling accepted by their mothers. This serves to pave the way for future negotiations with others. Secondly, the role of fathers, and particularly the effect of absent fathers, will be discussed. Lastly, due to the changes in family life, the importance of the extended family, particularly the patience and care of grandmothers living within the household, will also be examined.

Defining mothers

The discussions revolving around parents/carers were generally focused upon the pivotal importance and influence of the participants mothers. Reflective of the current context within South Africa, in households consisting of single parent families, it is generally the mother who lives with the children. For the children, it is the consistency and stability of their mothers which was deemed the most vital aspect shaping their identity and sense of belonging. The physical presence of the mother in a consistent and stable manner largely contributes towards the children feeling loved, supported and accepted.

During workshop 1 (Who am I?) a great deal of the concluding discussion revolved around mothers. It was noted that the children who were not living with their mothers, referred to their main carers as “mommy”. This resulted in a discussion involving who the children define as their mothers. Below is an excerpt:

Extract 1: The lady that looks after you [...] is your mommy

- C10: The lady that looks after you the most is your mommy, sometimes she isn't your real mommy, but sometimes she is. Like, my real mommy is died, but my new mommy didn't really born me, but she is my mommy because she looks after me and feeds me and stuff.
- C19: Yes, me too, my mommy is far away, but my other mommy cares for me, I love her more than my real mommy. She is my real mommy now.
- C4: I love my mummies also
- R: So how can I tell what mommy you are talking about?
- C19: (Shrugs). Maybe we should just say that our real mommy is the lady who looks after you the most?
- C10: I know, let's call them mommy for our real mommy that had us, but mamma for the mommy that looks after us now.

Upon further discussion it was established that these “mommies” were either foster carers or the children's grandmothers. The children generally perceive their main adult, female caregiver as “mommy”. As demonstrated in the excerpt above, “mommies” fulfil certain criteria. Firstly, they are

the primary caregivers; secondly, they provide a sense of security and stability and, lastly, they have the potential to protect the children against the vulnerabilities of a disadvantaged childhood. The criteria that define mothering were again reiterated in workshop 5 (People, places and things that are important to me). When examining and discussing photographs involving mothers, the children often noted that they feel happy and safe when they felt loved by their mothers:



Photograph 4: I love my mommy because she looks after me and my sissie

Extract 2: Explanation of photograph 4: I love my mommy because she looks after me and my sissie

- C2: This is my mommy, she lives at my home with me. I love my mommy, because she look after me and my sissie and feed me, and play with me. She tell me that she loves me, I love my mommy lots. Look, there she is, helping my sissie to get ready for bed.
- C4: My mommy does everything for me, she cares for me, she is kind also.
- C7: She sometimes lets me play with her clothes and put them on, then she laugh and say I am funny and that she thinks I am beautiful girl.

As the discussion progressed, it became increasingly evident that through the care, kindness and compassion of mothers the children understand themselves as special and loved. Being told that they are loved and appreciated was also deemed important by the children in creating feelings of belonging and acceptance. However, for some of the children their identity and sense of belonging has changed due to their circumstances. Thus, while mothering fosters feelings of being loved and cared for, the absence of this often creates sadness, confusion and anger. This was evidenced during

workshop 3 (What makes me happy and sad?). The following excerpt was from a child, C22, when she was drawing her pictures of what makes her happy and sad.

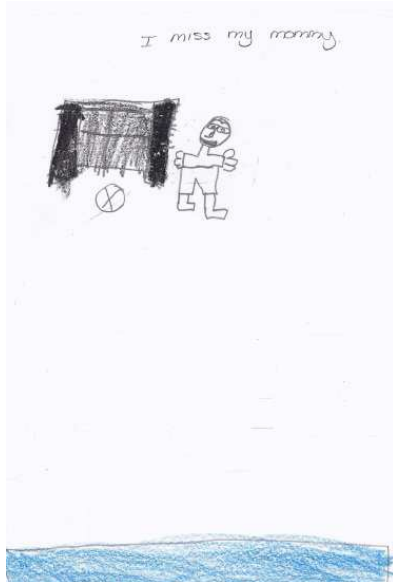


Figure 1: I miss my mommy

Extract 3: Explanation of figure 1: I miss my mommy

C22: This is my mommy, She was the best mommy. She looked after me, and cook for me and play with me and love me. She was safe for me and I say anything to her and she listen. I miss my mommy.

R: Where is your mommy?

C22: My mommy is in heaven with my granny, she was dead and I was next to her. I love my mommy and now she is gone. I was sleeping next to her when she went to heaven.

She then told me then that she wanted to draw another picture with her and her mother:



Figure 2: I miss my mommy, continued

Extract 4: Explanation of figure 2: I miss my mommy, continued

C22: Mommy and me, we are sad, we miss talking and loving. Now I am moved to a new house and a new Mommy, but still I am sad and crying. I want to live again with mommy? No I can't.
[...]

C22: Mommy is gone and then it was lost. My new mommy is kind and good. I think she loves me, but she is not like my real mommy because I still miss her and it is sad. I don't want to love my new mommy that much, because then she will go and then I will be sad again.

This excerpt serves to highlight the vital importance of mothers and that children define their mothers as primary caregivers, and thus the devastating effects that their absence can have upon a child. Arguably a large effect of an absence, such as that of C22, is that the security and stability derived from the mother is now lost. For C22, this loss has resulted in her questioning her belonging and feelings of loss. It has also resulted in her being hesitant to form a close attachment with her 'new mother'.

The importance of defining mothers serves to indicate the situation within South Africa whereby a number of children do not reside with their biological mothers. For the children in this research mothering is not necessarily about a biological connection, but more about being a primary caregiver who is able to provide security and stability, serving to protect the children against the

vulnerabilities of disadvantage. Based upon this, it is understandable that a loss of a mother has the potential to be devastating and affect further relational negotiations.

The findings of this research are largely reflective of findings by researchers such as Meintjies and Hall (2012), whereby the mother primarily provides a source of stability and security within the household. This security and stability is based upon two factors, upon the need to be accepted and belong within a mother-child relationship, and, as noted by Trawick-Smith (2006), upon a hierarchical system of parent as knowing and dominant. It is also from mothers that the children learn vital values and social cues. The following sections serve to further unpick the vital role and influence of the mother.

Maternal acceptance fosters belonging

Negotiating familial belonging in an affirming manner involves relationships evoking consistency and stability. An important aspect of this consistency is how the mother behaves in relation to the child and subsequently, the child in relation to the mother. For example, a child growing up in a very strict or rigid household is still likely to derive benefits from the stability, predictability and consistency of this behaviour. This can foster feelings of security. However, it is the emotional consistency or support that ultimately engenders feelings of security as well as being loved, accepted and supported. Thus, a child's sense of identity should ideally be derived from both a consistent and predictable household environment, together with acceptance and unconditional positive regard from the mother.

For the children, the need for acceptance by their mother was deemed vital and important. A number of the vignettes and discussions with the children indicated that this acceptance was vital in guiding a child's sense of belonging and well-being. The excerpt utilised in this section is derived

from the concluding reflective discussion at the end of workshop 3 (What makes me happy and sad?).

Extract 5: It is important for mommies to love us

- C4: It is important for mommies to love us, then we feel warm and loved and cared for.
- C17: My mommy makes me happy, she loves me and even when I do naughtiness I know that I am still loved and it is ok. But it's not nice when she gets anger because then I get sad.
- C12: It is the most important thing to have love from mommies and to know that they care for you. Then you are happy and it is right and the world is right.
- C24: When I am sad my mommy will hug me and it will be better and then it is ok.
- C13: It is important that mommies love their children because then they [children] feel safe and great.

Based upon this discussion, one may argue that acceptance and love derived from the mother are deemed as vital. Building onto that, this acceptance also creates feelings of safety and security, both vital in fostering the development of future relationships. Based upon the discussions with the children, the care-giving support provided by mothers continues to be important, even once they have entered wider circles of belonging, such as the school system.

Garbarino (1992) notes that, when interactions with primary caregivers are not supportive or caring, then anxiety and an insecure sense of self-esteem are likely to develop. As noted above, the acceptance derived from mothers is of pivotal importance; however it was felt by many of the children that this acceptance and love were not necessarily unconditional. Arguably, this makes one question the degree and scope of acceptance and the impact of acceptance, as deemed by the children as having certain criteria attached to it. Thus, for many of the children in the study, acceptance is vital, but this acceptance is not necessarily unconditional. Instead it is based upon how the child follows the social cues and teachings of the parents.

Social cues and behaviour as derived from mothers

The security and stability derived from the mother greatly involves the lessons and social cues that are derived from the relationship and the mother-child hierarchical structure whereby the mother conveys and teaches social rules and cues to the children. This also contributes towards the child's ability to develop other relationships outside the home. For the children, following these social rules and cues ensures feelings of acceptance from their mothers, but that this acceptance is conditional.

The children noted that they learn about "life and other important stuff" from their mothers. This included learning social norms, rules and behaviours both in and out of the home (Louw & Louw, 2007). This provides a secure scaffold from which negotiating increasingly wider circles of belonging becomes possible. This was evidenced during the concluding discussion from workshop 2 (What do I do during the day?). Using their timelines and pictures that they had drawn, the children discussed the social cues that they are taught by their mothers. Below follows an excerpt of the discussion:

Extract 6: My mommy teaches me how to be polite and friendly

C21: My mommy teaches me how to be polite and friendly.

C15: My mommy also does that, she tells me to say please and thank you and how to smile at old people.

C19: I watch my ma and see how she is like with other people, then I try to do the same.

R: Watching your mom, does this help you with your friends?

C21: Yes, lots I pretend we are having tea and then partying like my mommy.

C23: We also do pretend partying, but then my mom says I have to stop to be good, but I am just, like, copying her.

As the discussion progressed, the girls increasingly noted the similarities and differences regarding what they had learnt from their mothers' behaviours. As noted above, these included: saying please and thank you, being confident enough to talk to strangers and interacting with friends. The girls felt that in social situations outside the home, they generally rely on what their mothers have taught

them. Arguably, this is how social dynamics such as cultural curriculums and religion are initially conveyed to the children.

As previously noted, identities develop from dyadic interactions with significant others, as guided by societal cues and values (Boucher, Parker Tapias & Chen, 2005). The origin of these is derived from familial interactions, most notably the social cues taught by the mothers within the household. One may postulate that just as factors such as religion and culture serve to be 'markers of difference' for the children, operating within the micro systems of their world, social cues and rules guided by the mother may also serve to be 'markers of difference'. For example, upon entering the school system, a child who has been taught limited manners or social cues from home is likely to experience feelings of inadequacy or frustration when attempting to negotiate relationships within the school setting.

The discipline of the mother

For the majority of the children discipline is largely regarded as the mother's domain, possibly due to the absence of male or father figures within the household. Through the discussions it was noted that the children's day-to-day experiences within their households often indicated high levels of what the children termed discipline. As noted, the atmosphere within the home plays a vital role in guiding the children's sense of self-worth and esteem (Louw & Louw, 2007). This also appears to be closely linked to how the children are disciplined within their home. While the children accepted the harsh, often punitive discipline, they repeatedly noted that being disciplined made them feel unworthy, unloved, sad and sometimes angry.

A number of examples of this were depicted during workshop 3 (What makes me happy and sad?). While the children were drawing, one child shared her picture with me. Below follows an excerpt from our discussion.



Figure 3: When my mommy beated me

Extract 7: Explanation of figure 3: When my mommy beated me

C13: This is my mama, she is beating me. When my mommy beated me, then I cry.

R: Why is she beating you?

C13: Was naughty and wouldn't listen to her.

R: Does your mama often beat you?

C13: Sometimes she get mad at me or brother, then she beat us.

R: What do you do to make her mad?

C13: We don't help her at home and with the baby.

C13: Pointing at her picture: why are you so naughty? Be quiet.

R: Who says that?

C13: My mom, she gets so angry when I do something wrong, but she won't listen to me.

R: How does that make you feel?

C13: I get so mad and angry at her, then I cry, I love my mom, but I don't know if she loves me.

This excerpt serves to emphasise the influence and effect of this discipline upon the child. She describes feelings of anger, not being listened to, frustration and confusion regarding her ambivalent feelings towards her mother. If C13 refuses to assist with household chores or the baby, she is then punished. One may infer that this implies that there is a conditional element attached to feeling accepted by the mother. This element of condition appears to be negotiated along the line of assisting the mothers; arguably these is also a gendered element within (this will be further elaborated upon in the section titled 'Negotiating gender and stereotyping').

As noted in the literature, this 'harsh discipline' is linked to parents' exposure to community violence and associated aggression levels often results in them becoming more aggressive, punitive and rejecting of their own children. Additionally, a great deal of stress or pressure is placed upon the mothers within the family. This is often due to socio-economic influences and absent fathers within the family. These factors may serve to explain findings indicating that many children from single-parent families are more at risk of maintaining poor relationships and having poor self-images (Louw & Louw, 2007).

The absence of fathers

The absence of fathers, due to a variety of reasons, was a prominent theme during the research. While relationships with mothers are sources of consistency and stability, relationships with fathers were often described as being more inconsistent or unstable. The fathers' absences often resulted in the children questioning themselves, particularly with regards to whether it is something that they have done to result in their fathers being absent. When present, the fathers provide two vital functions for the children's identities. Firstly, their presence provides seemingly more financial security for the children. Secondly, they provide a more relaxed or fun adult-child relationship, based upon playing games and laughing. However, these father-child relationships are not consistent due to fathers being absent for extended periods.

