

Young men contemplating manhood
in contemporary South Africa

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The contemporary South Africa has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world which strongly influences the lives and future prospects of the South African youth. The aim of this study is to get a better understanding of the lives of young men in a context, where their possibilities to gain employment and reach successful adulthood and manhood are restricted. The attempt is to find out what the young unemployed South African men think about manhood and masculinity and how they navigate in their lives to become the men they aspire to be. In addition, the study discusses about the connections and contradictions between the young men's perceptions and the current reality of the South African society.

The study is influenced by the ethnographic research tradition and it provides a concise description of South Africa and of the direct environment the young men live in. The theoretical framework is built on the concepts of youth, masculinity and social navigation. The data consists of eight ethnographic group conversations with 36 young unemployed South African men, which were implemented during the spring of 2013 in a Non-Profit Organization located in Cape Town, South Africa. The collected data was further analyzed by using content analysis.

The results of the study reveal that social issues such as crime, substance abuse, violence and unemployment have a crucial influence on the young men's lives in South Africa and have forced them to reshape their understanding of real manhood as well as improvise in their lives while navigating their ways towards adulthood. According to the results, the young men oppose the empowerment of women and support the traditional gender order in which an ideal man is a strong breadwinner of the house. However, their masculine identity seems to be under a threat due to their worsened possibilities to maintain the position of the breadwinner in the contemporary South Africa. Although the young men want to educate themselves further and get employment, it seems that in their communities it is almost impossible to be part of a group, feel safe or get income without joining criminal activities.

Studying other societies is essential for social work because many social phenomena are universal and the knowledge gained from studies carried out in different contexts compels to reflect the societal practices of one's own country and question the old models of thinking. This study paints a picture of a country where the young people try to get the best out of the resources there are available for them. The young unemployed South African men feel included in their own communities but, however, when examining their possibilities on a broader societal scale, it seems that young South Africans are often forgotten and excluded from the wider societal practices. Thus, the study raises a question whether young men even have any other options than joining criminal activities in order to survive and fulfil the expectations of being a real man in the contemporary South Africa. Furthermore, the study challenges to contemplate the role of the surrounding societal structures in determining the possibilities one has and the challenges one will face.

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youth, South Africa, manhood, masculinity, navigation, unemployment



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Nuorisotyöttömyys on yksi tämän päivän Etelä-Afrikan suurimmista haasteista ja sillä on suuri vaikutus paikallisten nuorten elämään ja tulevaisuuden mahdollisuuksiin. Tämän pro gradu -tutkielman tarkoitus on saada parempi ymmärrys nuorten miesten elämästä kontekstissa, jossa heidän mahdollisuutensa työllistyä ja saavuttaa hyväksyttävä aikuisuus ovat vaikeutuneet. Tarkoituksena on selvittää mitä työttömät eteläafrikkalaiset nuoret miehet ajattelevat miehuudesta ja maskuliinisuudesta ja miten he luovivat elämässään tullakseen miehiksi, joiksi he haluavat tulla. Lisäksi tutkielma käsittelee niitä yhtymäkohtia ja ristiriitaisuuksia, joita on löydetävissä nuorten miesten näkemysten ja eteläafrikkalaisen yhteiskunnan todellisuuden välillä.

Tutkielmaan on vaikuttanut etnografinen tutkimusperinne ja tarkoituksena on tarjota tiivis kuvaus Etelä-Afrikasta ja siitä ympäristöstä, jossa nuoret miehet elävät. Teoreettinen viitekehys rakentuu nuoruuden, maskuliinisuuden ja luovimisen käsitteiden varaan. Aineisto koostuu kahdeksasta etnografisesta ryhmäkeskustelusta, jotka toteutettiin 36 nuoren työttömän miehen kanssa keväällä 2013 voittoa tavoittelemattomassa järjestössä Kapkaupungissa. Kerätyn aineiston analyysimenetelmänä on käytetty sisällönanalyysiä.

Tutkielman tulokset paljastavat, että Etelä-Afrikan yhteiskunnalliset ongelmat, kuten rikollisuus, päihteidenkäyttö, väkivalta ja työttömyys vaikuttavat laajalti nuorten miesten elämään ja ovat pakottaneet heidät muokkaamaan käsitystään oikeasta miehuudesta sekä improvisoimaan elämässään luoviessaan kohti aikuisuutta. Tulosten mukaan nuoret miehet vastustavat naisten lisääntyntä itsenäisyyttä ja kannattavat perinteistä sukupuolijärjestystä, jossa ideaalimies on perheen vahvana elättäjä. Heidän maskuliininen identiteettinsä näyttää kuitenkin olevan uhattuna, koska miesten mahdollisuudet ylläpitää asemaansa perheen päänä ja elättäjänä ovat huonontuneet tämän päivän Etelä-Afrikassa. Vaikkakin nuoret miehet haluavat kouluttautua pidemmälle ja saada työpaikan, heidän yhteisöissään on melkein mahdotonta olla osa yhteisöä, tuntea olonsa turvallisiksi tai elättää itsensä harjoittamatta rikollista toimintaa.

Muiden yhteiskuntien tutkiminen on välttämätöntä sosiaalityölle koska monet yhteiskunnalliset ilmiöt ovat universaaleja ja eri konteksteissa kerätty tieto pakottaa refleктоimaan oman maan yhteiskunnallisia käytänteitä ja kyseenalaistamaan vanhat ajatusmallit. Tämä tutkielma piirtää kuvan maasta, jossa nuoriso yrittää parhaansa saadakseen irti niin paljon kuin mahdollista niistä resursseista, jotka heillä on käytettävissään. Eteläafrikkalaiset nuoret miehet tuntevat olevansa vahvasti osa omia yhteisöjään, vaikka tarkasteltaessa nuorten mahdollisuuksia laajemmassa yhteiskunnallisessa mittakaavassa, vaikuttaa siltä, että nuoret eteläafrikkalaiset usein unohdetaan ja jätetään ulkopuolelle. Tutkielman tulokset herättävätkin kysymyksen, onko nuorilla mitään muita mahdollisuuksia kuin harjoittaa rikollisuutta selvittääkseen ja täyttääkseen aikuisuuden ja miehuuden vaateet tämän päivän Etelä-Afrikassa. Tämän lisäksi tutkielma haastaa pohtimaan laajemmassa mittakaavassa, kuinka pitkälle ympäröivät yhteiskunnalliset rakenteet määrittelevät sen, mitä mahdollisuuksia ja haasteita kukin joutuu elämässään kohtaamaan.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords

nuoruus, Etelä-Afrikka, miehuus, maskuliinisuus, luoviminen, työttömyys

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1 Introduction and research task

My first personal experience of South Africa was in 2011 when I was an exchange student in Stellenbosch University nearby Cape Town in South Africa. Stellenbosch is a wealthy town where the majority of the students are from well-off families. Just outside the town there is a completely different reality, a township¹ called *Kayamandi* where people struggle daily with housing problems, unemployment and poverty. Apartheid came to an end as an official policy 20 years ago and today's youth have lived all their lives in the Democratic South Africa. Still, the inequalities of the country are striking and many young people do not have the possibility to make progress in their lives. The situation in South Africa provoked a lot of feelings in me which, consequently, made me want to know more about the local youth and how they see their life in contemporary South Africa.

Within the recent years youth unemployment has increased drastically all over the world and today it is one of the biggest social challenges confronted by modern societies. According to International Labor Organization (2012, 7), nearly 75 million young people are unemployed worldwide and the rate will increase in the coming years. South Africa has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world. According to the UN world youth report (2011, 95), 51 % of South Africans aged 15–24 are unemployed and the youth employment is divided very unevenly between different groups. The situation has resulted in a direct employment crisis that has also been referred in the media as a ticking time bomb (e.g. Price 2012; Chauke 2012). It is understandable to describe the phenomenon as a ticking time bomb because more than half of the population living in South Africa is below 24 years old and since approximately half of them are unemployed, the amount of people in question is substantial. It is widely admitted that youth unemployment in South Africa is a serious cause for concern because of its damaging consequences.

While it is getting more and more challenging for a young person to find employment and earn one's living, traditional social roles and norms are changing as well. South Africa has gone through an enormous transition after the apartheid and globalization has

¹ Townships are urban living areas (often underdeveloped) that are situated in the outskirts of the cities.

shaken the traditional social order. Consequently, the roles of men and women are changing and scholars have started to talk about the crisis in masculinity.

The starting point for this study is my personal interest to get a better understanding of the lives of young men in a context, where their possibilities to gain employment and reach adulthood and manhood are restricted. At first my focus was on unemployment and how the unemployment affects young men's ways of seeing their position in the society. However, after getting to know my field and its people better, my focus shifted towards gender aspects and more precisely, towards manhood.

This study is located within the field of social work research. In general, the social work research is interested on people's everyday lives and the focus is often on people who are in vulnerable positions in societies. This study concentrates on the lives and experiences of the young unemployed South African men. According to my understanding, studying other societies is essential for social work because many social phenomena are universal and studies carried out in different contexts can provide us valuable information about our own society as well. In addition, the knowledge gained from such studies challenge us to reflect our own societal practices and to question the old models of thinking.

The aim of this study is to analyze the thoughts of the young unemployed men living in the urban South Africa. In addition, the attempt is to have a closer look at the social environments they are set in as well as the structures in the background which are affecting their lives. In my study I will answer to the following questions:

1. *What do the young unemployed South African men think about manhood and masculinity?*
2. *How do they navigate to become men they aspire to be and what are the complexities and paradoxes that emerge in contemporary urban settings?*
3. *How do the prevailing societal structures and the young men's beliefs and dreams encounter?*

In order to search for the answers to the questions above, *ethnographic group conversations* were carried out during the spring of 2013 in a Non-Profit Organization located in Cape Town. Furthermore, the collected data was analyzed by using *content analysis*. My study is influenced by the ethnographic research tradition and I attempt to provide a concise description of South Africa and of the direct environment these young

men live in. The study is multidisciplinary-oriented and the methods used involve anthropology and social sciences and the theoretical basis has aspects from African studies, men's studies and youth studies.

Historically the research focus in South Africa has been more on women because of their vulnerability, for example, to HIV/Aids but within recent years, research on men and masculinities has become increasingly popular (Barker & Ricardo 2005, 1). Many researchers (see e.g. Shefer et al. 2007) have claimed that researching men is essential because men play a fundamental role in decreasing women's vulnerability. Therefore, it is important to do research about South African young men because it is the young people who play an important role in building the future of South Africa. According to my understanding, the attitudes and practices of young men do not only reflect their experiences but also the state of the surrounding country.

Rob Pattman (2007) has studied young men in southern Africa in the context of HIV/Aids. He claims (ibid., 34) that young South African men are often problematized as immature, irresponsible and hedonistic. According to his views, studies about men should be carried out in a way that does not reinforce the constructions of African masculinity as bad. He argues that when studies are carried out as mentioned above, the men can start to critically reflect their masculinity and masculine identity. (Ibid., 34–35.) Pattman's suggestion, trying to avoid the stereotypes connected with African masculinity, is relevant also in this study. I find it important to treat my study participants in a way that does not reinforce the stereotypes but gives them a voice and a possibility to describe their lives.

The study is structured in the following way. Chapter two introduces the conceptual framework which was used in this study. This study focuses on young South African men and the theoretical framework is built on the concepts of youth, masculinity and social navigation. In chapter three I move towards South Africa and the focus is on the context where the young men lived in. Chapter four deals with the methodology that was used and I also reflect the ethical questions which arose during the research process. In chapter five I present the results of the study and finally in chapter six I conclude the study with discussion and further research suggestions.

About the terminology

In many circumstances racial classifications are unnecessary. Although in the South African context the terms *white*, *black/African* and *coloured* were invented to serve the interests of the apartheid state, they also refer to demographic markers (Sawyer-Kurian 2009, 13). In my study I will use the terminology which is commonly in use in South Africa when referring to people who are European, African or mixed race. In the following chapters when I talk about whites, I refer to people with European roots, typically Dutch or British. Moreover, black/African refers to people who are originally African. Furthermore, the term coloured refers to people of mixed race, which may be a mixture of European, African, Khoisan and Malay roots.

Telling the racial background of my study participants provides relevant and important information on the country's situation as well as it respects the participants' cultural and ethnic roots. The study participants referred to others by using these terms and for them it was a natural way of describing and identifying themselves.

We played this game where everyone needed to say two facts and one false about them. One Xhosa guy said "I'm coloured". After that everybody laughed. Only in South Africa you can do jokes like that. (Research diary 11.4.2013)

Nevertheless, it feels conflicting that even today the statistics made in South Africa are organized according to racial categories. People are not only sorted in segments according to their age or sex, but also according to their ethnicity. On the other hand, in this way the statistics reveal easily how unequally the wealth is spread between different groups. Like Robert Morrel (2001, ix) states, by using the descriptors white, coloured, African, Indian and black, race is given its social and analytical weight.

Diana Gibson & Marie Rosenkrantz Lindegaard (2007) have studied South African boys and how they manage to position themselves as men in the changing world. In their study they argue that in today's South Africa young people can construct their identities through many other things than skin color, for example, through music or exploring different cultures. They continue, however, by saying that in the South African context this is usually possible only for the well-off minority. (Ibid., 130–131.) I want to emphasize that even though I am using the terms such as white, coloured and black in this study, not everyone fit in to these classifications in South Africa nor want to be classified by their ethnic background.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 What is youth?

In youth studies there have historically been two strong traditions: transition approach and youth cultural studies (Macdonald et al. 2001, 2.2). The youth transition approach focuses on transitions in young people's lives (e.g. school to work -transition) and on structural forces that influence in the background, whereas the youth cultural studies focuses on studying youth cultures and subcultures (Nayak & Kehily 2008, 12–13). Youth transition studies have been criticized of having too much of a linear and mechanical perspective on young people's lives. The transitions, like a transition from school to work, have become so diverse that the idea of movement from one stage to the other is not considered useful any more. (Ibid., 14.) In addition, the youth transition approach can also be criticized of being a too Western way of seeing youth because in many non-Western countries the transitions are not similar to the Western world and, moreover, the concept of youth does not exist everywhere in the world nor has the same meaning.

However, according to my understanding the transition approach is useful also when trying to make sense of young people's lives in Africa. The strength of the transition approach lies in its potential to understand the complex relationship between personal and structural forces that influence young people's lives (MacDonald et al. 2001, 5.8). In South Africa, as everywhere in the world, young people's possibilities, choices, attitudes and dreams are strongly influenced and shaped by the society surrounding them.