Discussions involving the influence of fathers and their absence largely took place during workshop 3 (What makes me happy and sad). Reflective of patriarchal beliefs, the children noted that an absent father (unless he was away at work) meant that they were poorer, "the dads' always bring in the money" (C8), "I would be rich if I had a daddy at home; everyone with daddies has more money" (C13). The children with fathers in the group also reflected similar feelings regarding their fathers

and associated them with wealth. The following excerpts in this section are all derived from the reflective discussion in this workshop.

Extract 8: I don't have a daddy so I don't have so much of monies

- C14: I don't have a daddy, so I don't have so much of monies as other children that have daddies. That can make me sad sometimes. I am sometimes worried about it.
- C2: I have a daddy and he has a job so he works very hard for me to have toys and clothes and things. I am lucky because of this.
- C24: I was sad when my daddy went away to live with his new family. Then we sometimes had hunger because my mommy needed to get a job. She has a job now and so we don't have hunger all the time, but it would be better if my daddy was there.
- R: Why would it be better?
- C24: We would be able to buy more things and I miss him because he is my daddy and he looks after me. He loves me and buys me things and takes me to do fun things.
[...]
- C8: When my daddy died we were poor. Now my mommy is worried all the time about paying and not having money and not working so hard. Sometimes it's hard because I don't know what to do to help.
- C1: I also feel like it is hard because I'm too little to get a job and help my family.

This discussion highlighted the fact that children often equated a father's presence with financial and material wealth. This wealth or ability to provide material wealth contributed towards the children's sense of identity. This is largely due to the fact that an absent father creates additional financial worry or stress upon the family, including the children in the study. As noted by Peirson (2005), any pressures placed upon individuals within the household generally place pressure upon the others within that household. For the children these pressures included physical (hunger) and emotional (feelings of low self-worth or esteem) aspects.

During this discussion, one of the children discussed the fact that his father is making him sad at the moment. He explained that this was due to the fact that his father is unable to find work; some of the other children nodded and agreed that they are in similar situations and are also sad. The same

child proceeded to explain that this makes him particularly sad due to the fact that it means he is always angry and then he drinks and beats his mother. Another noted that it made him sad because it meant that his mother had to do additional work. All fourteen of the children who said their fathers were currently unemployed said that this made them also feel worried about their future. This seemingly creates feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth in relation to their peers who have employed fathers. The implications of an unemployed father can also have far wider repercussions. As noted by James, Jenks and Prout (1998), unemployment and subsequent poverty have psychological, economic and physical implications. As reflected by the children, feelings of anxiety and low self-esteem contribute towards a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness (Visser, 2007).

Bray, Gooskens, Moses and Seekings (2010) emphasise the link between acts of violence by men and their feelings of disempowerment as a result of unemployment and poverty. While there was noticeable unemployment and poverty experienced by the fathers, the children saw their relationships with their fathers as often involving playing games and laughing. Arguably, these games also provide opportunities for the children to learn vital social cues and behaviour. However, the clearly demarcated hierarchical system of parent-child appears to not follow such rigid and strict boundaries as that of the mother-child relationship. One may postulate that this is, in part, due to the inconsistency of fathers, whereby they are repeatedly absent. The children often noted that the absences made them question if it was something that they had caused. One child noted:

Extract 9: Then he goes away and I cry

C12: My daddy makes me laugh at home, then he goes away and I am sad. I cry and think it is me. Mommy says no, he has to work, but still maybe it is a little bit me and a little bit work. Mommy says no though. It makes me worried, maybe he won't ever be coming back and he does and then he goes away again. It is a little bit confusing.

Findings have noted that a child's sense of belonging is dependent upon feelings of being accepted, valued and included (Woodward, 1997). Additionally, it is the quality and consistency of relationships that foster feelings of security and belonging. The children's relationships with their fathers often invokes confusion and anxiety because their feelings of being accepted, valued and included are punctuated with long absences. One may argue that this places further pressure upon the mothers within the household. Additionally, the children then question their own role in contributing towards the absences, serving to create feelings of low self-worth and esteem.

The positive effects of living in an extended family

Within a South African context the traditional family appears to be slowly changing to encompass a wider spectrum of familial and non-familial members (Ramphele, 2002). This movement was repeatedly evidenced throughout the research process. While the importance of the traditional parental figures remains vital for children's identity, the importance and influence of extended family was emphasised. Particularly important was that of grandmothers who often assume a patient care-giving or mothering role within the family. The findings of this research indicate that, regardless of whom lives within the household, the stability and emotional support of those within are vital in fostering feelings of belonging, well-being and self-worth; thereby fostering opportunities for various relational engagements. For the children, a secure and stable household is often how they view the behaviour of the adults in relation to themselves. Feelings of love, support and being accepted contribute towards the children feeling secure and stable within their homes.

The pictures and extracts from this section are derived from workshop 1 (Where do I belong?). The children drew pictures demonstrating their extended families within the household. This provided a useful catalyst for discussions revolving around negotiating familial belonging and its often beneficial effects upon identity. Based upon these drawing and subsequent discussions, it is emphasised that a

household for many of the children includes extended family such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles.

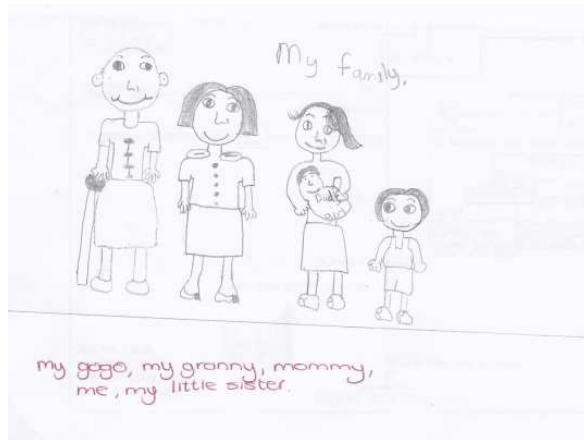


Figure 4: Here is my family

Extract 10: Explanation of figure 4: Here is my family

C1: Here is my family. My gogo, my granny, mommy, me and my little sister. I am standing next to mommy, she is loving. Everyone in my family is loving me and that makes me happy and good. It is safe and good to be so loved.

As noted by the extract above, a strong sense of belonging results in the child feeling happier and more confident within the household. For the child above describing feelings of being loved results in a sense of safety and happiness. These feelings, arguably conveyed by those within the household, contribute towards a child's initial negotiations with belonging and identity. For all of the children, feelings of being loved, supported and accepted were created largely as a result of how those within the household act towards the child.



Figure 5: I like living in a big family

Extract 11: Explanation of figure 5: I like living in a big family

C14: That is my mommy, mommy's sister, boetie, little brother, mommy's brother and me. We all live together and that makes me feel special. Everyone body says that they love me and that they help me and that they think I am great. So I am happy. I like living in a big family, it is so good.

When discussing the members living in the household, the children (as noted above) repeatedly voiced the fact that they enjoyed it when there were lots of people in the house. This generally meant that there were lots of people to help them with the household tasks and homework. It also meant that there were a number of people who the children could talk to and play with. Thus the children have more opportunities to foster relationships which create feelings of self-worth and esteem. The children emphasised that to feel safe and secure in a large household, the house has to be relatively stable and emotionally supportive. The children recognised that this stability and supportiveness assisted their sense of well-being and belonging. Mullis, Brailsford and Mullis (2003) reflect this belief by noting that a child's social, emotional and cognitive developments are largely influenced by the stability of the household, not necessarily the composition.

Amongst the children large households were deemed the norm. One of the children admitted that he felt different due to the fact that his household consisted of only his mother and granny. He felt that this placed him at a disadvantage because he would often come home to an empty house and feel "lonely". The children agreed that a large, predictable and secure household helps one feel accepted and loved.

An additional benefit of the large, but stable household appears to be the fact that the responsibilities of the primary caregiver are distributed amongst members of the household. For example, one child noted that when his mother is at work, he has lots of other people to look after him; another noted that he feels so loved by his mommy, granny and sister that "It's like I have lots of mommies." This has important implications, particularly for single parent households, whereby

research has indicated that children from these households often have a poor self-image and have difficulty fostering relationships (Meintjes & Hall, 2012). One may postulate that an ameliorating factor for single-parent households may be the input of other caring and compassionate family members.

A child growing up in a household that is secure and stable is far more likely to develop qualities required for self-regulation (Dawes & Donald, 2000). In this study, extended families were largely described as involving positive and affirming experiences. However, the overcrowding and lack of space within the households can create a sense of instability and insecurity within the household. Arguably, this is often a result of socio-economic influences which also result in the children's increased exposure to substance abuse and violence (these will be further discussed in section three, 'Negotiating Vulnerability')

The patient care-giving of grandmothers

During the daytime, many of the children's parents and other adults within the household are absent. Often it is the children's grandmothers who then adopt the care-giving or mothering role within the household. This section aims to emphasise this by noting that the grandmothers, similar to mothers, teach the children about social rules, as well as cultural and more traditional rules. However, the way that these rules are conveyed, according to the children, is often in a more patient and respectful manner.

The patient, care-giving role of the grandmothers was also discussed by the children in both workshop 1 (Where do I belong?) and workshop 5 (People, places and objects that are important to me). In workshop 5, during the discussions utilising the children's photographs, I noted that a number of children had taken photographs of their grandmothers. This resulted in a lively discussion regarding the care of grandmothers. Below is an excerpt.

Extract 12: The care of grandmothers

- C5: My mommy wouldn't let me inside the house.
R: Why wouldn't she let you inside the house?
C5: She was angry and was shouting at my granny, then she said that I was naughty and must listen. I had to stay outside until it got dark.
R: Did you go into the house then?
C5: My granny let me inside the house, mommy had gone.
[...]
C14: My granny is kind; she listens to me and teaches me things about where we came from.
C8: My granny says that I need to always be good and follow the rules because then it is important to be good and listen. It makes her such happy when we listen properly and do [things] right.
C6: I know my granny loves me, she tells me she loves me and cares for me and she is only teaching me to be good when she is punishing me.
R: Is your granny different from your mommy?
C6: Yes, mommy rush, rush, worry, worry. Granny is just at home with us, she is caring and mommy is more grumpy. Mommy always says she is too tired and I must ask Granny. Granny makes me feel loved because she always helps me and listens and loves me and hugs me.
C14: I feel better when I am with Granny because she is kind. Mommy gets angry sometimes, she is tired, but granny always cooks for me and hugs me and then I feel better that I am who I am.

This excerpt serves to highlight possible reasons for the role and influence of grandmothers upon the children's lives. This is largely due to the constant availability of the grandmothers within the household. While the parents are involved with daily stressors, such as work, the grandmothers convey consistent care-giving and support, thus serving a vital ameliorating role for many of the children, making the children feel more accepted and listened to. This consistent care-giving and support in relation to the child instils feelings of being loved and accepted.

Growing up disadvantaged is often associated with low-income or poverty, often having detrimental effects upon the children within the household. As noted by James, Jenks and Prout (1998), for children, poverty affects every sphere of their lives. This includes mothers who may work long hours and fathers who are often absent. However, it is the grandmothers who remain within the

household who have the time available to listen, instil values and interact with the children that serves to cushion many of the detrimental effects of disadvantage. They thus serve a vital psychological support for the children within this study.

NEGOTIATING GENDER AND STEREOTYPING

In traditional patriarchal, African communities girls are socialised to focus more upon connections, relationships, dependence and passivity, while boys are socialised to focus on autonomy and independence with dominance and aggression as accepted, even encouraged, practices (Oysterman & James, 2010). These findings were largely mirrored by the children. This section aims to highlight the fact that boys have a great deal more freedom and ability to move around their neighbourhoods. Firstly, this is due to concerns involving safety and, secondly, this is due to cultural and societal expectations, including the belief that boys are more capable of looking after themselves. There is an expectation that girls help more around the house, especially with the care of younger siblings. This section has been divided according to these two factors, namely, restricted movement and the care-giving of siblings.

Based upon the focus group discussions, one with the boys and one with the girls, a number of gendered differences shaping identities were noted. The girls appeared to shape their identities upon factors that are based along the lines of being close to home, care-giving, being protected and developing intimate relationships. These included looking after people (especially siblings) and loving others. They repeatedly referred to their friends and how important their friends are, particularly as playmates and companions with whom to share stories. While the majority of the girls noted that they generally have a few friends, in contrast the majority of the boys said that they all played together; many stated that they have many “best friends”. The boys were more concerned with factors such as leaving home and earning money, being providers, thus becoming sources of financial security for their loved ones.

A number of the factors identified above were also reflective of the findings of familial belonging; whereas for with fathers the emphasis was upon financial gain, for mothers it was upon remaining close to home and care-giving. This serves to emphasise the influence of gender stereotyping and cultural contexts.

Restricted movement

While there were a variety of differing gendered norms and expectations, noticeable was the children's recognition of the correlation between gender and safety. Due to parental and carer concerns, the girls are generally kept close to the home for safety reasons. This section will examine the fact that the girls' identities appear to be based more upon aspects confined around the home, for example playing with easily accessible neighbourhood friends or assisting around the house. In contrast, the boys are afforded more 'freedom' and hence their identities are shaped by wider influences. This will be done by initially examining what the girls spend their time doing around the home. It will then examine what the boys spend their time doing and the fact that they feel safer in the community.

The excerpts utilised in this section are drawn from workshop 2 (What I do during the day). Based upon the timelines that the children drew, two focus groups were established, one for girls and one for boys. The following excerpts in this section are all derived from these two gendered focus groups, emphasising the more restricted movement for the girls.



Figure 6: What the girls spend their time doing

[Depicted in figure 6: 1. I wake up, 2. Then I bath, 3. I brush my teeth, 4. Then I have breakfast, I make my own breakfast, pink porridge, 5. I am walking to my friend's Candy's house, 6. Playing skipping and swim with Candy]

Extract 13: Explanation of figure 6: What the girls spend their time doing

C22: This is me during the day, first I am waking up and then I have a bath and brush my teeth. Then I have breakfast, I make my own porridge, pink porridge.

R: Who helps you to do these things?

C22: I do these things by myself, that is because I like to be able to help my mommy. My mommy says that I am a big girl now and can do these things by myself. She is too busy with my boetie.

R: How old is your boetie?

C22: He is just a little bit smaller [than me], but he doesn't know how to do these things, the boys are a bit, like always needing to be helped.

R: What else happens in your picture?

C22: I am waiting to my friend's Candy's house, I walk there, she is right by me and it is safe to walk alone. Then I am playing skipping and 'swim' with Candy. She is my best friend and we play together lots.

R: Do you have other friends?

C22: Yes, but they are living far away and lots at school, but I can't visit them lots, only when my mommy can take me there.

A number of the girls' timelines and subsequent discussions include, firstly, the consistent concern of safety, thus keeping the girls closer around the household, and, secondly, the fact that societal norms within the family serve to guide expectations. For example, although slightly younger, C22's mother assists her brother because they are "always needing to be helped". Based upon societal norms and expectations, demonstrated in close household relationships, the girls often see themselves as more capable and willing around the house. However, outside the house, the girls are seen as requiring more protection and safety as opposed to the boys. The boys spend a great deal more time outside and away from their homes. This serves to expose them to a wider range of relationships.

Later in the girls' discussion group this awareness of being more restricted due to safety concerns was discussed.

Extract 14: I stay close to my home

C20: I like to do skipping and "swim".

R: What is swim?

C17: Um, it's this game.

C20: You have a rope and then you jump and sing.

C21: I like singing with my friend, we are only the two of us allowed to sing and we know lots of songs, my aunty teach us.

C24: I go to my friend house and we play dancing and singing and "swim".

C12: I stay close to my home, my mommy says that it is not safe otherwise; it is still fun, but sometimes not so much. Sometimes, then, sometimes I wish (giggles) to be a boy for being feedomed (sic). Then I can go around and play with my friend's far way.

The girls in the cohort discussed activities which were largely centred on their own houses and families. For the girls, activities included skipping, "swim" (a game with a jump rope), dancing and singing. Arguably this also results in the girls not being as exposed to a wide range of peer relationships, thus serving to perpetuate the fact that girls foster closer connections with a select few.

For the boys' focus group, the activities in which they are involved appear to extend in physical proximity far further than that of the girls. Findings such as by Bray, Gooskens, Moses & Seekings (2010) have indicated that this is due to the perception of boys being seen as tough, more independent and able to look after themselves. The activities that the boys spend most of their time on generally involve sport or physical activities. Most important and widely discussed was soccer, while other far less discussed games included rugby, cricket and ball skills. For boys, the opportunities for socialisation outside of the home allowed them to develop a wider range of relationships outside of the home. This exposes them to wider and more varied opportunities to build relationships outside the home. This was discussed in the boy's focus group.

Extract 15: Sometimes we are there alone

- C8: I like to play soccer and sometimes just throwing.
[The majority of the boys agreed and nodded in agreement]
- R: Where do you play these games?
- C9: On the field, near my house.
- R: How do you get to the field?
- C8: We walk there and then we spend the day there.
- R: Who else is at the soccer field? Are there any adults?
- C8: Yes, there is coach, he looks after us and teaches us.
- R: Is coach there all of the time?
- C9: No, sometimes we are there alone.
- C8: But then the big boys look after us, they let us play with them, my boetie is one of the big boys, he is sometimes a coach also.
- R: Are you always allowed to go to the soccer field?
- C13: Sometimes my mommy says no, but that is at night. When it is daytime I can go. I like to go, then I meet lots of people and can talk and play with them.
- R: Are the girls also allowed to go to the soccer field?
- C5: Nah, they are girls. They stay at home, it is safer there at home and at soccer it is boys' time, the girls they must stay at home.

This conversation serves to highlight the boys' awareness regarding why they are not as restricted in their movements. Most noticeably this was due to safety concerns. This conversation serves to highlight the fact that the boys are also subjected to some restrictions regarding their movements, for example, not going out at night.

Later in this discussion, one of the boys explained his timeline that he had drawn.



Figure 7: What the boys spend their time doing

[Depicted in figure 7: 1. Waking up, 2. Brushing my teeth, 3. I say bye to my dog and go to school, 4. Playing soccer with coach]

Extract 14: Explanation of figure 7: What the boys spend their time doing

C3: This is me waking up. I wake up early because it is gets light. I brush my teeth and sometimes I have breakfast, but only when my mommy gives it to me.

R: Why doesn't she give it to you every day?

C3: Sometimes she says I must do it myself, but it is too much hard for me. I just don't have it then. Sometimes mommy is away to work and then I don't have it [breakfast]. I say bye to my dog and go to school. After school it's always playing soccer, there is lots of us and its lots of fun and it has a coach and we all good [at soccer].

R: Do you have lots of friends at soccer?

C3: Yes, lots we are all friends, sometimes I don't know the other children there too well, but I know coach and then it's ok.

R: Who is your best friend there?

C3: Siphso, but I don't see him there all the time. When we do, it is lots of fun.

This again emphasises the impact of gender and stereotyping upon the children's identities. Firstly, in the girls' focus group most of the girls make their own breakfast, however, many of the boys, as reflected above, do not feel the need to do this. Secondly, the level of freedom afforded to C3 is noticeably more in comparison to the girls'. Lastly the impact of sport, particularly soccer, is noticeable in shaping the boys' identities.

One of the largest influences that shaped the children's exploration of their identity was the influence and role of gender and safety. Oyserman and James (2010) argue that identities differ with gender due to the fact that gendered norms and expectations are an integral part of society. One may also add that this is compounded by concerns around safety and security. This research highlighted that gender and how gender issues affect a child's identity, such as safety, are engrained in most aspects of the children's daily functioning. One may postulate that, for the girls, fears involving their safety in the neighbourhood may have implications with regards to how they relate to strangers outside of the confines of their home or other areas deemed safe. Arguably, strangers would be treated with increased caution and hesitation. Thus girls identities are more shaped through exposure in and around the home, while boys identities are shaped by wider negotiations in the community.

Care-giving experienced by siblings

The role of siblings was a dominant theme, repeatedly arising throughout the week. When discussing this fact with the children, it became increasingly noticeable that the role of siblings was vital as a support mechanism. For the majority of the cohort, sibling relationships were viewed as an important and reliable support base within the household. This section will, firstly, argue that siblings are an important source of consistency and stability both in and outside the household.

However, this care-giving is underpinned with expectations regarding gender and stereotyping. It is the girls who are considered primary sources of care-giving; while the boys often provide care-giving, the expectations are not necessarily as high. Secondly, it will examine the vital influence of older siblings as caregivers. This care-giving is often based upon acceptance and positive regard, serving to emphasise the difference between the care-giving experienced by siblings as opposed to mothers.

The care-giving of both boys and girls was demonstrated in workshop 3 (What makes me happy and sad?), whereby the children were asked to draw pictures and experiences that make them happy or sad. The focus of many of these pictures was on the pivotal care-giving role of their siblings. The following two drawings and excerpts serve to emphasise this care-giving.



Figure 8: Skipping with my little sister



Figure 9: Playing ball with my boete

Extract 15: Explanation of figure 8: Skipping with my little sister

C22: Skipping with my little sister. She is always there with me, even when there is no one else there, she is always there. I like to teach her things and she makes me feel happy and joyous.

R: Do you always help her?

C22: Yes, it is what a good big sister would do.

Extract 16: Explanation of figure 9: Playing ball with my boetie

C2: I am playing ball. This is with my big boetie. He teached me how to play. We play every day, lots of times. I am not so good as he is, but his is bigger. I love to play ball with him.

Both of these excerpts, as was repeatedly noted by a number of the other children, serve to emphasise the importance of the acceptance and care-giving of the siblings. Both the children above noted that they enjoy spending time with their siblings and that teaching or conveying skills to their siblings is important. As noted by C22, the constant availability and presence of the siblings is important, creating a sense of stability and consistency for the children. The influence of gender is noted whereby the girls remain close to the home and the boys are at the soccer field. Additionally, as noted by C22, there is also an expectation that sisters should always assist siblings. This was mirrored by a number of children during this workshop.

Both workshops 2 (What I do during the day?) and 4 (People who help me) highlighted the importance of older siblings as a care-giving factor within the household. This is particularly important when the household changes or parents become absent. During workshop 4 a number of the children drew pictures of people who assist them; together we then ranked these according to who provides the most assistance to the child. Below follows an excerpt from this process.

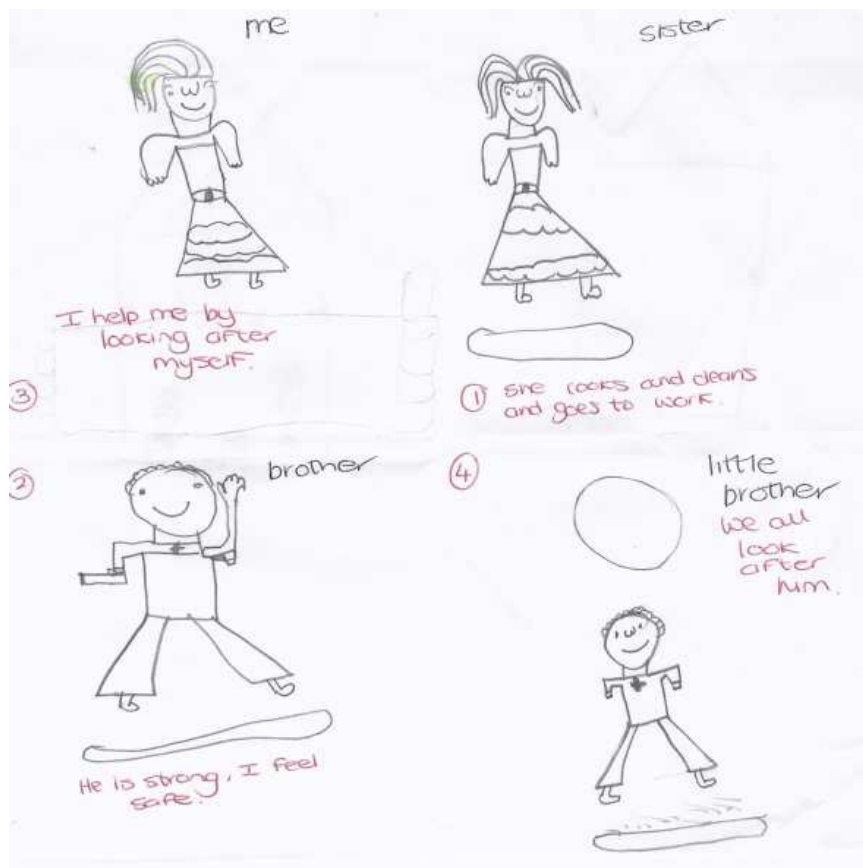


Figure 10: What we spend our time doing

Extract 17: Explanation of figure 10: What we spend our time doing

- C2 Here is my boetie [brother] and sissie [sister], they are standing in front of our house. They are older, they look after me. I live with them, they care nice for me.
- R: What do they do for you?
- C2 They do everything that my mommy used to do before she got sick and went away, now she is in heaven and I can't see her anymore.
- C2: My mommy also died and went away, Ananda, my sister looks after me and I look after my baby.
- R: Your baby?
- C2: We all look after him. I help to keep her happy and safe at home, she was sad when mommy went away.

This excerpt highlights the important role that siblings play in looking after each other, thus serving to cushion some of the effects of a disadvantaged childhood. For C2, the death of a parent resulted in his sister and, to a lesser extent, his brother adopting a care-giving role. After the sickness and

death of his mother, one may postulate that, while extra pressure has been exerted upon all of the siblings, the consistency of remaining within the familiarity of the household is likely to have been of benefit to C2.

The importance of older siblings or being an older sibling was also vital due to the fact that they influence the behaviour of the other siblings. The children's own sense of who they are appears to be guided by these influences and the role of their siblings, whereby the younger siblings place a great deal of emphasis upon aspiring to be like or similar to their older siblings. Words echoing the sentiment that "I want to be just like him/her" were repeatedly utilised in the concluding discussions of workshop 2 (What I do during the day):

Extract 18: I like to copy my sister

C 19: I like to copy my sister, sometimes she puts on makeup and gets dressed to go out, then I do the same. She helps to look after us at home. When I grow up I want to be just like her.

[...]

C5: I play with my big boetie, he talks just right and I want to be able to talk like him.

R: How does he speak?

C5: Like a grown up, he uses big words and swears and stuff.

[...]

C16: My baby [sister] copies everything that I do.

R: What do you do?

C16: I help to clean the house, cooking, sweeping, playing, running, singing, my baby tries to do all those, but she is too small.

The above excerpt serves to highlight that older siblings were often important "role models" for the children as was noted by the group. This includes modelling behaviour and talk. There was a general consensus that, regardless of what the older sibling had done or was doing, they are still deemed as vital influences for the children, particularly if they are consistently living within the household. A major aspect of the children's identities; how they talk, act and interact with people outside the home, is modelled largely upon that of the older siblings. What was not explored was what would

happen if the children chose not to model their behaviour upon that of their older siblings. Arguably, this would also have important implications upon their identities. It also serves to emphasise that, for the children, being accepted by their siblings is deemed a particularly important component guiding their identities.