The diversity of transitions needs to be acknowledged as well. Robert MacDonald & Jane Marsh (2001, 382) talk about the alternative transitions, like a transition to drug dealing or housing career, instead of only talking about the traditional careers (e.g. working career). Youth transitions should not be understood simply as employment-based because in modern societies there also exist other markers of status than employment which help structure young people's transitions to adulthood (France 2007, 60). When taking into account also the alternative careers the transition approach becomes a very useful tool when researching youth. In the South African context where

traditional transitions from school to work are restricted because of the unstable education system and the widespread unemployment, it is crucial to recognize the alternative careers as well.

Therefore, in this study youth is seen as a transitional life phase in which people try to figure out who they are and to whom they want to become. It should be acknowledged, however, that being young varies greatly from society to society. For example, in the Nordic countries young people in general have the possibility to build lives for themselves and youth is seen as a positive social position whereas in the countries where recourses are more restricted and tied to political networks, being young is often seen as a position of social and political immaturity (Vigh 2006, 36).

Despite the context, within a life course youth is a critical time of individual development (e.g. Heath et al. 2009, 5; Pohjola 2009, 26). According to Deborah Durham (2000, 114), young people are very sensitive to transformations in the society because during transformations their activities, dreams and possibilities are mixed and redirected. In South Africa people have lived through enormous transformations in recent years. Many people are faced with challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, HIV and substance abuse in their everyday lives. It can be argued that the social challenges of the surrounding society influence most crucially young people and their transition to adulthood.

There are many ways to define youth. According to the United Nation's definition, youth include people aged 15 to 24. However, the definition for youth differs widely from country to country, depending on cultural, institutional and socio-political issues (Du Toit 2003, 4). For example, in South Africa youth are officially seen as people from 14 to 34 years old (National Youth Policy 2009, 11).

Nadia Lovell (2006, 231) claims that youth as a concept is best treated as a floating category. I follow that idea and in this study youth is not defined by one's biological age but more by one's situation in life. I see youth as a construction which is culturally and historically produced and varies across time and place (see e.g. Heath et al. 2009, Nayak & Kehily 2008). As Lovell (2006, 247) states: "*youth is to do with one's activities, one's demeanor and composure, one's status as a non-adult, and one's insertion into recognized power structures.*"

In the work-centered societies youth is often defined as a liminal stage between childhood and adulthood where people are not children anymore but not yet adults either (Pohjola 2009, 26). Lovell (2006, 232) criticizes studies where youth is seen as a residual category and youth's actions are not taken seriously before they enter a fully accepted and complete personhood as adults. Youth should be treated as people who have their own free will and who are active in their own life and in order to understand the lives of the young people better, it is important to look at the ways youth are positioned in the society and, furthermore, how they seek to position themselves (Cristiansen et al. 2007, 11). It can be argued, that the ways youth seek their position in the surrounding world gives us also important information about our societies. Youth are in many ways essential when negotiating continuity and change in any context (Durham 2000, 114).

2.2 Masculinity

2.2.1 The theory of masculinity

For many centuries men and masculinity were taken for granted and they were seen as natural and neutral states of being while *gender* was something that was meant for women. However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s men and masculinity as a research area became its own academic field (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, 833). In addition, men started to be seen as gendered people and masculinity as something that was not stable but plural and socially and culturally constructed (Hearn 2007, 14–15).

As Christian Boehm (2006, 164) emphasizes, gender is not only something that men and women *are* but also something that they actively *do*. Men's studies understand masculinities and men's practices as socially constructed and produced and as changing across time and space, within societies and through life courses (Hearn 2007, 16). Therefore, gender identities have many dimensions. A man can see himself differently in his role as a father, a son or a sexual partner (Becker 2000, 55). Consequently, it can be argued that masculinity is a phenomenon, an ordinary system of beliefs and practices that controls behavior between women and men and also between men and other men (Lindegger & Maxwell 2007, 95).

Robert Morrell (2001, 8), who has done a lot of research about South African masculinity, argues that masculinity is not something that a boy inherits from his father but is, in fact, constructed within the context of class, race and other factors. However, it is also true that even though masculinity is not automatically acquired, boys and men are not totally free to choose the route that pleases them the most. They are influenced and shaped by discourses of gender from their first birthday onwards. (Ibid., 8.)

In this study I understand masculinity as described above. I also use the work and concepts of Robert Connell to help me to understand the young South African men's descriptions about manhood and masculinity. Connell and his work have been seminal in developing the theory of masculinity. According to his views, there are multiple versions of masculinity and he uses the concept of multiple masculinities to emphasize the diversity of men and masculinities. Masculinities are socially rather than biologically constructed and some of the masculinities are represented as ideal (*hegemonic masculinity*) whereas others as subordinated. (Connell 1995.) Connell's concepts have been used in diverse academic fields and cultural contexts and nowadays they offer a widely used and criticized framework for research and debate about men and masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, 835).

Masculinities are structured relationally and hierarchically. The most dominant and culturally acceptable form of masculinity is hegemonic masculinity into which boys and men are automatically socialized. Boys are expected to adjust to standards of hegemonic masculinity in order to be accepted as *real* men. (Lindegger & Maxwell 2007, 96.) A hierarchy of masculinities is controlled by hegemonic masculinity so it has dominance over women but also over subordinated masculinities (Lusher & Robins 2009, 387).

Even though hegemonic masculinity silences other masculinities and it is often seen as an acceptable form of masculinity, there are other forms of masculinity that exist and have always existed (Ampofo & Boateng 2007, 54–55). Connell calls the non-hegemonic categories of masculinity as complicit, subordinated and marginalized masculinities. Minorities, defined in terms of race, class, ethnicity or sexual orientation, represent these non-hegemonic forms of masculinity. While the majority of men follow dominant gender relations and forms of masculinity, there are some men who consciously or unconsciously resist the hegemonic masculinity. (Morrell 2001; 7, 9.)

According to Kopano Ratale (2008, 523), the easiest way to achieve successful masculinity in almost every culture, is to be dominant over females and other men. Men have to participate in certain activities, speak in particular ways, not to talk about certain topics and achieve a certain position in the society to be regarded as successfully masculine (ibid., 523). There is also a pressure on young men to be and become like other, older men (Shefer et al. 2007, 3). However, in a statistical sense not many men attain hegemonic masculinity - it remains more of an aspiration or a normative form of masculinity. (see Lindegger & Maxwell 2007, 96; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, 832.)

When doing research about manhood and masculinity it is essential to understand that masculinities are produced in a social interaction and they are influenced by power relations. The constructions of masculinities should not be distinguished for example only by race but rather by men's lived experiences (see e.g. Gibson & Rosenkrantz Lindegaard 2007, 144). The factors including men's social environments, power relations and life history should be taken into account when researching men and masculinities.

2.2.2 South African masculinity

It has been said that there is a lack of cultural nuance and historical specificity in research on Africa (e.g. Reid & Walker 2005, 2). People tend to generalize Africa and Africans. Most of the reports written about Africa demonstrate this view where African men are presented in a simplistic and negative light or their gender is simply ignored (Barker & Ricardo 2005, 1). According to Ratale (2008, 522), if men's positioning in societies and their emotions and bodily practices are not taken into account while doing research on African men, there is big risk that the research maintains stereotypes and delays efforts towards more equal gender relations.

When talking about South African masculinity one should remember that South Africa has one of the most progressive constitutions in the world. Gender equality was high in the priority list of the democratically elected government in 1994 and in post-apartheid South Africa the position of women has undoubtedly improved. (Walker 2005, 227.) However, despite the constitution which demands equal rights for men and women,

many institutional and social practices still affirm gender inequalities (Sideris 2004, 29). As Gibson & Rosenkrantz Lindegaard (2007, 128) state, the traditional cultural norms, racial divides and patriarchal gender values are in conflict with requirements of globalization, modernity and the new South African constitution.

Therefore, it can be claimed that men are still in many ways in a dominant position over women in South Africa. However, many scholars (e.g. Morrell 2001; Walker 2005) describe the transition to political democracy in 1994 as a significant turning point for South African men. The political and social changes, such as high levels of unemployment, liberalizing political discourses and the growing empowerment of women, have sharpened the tensions between men and women (Sideris 2004, 34; Colvin et al. 2010, 1185). Consequently, scholars have started to talk about the crisis in masculinity. Men feel uncertain about their social roles and responsibilities and place the blame on women for bringing the disempowerment for men (Colvin et al. 2010, 1185).

Many scholars have explained violent aspects of South African masculinity as an outcome of the crisis in masculinity. Men are supposed to dominate but they do not have the means to maintain this position anymore. (Gibson & Rosenkrantz Lindegaard 2007, 129.) For example, Anna Strebel et al. (2001, 519) argue that the overturning of traditional gender roles and high rates of unemployment among men have led to the situation where young men start to implement their masculinity through violence and other problematic behavior. According to Gary Barker & Christine Ricardo (2005, 3), the problematic behavior of these men is mainly a proof of young men trying to affirm themselves as a man.

The expectations about what it means to be a man influences significantly how men behave in their families and communities (Ampofo & Boateng 2007, 55). For example, Gibson & Rosenkrantz Lindegaard (2007, 139–140) found out in their study that if a township boy refuses to use violence and stays indoors, he is more likely to be perceived feminine. South Africa has globally one of the highest rates of violence against women (Strebel et al. 2006, 517). It has been estimated that 60 % of South African marriages involve physical and sexual violence (Sawyer-Kurian et al. 2009, 14). Thus, many studies have suggested that there is a “culture of violence” existing in South Africa and violence has been claimed to be an acceptable way to communicate (Gibson & Rosenkrantz Lindegaard 2007, 129). According to Morrell (2001, 12), masculinity

and violence have been intertwined in South African history. He argues that South African masculinity has been shaped by two different experiences: the workplace (mining) and rural life. In rural areas men dominated on all levels and that system has been reflected later on urban areas which would explain the behavior of men today. (Ibid., 12.)

In South Africa a strong tradition that connects men with their roots and socializes them with other men is initiation. Barker & Ricardo (2005, 9) claim that initiation practices, *the rites of passage*, have a vital role in creating cultural and collective identities for young men whereas the formal institutions, such as schools and political institutions, are weak. Many cultural groups in Africa continue to carry out these practices as part of the socialization of boys and men. Some of these initiation rites include male circumcision. (Ibid., 9.) When a boy gets to a certain age, he is supposed to undergo the rites of passage, and after completing them successfully, he has transformed from a boy to a man (Ratale 2008, 524). During these initiation rites young men are often isolated from their families and older men pass on information and skills to them that are considered necessary to be an adult male. These rites of passages provide a combination of social control, assistance and guidance to help young people with a sometimes confusing transition from childhood to adulthood. Even though the initiations practices offer a positive control and guidance for young men, they have also been accused of reinforcing sex segregation and gender inequalities. (Barker & Ricardo 2005, 9.)

Morrell (2001, 338) claims that the construction of masculinities in southern Africa is both “*a local and a global process*”. Globalization has reshaped the environment where notions of masculinity are expressed. However, even though the social and political transformation in post-apartheid South Africa has sharpened the tensions in gender relations, it has also given men the possibility to question and rebuild the past models of manhood (Sideris 2004, 34). Therefore, it can be argued that some men have responded well to the demands of the change while others are struggling with a crisis of identity.

2.3 Navigation - three dimensions

As discussed before, in this study youth is seen as a transitional life phase between childhood and adulthood. Youth as such can be an isolating experience for young people. Young people are often vulnerable because they are dismissed by adults and lack political and economic power. When doing research about young people it is important to understand the role of social inequalities and social institutions affecting youth's transitions to adulthood as many young people are excluded from higher education, from employment opportunities and from housing (Barry 2006; 1, 3). Especially in the African context it can be argued that exclusion has become a permanent feature in young people's lives (Lovell 2006, 235).

The concept which gathers together these characteristics of being young and provides a good analytical tool to understand youth in Africa is a concept of *social navigation*. Henrik Vigh (2006; 2009) uses the concept of social navigation in his research that deals with mobilization of urban youth in West Africa, and in his later work he has theorized the concept further. Navigation originates from a Latin word "*navigare*" meaning "*to sail or go by sea*" and Vigh argues that the concept of navigation highlights how people move in a moving unsettled environment (Vigh 2009; 420, 430). I found the concept of navigation useful also in my study.

Many scholars (e.g. Barker & Ricardo 2005, 3; Ratale 2008, 532; Salo 2007, 168) concur that in Africa a man needs to provide for his family and get married to be able to be considered as *a real man*. However, in South Africa the route towards being a real man is not always available due to high level of unemployment. Young men's opportunities to gain employment and participate actively in social and political life have decreased in the post-independent Africa and as a result new forms of agency have started to emerge. (Lovell 2006, 235.) Furthermore, according to Elaine Salo (2007, 168) if a man is unable to fulfil the expectation of being a breadwinner, he creates an alternative cultural pathway to assert his masculinity and manhood. Ratale (2008, 532) agrees with that idea and claims that because in many cases young men are not able to earn money by working, they end up choosing a different route towards successful manhood and adulthood. The structural problems, such as weak economy, unemployment and inequality create a fertile ground for illegal activities, such as corruption and gangsterism. (Ibid., 533.) Barker and Ricardo (2005, 8) point out that

South African young men who do not achieve socially respected manhood through employment are more likely to engage in violence, for example, in gang related activities.

This kind of theorization resembles the theories in criminology such as the strain theory which was developed by Clifford Shaw and Robert Merton in 1900s (Kivivuori 2008, 141). According to the strain theory, poverty and inequality increase frustration among citizens which can, consequently, result in criminal activities. Robert Agnew (1992, 49) has developed the theory further into the so called “general strain theory”. He argues that there are three main types of strain and each refers to a different type of negative relationship with others. Firstly, one can be under strain if one cannot achieve positively valued goals (e.g. the society does not give enough possibilities to progress in life). Secondly, one can experience strain if one loses something that was positively valued (e.g. breaking up with one’s partner) and thirdly, one can be under strain if others treat him in negative way (e.g. a child is abused by his parents). (Ibid., 50.) In summary, according to the strain theory, people engage criminal activities because they want to provide for themselves but the economic and structural circumstances do not enable it through legal activities. As such the strain theory could provide valuable tools when trying to explain the behavior of the young South African men.

Because of the marginalized position of the young men and limited opportunities to gain manhood and adulthood in South Africa, I wanted to find a concept that I could use to describe the process in which the young men are when they are trying to find their future paths. The theories in criminology, such as the strain theory introduced above, suit partly to describe the young men’s situation but I wanted to give more agency to the young men themselves and avoid externalizing their lives totally to the structural powers and that was why I decided to use the concept of *social navigation*.

Navigation has been used as a concept more widely when describing the transition from childhood to adulthood. For example, Elizabeth Lindsey et al. (2000, 117) use the concept in a context where they tried to figure out how formerly runaway and homeless youth were able to make successful transitions to adulthood. When the concept is used to illustrate social life it directs people’s attention to the fact that we move in social environments of individuals and institutions that engage and move us as we move along. As an analytical concept social navigation is interesting because it offers an alternative perspective on the intersection between agency, social forces and change. Most

commonly the concept is used in studies conducted in contexts where people move in uncertain circumstances and the concept focuses on the ways how people act when they seek to escape restricting structures. (Vigh 2009; 419, 420).