While drawing and discussing what makes them feel happy and sad, the girls repeatedly referred to the fact that undertaking responsibilities for their younger siblings made them feel “grown up” and “important”. They often emphasised that they took care of their younger siblings to help their mothers, and not necessarily because it was expected.

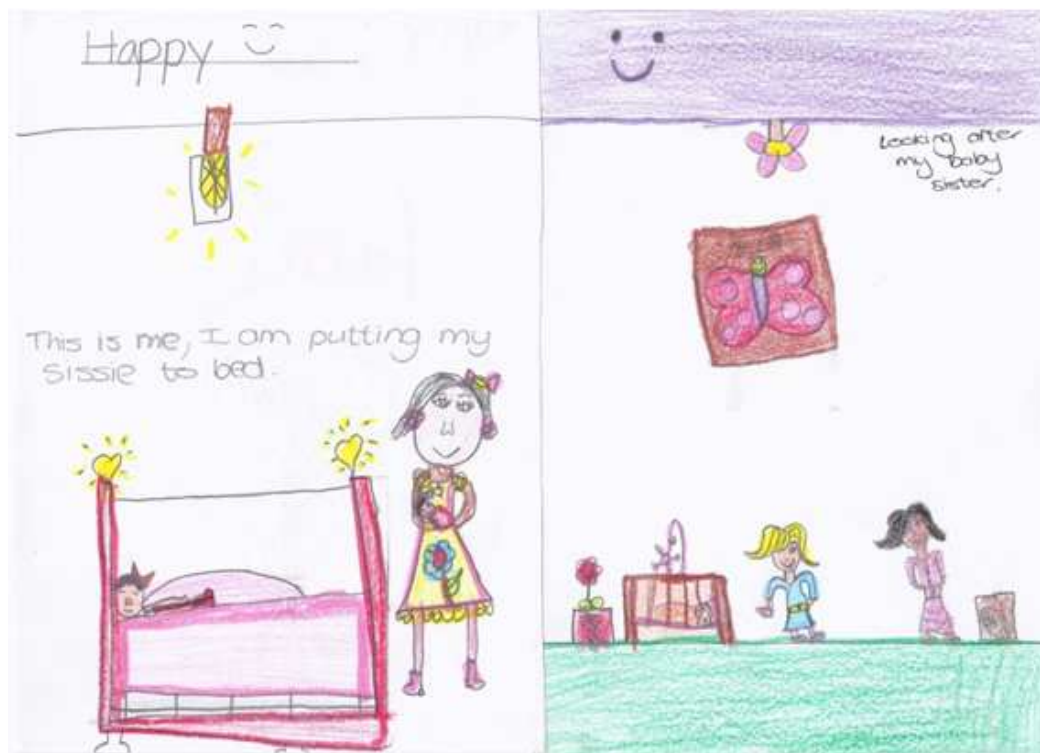


Figure 11: Putting my sissie to bed

Figure 12: Looking after my baby sister

Extract 19: Explanation of figure 11: Putting my sissie to bed

C24: This is me; I am putting my sissie to bed. I do this every night; my mommy is tired and needs to rest so I help. It makes me feel like a proper mommy also, in the morning I make my sissie breakfast. This is also to helpful my mommy, she is at work and my granny is old to do it.

Extract 20: Explanation of figure 12: Looking after my baby sister

C18: I am happy when I am looking after my little sister [Pointing to the picture]. Here is my little sister, I look after her. She cries in the morning, but then I wake up and feed her and play with her. Then my mommy can rest. When mommy wakes up she says: “why didn’t you wake me” and I tell her that I love looking after my baby sister. I am a good big sister.

When discussing the role of caring for siblings with the girls in the group, I asked the girls what the difference was between their care for younger siblings as opposed to the care elicited from their parents. This prompted a lively discussion regarding the differences and similarities. The cohort differed regarding how they cared for their younger siblings. Some felt that they modelled the care upon their “mommies”; however, the majority felt that they spend more time and care with their siblings as opposed to their mothers. They felt that they were able to be more caring and compassionate than their mothers and that they often assisted with their siblings to ensure a kinder and more compassionate relationship. The girls felt that this was largely due to the fact that they have more time with their siblings and that they are not tied to adult constraints, such as work and social responsibilities.

Caring for, and being cared for, by siblings was recognised by the children as a vital part of their lives. The care-giving experienced by siblings differs greatly to that of adults. Firstly, sibling relationships provide an opportunity for children to test their sense of belonging in a protected and secure way. While negotiations within familial belonging are heavily impinged upon by the realities of poverty and disadvantage, sibling relationships afford the opportunity for a more unconditional and ameliorating effect upon the children’s identities. These child-child relationships place the children upon more equal settings, thus providing opportunities for children to experience and apply rules involving compromise, competition and co-operation. During workshop 2, some of the children noted that fighting with their siblings is “not nice, but that they will always love us”. This appeared to

be a common consensus amongst the children, thus allowing sibling conflict to be a guide to generally understanding social relationships outside of the home (Louw & Louw, 2007).

Additionally, this appears to involve a level of acceptance and unconditional positive regard amongst siblings. For siblings who are close in age, they often regarded each other as allies within the household, while siblings, particularly girls, who are further apart in age, generally adopt a caring role for their younger sibling(s). This care afforded to younger siblings is arguably based upon gender and stereotype expectations. Thus it becomes understandable that girls would model their behaviour along the lines of older female siblings and boys would model theirs' upon older boy siblings.

NEGOTIATING VULNERABILITY

For many children in South Africa, including those in this research, childhood is experienced alongside the backdrop of poverty and disadvantage. As a result, factors such as violence, safety and absences (due to various reasons) were noted by the cohort as the main issues that “make us sad”. Findings, such as by Bray, Gooskens, Moses, & Seekings (2010), have indicated that these issues are pertinent throughout childhood in South African society, regardless of financial, geographic and historical divides. However, it is the frequency and intensity of these factors that increases in accordance with poverty and disadvantage. Arguably, this can be attributed to the influence of the “cycle of poverty” which is likely to affect an individual’s motivation and overall well-being (Sinha, 1990).

In accordance with findings in the Literature Review, such as by Franchi and Swart (2008), a child’s identity is guided by the variety of multi-cultural contexts within which she operates. The daily challenges that the children faced were repeatedly referred to and explored, including substance abuse, poverty and HIV/AIDS. These challenges were deemed normal by the children (with the

exception of violence), arguably serving as a backdrop which shaped daily interactions and feelings of self-worth and esteem. During the week some strong themes repeatedly emerged. Most notable of these was the fact that violence, safety and absences contribute towards a child feeling “sad”, “hopeless” and at times “desperate”. It was in these situations that the children often felt that they needed to be “adults” and “grown up”. However, in contrast to this are occasions when the children can engage in more age appropriate ways through activities such as play, exploration and appropriate childhood relationships.

Sinha (1990) notes that, if proper interventions occur at appropriate times, children are able to escape the “cycle of poverty”; arguably how this can be done is by the vital role that relationships both within and outside of the home play. The child will seek places where she feels that “it is ok to be me”. If this is not possible within the home, then the most notable place to turn becomes that of her school. Thus one may argue that the quality and type of relationships that the child receives from home, and also from school and the community, is of vital importance, serving to either enhance or inhibit a child’s sense of who she is.

This section will examine the contexts from which the children operate. It is these contexts which contribute towards vulnerability and disadvantage. However, within these contexts there are certain ameliorating relationships. These relationships assist in protecting the child and hence have a positive influence upon her identity and sense of belonging. Based upon the findings in this study the sections, discussed include: interpersonal violence, both within and outside the home, the impact of sickness and the ameliorating role of health care professionals, the security, stability and safety of school and particularly the teachers and, lastly, the vital ameliorating role of friends and peers.

Interpersonal violence

The role and influence of violence upon the children's lives was noted in a variety of ways throughout the week. This section will examine the two types of violence identified by the children. First is violence occurring within the household, particularly as a result of alcohol abuse, and second, is violence occurring more broadly within the community. Both have implications for a child's sense of belonging and identity, serving to highlight the vulnerability of the children. These implications include feelings of fear, hopelessness and helplessness, thereby impinging upon safe spaces of belonging.

As discussed in the section, 'negotiating familial belonging', there can be high levels of punitive and harsh discipline methods often inflicted upon the children. Arguably, these can also overlap and hence one should be reminded of these when reading this section. Aside from this, violence within the household often revolved around discussions of alcohol and its effects. This was noted, by the children in workshop 3 (What makes me happy and sad?), as well as in workshop 5 (People, places and things that are important to me). During the concluding discussion in workshop 3, the children discussed the violence resulting from alcohol.

Extract 21: I get scared when there are parties at my house

- C5: Over the weekends there are big parties at my house. Everyone, sometimes the kids also drink lots to get drunk.
[Assenting nods from the group]
- R: What happens then?
- C5: Everyone gets very happy, loud and 'laughy', but then some people fight and scream.
- C21: I once saw my daddy fight with my uncle. It was scary and people were shouting.
- C19: I get very scared when there are parties at my house. There is lots of fighting; I sometimes hide in the bed and pretend that I am sleeping.
[...]
- C7: When everyone starts to fight in my home I get sad. It becomes worrisome that there is so much anger in my house and they are all shouting, shouting and then I get shouted at.

- R: What do you do then?
C7: It makes me feel so sad and so I go across the road to see my friend, sometimes if he is away I stay with his mommy or I stay with my sissie.
R: Does anyone else ever feel like that?
C12: Lots of people come and get drinking at my home and then I don't feel so safe.
R: What do you do then?
C12: I go outside and try find my friends, but other times I just go and sit outside.

Based upon this excerpt, the children are often exposed to alcohol, some even participating in the partying and alcohol abuse. However, as noted by C5 and C19, there is often associated fighting and violence. This results in feelings of being scared and wanting to hide. This is reflective of findings such as by Flisher and Gevers (2006) linking increased levels of violence and alcohol. Arguably, substance abuse and increased levels of violence contribute towards a child feeling a sense of hopelessness and helplessness. They will also affect a child's sense of belonging, whereby her household is no longer a safe space to negotiate. One may postulate that it would make a child question herself and her feelings of being accepted within the household.

It is important to note that during times of violence or drinking, many of the children seek people outside the home to provide comfort and possibly protection. For example, C12 goes to find friends, as does C7. The ameliorating role of friends will be discussed further in subsequent chapters. However, it serves to emphasise that when in situations resulting in vulnerability the children do often attempt to actively escape from the situation, thus attempting to protect themselves.

Violence outside the household was also often referred to and noted. This became particularly noticeable in workshop 5 (People, places and objects that are important to me). Many of the children's photographs depicted high fences, burglar bars and security doors. The children were all able to recount experiences of crime. They felt that these experiences have made them increasingly fearful. As previously noted, fears regarding safety restrict their movement within their neighbourhoods. During the final workshop, the children repeatedly referred to their concern

regarding their safety and the “tsotsi’s” that frequent their neighbourhood. The following excerpt serves to highlight some of the children’s concerns.

Extract 22: The effects of violence in the neighbourhood

- C4: I get scared when I have to walk to my friend’s house, I know that there are tsotsi’s on the corner. They sometimes scare me.
- C17: My mommy says no, it is too dangerous and I have to stay at home or I have to wait for her to come and take me to my friend’s house. It is close, but I don’t walk by myself, I might get stealed and then no-one can find me.
- R: Who would steal you?
- C17: I had a friend and they stealed her and then she never came home, it was sad and then her mommy was sad and I was very sad.
- C8: There is lots of bad things where I live, it makes me scared. They do lots of fighting with knives and they are drunk and they shout and scare me. It makes me want to stay at home.

Based upon this excerpt, one can note that for the children violence is often a very real and close threat. Feelings of danger and concerns regarding well-being were often noted by the children. The children’s exposure to violence within their community involved kidnapping, death of a friend, fighting and stabbing. These also serve to restrict children’s movement within the community. The children voiced their feelings that these fears prevent them from ‘fun’ activities, such as playing at friends’ houses and being allowed to roam their neighbourhoods.

Although not noted in the research, interpersonal violence results in feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and fear, fostering a sense of insecurity and instability regarding how they view the world. One may assume that these feelings affect a child’s capacity and capabilities to foster future relationships. As noted by Garbarino (1992), if a child’s interactions with the world are not predominantly supportive and caring, the child is more inclined to develop feelings of anxiety and an insecure sense of self-esteem. She may be increasingly guarded and cautious in strange situations and around new people.

As previously noted, exposure to community violence influences the aggressive behaviour of both parents and children (Ramphela, 2002). One may postulate that the high levels of violence within the children's households are as a result of the high levels of violence being experienced in the wider communities in which the children reside. During the research the children would often causally discuss instances of violence that they themselves had witnessed. Of particular concern is the fact that these high levels of violence becomes the accepted norm, which the children are then likely to utilise within their own homes as adults, parents and carers, thus contributing towards cycles of violence and possibly even abuse.

The effects of violence upon the children's identities and sense of belonging are noteworthy. Fears and anxieties, involving safety and well-being, affect the children's sense of self and well-being, also restricting access to the community, thus resulting in the children been kept closer to home and the safety of their neighbourhood (as previously noted, particularly for the girls). It is possible that this results in restricting the fostering of relationships to within the home and possible over identification or attachment to primary caregivers and others within the household.

The impact of sickness

Within a South African perspective, negotiating disadvantage and vulnerability are often closely interlinked with the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS and associated sicknesses. This is reflected in this section whereby attending and visiting clinics and hospitals were often referred to by the children. Of particular importance, and the focus of this section, was that being sick entailed visiting the clinic or hospital and the nurses and doctors within. While sickness is an on-going concern, the doctors and nurses often serve to cushion the effects of being sick. Thus, during a time of particular vulnerability, doctors and nurses serve to contribute towards the child's sense of well-being and self-worth.

The following drawings and excerpts were obtained during workshop 4 (People who help me). The children would bring their drawings to me and explain them. These drawings served to highlight the importance of nurses and doctors to the children.

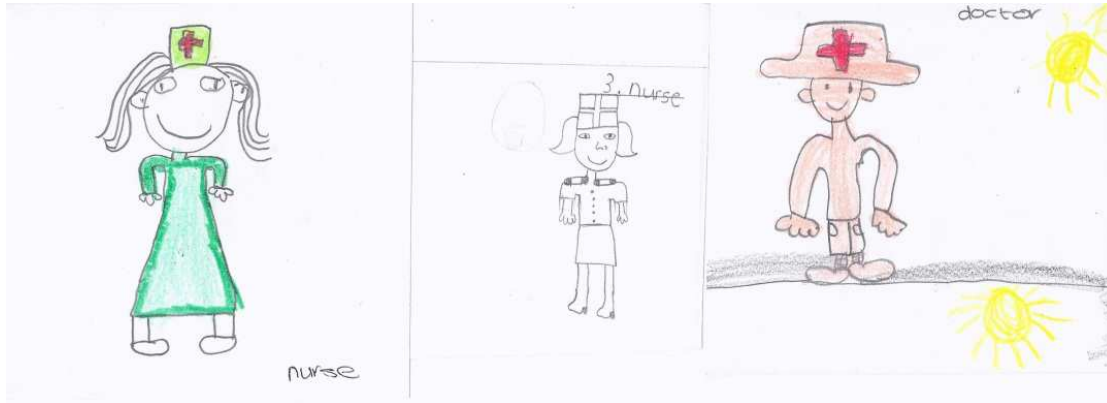


Figure 13: Nurse

Figure 14: Nurse

Figure 15: Doctor

Extract 23: Explanation of figure 13: Nurse

C1: Here is a nurse she is kind, she looks after me. She takes care of me when I am sick. She gave me something when I was sick, it made me better.

Extract 24: Explanation of figure 14: Nurse

C23: When I had to go to hospital there was a kind nurse. She smiled a lot and spoke to me. It made me feel special and like I wasn't that sick anymore. It helped me get better.

Extract 25: Explanation of figure 15: Doctor

C3: When I was sick I went to the clinic and the doctor seen me. He listened to what was wrong with me and was helping me to get better. He was paying attention to me and helping me and looking after me and it was good because it made me feel good inside and then I got better because of it.

The above excerpts, serve to highlight the fact that being kind, paying attention and listening to the children were all deemed vital components. This can contribute towards the idea that they are important and worth being listened to. The nurses and doctors were generally viewed by the children as helping them or their loved ones. Many of the children recounted stories of kindness and compassion by the doctors; they said that when this occurs, they feel "good inside" and "like I was

really listened [to]”. The importance of “being listened [to]” was repeatedly emphasised in the children’s stories and experiences of doctors and nurses.

Very few of the children were able to recount bad or negative experiences of doctors and nurses. One may hope that this is due to the fact that they have never had such experiences; alternatively this may be due to the fact that the children did not recount such stories due to the fact that the workshop was termed “people who help me”. During the feedback session when this was noted, one of the parents suggested that this may be due to the fact that adult caregivers protect the children and the children are not necessarily exposed or, rather, do not notice these experiences.

Due to the high levels of sickness it becomes natural to assume that doctors and nurses would play a large role in shaping children’s sense of belonging and contributing towards their identity. Of particular importance is that the children felt listened to and cared for. These feelings contribute towards the children being able to answer “Is it ok to be me?” in an affirming manner, serving to enhance the children’s well-being and esteem at a time of particular vulnerability. This also serves to emphasise the fact that nurses and doctors within the community play a vital ameliorating and affirming role for the children within the community.

The security, stability and safety of school

Findings have recently indicated that schools can provide the children with a sense of safety and control over their environment, aiding in enhancing the children’s identity (Bray, Gooskens et al., 2010 and Soudien, 2007). Findings in this study serve to confirm these findings. This section will discuss these findings by focusing upon the care derived from the school environment, particularly the affirming and consistent role of the teachers within the school.

The sense of being cared for and looked after included being cared for when injured or ill and being fed. Many of the children noted that if they injure themselves or get sick, they will always tell their teachers because then they will get treated. One child recounted a story of how she was burnt by boiling water from a kettle; she noted that her mother was unable to afford any medical care for her. However, the school was able to take her to a doctor and obtain the necessary treatment for her. For some of the children, the food eaten at school was the only full meal that they consistently received.

The children repeatedly referred to the fact that school provides many opportunities for them to meet and interact with both adults and other children. One of the more confident and social children in the group voiced the view that making friends at the school has assisted in giving him the confidence to make new friends outside of school. He noted that when he began at the school he felt very scared and shy to make new friends, but this changed because he was seen as being “fun and funny” at school. As reflected by findings such as those of Soudien (2007) a great deal of time spent at school revolves around the negotiation of peer relationships. The majority of the cohort agreed that school provided them with an opportunity to learn as well as also to develop an understanding of who they are and where they come from. Arguably this assists in developing the children’s integrity, dignity and ability to make sense of their lives (Trawick-Smith, 2006), thereby assisting in fostering the child’s sense of self-esteem and self-worth.

The affirming and consistent role of teachers

The children derive a great many benefits from their teachers. These benefits include: being accepted for who they are, being encouraged in a supportive manner, and feelings of safety due to the consistency of the teachers’ expectations and boundaries. Reflective of this is the following excerpt, derived from the concluding discussion of workshop 4 (People who help me).

Extract 26: It's like the teachers want to understand me more

- C12: I know that I will be safe at school and that no-one can hurt me, if they do then I tell the teacher.
- C17: My teacher shouts at anyone who hurts or teases, then I feel safe because I know she will keep me safe.
- C19: The one day I got a sore tooth and Aunty Eve [teacher] took me to the dentist; she made sure that I was ok.
- C21: The teachers love me and I love them, I can do anything, but I know that it will be ok
[...]
- C12: It's like the teachers want to understand me more. Um, it's like being a rock and always knowing what is inside the rock, even when you make the rock so, so angry, it is still there and you know it will be ok.
- C19: I like to be knowed by the teachers; they make me feel good because I always know what I can do.
- C7: Yes, they are strict and get angry if someone don't forget to follow the classroom rules.
- R: Is this good?
- C7: [some children nod] Um, I'm thinking yes it is, maybe it is making school a safer place to live.
- C13: Once someone slapped me in the playground, I cried, and I cried and I cried. But my teacher he listened to me and told me it was ok and told me "who did it?" and I told him and then he punished that person. It was good because you not allowed to be slapped, it was good because I felt cared and cared for.

As noted above the children derive a great deal of benefit from the teacher-child relationship. Most notably, the children feel safe in the predictable and stable knowledge regarding rules and boundaries, understanding that these are all consistent and fairly imposed upon all the children equally. This security and stability, like that of the mother, results in the children deriving a sense that the world is a safe space to negotiate. The care and compassion of the teachers was also noted by the children as being important, thereby providing psychological and emotional support for them. In essence, the children felt that there were respected and understood at school. This served to enhance their sense of worth and self-esteem.

The teachers appear to take on a similar role to that of the children's parent, particularly the mother, whereby they are taught social cues and boundaries. The clear rules, boundaries and

expectations set by the teachers creates an environment which is seemingly stable and consistent. This has an effect upon other relationships within the school, whereby an ethos of care and compassion is created and generally adhered to by the children. Additionally, the children described how the teachers had taught them “how to be good” and “good manners”. One child felt that his interactions with peers have changed (for the better) due to the fact that he had been taught by the teachers how to make friends and “be kind”. This is due to an increased sense of social awareness, peer and teacher influence and the specific behavioural code taught at the school.

School focused, as well as peer focused possible identities are generally perceived as more important by children whose home lives are unstable (Oyserman & James, 2010). This may also be indicative of the tendency that, when children have few role models within their immediate environment, they attempt to look elsewhere for people to model “good behaviour”. This emphasis on “being good” was often referred to by the children, reflective of the findings of Dawes and Donald (1994) and Oyserman and James (2010). It stresses the importance of stable role models, such as teachers, within the community. The children will seek to aspire to “good behaviour” as modelled by those role models.

The ameliorating role of friends and peers

This section aims to emphasise that one of the most important protective factors of negotiating vulnerability is that of peers and friends. These relationships provide a platform from which children often feel secure enough to explore and experiment with societal norms and relationship rules. Additionally, the role and influences of friends and peers was similar to that of the children’s siblings, whereby the child-child relationships serve to teach the child values such as co-operation and compromise (Trawick-Smith, 2006). This section will initially explore how children negotiate their peer relationships and then how these relationships serve as a protective barrier against a disadvantaged childhood.

All of the excerpts below were derived from workshop 3 (What makes me happy and sad?). Within this workshop the importance of friendships and peers was emphasised, particularly when the children drew what makes them happy and sad. Many drew experiences with friends on both the happy and sad side whereby playing and feeling accepted by friends creates happiness and a sense of belonging, while fighting results in feeling sad and worried. When the large number of friends being drawn was noted, one child explained it as follows.

Extract 27: When I am with my friends I can be who I want

- C1: When I am with my friends I can be who I want. This means that I am just me.
R: Are there times when you are not you?
C1: Um, no, I am always me, but I have more like time to just try different things. I can be grumpy and angry with my friends if I want to, they can make me grumpy and angry. But with adults I always smile and say I am good.

Based upon this, one may argue that friends, particularly close friends, create feelings of security and safety. Possibly, amongst close friends there is also an element of unconditional acceptance. This, then, becomes a platform from which the children can experiment with social rules and cues. As noted by C1, she feels more comfortable and accepted amongst her friends, fostering a secure sense of belonging and possibly providing opportunities for her to experiment with her sense of self. However, friendships are still largely guided along the need for acceptance and to belong. This was noted by C13 when he discussed his drawing of what makes him sad. Below are the picture and his vignette.



Figure 16: This is my friend

Extract 28: Explanation of figure 16: This is my friend

C13: This is my friend. We are good friends, best at playing together. When we fight we get angry and then he won't play with me. It makes me cry, waaaaa, like that, and tears come. We fight cause sometimes we don't want to share things and he won't listen to what I want to do and I keep telling him to do things. I want him to stay being my friend so 'ok' I say I forgive you, but you must share things.

Based upon this excerpt, C13 explains how he is able to navigate social rules amongst peers. His desire to maintain the friendship resulted in him ultimately reaching a compromise and forgiving his friend. This serves to highlight the desire and need for him to belong and be accepted. The need to be accepted and belong were also highlighted in the following vignette.



Figure 17: I am happy playing ball and sad when my friend hits me

Extract 29: Explanation of figure 17: I am happy playing ball and sad when my friend hits me

C3: This is me, I am happy and then I am sad.

R: Can you tell me about being happy?

C3: I am happy at playing soccer. My friends and I all play soccer.

R: Why do you play soccer?

C3: I dunno, it's like we all play so there are lots of us to play. I won't play if no-one else does. Playing soccer is fun and I am good so then everyone asks me to play also, then I feel good and play some more. My boetie also plays and we watch him and see the good moves.

For C3 playing soccer results in recognition and praise, thereby affirming his sense of self and identity. As noted by Trawick-Smith (2006), peers serve as a natural comparison allowing children to measure their own accomplishments. This was largely demonstrated above. When discussing what they spend their time doing, the children repeatedly referred, in various ways, to the fact that the activities that they participate in are largely determined by the role and influence of their peers and siblings. Thus, their friendships are guided along lines of acceptance and the need to belong. The children often learn (and are taught) games and sporting activities from each other.

For the children, playing together appears to assist in establishing feelings of self-worth and affirmation. Even those children who felt that they were not good at games or sporting activities expressed enjoyment and felt that they enhance self-esteem. During workshop 5 (People, places and objects that are important for me), for example, one of the children utilised this photograph to discuss the importance of soccer in fostering feelings of belonging amongst his peers:



Photograph 5: Friends are important

Extract 30: Explanation of photograph 5: Friends are important

C10: I always lose at soccer and ball games, but they are fun because we all play and then I feel happy because we are all together. This is good because then I am happy and laughy. I am like this, friends are important and they need to be good friends and helping friends. They need to help you no matter what. Other friends are just there sometimes and they are not such very good friends.

As previously noted, for many of the children, peer relationships were also a source of security and stability. It is during times such as adult drinking and socialising over the weekends that the children felt that it was important for them to have support outside their households. Of particular importance were the roles of friendships; when the parents are engaging in “adult activities”, the children are then afforded an increased freedom to visit friends nearby. It was noted with the cohort of children that the friendships appear to be guided to some extent along these lines of “freedom”, whereby some of the friendships develop according to accessibility. This includes factors such as

parents who drink together, children who live close to each other and the curfews imposed upon the children.

Bray and Clacherty (2010) note that central to children's identities is the quality of their everyday interpersonal relationships, from which they are able to derive encouragement, support and a sense of self-efficacy when these relationships are guided by trust and reciprocity. This finding was repeatedly emphasised by the children in relation to their friendships with peers. Friends, particularly close friends, create feelings of security and safety. This serves as a platform from which the children can experiment with social rules and cues. However, these experimentations are restricted due the fact that the children also desire acceptance and belonging.