Young people, from this perspective, do not only move through space but navigate their way. This movement is intentional and goal-directed but depends not only on an individual's free-will. It is affected by young people's social position and by the shifting structures and possibilities people are tied to. Thus, young people are conceptualized as being active beings who make the most of the resources they have. (Langevang & Gough 2009, 743.)

In this study I want to emphasize that navigation has three dimensions. Firstly, navigation needs always a subject and in this case the subjects are the young South African men. Secondly, when the young men are navigating they need to have a direction, a destination where they direct their route. The young men are actively navigating towards their goal and making choices which affect their lives (see "acting subjects" Whyte 2006, 261). Thirdly, navigation does not happen in a vacuum but in a certain context. The young men's navigation towards the chosen direction is restricted by the surrounding society that is unsettled and moving all the time. The structures determine the possibilities that the young men have and the challenges they will face. As Henrik Vigh (2006, 54) has put it: *"Navigation is thus centred on both near and far, a here and a there. When navigating we imagine and actualize a path through unstable social terrains, simultaneously moving across the next obstacle or wave and negotiating the many more to come on one's way along an envisioned course"*. With the help of the concept of navigation it is possible to look at where young people move, where they avoid from moving to and where they wish to move to but are constrained from going. By looking at these factors, it becomes possible to understand the wider societal situation and the underlying structures affecting young people's lives.

3 Locating the study

3.1 South Africa and the Mother City

South Africa is situated in the southernmost part of the African continent. It is divided into nine different provinces which all have their own special features. South Africa is a diverse country by its nature but also by its people. The population of South Africa is 51,8 million, and it is divided into different racial, ethnic and religious groups which speak 11 official languages. 79,2 % of South Africans are black, 9 % white and 9 % coloured and the Indian/Asian population is 2,5 %. (van Niekerk 2013.)

South Africa has a colonial history and also a cruel history of apartheid. Apartheid was a system of legally enforced racial discrimination which was established in 1948 and ended as an official policy in 1994 (Teppo 2004, 14). During the apartheid era racism touched every aspect of life. Apartheid laws (e.g. The Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act) governed the racial categories and the territories where certain groups were allowed to live (Jensen 2008, 40). Towns were segregated into black, white, coloured and Indian areas. Whites lived in the center, blacks in townships on the outskirts of cities and coloureds and Indians somewhere in between (Durrheim et al. 2011, 4).

South Africa has experienced an enormous transition since the apartheid days and it is nowadays considered as an upper middle income country (World Bank 2014). However, South Africa is still one of the most unequal societies in the world. The growth that has happened during the first decade of democracy has benefitted the rich more than the poor and therefore the inequality has even increased after 1994 (Hankela 2012, 61–62). The nature of inequality has however changed. Even though race still correlates with income, it is important to acknowledge that intra-group differences have increased remarkably. It has been said that South Africa has become a society divided not only by racial but also by class lines. (Jensen 2008, 197.)

The effects of apartheid can still be seen in the South Africans' everyday life. The separateness that apartheid generated when creating racial communities in the urban

areas still exists in the post-apartheid South Africa (Salo 2003, 349). The area where you are born still determines too often what kind of possibilities you have in life.

I conducted my field work in Cape Town, which is often called *the mother city* because of its history of being the oldest city in South Africa. Cape Town is situated in the Western Cape Province, which is known for its natural beauty, cultural diversity, wine industry and tourism. Cape Town is South Africa's legislative capital and it houses the Parliament (van Niekerk 2013). Compared to other African cities, Cape Town is modern and wealthy and often considered as an untypical African city. However, it is good to acknowledge that even though Cape Town is an untypical city in the African context, it struggles with the same problems and challenges as the other African cities, for instance poverty, unemployment and crime. (Teppo 2011, 269.) For example, the unemployment rate in Cape Town is 23,9 % (Statistics South Africa 2014) and 35,7 % of households live below the poverty line² (City of Cape Town 2012).

Cape Town has often referred to as a cultural and genetic melting pot. The population is predominantly coloured (42 %) and African (39%). 15,7 % of the population are white (City of Cape Town 2012). The most common languages are Afrikaans³ (34,9 %), IsiXhosa⁴ (29,2 %) and English (27,8 %) (Statistics South Africa 2014). The biggest population group, coloureds, speak mainly Afrikaans as their mother tongue. Although there are many ethnic groups found in Cape Town, different groups are still living very separately in their own communities. The majority of the black and coloured inhabitants live in *the Cape Flats* which is a big township area on the periphery of the Cape Town city center. The young men who participated in my study are mostly from this area. In general, the inner margins of the city are inhabited by coloured people whereas the furthest townships are inhabited by African people, mainly isiXhosa-speaking residents and immigrants from other African countries (Salo 2007, 162).

Townships are common sights in the South African scenery. These urban ghettos were born during the apartheid era when the regime decided that black people were not allowed to live in the city that was defined as white area, but instead they were to live in the rural areas in their *ethnic homelands*. All the African and coloured people living in

² If the monthly income of a household is less than ZAR3500/month (~330 €), the household lives under the poverty line.

³ Afrikaans is a West Germanic language which was developed from Dutch dialects in 18th century. It is natively spoken in South Africa and Namibia.

⁴ IsiXhosa is a Bantu language which is the second most spoken language in South Africa after isiZulu and it is mainly spoken by people who belong to Xhosa tribe.

the cities were forced to move to rural areas or townships, which were built on the outskirts of the cities. (Teppo 2011, 275.) People were not only forced to live in a certain location but the location also determined what kind of housing and other services people were able to get (Salo 2007, 162). For the most part the living conditions in townships were, and still are, harsh.

When talking about the Cape Flats people often think about gangs, violence, drug abuse and poverty. Even though the picture of Cape Flats is often too simplified, it is true that many of the streets in the townships are ruled by local gangs and they rank high in crime statistics. Gangs have their own territories which they protect and people living there need to be aware of these territories. (Jensen 2008, 60.) It needs to be recognized that many people in South Africa live in areas where the violence or the threat of violence is nearly always present.

After 1994 the townships have grown increasingly larger as people have gotten the right to move wherever they want. People from the rural areas want to leave the misery and poverty of the countryside behind and wish to find a job and a better life from the city. The population of Cape Town has doubled after the transition and the majority of people moving to Cape Town find their new home from the townships outside the city. (Teppo 2011, 281.)

3.2 Situating young men in the South African social and political context

As argued before in this study (see chapter 2.2.1), men are not only gendered subjects but also subjects of ethnicity, race and political choice (Ratale 2008, 521). That is why it is important to get a closer look at the social and political context in which South African young men live in.

In South Africa young people have historically been divided according to race lines and, therefore, it is important to study youth in the South African context. These lines have influenced the labor market. Unskilled jobs have been given to black men whereas professional and state jobs to white men. The school world has been shaped by the racial divide as well and the quality of education differed depending on whether one was a black learner or a white one. Even though South Africa has changed and is

changing all the time, the racial divide that apartheid created still exists and a strong socio-economic inequality between different racial groups remains. (Morrell 2007, 75.)

Besides the racial divide, it is worth noting that more than half of the population living in South Africa is below 24 years old. Similar situations are often described as the youth bulge (e.g. Sommers 2003). Some researchers (see e.g. Hvistendahl 2011, 552) have claimed that if a country has a youth bulge and high unemployment among young people, it is more likely to face unrest and violence. Barker & Ricardo (2005, 3) blame these researchers for generalization and failure to explore the diversity of young men's experiences. African young men are often stigmatized and seen as criminals or troublemakers. Although young men are often in the front line of the conflicts in the region, they represent only a minority. It is important to acknowledge that the majority of men living in sub-Saharan Africa are not involved in conflict or armed violence, but are in fact considered to be guilty because they are young, poor, unemployed and male. (Ibid., 2–3.)

One could easily come to the conclusion that because there is a predominance of young people currently in South Africa and in Africa in general, the youth would be in decision-making positions in politics and in society. However, youth are politically powerless and the decision-making positions are filled by those who are over 50 years old. Thus, it can be asked why young South Africans do not fight against the power that excludes their voices from decision making. (Ratale 2008, 527.) Ratale (ibid., 527) answers to this question by saying that power does not reside only in numbers.

Unemployment is one of the biggest challenges facing youth in South Africa. In 2013 the official unemployment rate in South Africa was 24,7 % (Statistics South Africa 2014). However, among people aged 15–24, the rate was 51 %. It is also worth noting that when talking about unemployment only the formal jobs are counted. Many households in townships employ different strategies to survive, including running a *tuck shop*⁵ or a *shebeen*⁶ or selling sweets in the trains. (Jensen 2008, 55.)

In Cape Town, like in South Africa generally, women have taken the breadwinner's role from men in many households because of the widespread unemployment among men. The majority of the city's urban economy is based on jobs that have normally been done

⁵ a small shop usually at the ground floor of a flat that sells groceries.

⁶ a local bar that sells alcohol without a license.

by women, for example the clothing, leather and canning industries. In addition, many households rely on the state welfare system which gives grants for child support which are allocated for women as well. (Salo 2007, 167.) Thus, it can be argued that the man's role as a head of the house has weakened because of their worsened possibilities to provide for the family.

When talking about the South African society and challenges that the youth need to face, one cannot ignore the HIV/Aids epidemic that is one of the worst in the world. The UNAIDS (2012) estimates that there are 6,1 million people living with HIV in South Africa. The disease has physical, social and economic effects that influence relationships, education and employment and there is especially a serious concern regarding the increasing amount of infections among young people. Moreover, the HIV epidemic has a strong gender dimension, because gender inequalities are claimed to be the major factor behind the spread of HIV. (Sathiparsad 2007, 181.) Furthermore, violence plays a big role in many South Africans' lives as mentioned previously in this study (see chapter 2.2.2). Widespread poverty and unemployment have resulted in increasing numbers of South Africans starting to rely on criminal violence as a means of livelihood (Cock 2001, 44). The number of car hijackings, assaults, murders and rapes are all at alarming levels.

The majority of the young men who participated into my study were living in the townships outside Cape Town; one part in black townships and the other part in coloured townships. It is noteworthy that the young Xhosa men who took part in the group conversations had their roots mainly in Eastern Cape where their ethnic homelands were located during the apartheid and many of them still had family members living in the rural villages in the Eastern Cape. Therefore, the young Xhosa men did not have only urban roots but also very strongly influential family and tribal history in the countryside.

The coloureds have a very unique history as well and that should not be ignored either when doing research among young South Africans. The coloured people are mostly descendants of Cape slaves, the indigenous Khoisan population and other black-African people who had been integrated into the Cape colonial society by the late nineteenth century. Since they also have a bloodline link with the European settlers, they are often regarded as "mixed race" and have held an intermediate status in the South African racial hierarchy. (Adhikari 2005, 2.) During the apartheid years coloureds were favored

over Africans and they got access to social welfare grants and housing (Salo 2003, 349). However, according to Kevin Durrheim et al. (2011, 31), during the apartheid era coloureds considered themselves too black to enjoy the privileges of whites and today in post-apartheid South Africa many of them feel being too white to benefit from legislative policies designed to compensate black disadvantages. Thus, it can be argued that because of the marginalized status, the coloured communities have had difficulties in developing positive social and cultural capital. Many of the coloured communities of today are bedeviled by poverty, violence and gangsterism. Moreover, they suffer from widespread alcohol abuse because during the apartheid many coloured people worked in the vineyards and during that time it was a normal practice to pay one's salary not with money but with bottles of wine.

The young South African men who participated in my study were both coloured and black and they were all unemployed. Many of them had dropped out from school because of criminal activities or substance abuse. The majority of my study participants came from the Cape Flats from the very deprived townships. A few of the men stayed at Bo-Kaap, which is an Islamic community next to the city center while some of the young men were officially homeless and were sleeping in shelters. Jeremy Seekings (2012, 18) authentically describes the youth who are living in the above described surroundings as *urban outsiders*. Urban outsiders have mostly failed to complete secondary education and lack close connections with people who are employed (ibid., 18). This definition also suits well to describe the young men who participated in my study. They were pushed out from normal schooling and did not have resources to gain employment. However, it is good to remember that a big part of the young men living in South Africa is in a similar situation.

4 Methodology

4.1 *Ethnographic group conversations*

This study was inspired by the ethnographic research tradition and the ethnographic way of seeing the surrounding world. The idea behind ethnography is the will to understand how people conceive their world (Rastas 2010, 65). As James Spradley (1979, 3) has put it: “*Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people*”. Ethnography studies the everyday life led by often “othered” people on the level of meaning, social structure and power relations (Lather 2001, 481). I find ethnographic methodology useful when doing research in a context that is not familiar to the researcher. In my study I approached my research task in an ethnographic manner meaning that I wanted to learn about my study participants’ lives by not only asking questions but also by seeing, feeling and experiencing the settings where they lived their lives.

Normally ethnographers use observation as their main data collection method. In this study however observational methods were used to enhance the use of other methods (see e.g. Heath et al. 2009, 102). I had the opportunity to gain some knowledge already during my one-year student exchange in 2011 and, hence, two years later when I returned to South Africa, it was easier to start collecting the actual data as I already had some essential knowledge about my case country and its people. The participant observation was an important part of my fieldwork even though I did not carry it out systematically. The time spent with the youth helped me to gain acceptance among the young men and recruiting participants for the actual research interviews was easier when they already knew who I was (I will return to the meaning of my observation period in more detail in chapter 4.3).

The actual data collecting method was the focus groups which in this study I call *ethnographic group conversations*. What makes ethnographic interviews special is that in ethnographic interview both the participant as well as the researcher already knows something about each other. Of course often in other types of interviews people have some foreknowledge about one another, but in ethnographic interviews the interviewer

and the study participant already know each other better before the interview session and the idea is that they do not need to start building trust from scratch because they have already experienced things together before in the field. Furthermore, another important aspect is that the questions or themes discussed in the sessions take shape not only by reading previous research before entering the field but especially during the fieldwork process. The researcher uses experiences and knowledge that she or he has obtained during the time spent in the field. (Tolonen & Palmu 2007, 92, 99.)

I decided to implement ethnographic group conversations because I felt that it was a more productive way of hearing young men's thoughts than individual interviews. People acquire social knowledge through interaction with others and construct meanings through a shared process (Eder & Fingerson 2003, 35). Therefore, in many ways group conversations can be seen as a more natural way of exploring young people's lives. When I talk about group conversations I refer to semi-structured conversations where the group members discuss about the themes which the group facilitator has decided beforehand (see e.g. Heikkilä 2008, 292). In general, in social sciences the focus groups have been used in research where the aim has been to get information about people's attitudes or ways of living. I decided to implement group conversations because according to my understanding it is the best way of eliciting knowledge about how certain people talk about a certain phenomenon. (See *ibid.*, 293.)