Within this framework one can understand that, if new secure opportunities to interact are consistently presented, the child will develop more social knowledge and thus have new possibilities to learn about the world and themselves. Garbarino (1992) argues that the involvement of children in increasingly complex social settings provides opportunities to establish caring and nurturing relations. However, these relations can also prove to be detrimental to the children's sense of belonging if the interactions are not supportive and caring, thus provoking anxiety and creating an insecure sense of self-esteem. Affirming relationships, in this case friendships, scaffold further attempts to negotiate belonging and affirm identity (Swick & Williams, 2006).

CONCLUDING REMARK

A child's questions of identity and belonging involve the questions of 'Who am I?', 'Where do I belong' and 'Is it ok to be me?' Negotiations involving familial belonging, gender and stereotypes, and vulnerabilities form the three core themes by which the children answer these questions. This

research served to highlight children's relational identities and the importance of secure, quality adult-child and child-child relationships.

Firstly, familial belonging emphasises the importance of security, stability and predictability. A child's relational identity and sense of belonging are derived primarily from their mothers. Mothers in this context are not necessarily biological but are primary caregivers who embed social rules and cues. Arguably, reflective of the violence within South Africa, harsh and punitive discipline is often utilised by the mothers. The role of fathers, though, has taken a back seat due to their absences. However, when present they often provide a more relaxed, albeit not necessarily consistent adult-child relationship. The importance of belonging within an extended family, particularly the role of grandmothers within the household was also emphasised.

The second theme, negotiating gender and stereotyping, served to highlight the fact that boys have a great deal more freedom around the community. Based upon the data, this was due to concerns involving safety and security, and due to cultural and societal expectations. These factors were elaborated upon with the themes of restricted movement and the care-giving of siblings.

Lastly, negotiating vulnerability revolved around the realities facing many children in a disadvantaged community. For the children in this study, these included interpersonal violence, the abuse of alcohol and sickness. These contexts of vulnerability were offset, or the effects reduced, due to a number of important and protective relationships within the community. This included the role of health care professionals, teachers and friends.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Tutu (2011, p. 1) noted that children are "... both the treasures we wish to protect and the resources we need to do so." In order to do this we need to listen to the voices of the children. This dissertation listened to the voices of the children as they shared and explored how they negotiate their identity and belonging. This chapter aims to draw the threads together by examining the literature, the voices of the children and the data analysed. The major findings and themes that were identified during the course of the research process will be highlighted and discussed. Reflective of these, emphasis is placed upon the importance of interpersonal relationships, interconnectedness and context-specific influences of a disadvantaged childhood.

DISCUSSION

The findings in this research indicate that the children in the study negotiate their identity according to three broad factors. They define themselves in relation to their parents and familial belonging. Building upon this, their identities are conceptualised and guided according to the influences of gender and behaviour which stereotypes the roles acquired by the boys and girls. The children also define themselves in accordance with other individuals, such as teachers and peers within the wider community. Many individuals within the children's lives have a potential ameliorating role against the vulnerabilities of disadvantage. If the children's familial life fails to provide support and an affirming sense of self, then, ideally, it is those within the community who are able to provide this. If these negotiations are affirming and positive, the children develop a secure sense of self, the concept that "It is ok to be me."

The data emphasised the fact that children's understandings of their identity largely incorporates attributes, qualities and inclinations of those closest to them. Reflective of the literature and data, it is through relating to others that an individual is exposed to various experiences and is subsequently

able to develop increasingly complex and multiple identities. The following discussion aims to further elaborate upon these factors; namely, how relationships and belonging guide identity, the relationships which contribute towards a child's sense of self, and the vital impact of familial belonging and how children negotiate disadvantage.

How relationships and belonging guide identity

Identities are both a state of 'being' and a process of 'becoming' (Uprichard, 2008). The children demonstrated this by noting how their identities change and develop as they are increasingly exposed to various relationship opportunities. As discussed in the literature and the research findings, this process of 'becoming' is a constantly evolving process of engagement and negotiation with the world and the contexts that a child exists within. How a child answers her own questions of identity can hinder or enhance her self-esteem and sense of self-worth. However, these become increasingly complex in a situation where possible emotional and physical needs, due to various reasons, are not adequately met. Children's identities are not simply about the acknowledgement that they make their own personal choices, guided by the differing groups in which they belong. It is also about how others define the child, how she is understood and accorded respect. From this viewpoint of identity and belonging, one can recognise that affirming relationships are more likely to scaffold further attempts to negotiate belonging in an affirming manner.

The quality and type of children's social experiences often serve to either enhance or hinder their sense of who they are. This reflects a child's negotiation with the world in increasingly larger circles of belonging as the child grows older. This recognition emphasises what Dawes and Donald (2000) term 'developmental epochs', whereby new experiences of belonging assist in expanding and developing identities. This is guided by the increased physical and psychological maturation, as well as new tasks that are then set by society. For the children in this study, the set of influences can be seen as follows: first, the role of the household, particularly parents and extended family; second,

still with a focus upon the home are gender and stereotyping behaviour with regards to restricted movement and care-giving; and, thirdly is the role of others within the community, most notably health-care professionals, teachers and friends/peers. Individuals such as soccer coaches and neighbours, to a lesser degree, were also a factor within the community. The children allocate the majority of their time within these relationships. Arguably, these relationships serve differing functions for the children. However, the importance, first, of acceptance and recognition and, second, of safety and security, were deemed as particularly important attributes of these relationships. These relationships will be further elaborated upon later in the chapter.

Important relationships guiding identity

Findings in this study indicate that the children appear to traverse varying identities, according to adult-child and child-child relationships. The children repeatedly described ways in which they behave and act differently amongst children as opposed to with adults. Arguably this is reflective of the findings by Trawick-Smith (2006) whereby adult-child relationships are based upon a more hierarchical system of teaching and 'knowing', while child-child relationships afford a more equal or egalitarian status amongst peers and siblings. Within adult-child relationships, affirmation and positive regard are often derived from good behaviour and doing what is expected. The children noted the fact that it is the adults in their lives who teach them how to "be good" and have "good manners". Amongst child-child relationships affirmation and positive regard appear to be more based along the lines of exploration and experimentation of the societal norms and cues. Arguably this is due to the differing subject-position that is occupied according to the differing relationships. How the children defined themselves and their interactions with others are shaped in accordance with their subject-position within those relationships.

Based upon the stories and experiences that the children described, one can conclude that these two types of relationships serve differing functions. Within adult-child relationships the children

particularly seek stability and consistency. They express a desire to understand and be taught the social rules surrounding them. This paves the way for future relationships and interactions with others. Within child-child relationships the children are able to explore, experiment and push the boundaries regarding societal norms and relationship 'rules'.

Affirmation and positive regard are viewed as imperative by the children. Feeling accepted, loved, respected and listened to were all deemed vital by the children and were repeatedly referred to in a variety of ways. This affirmation and positive regard are often linked to the children's perceptions of behaviour and social cues. These social cues, or 'rules of belonging', are taught and re-iterated to the children by various individuals. It is the mother figures and then the teachers within the children's school that initially assisted in teaching these social cues; including societal norms, behaviours and expectations. This is done through talk and behaviour that the children observe. These cues or rules are often put into practise by the children's interaction with siblings and peers, serving to assist the child's sense of belonging and identity in accordance with the rules that they have been taught. A child's behavioural norms and engagement with the world are initially guided by the example of that of their mothers/caregivers. However, as the child grows, other influences such as siblings, neighbours and teachers may assist in changing or developing how a child engages and belongs in the world. For many children, this is a vital ameliorating factor for the development of the children's identities.

As previously noted it is through relating to others that the child is exposed to various experiences and is subsequently able to develop increasingly complex and multiple identities. Thus, to break the "cycle of poverty" and disadvantaged circumstances, supportive, stable and affirming relationships need to be fostered and encouraged. Findings in this research particularly emphasise the importance of the school, particularly teachers, to provide a supportive environment for relationships to be fostered.

Negotiating familial belonging

Based upon the findings of this study, of pivotal importance in this negotiation are that of the child's immediate household and those existing within. It is important to note that these households do not appear to be traditional western type, nuclear households. Instead they are often extended to include different family members and often non-family members. Regardless of who resides within the household, the importance of stability and consistency were deemed important for the children. This security and stability are developed according to the environment within which the child resides; this may include factors such as routine and clear understandings regarding expectations (such as rules). However, more important is affirming emotional and psychological support.

Most important, for the children's negotiations within all spheres of their lives is the vital influencing role of mothers and the stability and consistency subsequently offered. This can be attributed to two possible factors: firstly, the influence of patriarchy and cultural factors aid in creating the traditional 'norms' for parenting roles and expectations; secondly, there is also an absence of father figures due to several reasons, most notable in this research is that of fathers who work away from the home.

The children define mothers not necessarily along lines of biological mothering, but instead as someone who is their primary caregiver and a provider of security and stability. If these two definitions are met, the mother is able in many ways to protect the child from the vulnerabilities of a disadvantaged childhood. Of particular importance to this research is that this protection involves the child feeling supported, loved and accepted. The mother-child relationship also serves to teach children social norms and rules. Findings have indicated that both of these factors enable future secure relationships to develop more readily (Trawick-Smith, 2006).

One may argue that the mother has a number of effects upon a child's relational identity. Firstly, she provides a base from which security and stability are derived. Arguably, this has the potential to

contribute towards a child becoming resilient and confident. As noted by Biersteker and Robinson (2000) resilience is closely linked to the development of emotional intelligence. Findings, such as by Sharma and Sharma (2010), have reflected this, indicating that children who feel worthy and capable are far more likely to be optimistic and continue to do well in social settings outside the home. Secondly, by teaching the child social cues and expectations, the mother is enabling the child to behave outside the home in accordance to certain societal norms. It is likely that this has implications for any subsequent relationships. For example, a child who is taught and conveys acceptable behaviour is more likely to experience affirmative regard from others regarding her identities. Alternatively, a child who is unable to follow certain societal norms is likely to feel a sense of failure or being unaccepted by others. This is likely to affect her identities in a non-affirming manner.

While mothers are a constant source of security and stability, fathers were often described by the children as being more inconsistent or unstable. The children's relationships with their fathers often invokes confusion and anxiety because their feelings of being accepted, valued and included are punctuated with long absences. These absences result in the children questioning themselves, particularly with regard to whether it is something that they have done which has resulted in their fathers' absences. This creates feelings of low self-worth and esteem. The fathers provide two vital functions for the children's identities. Firstly, their presence provides seemingly more financial security for the children. Secondly, they provide a more relaxed or fun adult-child relationship, based upon playing games and laughing. However, these father-child relationships are not consistent due to fathers being absent for extended periods.

Dawes and Donald (2000) emphasise that a consistent and predictable household, with a receptive caregiver fosters the development of self-esteem and identity. Regardless of whom lives within the household, the stability and emotional support of those within fosters opportunities for various

relational engagements which are vital in fostering feelings of belonging, well-being and self-worth. In addition, for the children a secure and stable household is often how the child views the behaviour of the adults in relation to themselves. Feelings of love, support and being accepted contribute towards the child feeling secure and stable within her home. This is also closely linked to how those within the household behave in relation to the children. For example, as described by one child, feeling loved results in him feeling “great” and “happy”.

Large households also have the potential to protect the children against some of the effects of vulnerability. For example, financial support may be provided and the responsibilities as the primary caregiver may also be distributed. This can alleviate some of the pressures upon the household. For many of the children the patient care-giving of grandmothers was largely reflective of this; the grandmothers remain at home while the mothers are at work. It is the grandmothers who remain within the household who have the time available to listen, instil values and interact with the children that serve to cushion many of the detrimental effects of disadvantage. Thus, they provide a vital psychological support against the effects of disadvantage.

The children who do not derive the needed security and stability from their familial belonging are, arguably, at a disadvantage due to the fact that their societal rules, particularly derived from their mothers, may include psychological factors such as feelings of worthlessness and helplessness which impinges upon their ability to socially engage and interact. However, if outside the home secure and supportive relationships are provided, such as by a supportive teacher or neighbour, then a child’s sense of identity and belonging may be enhanced. This is cognisant with the transactional model proposed by Donald and Dawes (2000). Based upon this study one can postulate that many of the children have derived these relationships largely from their schooling environment, but also from their neighbours, healthcare professionals and, for some of the boys, from their soccer coaches.

Gender and stereotyping influences identity and belonging

Ratele and Duncan (2008) argue that one's values are derived from negotiations with others and are then signified through shared meanings. In order to feel a sense of acceptance and belonging, the children attempt to negotiate their relationships alongside the shared meanings of accepted societal norms and values within which they belong. When this is done, the child's sense of self-worth and esteem is built upon due to the recognition of those surrounding the child. Thus children are more likely to conform unknowingly to gender roles and stereotypes surrounding them. This was evidenced in both the boys' and girls' behaviour. For the girls care-giving, particularly by siblings, contributes largely to their identities, while for the boys, playing soccer and being outside serves to shape their identities.

It is often the girls or female siblings who adopt a largely care-giving role around the household. As previously noted, the care-giving experienced by siblings differs greatly from that of adults. This is largely due to sibling relationships allowing children the opportunity to test their sense of belonging in a protected and secure way. This also affords the opportunity for a more unconditional and ameliorating effect upon the children's identities. Older siblings influence the behaviour of other siblings, often becoming important "role models". The children's own sense of who they are appears to be guided by these influences and the role of their siblings as the younger siblings place a great deal of emphasis upon aspiring to be like or similar to their older siblings.

As noted in the literature, the importance of creating a number of close relationships is vital. Based upon the data one may postulate that boys differ from the girls based upon the fact that the girls have fewer, but closer relationships, while the boys have a wider circle of relationships, but these are not as close. This can affect how children cope and deal with factors such as violence. Findings, such as by Duncan and Rock (2003) as cited in Louw and Louw (2007), indicate that pre-adolescent boys are more likely to display stress-related symptoms subsequent to exposure to violence. This

was largely attributed to the boys' increased exposure to violence. Arguably, one may build upon this by noting that more quality relationships serve to provide a supportive mechanism for the girls which the boys do not necessarily receive. Although not specifically investigated, one may postulate that a few close, secure, quality relationships are more important than being exposed to a wider number of not necessarily well connected, close relationships.

Negotiating vulnerability and protective relationships

Children are in possession of multiple identities. This was reflected in the data through two differing ways: firstly, it was through the fact that children's identities change in accordance to subject-positions. These differences were particularly noticeable in adult-child relationships and child-child relationships. Secondly, largely mirroring the literature, identities are dependent upon the context within which an individual operates. These contexts differ in that they may either directly affect the child, for example, the concerns regarding safety or the issue of alcohol abuse indirectly affect the child, particularly with regards to the quality of the relationships surrounding the child.

As discussed in the literature review, children view their own identities largely based upon the places to which they belong. They viewed their sense of belonging in the family as the most vital aspect that guides their identity. Upon entering the school system the children felt that the circles within which they operated expanded. This was largely as a result of the influence of the adults within the school environment. The vital role of peers and friends was also repeatedly noted by the children. It is the quality and type of these interactions that are of particular importance, thus serving to guide further attempts to negotiate belonging.

Isin and Wood (1999) argue that identities are comprised of partial fragments based upon the differing contexts within which a child operates. These partial fragments or multiple identities were examined with regards to the relationships surrounding the child. Franchi and Swart (2008) criticise this by noting that when identity is viewed as different, completely separate socialising systems the fluidity and multiplicity of identities, which is derived from all contexts is overlooked. Additionally, certain aspects of children's identities do overlap and affect the whole child in all contexts. For example, a child who feels worthless at home is more likely to have similar feelings at school. However, as indicated in the research, there is still potential for these feelings to change if the child is exposed to meaningful, stable relationships. Perhaps this capacity to change, particularly feelings of low esteem and worth, can be partially attributed to the children's desire to utilise and adopt what they deem as good characteristics. In light of this it is vital to note that different identities are present in different contexts but that these contexts are all connected when viewing the child as a holistic being.

Dawes and Donald (2000) argue that children are active participants, thus affecting their own development and interaction with their environment. This is acknowledged; however, reflective of the data is the fact that the children's identity development is also restricted according to the context of a disadvantaged childhood. Often within the spaces that children navigate, there are opportunities to experience different types of relationships, for example, adult-child and child-child. The opportunities for differing relationships within these spaces have the potential to be a protective measure, whereby there is the increased opportunity for relationships which are affirming and unconditional.

Often referred to or noticed by the children were the continuous, underlying threads of a South African childhood which have been noted in many research findings. These included: poverty; the influences of alcohol abuse; safety and violence; the influence of illness (often HIV/AIDS). While

these problems facing childhood do not occur along the lines of race and wealth, they are often noted as increasingly common in disadvantaged communities. Arguably an amalgamation of these factors is also a direct and an indirect result of what James, Jenks and Prout (1998) term the “cycle of poverty”. Findings have indicated that, for children to escape the “cycle of poverty”, their sense of belonging to and acceptance by meaningful others are vital. Based upon the study, it is argued that for this cohort, the opportunities derived from their school context play a vital role in this regard. However, this recognition does not serve to detract from other vital influences such as parents, siblings, neighbours, peers and health care professionals.

Based upon the findings, the school plays a vital role in developing the child’s identity and enhancing belonging. The critical role that school plays in assisting to develop the children’s integrity, dignity and ability to make sense of their lives was repeatedly acknowledged and noted throughout the study. Most important for the children was the fact that school provides them with a sense of safety, acceptance and the opportunity to learn. The vital role of the teachers was also emphasised during the study and was reflective of the ameliorating role that the school can play. Also reflective of the literature were the findings that of particular importance to the children are the friendships that they make from attending school.

The research emphasised the fact that a pivotal protective factor against vulnerability is that of peers and friends. These relationships provide a platform from which children often feel secure enough to explore and experiment with societal norms and relationship rules. The role and influences of friends and peers were similar to that of the children’s siblings, whereby the child-child relationships serve to teach the children values such as co-operation and compromise (Trawick-Smith, 2006). Friends, particularly close friends, create feelings of security and safety, thus serving as a platform from which the children can experiment with social rules and cues. However, these experimentations are restricted due the fact that the children also desire acceptance and belonging.

Concluding remark

Identity is a multi-dimensional and complex phenomenon. This has been reflected in both the literature and analysed data. This dissertation has argued for the recognition that traditional westernised psychological approaches to both identity and research are not necessarily appropriate for the South African context. In recognition of this, the participatory research methodology was utilised. This placed greater emphasis on the contexts within which the children operate and allows them to be researchers of their own identities. The children placed emphasis upon the importance of relationships and human connectedness whereby children are inextricably interlinked and shaped by their various interpersonal relationships. As noted by Markus and Kityama (1991, p. 226) "The sense of belongingness to a social relation may become so strong that it makes better sense to think of the relationship as the functional unit of conscious reflection." This is reflective of findings, such as those by Brooker and Woodhead (2008) and Markus and Kitayama (1991), which state that African cultures emphasise interdependent relationships as opposed to the more independent westernised cultures.

Identities which can be viewed as relational or interpersonal are based upon three factors (Markus & Cross, 1990 as cited in Boucher, Parker Tapias, & Chen, 2005). Firstly, thoughts, feelings and behaviours may be internalised and experienced as one's own. Many of the children in the study demonstrated the fact that they have internalised their parents' beliefs and attitudes regarding appropriate behaviour within society. The children's thoughts, feelings and behaviours were often modelled upon the adults in their lives, particularly mothers and teachers. Secondly, the children's identities are only able to exist within the context of others. However, as noted, the 'context of others' is dependent upon the wider social, cultural and economic contexts within which the children and those relating to the children operate. Lastly, the children's experiences with others are often utilised in the evaluation and maintenance of the children's identities. This allows identities to

be constantly revised and adapted. This was particularly noticeable when the children entered school and were exposed to an increased range of possible relationships.

NOTED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE LITERATURE AND DATA

The issue of peer pressure and having to conform to friendship groups was not present in the data. Findings such as those by Connolly (2002) as cited in Brooker and Woodhead (2008) have indicated that children demonstrated preferences to develop peer relationships from within cultures and traditions of their own respective communities. They thus, unknowingly conform and adapt their behaviour to fit into their own peer groups. Arguably, reflective of these findings the children have unknowingly adapted to their peer groups and hence peer pressure is present but not directly noted by the children. One may also postulate that this is due to the age of the children and that peer pressure becomes increasingly prominent as the children reach adolescence. It is also possible that peer pressure is present but was never adequately explored during the research.

As noted in the literature review, gender, religion and culture are three pivotal markers of difference, thus providing meaning to the contexts in which one operates (Boucher, Parker Tapias, & Chen, 2005). These are deeply engrained within society, shaping relationships and how these relationships are conducted. Within the data, there was a great deal of reference by the children to the influences of gender and patriarchy. Religion and culture were not widely or repeatedly noted by the children. This may be attributed to the age of the children. It is also possible that this is due to gender being a prominent issue because the children were able to perceive the differences between themselves as boys or girls. However, with both religion and culture there are not perceived differences guiding the children's relational identity. All of the children were Xhosa speaking, black children and they all follow Christian beliefs and understandings. It can be argued that culture and religion play a vital, often undetected role of influencing the children's identities. However, the children are often not directly aware of these influences. They are aware of the influences of gender,

due to the fact that they see themselves in relation to others as either boy or girl. Thus culture and religion are also pervading, albeit indirect, influences upon the children's lives, affecting behaviour, social cues and values.

The role and influence of racial identity was never discussed or noted by the children. When presenting the results and discussion with the group, this was noted and the children were encouraged to comment upon this observation. They all agreed that skin colour was not important, but that they also have had few opportunities to meet children of other races. This has interesting implications for findings, such as by Connolly (2002) cited in Brooker & Woodhead (2008), that argue that children tend to demonstrate clear preferences to develop peer relationships from within the cultures and traditions of their own respective communities, thus reflecting the development of strong in-group preferences. While this is true, in a South African setting perhaps the issue has additionally become more one of accessibility and opportunities for children in disadvantaged communities to meaningfully socialise and interact with children in other communities (Bray & Brandt, 2007). This serves to limit a child's opportunities to develop alternative identities, as well as serves to perpetuate traditional apartheid-type segregation.

LOOKING AHEAD AND RECOMMENDATIONS

How children's identities can be fostered in South Africa

The findings of this study emphasise the importance of children developing identities which include feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. Further opportunities for children to develop these attributes are required, particularly when children are operating alongside the backdrop of issues such as poverty, illness and substance abuse. Ideally, this needs to be done by utilising a multi-dimensional approach, whereby all individuals who are influential in the children's lives are encouraged to become involved. Flisher and Gevers (2006) recommend that these interventions should include

both universal and specific interventions. This would serve to assist and engender children's mental health within community and school settings. Arguably these need to stretch across the divides of inequality within South Africa.

An increasing body of research points to the remarkable agency and resilience that many children growing up in disadvantaged situations faced. This resilience is often as a result of secure and supportive relationships. A child who is resilient is deemed socially competent, has a sense of purpose, is able to problem solve and be autonomous (Krovetz, 1999). A great many stories and experiences shared during the study indicated the resilience of children. However, one needs to be aware that to simply acknowledge children as resilient can overlook the fact that children are largely dependent upon others to have their needs met (Peirson, 2005). Legally and ethically it is the role of the adults within a household, school, community and country to ensure that children's needs are met. While children's resilience needs to be celebrated, it should not be utilised as a scapegoat for inadequate care. It can be argued that the resilience witnessed during the research process was largely one based upon the children's ability to seek different ways and means to belong to "circles" which affirm and engender feelings of self-worth and esteem. Additionally, it can be postulated that this resilience is also linked to the concept that children have differing and unique personal identities, which help to enhance or encourage resilience in some children.

Injuries towards self-esteem and identity are regarded as precursors to, even markers of, mental ill-health (Sharma & Sharma, 2010). Many findings have indicated the high degree of continuity between mental health issues in childhood and adolescence and that these continue to be a problem into adulthood (Fisher & Gevers, 2006). There is also a correlation between low self-esteem and worth, and issues such as unsafe sex, interpersonal violence and alcohol abuse are common concerns in South Africa. A study amongst high school students in Cape Town has found that exposure to violence is closely linked to subsequent depression, anxiety and post-traumatic

stress disorder (Flisher & Gevers, 2006). Thus it becomes essential to address children's mental health, not only on an intervention level, but also on the wider preventative level, thereby encouraging and fostering each child's sense of identity and belonging. Programmes that creatively address mental health are vital. This includes programmes such as the 'Healthwise Intervention' which delivers activities to encourage positive behaviours during leisure time, such as community service activities, and playing games with friends in safe environments. This programme is run in school and community settings. It aims to foster mental well-being and develop children's identities by teaching children how to make decisions, regulate their emotions, resolve conflicts and overcome boredom in healthy and productive ways (Caldwell, et al., 2004).

Participatory research and children

The process of this research has served to emphasise the importance of listening to our children. We need to provide them with skills to enhance and encourage participation. However, for this to occur we need to critically examine our own conceptual understanding of childhood and our expectations of children. If these are not adequately examined, the validity and importance of this paradigm will forever remain a peripheral one. The United Nations (1989) has recognised the vital importance of children's identity, which needs to be shaped and guided through participation with those who matter the most, our children.

Another important factor that one needs to examine is the degree of importance afforded to the children's participation. If carefully and soundly conducted, participatory research with children, just like that with adults, has the potential to empower and educate, providing children with the opportunity to explore their own knowledge and, ultimately, have the confidence to disseminate this knowledge back into their own communities. This becomes a cyclic process whereby the children become increasingly resourced and knowledgeable about the world in which they exist, and

are able to share this knowledge and hence affirm their identities. This degree of importance can be further enhanced if adequate monitoring and evaluation occurs (Wilkinson, 2000). Participatory research with children needs to be monitored and evaluated by the children and young people. This requires careful training of youngsters in collaboration with sensitive researchers or facilitators.

Participatory research with children cannot and should not be utilised in an identical fashion to that of participatory research with adults. For participatory research with children to develop, certain tenets have to be explored. These include: the degree of involvement of children and young people, the importance of adequate scaffolding to ensure free participation, and the training of sympathetic researchers who are experienced in working with children and child development. Based upon these tenets, further research findings and methodological proposals are required with a specific focus on child participation. Only then will the necessity and importance of this paradigm be truly recognised and valued.

Future scope for research

The quality and type of the children's belonging is of pivotal importance for the healthy development of the child. In the light of this it becomes necessary to emphasise the importance of programmes and interventions aimed at assisting relationships fostering belonging, most importantly in the family and the school system. As noted in the literature, any pressures experienced by members within the family impact others within that family. In light of this one may conclude that successful programmes and interventions aimed at not necessarily the child but at the family or school systems are likely to have beneficial results for the children. Further studies regarding the specific impact of these programmes is pivotal for future planning and funding.

Based upon the findings of this research, it is suggested that future research further examines how children from various South African contexts negotiate their identity and belonging. As noted by

Bray and Clacherty (2010), the everyday lives of children have only been sporadically touched upon and examined. However, research in this area is vital, thus assisting us to move away from traditional western viewpoints regarding identity and development.