The reason why I call the sessions with the young men "conversations" instead of "interviews" or "focus groups" is that the sessions with the young men were more like natural conversations than interviews (see Pietilä 2010, 216). The aim was to build interaction between the members (Valtonen 2005, 224). I had some topics that I wanted to cover during the sessions (see Appendix) but everybody had their right to talk freely and develop the topics where they wanted. I also encouraged the young men to challenge each other's opinions and challenge me as well. During most of the sessions I felt more like a group member rather than a researcher carrying out an interview.

Especially in focus groups it is important to acknowledge that the data has come about in an interaction and the attitudes and values of the whole group can be found even in one comment (Heikkilä 2008, 294). Focus groups encourage study participants to talk and gives them power but at the same time it is important to remember that the power can be divided very unevenly between the participants. Some group members may not want to voice their opinions or there might be one or two strong personalities who

dominate the conversation. However, when a researcher becomes aware of this, the data can prove to be very fruitful and offer valuable information about the themes that the people want to avoid or the themes they feel the need to exaggerate. (Ibid., 301.)

In my study the dominant personalities and hegemonic masculinities were strongly present and I believe that this was due to the group conversation setting where the data was collected. Therefore, the results would probably have been quite different, if I had decided to use some other method than ethnographic group conversation, for example individual interviews. Especially the alternative opinions and other masculinities could have been more present in individual interviews where there is no risk of losing one's reputation in front of one's peers. However, in my study setting the ethnographic group conversations felt like the most fruitful method and it was interesting to see and analyze how the young South African men interacted with each other and how they created collective opinions and views in a group.

In every research it is essential that the data is put into its context. When analyzing it the researcher should acknowledge the surrounding world and communities in which the participants are living and also the social and cultural power relations that affect them. (Tolonen & Palmu 2007, 111.) Especially in the South African context a researcher should not close her or his eyes from the surrounding society. Therefore, I have tried to analyze the data in its context so that the power relations and possible inequalities could become more visible.

4.2 The Salesian Institute and the youth projects

This study is based on an ethnographically inspired fieldwork which I conducted during a three month period of time in 2013 at the Salesian Institute in Cape Town, South Africa. The Salesians are a Catholic society that helps the disadvantaged youth around the world. The principles of the institute are based on its Italian founder Father Giovanni Bosco's educational system of *reason, religion* and *loving kindness*. (Salesian Institute 2014.)

The Salesians came to Cape Town in 1896 and since 1991 they have run projects for disadvantaged youth in their premises in the city center and nowadays they are

registered as a Non-Profit Organization (Salesian Institute 2014). At first their focus was on homeless young people who lived in the streets of Cape Town but in recent years there have been more and more youth coming from the townships surrounding the city and fewer children from the streets. In the beginning the projects were only meant for boys but today they also accept girls to participate. (Interview with the project director 2013.)

The youth projects specialize in education and skills training and their goal is to reintegrate youth back into the society. Even though the youth projects are driven by Christian values, they work with children regardless of religion, race, gender or nationality. They put effort not only into training but also into life skills so that the disadvantaged youth could restore their sense of dignity and self-esteem. At the moment the Salesians have four projects running in Cape Town which are *Learn to Live School* (special school of skills and technical workshop training), *Youth Employment Skills project*, *16+ outreach project* and *Don Bosco Hostel*. (Salesian Institute 2013.)

Firstly, the *Learn to Live School* has 60–90 students who are not able to attend the mainstream schooling. Many of the students are homeless or staying at the shelters. Secondly, the *YES (Youth Employment Skills)* project works with youth who have a minimum of grade 9 education and who are between the ages of 18 to 26. The idea of the project is to offer training and life skills for young people who cannot access further education because of their finances or low grades. The goal is to find employment for the participants. Thirdly, the *16+ Outreach program* is working with the youth and children in the streets. The aim is to integrate the youth into the Salesians' other projects. Outreach workers try to build a relationship with the youth and help and advise them with their problems. Lastly, *The Don Bosco Hostel* is a 6 month long program that offers young men (16–24 years) residential, occupational, educational and life skills training, in which the aim is to prepare the young men for independent living. The staff working at the Salesian Institute is comprised of board of management, a project director, project coordinators, a social worker, child care workers, teachers, instructors, cooks, cleaners, fund raisers and volunteers. (Salesian Institute 2014.)

Young people generally find the Salesian Institute through street workers who work in the communities and spread the information about their projects. Some youngsters also join the Institute through some other Non-Governmental Organizations or schools. The people working at the Institute describe their youth as youth at risk. According to the

project director (interview 2013), unemployed youth are in a bigger risk of getting into drugs and joining gangs in the streets. It is a major challenge for them to stay away from drugs and not to join criminal activities. Many of the youth have problems with their literacy skills and, in addition, the youth often have a drug or an alcohol dependency when starting at a project at the Institute. Even though the ideal would be to get the youth back to the normal schools, the Salesian Institute is for many young people the so called last stop. That is why during the projects the youth are given as much of knowledge and life skills as possible. (Interview with the project director 2013.)

Even though Christianity was not imposed to the students by the staff, the youth projects had high moral standards and a strong educational aim which were present in the teachings. Values such as decency, responsibility and diligence were emphasized especially in the life skills training and the students were encouraged to outgrow their past models of thinking. When talking with the students it was evident that the values and teachings of the Institute had had a strong influence on the ways how they conceptualized their past and their future.

4.3 Gaining access and conducting the study

When I decided to travel to South Africa to collect the data for this study I started to look for a suitable organization that worked with my target group, young unemployed men. As Sue Heath et al. (2009, 31) argue, gaining research access in youth organizations is dependent on the goodwill of institutional gatekeepers. I found the Salesian Institute quite easily through the Internet. I sent them an email where I introduced myself briefly in addition to my research interest and explained my motivation to contact their organization. After a few emails I was given the permission to conduct my study at the Salesian Institute. According to Tarja Tolonen & Tarja Palmu (2007, 89), many describe the access to the field as a chaotic process. However, in my case the beginning was easier than what I ever could have anticipated.

When I arrived in Cape Town I immediately started to negotiate with the Salesian Institute about the practicalities of the study. They were very helpful and after reading my research plan, I was allowed to recruit participants and form the groups freely

according to my plans. Before conducting the actual group conversations I had the opportunity to get to know the youth by spending time at the Institute. Even though I did not observe systemically, I used that time as a tool to get to know the youth and the phenomenon better. Therefore, the first month that I spent in South Africa was an observation period for me. I followed the lessons and workshops at the Institute. I sat in the back of the classroom or on the side watching students playing soccer. I talked with the students and the staff members during the breaks and tried to get to know the Institute and the people better. A few times I was asked to replace a teacher when somebody was sick but luckily that occurred always during young children's class so that my roles as a teacher and a researcher were not mixed. I had many memorable moments with the young people outside the actual group conversations which influenced my ways of thinking about my research task and provided me valuable information.

There were many European volunteers at the Institute so the youngsters were used to foreigners being interested in them and according to my understanding, it was beneficial for me in terms of building trust and gaining acceptance from the youth. Furthermore, I got the impression that for me it was easy to find common ground with the youth because I already knew the country and its young people quite well and was familiar, for example, with the music they listened to and the TV programs they liked to watch.

The target group in my study was the young men who were more than 18 years old and participated the Salesian Institute youth projects. I got a list of the classes which had people who fit in my target group. When checking the list I realized that it would be easier to conduct the group conversations if I accepted also 16 and 17-year-old men to participate in my study since the majority of the students were between 16–20 years old. I discussed the matter with the project director and he did not have an issue with also the underage young men participating in the study as long as the young men themselves gave their consent.

After the one-month observation period I held an info-meeting for every class that had students who suited my target group. In those meetings I told about myself and my study and gave the young men the possibility to decide whether they wanted to participate or not. The info-meetings were a good opportunity for me and the young men to reflect our boundaries as the following excerpt from my research diary shows.

One of the boys said that I shouldn't be scared or surprised when they are going to talk about gangs and crime. I said that there aren't any right or wrong answers but only their opinions matter. (Research diary 27.3.2013)

After the info-meetings I realized that with some of the young men I did not share a common language good enough for the study purpose. The classes were divided into groups based on different languages. There was one Afrikaans class, one isiXhosa class and two classes taught in English. Because of the language barrier, I decided that I would focus on the two classes that had lessons in English and hoped that I would get enough participants from those classes. I decided carry out separate sessions with the classes for 45 minutes prior to the actual group conversations in order to get to know one another better. We played ice-breakers and had small discussions. During the sessions I told them again about my study and their possibility to take part in it. At the end of the sessions I asked them to let me know if they wanted to participate. I made it clear that participation was completely voluntary and that my study was not part of their school work.

The study participants were black and coloured young men who were all involved in the Salesian Institute youth projects at the time of my fieldwork took place. I formed three conversation groups from these young men so that in every group there were four to six participants, both black and coloured. Then I fixed the interview timetable with the Institute. I had the possibility to conduct the conversations during the school day which helped me a lot in motivating the young men to participate. The group conversations were held in a hall because it was the only room that was not in use during the school day. All the conversations were recorded with an audio-recorder once I got consent from all the participants.

My intension was to meet with each of the groups three times for 45 minutes. The original plan was that the young men who were not part of the group were to be taught by one of the staff members while the other young men participated in my sessions. However, I realized quite quickly that carrying out that plan was almost impossible. The young men were eager to take part in my study and preferred it to the school class. During the second session with the second group I realized that the group participants were totally mixed and the participants that I had had during the first session were different people than the ones participating now.

After contemplating this dilemma for a while, I realized it was not relevant for my study that each group session always included the same members. Luckily, all of the young men were familiar with me already and knew what I was doing at the Institute because of the observation period and the info-meetings that I had held to each class. Therefore, I decided not to forbid the young men from joining the group conversation even if they were not the original members of that group. In the end none of the groups consisted of original members exclusively and there were always 5 to 14 participants in every session.

Due to a high turnover of participants, it was important to me to emphasize at the beginning of every session that if the young men participated in the group conversation they were taking part in my study. During most of the group conversation sessions it was not a problem to have different participants than I had planned but when I received 14 young men to one group conversation I needed to improvise quite a bit to be able to carry out the session. In order to get the young men's attention I used, for example, statements to provoke the conversation. Because of the replacement of some of the group members, instead of having 9 sessions I had 8 group sessions in total.

I had specific themes planned for every session (see Appendix) and the idea was that we would discuss about them freely. Many of my themes were linked to unemployment but soon I realized that every time when I started talking about unemployment and jobs, the young men developed the conversation towards something else. That is the reason why this study turned out to be more a study of masculinity than a study of unemployment. The themes developed and changed all the time from the first session till the very last one. After every session I listened to the recorded tape and planned the next session. Each time we started the sessions by thinking what we had discussed last time and whether any of the young men had anything to add to the topics discussed previously. The challenge of the sessions was not to get the young men to talk as much as it was to keep the conversations on the right track.

4.4 Research material and the analysis

In the end my data consist of 8 ethnographic group conversations and in total I had 36 young men participating in my study. In addition, I interviewed also the project director but ended up not using it in my analysis but it, nevertheless, provided me a broader understanding of the context and the Salesian Institute itself. All the collected data was in English. After coming back to Finland I transcribed the interviews which converted into 140 A4 pages (Times New Roman, 12, 1) of text. I did not transcribe every sound and sigh on the tape because I did not consider them to be relevant in my study. A few times I needed to guess what a participant was saying because of the noise or unclarity on the tape or because I was not sure if I understood a South African slang word correctly. I have not corrected the grammatical errors in the quotations used in the study because I wanted to present the young men's talk as authentic as possible.

I also kept a research diary throughout the research process and I have used it to help me memorize some situations and feelings that I had during the process. A social work researcher Maija Jäppinen (2010, 137) has done ethnographic research in a women's refuge in Russia and she has found it useful that when reading her old field notes small words and hints can bring back memories, places and feelings that were already forgotten.

Sirpa Lappalainen (2007, 13) states that in ethnographic research different stages overlap meaning that collecting the data, analysis, theoretical framing and interpretation happen partly simultaneously. This was true in my study as well because already during the field work period the analysis started to take shape. Furthermore, I realized that during the actual analyzing stage I constantly returned back to the time spent in South Africa. The actual method used in the analysis was the content analysis. Content analysis is a widely used method in social research and the idea behind it is to organize the data so that it could give clear and meaningful information about a certain phenomenon (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2004, 110). The content analysis felt like a suitable method for my study since I was interested in the content of the conversations as a whole and not, for example, in specific use of words.

Firstly, I read carefully through the transcribed conversations and tried to find themes and topics which came up repeatedly and which I found interesting and relevant

considering my research task. I made notes in the margins of the text and wrote down questions that arose while reading the material. Secondly, I created different categories from the themes that I considered to be relevant. I marked different categories with different colors in the text. Moreover, after the colour coding I moved all the text marked with the same color into its own file so that I had all the information available about a certain theme in the same file. I then went through the new files many times and tried to figure out what the young men were talking about and why.

Thirdly, I continued by drawing mind maps and tried to figure out what kind of connections and differences different texts under different categories had. I managed to combine different categories together resulting in a more coherent categorization. Finally, I had two main topics which shaped into two main themes of my study. The two themes form their own result chapters as well. The first main theme is called *What it takes to be a man* and within that theme I deal with the questions of manhood and the types of masculinities that are appreciated among the young men. The second main theme deals with the concept of navigation and within that theme I am interested in knowing what kind of strategies the young men use when navigating towards adulthood. The third result chapter took shape when I started to analyze more profoundly the connections and contradictions between the young men's views and the realities of the surrounding society.

In the result chapters I have decided to use a lot of citations⁷ from the young men. The young men were brilliant story tellers and according to my understanding, by using their original words I give the young men a real possibility and voice to describe their lives. The authentic words of the young men also offer a unique and a more genuine perspective of their everyday lives in the contemporary South Africa.

⁷ In the citations I have used the following symbols:

ML: The initials refer to me in the citations.

[--] I have made the comment shorter by leaving part of it out.

[] My own comment or interpretation.

*** Separates citations that are taken from different parts of conversations.

4.5 Sameness and difference – reflecting on ethics

According to Einat Peled & Ronit Leichtentritt (2002, 148), a study without appropriate ethical standards cannot be a good study even if other aspects of the research would be maintained in a satisfactory manner. In the field of social work, one of the most important things when doing research is to make sure that the study participants stay anonymous. However, in my study it was not the case. Many young men said that they are willing to participate with their own name and none of them seemed to be concerned about somebody identifying them. Regardless of this, I have changed all the names of the participants to ensure that the things that were said during the conversations would not cause any harm for the participants or make them feel ashamed later on (see *ibid.*, 150). The names are randomly chosen English men's names and the names are not linked in any way with the participant's ethnicity, in other words one cannot know whether the participant is coloured or black.