This study aimed at examining various factors within the children's environment which contributed towards the development of their sense of identity and belonging. It is recommended that future studies build upon this by examining how children negotiate their identities, with particular interest and emphasis placed upon the role of schools and the relationships which exist within them. As noted by the Department of Education (2001), children from disadvantaged backgrounds require additional support with regards to emotional, financial and home situations. The children in this study receive additional emotional and financial support (in the form of sponsorships), as well as a school feeding programme from the school. One may postulate that this has further assisted in enhancing the children's sense of identity. Therefore, it is recommended that further research regarding identity and the various influences of schools be undertaken.

Participation with children is a gradual, carefully scaffolded process (Hart, 1992). In recognition of this, an attempt was made to build the foundations of participatory research with a cohort of children. However, within this cohort there remains a great deal of scope and potential for this research to be continued and for the knowledge generated to be built upon and extended into the community.

Reflective of recommendations by researchers such as Holloway and Valentine (2000) as cited in Bazuin-Yoder (2011) and Ratele and Duncan (2008), identity within a South African context fails to adequately account for wider influences such as migration, economics and cultural expansion. There is a need for future research to jointly examine children's perspectives and experiences, while acknowledging the fact that wider systems also shape and affect the children's experiences. When

appropriate, this study, largely based upon the views of the children, attempted to acknowledge and account for these influences. However, due to the nature of the study, this was done only in accordance with what the children noted and felt. There is a necessity for future research in South Africa to explore these issues in a more in-depth manner.

CONCLUDING REMARK

Currently, a great deal of emphasis is placed upon the importance of identity within South Africa. However, insufficient research has been conducted specifically upon how children living in a disadvantaged community develop their sense of identity (Richter, Manegold & Pather, 2004), thus failing to focus upon what the children deem as normal, including daily living and interactions. By focusing upon these factors, one is able to obtain a holistic understanding of both identity and belonging which are important indicators of children's emotional well-being. This dissertation placed itself within this research gap, aiming to give voice to those that are often left "voiceless", but who hold the knowledge of their identity negotiations, the children themselves. It is hoped that this study will contribute towards providing a voice for our children, a voice which will be acknowledged and recognised by all.

Researchers are increasingly recognising the importance of context-specific research methodologies and approaches, thus moving away from traditional western practices and paradigms. This includes the participatory research methodology. The concept of children as active participants in research has only recently begun to gain recognition; however, in South Africa the scope and need for such research is vital and should be further utilised.

Developing an identity involves questions such as 'Who am I?', 'Where do I belong?' and 'Is it ok to be me?' These questions are imbibed in a society deeply entrenched along lines of disadvantage and privilege. The answer to these questions guides a child's self-esteem and serves as a foundation

from which a child can either resiliently face her world or perpetuate 'cycles of poverty' and violence. Children's identities are not simply about the acknowledgement that they make their own personal choices, guided by the differing groups to which they belong. Instead, it is also about how the children view themselves in relation to others. This involves the ability to foster quality relationships which provide acceptance and positive regard. In a disadvantaged community these relationships are affected and influenced by certain socio-economic factors. The findings indicate a number of strengths but also areas of possible improvement within the community. However, throughout the research, there were stories of strength, support, love, creativity, adaptability and survival, providing glimmers of hope for children who are negotiating disadvantage.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter to the school regarding the research

24.02.2012

Dear X

Information regarding my Research Thesis

Thank you so much for volunteering to participate in my Masters Research thesis (as part of my Psychology masters, University of Fort Hare)

Research topic:

Negotiating identity and belonging: a child's perspective

The idea is that I will use a technique called 'participatory research', whereby the children are given the opportunity to become active co-researchers.

Together, with the children we will explore the questions of 'who am I?' This will be done through structured sessions/workshops with the children.

To get the project going, I will give each child a disposable camera to take photographs of people, places and objects that are important to them. The project is meant to be fun and will include things such as games, drawings, role play etc.

The aim is for the children to develop a sense of awareness about who they are. The other aim is for me to gain an understanding as to how children develop their sense of identity and belonging within their family, community, at school and amongst peers.

What is produced in these sessions will be analysed and used in my research thesis.

Duration of the research component:

2nd term; we need to decide how we want to structure the sessions (weekly, a few times a week in the morning, after school, in a solid block week etc)

Who would be involved?

Ideally some of the grade 2 & 3's can participate. Perhaps we could do it early in the morning, when the children are arriving, before breakfast, thus it won't affect class time.

Issue of consent and confidentiality:

The school board needs to provide me with a letter stating that they are happy with me to conduct the research at the School.

A letter needs to be sent home to the parents (I will draft a letter for this purpose.)

The children will also be required to give their own consent (I will do this).

I recognise the importance of confidentiality, thus all names will be changed and photographs used will not show individual children.

What would be required?

Preferably a space where we can all work in peace, possibly a classroom or even outside if necessary.

When circumstances dictate I will provide materials for the sessions (however, would it be possible for the children to use the school pencils etc)

It is important to note that nothing negative will be written about the School, the parents or the children. And everyone who participates will at all times remain anonymous.

If X chooses to be named, they will be acknowledged for their support/co-operation – this will be done verbally at the university, as well as in the research thesis.

If necessary, I can provide lesson plans. I am also prepared to come and share my research/findings with the children (in 'child friendly' speak), as well as making a copy of my thesis available to the school for the teachers and the board to read. This will be towards the end of the year.

I am looking forward to an exciting and vibrant project with the children gaining a sense of ownership along the way.

Thank you again.

Regards

Tammy Ridley

(University of Fort Hare, Masters in Counselling Psychology candidate)

Appendix 2: Consent form - parents

March 2012

Dear Parents/Carers

Invitation for your child to join a research project on identity and belonging

A Research Project about identity and belonging is going to be conducted at the school. This is going to be a fun and exciting project in which the children are invited to participate. Within a group setting, the children will be involved in activities such as taking photographs, drawing, role play and games. The children will be exploring issues such as “who am I?”, “where do I live” and that “it’s ok to be me”. It is about hearing about what our children have to say, in an exciting and fun way.

When: The project will take place daily over the week of the _____. The children can participate for between 2 and 3 hours per day.

Where: It will take place at the school.

Aim: We are hoping to gain insight into how children develop their sense of identity and belonging amongst their friends, family and the community.

Please note:

- ✓ Participation is voluntary, you need to discuss the project and this letter with your child and together decide if you want to give permission for your child to participate.
- ✓ At the beginning of each session the children will be required to sign their own voluntary consent form.
- ✓ A record of the names and ages of children participating will be kept securely, for the purpose of the research.
- ✓ We will sometimes use photographs, video cameras and observations. However, to ensure that all children remain anonymous we will change the names of all participants and block out any identifying features. The name of the school will also not be disclosed.
- ✓ When the study is finished all data will be shredded.

At the end of the research project, I will return and share my findings with the children. Parents and Carers will also all be invited to attend.

This is meant to be a fun, exciting opportunity and I am looking forward to working with the children on this project. Please feel free to contact Yvonne should you have any questions and she will then send them on to me.

I (parent/legal guardian name) give permission for my child: to participate in the research.

Signed:

Appendix 3: Consent form - children

I,

Understand that I am doing a project about 'who I am' and that it is voluntary (this means that I can choose if I want to do the project or not).

I understand that sometimes we will have our pictures taken, will be videoed and observed (watched by the teachers).

I understand that I will remain anonymous (this means that no-one outside the project will know that I was in this project).

I agree to participate (get involved) in the project and that I can decide not to participate at any time; I just need to tell the teacher.

Name:

.....

Signed:

.....

Date:

.....

Appendix 4: Letter to the parents: the disposable cameras

Disposable Camera project

07/05/2012

Dear Parents/Carers

Each child has been given a camera. The children need to take photographs of people, places and things that are special to them. Please do not take the photographs for the children, it is for the children to take themselves. Please can you help the child to choose what they want to take photographs of, such as sisters, brothers, people that live with them, special toys or places that they like to go.

Please can they return the camera to the school by Wednesday, 9th May 2012. I will then have it developed and the children will use the photographs for the research project. They will then be allowed to take the photographs home.

Looking forward to the project and thank you for your help.

Kind Regards

Tammy Ridley

Appendix 5: Broad research plan (as given to the school)

02.05.2012

Through the utilisation of the participatory research methodology, rich and varied data will be collected. It is anticipated that the following activities may be utilised. Please note, however, that due to the nature of the research, these activities may change or be adapted during the process and as guided by the children.

- **Photovoice:** The children will be introduced to the project by being given a disposable camera to take photographs of people, places and objects that they love. These photographs will then be printed and discussed with the rest of the group. The principle foundation behind this method is to empower children to decide what they want to take photographs about. It is also a method that allows one to document and reflect upon the needs and assets within a community.
- **The generation of a timeline:** The children will have the opportunity to create their own liner timelines depicting a day in their life. This is a common participatory methodology which yields rich information regarding how the child's daily routines shape their sense of identity. The children will then be encouraged to share their timelines with the researcher, who will record the discussion.
- **Drawing:** the children will be given a number of opportunities to explore their identities in non-verbal ways. The utilisation of drawings will be extensively used.
- **Platform theatre:** This provides useful insight into the child's sense of belonging and allows one to gauge who is pivotal in their lives. The emphasis of this exercise is the creation of real characters within the child's environment. These will be recorded and played back to the children to elicit discussion.
- **Focus groups:** The process will include a number of opportunities for the children to explore their thoughts and ideas in small groups. The aim of this task is to help to stimulate creative thinking and to identify the children's sense of identity and belonging.
- **Group discussion:** The children will discuss what they enjoyed and learnt from the week. This will aid as a daily conclusion of the work with the children.

All the research will be photographed and recorded with video and audio cameras – the sole purpose of this is to aid the researcher. All such information will be destroyed after the completion of the thesis. The researcher fully respects confidentiality of all who participate. Any photographs, drawings and other collected data utilised in the thesis will remain confidential and names and faces blanked out.

I am looking forward to a very exciting and busy time with the children!

Appendix 6: Overview of the research process

The workshops took place over a week, every day after school. They were between two and three hours per session.

Workshop 1: Introduction to the research and the topic, where do I belong?

The children were introduced to the project and shared their expectations and suggestions for what they would like to learn and do. Some suggestions were to draw pictures, paint, and act and use music. There was a group discussion regarding the concept of *Who am I?* And *Who lives with me?* A Venn diagram was utilised to illustrate who lives at home with the children. At the end of the session the children were each given a disposable camera. It was explained how they use it and that they are required to take photographs of people, places and things that are important to them. During this session the children repeatedly referred to the things that they do when they are not at school, thus it was suggested (but myself) and then unanimously agreed upon that workshop 2 would revolve around *what I do during the day*.

Number of participants: 24 children

Types of data collected: Venn diagram, drawings, group discussion

Workshop 2: What I do during the day?

The children were asked to share with each other what they do on a daily basis when they are not at school. They drew timelines and pictures to illustrate their daily lives. Based upon the gendered themes occurring in the timelines and pictures some children volunteered to participate in two focus groups. These provided the opportunity to investigate the gendered differences noted by the researcher. At the end of the session the children discussed what they would like to do in the following session. They voted that they would like to explore things that make them happy and sad.

Number of participants: 21 children

Types of data collected: timelines and drawings, focus group re gender and group discussion

Workshop 3: What makes me happy and sad?

Many of the children opted to draw pictures of experiences and issues that make them happy and sad. The subsequent discussions exploring these drawings were centred upon children's relationships with others, particularly their parents, peers and siblings. A theme that repeatedly occurred was the influences of contextual factors upon the children's relationships. For example, how alcohol affects a child's relationship with her parents. A number of children opted to video their feelings – with my assistance, they did this in front of the video camera. At the end of the workshop it was decided that we would continue to explore people that make them happy, by focusing upon people that help me.

Number of participants: 24 children

Types of data collected: drawings, focus group (videoed), group discussion

Workshop 4: People that help me

During this session the children explored how their sense of belonging is guided by people that help and assist them. Many of the children composed short role-plays to illustrate how people in the family and community assist them. These were shared with the class and elicited a great deal of discussion. Some of the other children opted to explore this theme by drawing people who help them. With assistance, these were then ranked according to the degrees of help that are received. During the groups closing reflection it was further explored how individuals within the children's families assist the children and shape their sense of belonging.

Number of participants: 23 children

Types of data collected: Platform theatre, drawings (ranked), group discussion

Workshop 5: People, places and objects that are important to me

With the utilisation of the photographs, the children discussed and shared people, places and objects that are important to them. Through these discussions, the children were able to share relationships and experiences that have contributed towards their sense of identity and where they belong. There was a great deal of discussion about their community and how they feel safe and unsafe in certain areas of the community. Three of the children opted to draw maps to illustrate where they can and cannot go in their community. At the end of the session, the children discussed their experiences from the week, giving advice and suggestions for my research, as well as recommendations for future similar workshops.

Number of participants: 24 children

Types of data collected: photographs/photovoice, drawings (maps), group discussion

Feedback session

This session occurred approximately a month after the research process. Parents and teachers were invited to this session. The data analysis process had begun and themes utilised were identified. This session provided the opportunity for children to give feedback regarding their experiences of the project; additionally, providing the opportunity for the initial research findings to be shared with the cohort. The children were eager to elaborate further upon the findings – providing their own opinions and views. This served to further shape the data analysis process.

Number of participants: 24 children, 2 teachers, 5 parents

Types of data collected: feedback/ group discussion