As Peled & Leichtentritt (2002, 149) point out, being a research participant can be a meaningful role. A research participant contributes to the development of new knowledge and may even experience personal learning (*ibid.*, 149). My study participants took their role as study participants seriously. They were seemingly flattered that a Finnish student wanted to come all the way to South Africa to implement research conversations with them. However, it was still surprising how gladly the young men talked about their lives.

I was surprised how openly they talked about smoking ganja⁸ and using "tik"⁹. Of course I cannot know if they just wanted to show off or what it was, but it was interesting. (Research diary 11.4.2013)

As the particular excerpt from my research diary illustrates, in the beginning I was surprised how freely the young men talked about drugs and gangsterism. However, later on I understood that those themes were not taboos for them. On the contrary, they were part of their everyday life. Lotta Haikkola (2012, 59) noticed in her research which examined second generation young people's transnationalism and identity negotiations in Finland that young people are willing to talk if there is somebody who really listens

⁸ A slang word for cannabis.

⁹ Chrystal methamphetamine, a popular drug in Cape Town region.

to them. The moments when someone is listening to youth without judgment or educational aim are rare and research interviews are seen as these types of moments (ibid., 59).

The weakness of the group conversation as a data gathering method was that I could not know how the young men would have behaved and talked if their friends had not been there. As Heath et al. (2009, 91) state, the weakness of the focus groups is that the conversations are shaped by the peer pressure and the influence of dominant individuals. It is possible that the conversations silenced or marginalized talk that could have challenged the so-called *hegemonic masculinities* (e.g. Williot & Griffin 2004, 66).

The other issue that provoked a lot of thoughts and ethical reflection was the role of the Institute. The staff did not interfere in my study in any ways but the fact that the young men were all participating in the youth projects at the time the fieldwork took place and that the data was gathered in the premises of the Salesian Institute influenced the group conversations. The young men had adopted a lot of teachings from the Institute and therefore, I started to question the authenticity of the young men's views. How much influence the values of the Institute had had on the ways the young men conceptualized their lives? The values of the Institute were most present in the conversation that dealt with work and family life. Probably the study results would have been quite different if I had implemented the group conversations, for example, in the streets of Cape Flats which is more like a no-man's land for the young people. However, I came to the conclusion that the conversations with the young men were valuable as they were as long as the context where the data was gathered is taken into account.

The Salesian Institute appeared often to me as a disorganized and chaotic place. I never knew what would happen during the day and whether I could carry out the things as I had planned. Even though I had formed groups with certain boys, in the end I never knew who would take part in the session that time. Thus, one ethical concern I had was the fact that the group conversations were organized during the normal school lessons. It was an excellent way to motivate the young men to participate but, at the same time, one could argue that there was an uncertainty whether all the young men understood what they were taking part in. Therefore, it was very important for me from the beginning that all the study participants understood who I was and what I was doing. Hence, I started all the sessions by telling shortly about my study and emphasizing the possibility of not participating. One time I had my group conversation on a Friday

afternoon and only one third of my study participants came to the session. That occasion made me realize how much the time and place where research interviews take place influence the success of the research.

Many times during the field work period I felt that I was balancing between two extremes. Sometimes I felt as if I was *one of the guys* and it did not matter that I was neither black nor born in South Africa while sometimes I considered myself as a total outsider who should feel ashamed of her privileged position. Often I got the feeling that the interaction between me and the young men was strongly influenced by me being a woman and also me being from a better off country. I am a young white European woman whereas my participants were young South African men. Nevertheless, often I got the impression that me being an outsider also helped the young men to talk about their lives. Liz Walker (2005, 229) came to the same conclusion in her research when she interviewed black South African young men about their masculinity. The difference between a white middle class researcher and the research participants facilitated the discussion rather than restricted it (ibid, 229).

My ethical concerns during the research process were mostly linked with the power relations. Studies about Africa have historically been carried out by non-African researchers (Gould 2011, 325). Harri Englund (2011, 58) points out that many African researchers are resentful towards Western *research tourists* who come to Africa to do fieldwork for a short period of time and afterwards they just go back home without really committing themselves to the African problems. I contemplated this issue a lot during my fieldwork. For me the time I was able to spend on the field was an interesting adventure and the things the young men told were exciting stories, although, for my study participants it is everyday life. For me it was an important issue to gain legitimacy to do research about African issues as a European student because somehow I felt that I did not have the right to be there asking all those questions. What gave me a better conscience, however, was that the young men told me gladly about their lives and for them participating in my study seemed to be a special moment as well.

5 Results

In the result chapter I will answer to the research questions which were introduced in the beginning of this study (see chapter 1, page 2). I have divided the results into the three subchapters of which each will answer to one of the research questions. In the first subchapter I will concentrate on the young men's views about masculinity and their personal sense of what a real man is. I will also point out a few special characteristics about South African manhood and masculinity which were strongly present in the young men's talks and which I find important when talking about manhood and masculinities in the South African context. The second chapter will cover the navigation towards adulthood and the issues that the young men face when becoming a man in contemporary South Africa. In the third chapter I will concentrate on the prevailing societal structures and on how they and the young men's beliefs and dreams encounter.

5.1 What it takes to be a man

Manhood was one of the key themes of the gathered data and it seemed to be an important topic for the young men. This chapter will cover five themes concerning South African manhood and masculinity which came up during the group conversations and on which I have decided to concentrate. The themes that I will analyze more detailed in the following subchapters are: respectable man, initiation, marriage, women and good old days.

5.1.1 Respectable man

During the group conversations with the young men it was interesting to learn how they viewed some of those men in their communities who were respected and looked upon. A respected man was seen as a breadwinner of the house, someone who was economically independent, responsible and took care of his family.

Owen: The man that we respect, it's a man who protect his wife, taking care of his wife and his children, who doesn't do abuse, who's responsible, who has integrity, and he's each and every day feeding his children. That man is a man I want to be. And I respect it.

The young men perceived that it was a man's responsibility to find financial income and bring food to the table. In addition to providing for his own children and wife, the young men thought that a respectable man should take care of his parents and the rest of the family as well. These kinds of talks illustrate how highly the young men appreciated their families and not only the so called nuclear family but family in a wider sense, including also the more distant relatives. The young men felt that they owed the solicitude for their families as their parents and other relatives had taken care of them when they were young. Now it was their turn to give back.

Nick: If I was the only son, I will live in the back of the yard and look after my mummy till my mummy die. [--]

ML: So if the parents are not working are they waiting that you need to provide for them?

Guys: Yes.

Brian: Yes you must, because when you are young, they do provide for you.

Family was mentioned often during the conversations with the young men especially when talking about the different roles and duties of men in general. The young men seemed to be very family-centered and they appreciated a man who was seen as a responsible person, setting a good example in his community. In general, it seemed to be significant for the young men what the other people thought and talked about them. It was important to be appreciated in the community.

The young men stressed that a man should be mentally strong and should not show his weaknesses if he wanted to be respected among the people.

ML: Well, does a good man show his feelings for example? Is a man is crying there on the street..?

Guys: Haaaaiii [=No], men don't cry.

ML: Why?

Owen: Only coward men cry. You get out of my house. I'm gonna check another man, because you are crying in front of us.

It is notable however that regardless of the fact that the young men considered crying in front of others as a cowardly act, as the example above illustrates, they did not claim that men do not have feelings at all. It was only that men were not supposed to show those feelings. It also seemed that it is important that a man performs in a way that does not reduce his masculinity in front of other people. Being a man is something that a person is actively doing and performing, which is also found by other researchers (see e.g. Boehm 2006, 164). Similarly, according to Tamara Shefer et al. (2007, 3), there is a strong pressure among South African men to follow the dominant mode of masculinity and act in a way that reasserts their masculinity. Such findings were also found in the data of this study.

Although other people's opinions were important to the young men when building their masculinity, being a man was also something more fundamental. The young men described that manhood was something that was built inside of them and they emphasized that outside factors could not change or remove the manhood that was captured inside of them. Therefore, it seemed that for the young men being a man was an attitude but also an essential part of their identity.

One of the most important components of their inner manhood was dignity. Dignity was mentioned many times when the conversations dealt with real and respectable manhood.

Robert: Most special thing that makes you, like people see that you are a man, it's your dignity.

ML: Dignity?

Robert: Because if you have dignity, people start to respect you.

Steffen Jensen (2008, 170) has done research among young gangsters in Cape Town and in his research he describes dignity as something what the powerless people have left when everything else has failed. In my study dignity got same kinds of aspects. It seemed that for the young men dignity was something that a man needed and had a right to hold on to whatever happened.

There were three dimensions to manhood in the young men's talks. Firstly, the young men wished to become good men. A good man was seen as someone who is responsible in his actions especially in relation to his family members. Their male ideal that stood out as the hegemonic masculinity was a breadwinner who can provide for his family. Secondly, it was important for the young men to be appreciated and respected as a man among their peers because manhood is partly built on other people's views and opinions about you. Thirdly, manhood is not, however, only something that is based on other people's opinions, but the young men also talked about the inner manhood which compose a big part of their identity.

5.1.2 Initiation – the rites of passage

Approximately half of the young men who participated in my study were members of the Xhosa tribe. Among the Xhosa people, the initiation an old tradition and it is still widely implemented throughout South Africa also in urban areas. As discussed before in this study (see chapter 2.2.2), during the rites of passage adolescent boys are taken to the bush where they are taught by older men some skills and life experience. Among the Xhosa people, a male circumcision is also part of the initiation ceremony. According to the Xhosa tradition, a boy becomes a man in the rites of passage and before the initiation ceremony a man cannot speak or sacrifice to the ancestors which is also a big part of the Xhosa culture (Meissner & Muso 2007, 372). It is forbidden to talk or ask questions about the initiation in public because what happens during the initiation should remain a secret and is meant only for people who have experienced it (ibid., 371–372). Luckily in my study the young men were willing to talk about the initiation and what it meant for them.

Some of the young Xhosa men who participated in my study had already become men through the rites of passage and they talked about it in a very respectable way. They described the initiation as a ceremony that one would need to pass if one wanted to become a real man.

Owen: To be an adult, there are some steps that is taken to become an adult. In my culture we have some ceremony, we do rituals. And do all that traditional stuff and we go to the mountain for some circumcision. We going for that..

ML: But you are then really young, like 15? Or how old?

Owen: In 15, yeah, you can do [it] if you are fifteen, still the right time, but 10 years can't do it because [you are] still young and [you have] no mentality like the adult mentality. So when you are there, they give you the mentality of an adult and how to act like an adult. You see, when you come in the world now, you come with that mind - I'm no longer a boy, I'm a grown man now. [--]

It seemed that for the young Xhosa men the initiation is a life changing experience. They explained that when a person goes to the bush, he is still a boy but when he comes back, he is an adult man with a new mindset.

ML: So, I don't know is it too personal but I'm just thinking is it really a different feeling now how you feel about yourself?

Kurt: Yeah, and the mindset changed.

ML: In the bush?

Kurt: Yeah, when you are there. They teach you many things what it means to be a man, how to stand in life. It's not only the thing that they do... They talk to you, they give you.....they give you knowledge of being a grown man. And you can feel it in yourself that I'm changed now from a boy to a man.

The young men also stressed that after coming back from the bush it is important to show the other people that you have gone through the rites of passage. To do so, a man is supposed to wear certain clothes for certain time. During the group conversations Kurt was wearing a fine blazer and a cap and for him it was a way to show the others that he was a man now:

Kurt: It's a process in our culture. So that, you see now Kevin, maybe we were friends when I was a boy with Kevin. Then I go to the bush. Kevin doesn't know that I go to the bush. Then I come back, I must wear the blazer and the cap so that everyone can see that I've come from the mountain. Because maybe after 3 months Kevin saw me with a cloth that I was wearing when I was a boy, he's gonna call me by name like "xx" [=a word in isiXhosa]. He don't know that I went to the bush.

ML: You kind of wanna show it.

Kurt: Yeah, you wanna show that I'm changed now. So I need respect from the boys.

Among the Xhosa people a man who has gone through the initiation is considered to be more respectable than a man who has not. Other studies (see e.g. Meissner & Buso

2007, 372) have shown as well that a man who has not experienced initiation cannot be treated as an adult but he is, in fact, treated as a minor even by the younger men.

Kurt: It's a must that you go there. Because even if you are 51, me I'm 20 and a man. If you didn't go to the bush and you are in the same culture with me, I will call you by name because by our tradition, you are younger than me, because you didn't do the culture that you were supposed to do. You, you have to respect me, even if you are 40 years old being a boy.

Although not everyone among my study participants were Xhosa nor familiar with the initiation practices, I found it important to focus on initiation as well when analyzing what makes a man according to the young men. The young coloured men who participated in my group conversations did not recognize any initiation rituals in their culture and it happened a few times during the group conversations that some of the coloured men wanted to emphasize that these kinds of rituals were not part of their culture. However, it seemed that the rites of passage had an important role in making a man in the Xhosa community. The initiation connects them with their roots and culture, socializes them into the Xhosa masculinity and makes them to be respected among their people.

5.1.3 Marriage

Many scholars (see e.g. Hunter 2011) have argued that it has become much harder for men to get married in contemporary Africa due to lack of income. In my study the young men mentioned hard demands that you need to be able to fulfil in order to get married. They described girls as demanding and not caring about the traditions anymore. According to the young men, girls were too influenced by the Western world.

ML: Do you think it is harder nowadays to get married? That you need to be something else?

Guys: Yes.

George: Yes, you need to have a good job.

Jack: Good salary.

George: All that stuff.

Owen: You see now, these days...

ML: You need to have money to get married?

George: Yes, girls they want a house, they want everything...

Owen: Because a girl of today, they don't want just to go to the home affairs and put a ring... They want white big weddings where they are sitting in a limousine. Even in a church, there's a red carpet and a priest from England.

In many African cultures, people still follow the bride price tradition (*ilobolo* in isiXhosa) where a fiancé needs to pay his bride's parents traditionally cows or nowadays more often cash before he gains the right to marry their daughter. "Ilobolo" demonstrates the future wife and her family that the man is serious about her and has enough money to take good care of her. (Hunter 2011, 1111.) Because of the wide spread unemployment among young men and a lack of income, it has been claimed that young African men have problems getting married. In my study the young men did not mention "ilobolo" before I purposely asked about it and even then they did not consider it to be the most crucial thing influencing their ability to get married. They put it simply: if a man finds a right woman, he will work hard to save money so that he will look good in front of his bride's parents and finally, he would get what he wants.

The more passionate conversations came about when somebody questioned the role and the meaning of the marriage. Surprisingly marriage seemed not to be something that all the young men aspired in their lives, quite the contrary.

Kurt: This generation of today, it has changed completely..

Nick: Too much.

Kurt: You see, back then, all the men had only minded about his family... but now...

ML: To do what?

Kurt: ...guiding his family and provide for his family. That you call a man. But now, even sitting here, all of us, I don't think there's a guy who wants to marry here. No one wants to get married.

ML: Why?

Kurt: Because of the children of the generation.

Mike: The consequences...

ML: How has it changed? What happened?

Kurt: Why you marry if you gonna get divorced?

The young men mentioned divorce many times in the conversations and for them it seemed to be the biggest reason not to get married. They told that they saw it all the time happening around them and, hence, did not want to get married. The young men's worry is understandable when watching the divorce statistics of South Africa - almost every third marriage ends in divorce (Statistics South Africa 2014). However, it should be questioned if the increased number of divorces is the reason why the young men do not want to get married. It could also be that the attitudes and values of the young South Africans have become more liberal and that is why the young men could imagine their future also without getting married.

The young men also felt that the situation was different before than nowadays and when I asked why it was so common to get divorced in South Africa today, the young men explained the phenomenon by women's changed behavior.

ML: Ok, so can I just... if I understood right. So you think if a woman works, she gets so much power so she starts to live like in a more independent way?

Owen: Yebo [=Yes]. That's really irresponsible. That's why so many people are getting divorced. In the olden days there were no such a thing like divorce.

It was interesting to learn that the young men did not consider that families or the society could benefit if women worked outside the house. On the contrary, they believed that the empowerment of women had increased the irresponsible behaviour among women and it was also seen as the main reason behind divorces. The young men pointed out that if a woman worked instead of a man, she would get more power and could start to disrespect her husband. It seemed that the young men felt that their position as a head of the house would be threatened if a woman worked instead of a man.

Even though the society and the women had changed around the young men, they still thought that a good man should not get divorced. This fits well with the opinions which the young men voiced about respectable manhood. Even though divorces are common in South Africa and probably the young men knew many people who had divorced, they still thought that a good man should not get divorced but be responsible and stay with his family no matter what happened.

In the context where teenage pregnancies are common and unemployment wide spread it is not surprising that the young men demanded for more responsible behaviour from both, women and men. They stated that a good man should not get children before he has something to offer to them.

Kurt: Adults must stand for yourself. You need to look a job. You cannot start getting a child and know that you don't have anything to support him. You must be responsible.

ML: But it happens right, all the time?

Kurt: Yeah, it does happen. Maybe it's the other people's mindset.

ML: So you say that it shouldn't happen?

Kurt: It shouldn't happen. Because if your wife has a child, you must prepare everything, you must know the needs of a child, especially when he's young. You need to buy many... You must give to the child so that he can have a better future.

Regardless of the young men's somewhat conservative demands for more responsible behavior, they were surprisingly open-minded towards different kinds of relationships. South Africa is known for its liberal marriage laws which allow same sex marriages in addition to polygamy being widely accepted. When we talked about polygamy, the young men brought out many different views during the conversations and also pointed out that even the President of South Africa (Jacob Zuma) has many wives.

ML: So a good man can have many partners?

Owen: No, not a good man. A good man can have one partner.

ML: I'm talking about a good man who is respected.

Owen: Jacob Zuma is respected but he has 8 wives.

Charles: And he's gonna get another one, right now.

Owen: Yeah and he's about to get another one.

ML: Really?

Owen: Really. So sometimes you can be respected even though you have 16 girlfriends or wives.

ML: Ok, so what do we think about Jacob Zuma then?

Charles: [He is a] Playboy.

On the one hand, the young men accepted a man to have many partners but on the other hand many of the young men agreed however that a good man should only have one wife. The young men described even their president as a *playboy* because of him having many wives. Some of the young men also pointed out that if you had many partners, there would be a greater risk of getting and spreading diseases. However, also in the case of polygamy the most important thing was a man's ability to provide for, according to the young men.

Numerous studies (see e.g. Ratale 2008) state that in Africa men achieve respectable adulthood and become real men when they get married. In my study too, marriage was regarded as one of the important steps that you need to take before you are considered a real man, but also alternative opinions were suggested. It seemed that the young men want to get married because getting married is something that a good man needs to do. At the same time, however, the young men pointed out that a sacred married life is threatened by divorces, teen age pregnancies and worsened possibilities to provide for a family. Consequently, the young men even despised the whole idea of marriage.

5.1.4 Women and their role

When we were talking about manhood in the group conversations the young men started often talking about women. It was somehow easier for the young men to conceptualize good masculinity when it was discussed parallel to womanhood. It was popular to explain the problems and challenges of the surrounding society by women's behavior.

Dave: Ok, let me tell you something about the girls. You see like at the young age when they come to high school, they wanna be noticed you see. They wear miniskirts, tight sweaters... Now they see gangstas, they look nice. Now they wanna be by the gangstas, they wanna be noticed at the school. They wanna be with the gangsta and that's how happens early pregnancies...

Simon: Yeah, this is because of the girls I would say. I'm not blaming the girls but I'm just making an example of the girls. Because the girls of our generation, they sleep with this one, they sleep with this one. So you don't know who's the right one.

According to the young men's views, STDs (sexually transmitted diseases), early pregnancies and divorces were common because of the women's behavior. Women were the ones who had lost their principles and who just wanted money and attention at any cost. Many comments were made about women cheating and sleeping with many partners and when I asked about the behavior of men, they answered that it was more natural for men to have many partners than for women. It seemed that the young men believed that a man with many partners was just having fun but if a woman had many men at the same time, she was considered as irresponsible and this behavior would result in negative consequences.

The young men thought that men were nowadays more upright than women. They reasoned that the women had lost their principles while gaining more power.

Simon: [--]When the mum is trying to tell the right way, she's running away: "You can't tell me nothing, you can't beat me. I will go to the police. I have a right. If you touch me, I go to the police."

ML: So she's saying that?

Simon: Yeah. But as me, if my father beats me, I know, ok my father's, in the end of the day, trying to show me the good way.

In this particular example Simon explains how girls and women have gained more power and become more independent. According to Simon, this kind of empowerment of the women had led to the situation where the women did not believe their parents anymore even though they were trying to teach the children *the good way*. In Simon's comment *parents* seemed to represent something that has traditionally been respected and believed in whereas *police* represented the authorities of the modern world. The empowerment of women has shaken the traditional social norms and it seems that the young men felt threatened because of that.

Nevertheless, the young men believed that good women still existed even though they were rare and hard to find. A good-hearted woman was someone who did not care about the money but loved her husband unconditionally. An ideal woman from the young men's point of view was very close to the stereotypical picture of a traditional good housewife.

Owen: Women, we suppose women in my culture to stay in the house. The work of the woman is taking care of the kids...

Andile: and cook...

Owen: and wash my clothes. And when the children are gone, make the house clean and very tidy. Cooking...

ML: Is that what you think or what this...?

David: No, it's a rule of the culture.

Both, the Xhosa and the coloured young men, explained the gender roles by saying that it was their culture that was giving them the rules. It seemed that for the young men following their culture was more important than gender equality. According to the young men, in their culture it was important that a woman respected her man.

Even though the young men expected the women to stay at home and take care of the house there were also some comments that related to other kinds of demands regarding women.

Owen: It's like when you are looking for a girl, you are looking for a faithful person who is honest, who is committed.

Jack: Who's educated.

ML: So do you need to be educated to get married?

Owen: Noooo, a stupid woman can't come to my house.

Jack: Every weekend, they go out to drink...

Owen: I want someone... When I say I have a problem like this, she would come with ideas, you see.

In the previous example it can be seen that some of the young men appreciated a woman with education. It seemed that women's education was not important because of women's improved working opportunities but it was important to have an educated woman because she understands her husband better and can help him with his decisions.

Although the young men thought that it was the men's role to provide and women's to stay at home, the reality is that in South Africa the breadwinner role has switched from men to women in many households (see chapter 4.2). One could think that the attitudes towards women working and earning the family's income would have become more

tolerant because of the switched roles. However, in my study the young men did not show any signs of more tolerant opinions regarding this issue. It seemed to be a question of pride for the young men.

Matthew: Imagine that I'm a boy, my wife works, I'm at home. I must be washing, I must be clothing, I must make food, I must make the children clean, I must go fetch them after school. How do I look? I'm a man, I'm supposed to work...

ML: So do you think that people wouldn't watch you in a nice way?

Matthew: Listen, I'm a boy... Big man doing this, wife working, I'm at home, children are at school. I'm a big man and I don't work...

[--]

ML: What do you think about that kind of husbands? If there is nowadays that kind of husbands?

Brian: No, that's not right people.

Nick: It's "moffies" [=a homosexual male].

Brian: Let's think that I'm a wife, you are a boy for example. I work, you are at home. What is there to do at home for a man?

Nick: You would just be bored.

[laughing]

ML: So a man can't do the home things?

Guys: No.

Ronald: I'm not a girl, I don't make food.

In the conversation above, Nick refers to the men who stay at home when their wives are at work as homosexuals. *Moffie* is an Afrikaans slang word and it refers not only to the homosexuals but it is also used when something is considered as "girl stuff" (see e.g. Ratale et al. 2007, 116). It seemed that a true man should not do things usually done by women since he could be considered to be a "moffie". According to the young men it was not good if a man looked or behaved in a too feminine way.

Even though my intention was not to focus on women, the topic switched often to women and the differences that existed between men and women. As the matter of fact, it became one of the most popular topics during the group conversations. It seemed to be easy for the young men to talk about women when they were not around. The young

men supported traditional gender roles where a man works and earns money while a woman stays at home and takes care of the children. However, the young men had realized the change in gender roles and they felt threatened by women's grown power. It seemed that it was easier to blame women than analyze more deeply the reasons behind their changed position in the society.

5.1.5 Good old days

The young men longed for the old days like they themselves had lived already during the time when their parents were young. The old times were mentioned especially when talking about gender roles. According to the young men, in the old days, the women did not have the same equal rights as men but everyone followed the rules of their culture.

Owen: But if you see now, they break our rule. They say now, if you see the olden days, the men, even in the work were getting bigger salary than the women. You see now, even a woman can have a bigger salary than a man.

On the whole, traditions and rituals seemed to be important for the young men and those made them to miss old days. They thought that in the old days people were more responsible than nowadays.

Kurt: Because the children of today they don't have a better future because people just do without knowing what's gonna happen next. They don't care.

ML: What do you mean?

Kurt: Like having a child. Having a child without work, without any support. You can't even support yourself but want another soul to feed. That's irresponsible.

The example above illustrates how the young men consider today's South Africans to be more irresponsible than previous generations. They explained the social issues, such as divorces and teen age pregnancies, by people's behaviour. The young men believed that people are more superficial than before and do not believe in commitment. It seemed that the young men were worried because the fundamental values, such as commitment, had been replaced by people's urge to experience and have adventures.

When talking about manhood with the young men, especially the young Xhosa men often started talking about their tribal culture.

Kurt: Yes. They do follow the rules, if your mental is right. Because the culture is what you believe in so you must follow. 'Cause we are doing the culture, praising our ancestors because everything you do in your culture you must do with the respect. Now if you don't follow those rules... Because our farther has been there, done that.

ML: So that's why it's important.

Kurt: If you think that you are better than them and want to do your own thing some bad luck can happen to you because you are disrespecting the ancestors. You must stick to what you must do. [--]

The young men thought that by following their culture they were respecting their roots. Therefore, it seemed that culture and the tribal traditions served as a link between the young men and their history and roots. The young men longed for the days when people were still living in the countryside and farming their own cattle.

However, the young men's overall experience was that the life had been harder when their parents were young. The young men's parents had lived during the apartheid days and had been poorer than the people of today. According to the young men people needed strength in those days to be able to survive but, as Simon states below, in today's South Africa it is not the strength that counts the most.

ML: [--] But are you saying that it was different back in the days than now to be a young man?

Simon: Yeah, it was different.

Nick: It was very, very hard. It wasn't so easy.

Simon: If you wanted to be a man in olden days, you needed to work hard. Olden days the education was not important but your strength. What is important is your strength.

ML: Yeah, now it's the education.

Simon: Today your strength is not important but the education.

The young men seemed to be living between two worlds. They had strong cultural and traditional roots and they believed that it is important to follow and respect the culture. At the same time, however, the society around them had changed and not everything

that was important according to their culture went together with the new modern values and ways of living. It seemed that this conflict between the traditional and modern worlds and the ongoing social change made the young men to admire and miss the old days.

5.2 Navigating in a complex world

In this study I use the concept of navigation as a conceptual tool to understand the lives of the young men. The data revealed that fragility is one of the main characteristics of being young in South Africa and the concept of navigation describes well the process in which the young men are when trying to achieve successful manhood and adulthood. In this chapter I will analyze all the three dimensions of navigation which were presented before in this study (see chapter 2.3). Firstly, I will look at the fragile life stage in which the young men are. Secondly, I will present the context where they live in and thirdly, I will concentrate on the means they use when navigating in order to survive.

5.2.1 Youth as a fragile life stage

When discussing the characteristics of being young with the young men, they mentioned that young people do not need to worry about their boundaries whereas adults should be responsible and not cross theirs because they need to set an example for their children. However, the young men did not think that young people were only supposed to party and enjoy but according to their beliefs, young people are also active players of their own lives. They considered youth as an important life stage since it is the time when people make decisions regarding their future.

Kurt: A teenager is a stage whereby children start to know what to do. They start then to make their decisions. Teenagers are “lastig”[difficult]. When you come to a teenage stage you are “lastig”, like you want more than they can give you. That’s when you make too much mistakes in your life when you are a teenager.

The particular example shows that the young men felt that it was not always easy to be young. It seemed that they felt that young people are supposed to work hard to accomplish their goals but at the same time there are temptations all around and it is not easy to make right choices. The young men emphasized the meaning of friends during this fragile life stage. According to the young men, friendships could influence on you in a good but also in a bad way.

Oscar: We also, we have now this thing, where a person will follow a friend everywhere. If your friend does wrong, you will do wrong too. If your friend jumps into the fire, you will jump there too.

The young men felt pressure to experience the same things as their friends and it seemed that by imitating his friends' behavior a young man could feel a sense of belonging to a group.

On the whole, the young men participating in my study were in many ways in a turning point in their lives. All of them had had challenges in their childhood, some of them bigger than others, and now they were participating in the youth projects organized by the Salesian Institute. The time spent in the Salesian Institute offered a break from a normal life for many of the young men and the goal of the program, to integrate youth back to the society, could also be heard in the way the young men talked about changing their life-course.

John: I would say that to be young it is very nice but if you take it in a right way. Because when you are young you get a lot of challenges and you got two options: the bad and the good side. And that good side will push you further in life and bad side will push you down, until you die.

The Salesian Institute seemed to be a strong source of influence when we were talking about the young men's possibilities and challenges that they might face in their future. In a way, they perceived their options in a very black-and-white manner: as a young man you either choose the right path and success or you choose differently and end up dying as John stated above. The young men mentioned many times the importance of making right choices in life and they emphasized the meaning of the influence of one's social environment and friends have when making decisions.

5.2.2 Social environments

The context in which the young men lived seemed to have a lot of influence on the young men's childhood and also on the prospects they had today. Apartheid days are now gone and the young people of today's South Africa were supposed to be the generation who could live a better life compared to their parents. However, the young men felt that their communities had not set a good example for the children of today and they were not getting the support that they would have needed in order to progress in life.

ML: But how is the situation different?

Wayne: Parents are from that time, 1994 side, that side. Parents that time, things happened here in this country, apartheid days. Many of the parents those days were affected by that and stopped going to school because of the apartheid. While that happened, they... When it [apartheid] finished, they tried to build their life and many people maybe they got children... They were trying to put, educate their children, put them to school, teach them. But now in those houses they don't have education. So it's hard to tell a child, they expect the child to learn, and you set a bad example for your child.

Wayne explains above that the problem with education lies in not having good role models. The young men felt that their parents did not have the means to help and support their children. According to Morrell (2007, 75), many of the coloured and black people who were young during the apartheid days did not have the possibility to educate themselves but they worked as an unskilled labour. When apartheid ended everyone got the opportunity to attend schooling regardless of their socio-economic level, culture, colour or language. Nevertheless, the young men stated that youngsters of today do not have a better life or greater possibilities than their parents. The education system of South Africa has been criticized for being unequal and inefficient (e.g. Morrell 2001, 24). However, the young men blamed bad role models and bad friends that young people have instead. According to them, the bad role models led children's interests towards wrong things and not on education.

In addition, the data revealed that schools are not hospitable environments for studying in the young men's communities. The young men described the environment of schools as chaotic and scary. According to them, gangs were in power in schools and even the

teachers did not have the means to intervene. The young men felt that they could not respect their teachers because they were not protecting them from the bad things.

Owen: Even the teachers they are scared, some of the teachers. There came a guy, when I was in grade 7, came a guy. The teacher taught us a lesson, [she] was writing on a board. Yeah, we were writing the notes. The guy come in the door and goes straight to the desk of the teacher and take her laptop and put it in the bag and he go out again. The teacher doesn't have a word for it. [--] More you experience such things like that, yebo, when you are in high school...

Dave: ...it's gonna affect you.

Owen: But a teacher is the one who is supposed to protect you but if the teacher is scared - what it puts you?

Dave: What you gonna think of the teacher also you see?

Moreover, the example above illustrates well how easy and common it was to do criminal acts in the young men's communities. Therefore, it seemed that crime has become a part of everyday life in South Africa.

During the conversations the young men talked about violence which was not only present in schools but everywhere when growing up in the communities where the young men had grown up. When they talked about their communities they mentioned crime, noise, drugs and violence. The young men reasoned that the environment had shaped them and made them into who they were today.

Luciano: Let me tell you something. When you grow up in our community, we see such things. People fighting in front of the gate, in front of the yard. The other guy is fighting with the other neighbour. Shooting the other in front, on the street. We grew up in that situation, we come from that situation. So now when you are in high school, is time now to experience that, to try that. Because the way we grew up, we have seen those things.

George: When I was at school my goal was always I wanted to be a boiler maker, that was my goal. But when I went to high school - boiler maker, fuck that, I'm a gangster now. You see.

It seemed that if a young man sees certain things happening all the time around him, he starts to believe that it is normal and starts behaving likewise. As discussed before (see chapter 2.2.2), it has been argued that a culture of violence exists in South Africa and

especially South African men are claimed to be violent. In my study the young men did not accept the use of violence in any circumstances but they understood why there is so much of it around them. According to them, the surrounding society made people use violence because people had learnt that model already in childhood. Kyla Sawyer-Kurian et al. (2009, 14) claim that problem drinking is tightly linked with the use of violence. The young men agreed on that and explained that drugs and alcohol are the main reasons why violence is so often present in South Africans' everyday lives.

Even though the young men did not accept the use of violence, they still admitted that there have been times in their lives when they have resorted to violence.

Tony: Yaa, if you are growing up in my place. You see all, that the children from a young age they start going gangs. After the gangs, they start fights between other gangs. [--] And start smoking also miss! First they smoke cigarettes, after that ganja and then some go to other drugs. [--] I sold ganja and that. I got a lot of money. Every day I had money on me. I started to take my brother's gun. I started to walk with his gun and shoot there in a bush. And yaa, I used to hurt a lot of girls. I had a lot of girls - I had a lot of them. You see miss. I used to party with the girls and everything, to do everything. They had fun time with us. Just used to hurt girls. [--]

The communities where the young men grew up appeared in their talks as scary, violent and very masculine. It seemed that a man needs to be strong and tough in order to survive in the streets of Cape Flats. When navigating towards manhood and adulthood in such surroundings young people need to improvise a lot and find alternative strategies to survive. In the following chapter I will have a closer look at these strategies.

5.2.3 Alternative navigation strategies

In the group conversations we talked a lot about different paths that people could take when navigating towards adulthood. In South Africa many of the paths seemed to be closely linked with crime or other unofficial jobs. The young men described the alternative paths as "short cuts" or "easy ways".

Kurt: In our country, doing the criminal is first.

Ronald: Easy way.

Kurt: Yeah, easy way this one.

ML: Easy way to get money and respect?

Kurt: They call it a short cut.

Nick: Yeah, short cut.

ML: Short cut, yeah. But why?

[--]

Kurt: It is like this, you don't spend hours and days in working in order to get paid salary. You can get paid even just today.

As the example above illustrates, the young men considered crime to be an easy way to earn money. In South Africa there are few jobs available for uneducated young people who do not have the needed connections and it could be argued that in a situation like that a person does not have any other option than resorting to criminal ways in order to get money and food. According to the young men, if a man was not able to get a job, the only option for him was to join criminal activities. Many of them had already experienced that before.

Dave: If you have a job, it's right. If you don't have a job, it's quickly you go to jail.

Ronald: Then you gonna turn to gangsterism.

Nick: And sell drugs.

According to the young men, it was common that young people did not even think of any other options than joining a gang or doing other criminal activities in order to get money. It seemed that for the people who grow up in their communities, joining a gang is a natural and right thing to do. In the group conversations it came up many times that the local gangs and gangsters served as role models when the young men were children and growing up. In those communities gangs had a lot of authority and many young people looked up to them and wanted to become like them.

ML: So when you were a kid like, like, who were the ones that were your role models?

George: It was gangs.

Owen: It was gangs. It was bad role models.

Dave: Bad, like one day I'm gonna be like them you see.

Luciano: Some people, they are selling the drugs. You never work, you are selling drugs. You have a big and nice house, BMW and a wife and children and you sitting there and enjoying the life. Those were our dreams, just sitting there and people sell the drugs for you, you are the main boss... And you have body guard, you have your house, your wife and the body guards and your children are here in a private school.

The particular example above exemplifies that ranking high in a gang hierarchy means that a man has a lot of money and he is able to give his family everything they need. In the young men's neighborhoods the ones who had money to build a nice house and put their children to private schools were bosses of the gangs and as a young child you easily start to admire that kind of lifestyle. As Steffen Jensen (2008, 71) found out in his research dealing with Cape Town gangsters, being a member of a gang feels tempting because young men thought that as a gang member you have an access to infinite riches, fancy cars and the most beautiful girls.

Apart from the riches that drew young men to join gangs, Jensen (2008, 97) also found out that gangs offered protection that was needed in order to be able to survive in the streets. In my study the young men mentioned the need for protection as well. Joining a gang helped feeling safe in the community. In the young men's talks being a member of a gang seemed to be just about the only option if one wanted to survive in the streets of Cape Flats.

ML: How can you then survive there in high school? Like it sounds terrible. Do you have any other options there?

George: You must go in a gang. You see. You must also be in a gang.

ML: So it's not your decision.

Owen: Sometimes we do wrong things for right reasons.

Owen: Sometimes you join the gang although your intension is not there in the gang but to protect yourself in some things.

Furthermore, being a member of a gang gave the young men a sense of belonging and a feeling of being part of something. They explained that they felt easily lonely if they did

not take part in the actions happening in the streets. It seemed that if a young man does not have a job or an education in South Africa, he starts to spend time with people who are in a similar situation and finally ends up joining criminal activities. This kind of line of thought resembles the principles of the strain theory (see chapter 2.2.). In other words, people end up becoming criminals because the society does not give them other possibilities. However, the young men also recognized the flipside of the life of a gangster. As a gangster one could never know when he, his family or friends would get hurt.

George: Maybe like this one is killing people, I want to be like him, killing people. Then when you grow older, then you are like him, then you just wanna kill people. But when you gonna get killed, you don't know that.

Kurt: Yeah when you are a kid, you think it's cool because... I did also join those guys but that's when you realize that it's hard this life because my two friends died in front of my friends. So you are like no, this thing is making our life damage, damaging our lives, because there's some places you cannot go to.

The fear of getting caught by the police or getting killed by some other gangsters was the negative side of being a gangster, according to the young men. In a one way it seemed that being a gangster is the easy way because it is a fast way to get money and gain respect but, at the same time, it also seemed to be a dangerous and wearing business.

Many of the young men who took part in my group conversations had problems with drugs or alcohol. Substance abuse is a widespread problem in the communities the young men were from and substance abuse was viewed as an alternative survival strategy.

Wayne: It happens, because it starts with small groups. You are told, you are going to smoke a joint, or ganja. It always starts with ganja. Things like that. So they are standing in groups and you feel like that you are comfortable standing there.

ML: Yeah, you feel that you are part of something.

Wayne: Yeah, you are part of something because now they call you "Rastafari". They do the things that rastas do but they are not really rastas. [--] They think they support something positive but it turns out to be negative. So they can turn you to ganja, there would join more friends, also unemployed. And now that would be the group where they drink alcohol and they do ganja. So actually, you

are spoiling your, how you see yourself, how you feel about yourself. [--] You call it a party but you are going nowhere. You end up killing yourself, slowly with drugs.

In the example above Wayne explains that he started to use substances because he wanted to become part of something, in his case he wanted to be like a real Rasta. Many scholars (see e.g. Sawyer-Kurian et al. 2009, 15) suggest that for many men using alcohol and other drugs helps in proving their manhood and it makes them feel like they are part of a group. Besides becoming part of something, selling drugs was also an important strategy to earn income in the young men's communities.

Kevin: I think that there is... it comes to the point where you start selling drugs. The first step is to start selling drugs... There is the other option, you start like maybe a small business and you start working your way up and see if you can make the business grow. But if it comes to that stage where it isn't working then only way you can turn to is selling drugs.

ML: Yeah, to get some income.

Kevin: To get some income, to stay alive.

The young men mentioned selling drugs many times when talking about different options or careers that young South Africans could choose in order to provide for their families. It seemed it is common in the young men's communities to sell drugs as a side business or even as an everyday work.

Apart from gangsterism and drugs, the young men mentioned that some young people start a sex affair with an older woman or man in order to get money. The young men explained that having an older lover who pays your expenses was really common in their communities and sometimes it was the best way to fund, for example, one's studies. According to previous studies (see e.g. Pattman 2007, 41), young men have difficulties in finding a girlfriend in today's South Africa because older men have better possibilities to provide for young women. In my study the young men did not consider "sugardaddies" as a threat, quite the contrary. According to the young men, in such arrangements nobody got hurt and both sides won.

Owen: Yeah, because other girls they don't have the money to pay for the books, they want to be there in the varsity and the parents, they are unemployed. You see. And she has to go for the sugar daddy. Sugar daddy...

ML: You call them sugar daddies..?

Owen: Yes, the ladies call them sugar daddies.

Buntu: Not us, we call them sugar mummies.

Jack: But you mustn't say no, you must eat her money and do something and then you just leave her alone.

Owen: Because in the end of the day, you are benefiting and she's benefiting.. Nobody gets hurt: you do what you want, you get what you want.

When I asked the young men why young people in South Africa took the *short cut* they gave me different answers. Some of them thought that it happened by accident by growing up in a community where it is natural to be a gangster. Many of the young men also felt that the whole country was twisted and people were doing wrong things in order to survive. Also the hopelessness was mentioned.

Kevin: [--] You never wanted to do things in a wrong way but then you get caught up in doing the wrong things, hanging out with the wrong friends, bad guys. So now you are in that. But when you realize that these guys are actually not good then it's going to be too late. You end up, either you end up, not knowing what's happening around you, not knowing what's going on. [--] And that's how you end up in jail or you end up dropping out of school. You're thinking less about yourself; you are thinking that they are doing the right thing here. Cause I'm not getting so much support to do it the right way.

Navigation towards adulthood in the context where the young men lived seemed to be full of difficulties and obstacles. Gangs ruled in the communities and substance abuse was common. It seemed to be extremely hard and nearly impossible to be part of a group, feel safe or even buy yourself bread without joining criminal activities. The young men described the illegal activities as a “short cut” because by walking the criminal path they were able to earn money and gain respect easily. However, as argued before (see chapter 2.3), when youth are navigating it is important to acknowledge the environment where the navigation takes place and not only the choices that the actors, the young men in this case, have made. The young men introduced different strategies which they have used to survive in the streets of Cape Flats but it can be questioned if the young men even had any other options than taking these so-called short cuts to be able to survive and achieve successful adulthood.

5.3 Fighting against the prevailing structures

In the previous result chapters (5.1 & 5.2) I have presented the results concerning manhood and navigation in a more detailed manner. In this chapter I will bind the findings together and analyze the situation in which the young men seemed to be together with the current societal situation in South Africa. It should be acknowledged, however, that when analyzing the data in such a way, I could not avoid some overlapping with the themes that have been analyzed more detailed in the previous chapters. In the following subchapters I will look at the situation of the young men in a framework of unemployment, future prospects and marginalization talk.

5.3.1 Unemployment

In the previous chapter I focused on the alternative ways the young men use when navigating their ways in the contemporary South Africa. Even though the so-called alternative careers were strongly present in the young men's talks, for them it was clear that the best thing would be to get employment and earn money through legal activities. As a whole, the young men's view about a good life and a good manhood seemed to be very work-centered.

The young men's work-centered way of thinking felt surprising because as mentioned before, almost a half of the people aged 15–24 are unemployed (UN world youth report 2011, 95) and it is extremely difficult to find a job in contemporary South Africa. The young men who participated in my study were all unemployed and they were all coming from the communities where unemployment influenced everyone's lives. However, many of the young men thought that the problem was not the lack of available jobs. According to them, there were jobs but they were just hard to get.

Dave: Ok, today here in South Africa, in today's world, it's not about your matric and everything, it's about who you know. If I know you, I have my own business, you can come to work. I don't know you but you have your matric, I know you but you don't have a matric. I'm gonna take you because I know you.

As the example above shows, according to the young men one got nowhere without right connections. South Africa appeared as a network society where education is not as important as your connections. The young men also gave many other reasons why there were so many people unemployed in South Africa. They blamed their people of being lazy and not wanting to work. Moreover, they said that young people were picky because of their reputation would not accept just any job. Furthermore, the widespread substance abuse was mentioned as being the main reason why people stayed at home not even searching for work. Although the young men recognized a few structural issues related to finding a job, the most common opinion was that one's attitude was the most important factor when looking for employment.

Simon: When you feel bad, you start to think negative. Because you are telling yourself: "Ok I don't have a job. I'm not educated. Why I can't go to do wrong? Because people outside they say that this is the easy job, easy way to get money. Sell drugs."

ML: So is that the way that people choose then?

Simon: Yeah, that's the way.

ML. Ok, well this question might be a bit hard...

Kurt: But some of the people, they are not educated, still they have cars, they have business cause they tell themselves that I'm not educated but I know something that I can grow.

It was thought provoking to hear that the young men did not blame the society for not offering them enough opportunities but that they actually placed the blame on individuals more. A similar phenomenon was noticed by Päivi Honkatukia & Leena Suurpää (2007) in their research about the criminality of young persons with immigrant background in Finland. They found out that the young people thought that they were more responsible for their situations than the public authorities or societal structures even though those young people had in many respects worse possibilities to act as full citizens in the society than other people of the same age. (Ibid. 117.)

The young men mentioned some external factors when talking about the widespread unemployment. The topic of immigration was definitely one of the most common ones.

Simon: I think that the problem we have here, no matter if you have no matric nor certificate, whatever you can still work, but the problem is the people from other countries. They take over us in our country. They take our work. Because

everywhere you go, if you go, even in a home affairs, even in a school, even in a work, you find out that even the teachers are not from our countries.

Simon: And then, our people, they are suffering now. If you go outside there, mostly people from our country, they are on the street but the foreigners, they work, they've got everything. They take over our work.

After the apartheid the number of immigrants who reside in South Africa both legally and illegally has increased. According to Annika Teppo (2011, 285) South Africans are suspicious of people coming from other African countries and they have even organized riots demanding foreigners to leave their country. In my study xenophobia was present too. The young men blamed their government for taking in too many immigrants and now the South Africans did not have jobs available anymore. They also explained how their townships had been taken over by immigrants. The young men thought immigrants were doing better than them and it was not right according to their views. However, some of the young men also accepted the presence of the immigrants as the following example shows.

Matthew: It's not that they take over. They're also coming to have a living. They also wanna the support like you guys.

In the comments made about foreigners taking over, the young men also mentioned that foreigners got jobs more easily because they were willing to work for a lower wage and in worse conditions. In recent years in the Western world people have started to question and rethink the meaning of employment and one could think that this change would have reached also the South Africans' mentality. Many researchers have found out (see e.g. Tuppurainen 2010, 26) that European young people think that a job should be rewarding not only money-wise but also mentally. However, when talking about the meaning of employment with the young men, they did not have the typical Western demands for a job.

ML: [--] What does work mean to you?

Matthew: Yooh, a lot of things, because without a work, without a job, how you gonna get money in?

ML: Ok so money.

Matthew: You must, imagine you have children, you are not working. How they gonna get something to eat? How they gonna get thing to wear? You see. Where's the money gonna come from? You can't just sit and think: "Now I'm gonna go there, I'm gonna ask from that one 100 rand today, I'm gonna give it on Friday." Where you gonna get the money on Friday? You should go now to look for a job. You have children. [--] You must go look for a job. Without a job, you can do nothing. Your parents will not gonna be there forever.

According to the young men, the most important thing in having a job is income. Also Rènètte Du Toit (2003, 2) agrees based on her research done among the young people in South Africa. She argues that first people need to be able to fulfil their primary needs, such as food and housing, and after that they can maybe start thinking about other dimensions of work such as social and identity aspects. (Ibid., 2.)

Matthew: [--] [If] you don't have an option in getting jobs, then you just take whatever you can. But if you have an option, you must think of that also.

Even though the young men talked about South Africans being lazy and picky as job seekers, the example above demonstrates that for them the most important thing was to get a job, no matter what kind of a job it was. The young men had witnessed in their communities that getting a job was very hard and most of them had experienced that by themselves. Furthermore, the young men emphasized that if a man was not able to get a job through legal activities he would not have any other choices than using drugs or joining a gang.

Kevin: I think the biggest challenge is having to, make a living everyday here. Unemployment.

ML: Unemployment? Well, what happens if a man is not working? You guys, you are not working at the moment. So then after when you stop here, I don't know what you gonna do but if you are not able to get a job, what happens?

Ronald: You go back to your old ways.

ML: Old ways. What do you mean?

Ronald: Using drugs and that.

The young men who participated in my study had all dropped out from normal schooling and were now integrated to the youth projects of the Salesian Institute. They shared a work-centered world view even though they had never worked themselves and

did not have many working role models either. In a country struggling with a youth unemployment crisis it was surprising to hear that young people believed in their possibilities in the job markets even though the harsh reality surrounding the young men had demonstrated many times that for many people the only option to earn one's living is not employment but joining a gang or selling drugs.

5.3.2 Future prospects

Although the society surrounding the young men appeared often as a cruel place, they still believed in their possibilities in the future. According to their own words, they had done wrong and experienced bad things in their past but now they felt they had another chance to choose differently.

Kevin: So for me it's actually better if I just keep on fighting to be a better person, to become a better person, than to go back to my old ways. Because back in my old ways, why I stopped there, because it could have ended up, either by me getting killed or me killing someone else. You are pushed to that limit where you are desperate to get money to do drugs and to support. But you can't actually support someone else by... because it's not the way it's done.

As Kevin describes above, if the young men wanted to change their "old ways", they would have a big fight ahead of them. Although the young men believed in their future possibilities they explained that if they wanted to become better people they should fight hard or else they would fail. Despite the discouraging reality, many of the young men wanted to educate themselves further even though in the past they had had their struggles with education. They understood the value of the education and some of them even wanted to study in a university in the future.

ML: How do you see for example your future?

Matthew: Strong.

Ronald: I see my future, I'm working, I put everything for my children..

Simon: Also with matrices, they can go and swipe the streets.

ML: They can do what?

Simon: They can swipe the street. They need to go further.

ML: How far?

Simon: In UCT [University of Cape Town]. So that they can be something in life. You see.

The young men knew people who studied in the university and they had witnessed those people succeeding in their lives. It is worth noting, however, that the young men also pointed out that the connections mattered more than the education when looking for a job, as pointed out in the previous chapter (see chapter 5.3.1). It seemed that they had learnt to appreciate educated people although they knew that with the right connections you could be able to get a job even without education.

The young men had in general a clear direction in mind where they wanted to navigate next.

ML: Ok, study and then work. Do you already know how it will be for you, will be easy or hard to find a job?

Ronald: Not so easy but, yeah, we'll survive.

Dave: I will find a job.

Ronald: Yeah, we'll find it.

The young men seemed not to be worried about not finding a job after finishing their time in the Salesian Institute. The reality was, however, that many of the young men had problems with their literacy skills as well as with their English skills and not all of them had even a proper place to stay after finishing at the Institute. Living out the dreams of studying further and getting a well-paid job were maybe further than the young men thought.

Although the young men emphasized on numerous occasion that they did not believe in marriage (see chapter 6.1) many of them dreamt of having a family one day.

ML: And what will you do then the rest of your life?

Brian: Work for them [children].

ML: You gonna take care of them?

Brian: yeah. I wanna give them a nice living.

Brian: No, don't talk shit. Big house, 3 children, nice wife, you see, a nice car, yeah, that's all.

Similarly, Juha Kääriäinen (1994, 179) found out in his research dealing with Finnish prisoners that especially the young prisoners had a very “typical” dreams regarding their future: having a beautiful wife, two children and a company of their own. Despite the fact that my study was carried out on the other side of the world and on a different decade, the young men’s dreams were similar: they wanted to start a family and a company of their own. Some of the young men had already children of their own and they emphasized that it was important for them to be able to give a better life for their children than they have had.

As many young people, also the young men who participated in my study dreamt of being rich in the future.

ML: [--] What about you, where would you like to see yourself in ten years time? What kind of things you wanna have?

George: I want to be a boss.

ML: You wanna be a boss, what kind of boss?

George: A boss of taxis. Every day I say the money must come to me.

ML: So you gonna be a boss, you will have money. What else makes a good life?

George: What else makes a good life...

David: To be famous.

The example above shows that for many of the young men a dream was to become rich and famous one day. They were coming from poor conditions but many of them had an access to TV and Internet. In general, nowadays almost everyone has an access to global media and it enables people to see how people are living elsewhere in the world or elsewhere in one’s own country. It seemed that the young men’s dreams to become rich and famous were adopted from the TV series and music videos. The media introduced them a world they never had access to in their real lives. Hence, that world appeared to them as a dream life.

When talking about the youth unemployment and widespread criminality in South Africa, the young men explained that people gave up too quickly. According to them,

people should just fight harder. Although the reality was harsh the young men still had the courage to dream and believe in their future.

ML: What if you don't succeed? If something goes wrong?

Kurt: Goes wrong?

ML: ...in your life?

Kurt: You keep on pushing. You don't just, when you have a challenge, you mustn't let the challenge overcome because also they are also from this world so it doesn't stop people to be successful so you must look forward, don't look at the bad. Don't let it disturb you. You should just keep on following your dreams. If you work hard, you'll get there even if you are old.

The young men wanted to change the course of their life but they knew that they had a big struggle ahead. It seemed that it is more normal and common in the young men's world to be a gangster or a drug dealer than a working man. Therefore, the earlier discourse regarding alternative careers should be questioned. Maybe alternative in the young men's case would be to choose something else than a career of a gangster? The young men's dream of having an education, a job and a family might feel normal achievements in life but in the South African context they should not be taken for granted.

The young men emphasized that people's individual choices and attitudes matter the most when navigating towards adulthood. Elina Pekkarinen (2010) challenges the idea of people determining their own destiny in her doctoral thesis examining five different child welfare cases in Helsinki. She argues that often people do not have the option to choose differently due to, for example, their poverty or ethnic background. (Ibid., 167.) In my study it seemed that the young men did not have the means to analyze the influence which the societal structures had on them and on their possibilities, but, instead, it was easier to place the blame on themselves or also partly on others, especially on women.

5.3.3 Included or excluded?

In a European context when talking about young people who are in the same situation as my study participants, scholars often talk about concepts of exclusion and marginalization (e.g. Helne 2002; Suutari et al. 2001). However, in the South African context the use of such concepts feels conflicting and they should be questioned and rethought when talking about South African youth.

The conversations with the young men revealed that exclusion was part of their everyday life. They were excluded from the proper education and housing and they did not have access to the job markets. As Wayne explains in the example below; the exclusion started already when they were children.

Wayne: In today's society, for instance, young teenagers feel like there's no hope for them, so they go for drugs. [--]

ML: Why do they feel that there's no hope for them?

Wayne: There isn't any income, they see it from their side. How are they gonna earn money? How are they gonna put food on their table if they come home tonight? Cause if they don't have education, they don't have a job. So for them, if their parents don't earn a lot of money and things are not good at home, then they can also have a lack of respect. So teenagers, young boys, who don't have education, who don't have a job. So if you don't, if he doesn't come part of life which is around him, it would end up that he would get hooked in drugs and alcohol and he'd just feel that..

Wayne's comment illustrates well how the seeds of exclusion were already planted at the young age. If the parents did not work and had social problems such as alcohol abuse, they did not have the means to support their children. In addition, the school failed to integrate young people as analysed more detailed previously in this study (see chapter 5.2). Since the young men lacked education and employment, they felt that they were pushed away. According to Wayne, drugs and alcohol became easily part of young people's lives if they did not have any other means to survive.

The data revealed that the South African society had not invited the young men to participate in its social, political and economic life. However, the young men tried to get the best out of the recourses there were available for them.

Wayne: [--] If you are from the Cape Flats mostly things happen around. There's always loud music, always sound of children who are running around in front of your house where you live. Children make the noise. It's very loud outside. If you have friends outside and you experience the fun that they are having, moving around. It's likely that you feel lonely in some point, if you are not educated and.. You feel like that you must just meet up with these guys again, you must go and visit.

As the example above shows, the young men had a need to be part of something. Since they were excluded from the wider societal practices, it was not surprising that they tried to find other ways to become accepted. The townships ruled by gangs could be seen as small societies where people navigated their ways according to their own rules and laws. Thus, it seemed that the young men felt included in their own communities. The young men shared a common valuation of culture and family. Following the rules of the culture and traditions of a family seemed to be more important factors in the young men's lives at the moment than the political participation or the burden of unemployment. Hence, in their own life and community the young men were "insiders" following the commonly accepted rules and respecting their culture but when examining their possibilities and practices on a broader societal scale, it seemed that they were often forgotten and excluded.

Nevertheless, according to my understanding it would be misleading to talk about marginalization in the young men's case. In South Africa many people share the same realities with my study participants. As pointed out before (see chapter 1), half of the population living in South Africa is below 24 years old and among people who are 15–24 the unemployment rate is 51 % (UN World Youth Report 2011, 95). In fact, the people who do have a job, an education and money can be seen as a more marginal group than the young, unemployed and poor South Africans. It can be asked if a concept of marginalization has any conceptual power in a context where exclusion does not only relate to marginal group but, instead, touches the lives of the majority of people.

6 Conclusions and discussion

In this study I was interested in knowing how the young South African men define masculinity and manhood and how they navigate their ways to become men they aspire to be in the contemporary South Africa. This study has painted a picture of a country where young people's possibilities to gain employment, start a family and reach successful adulthood are restricted. The conversations with the central characters of this study, the young South African men, revealed that social issues such as crime, substance abuse, violence and unemployment have a crucial influence on their lives and have forced them to reshape their understanding of real manhood as well as improvise in their lives while navigating their ways towards adulthood.

The young men had strong opinions on what makes a real man and the topic was seemingly liked and easy to talk about. In previous studies carried out in South Africa (see e.g. Ratale et al. 2007, 114), many men and women have defined a real man as a man who is a heterosexual and the head of the household, as well as, being responsible for a family and having sexual needs. In addition, a man is seen as having the privilege of a social life outside the house, according to many South Africans. These characteristics were present in my study as well and the above mentioned male ideal stood out as the hegemonic masculinity in the young men's talks. The young men described the ideal man as a strong breadwinner of the house. They defined manhood as something that was built inside of them, although, it also seemed important how their manhood and masculinity are perceived by other people. Respect and admiration came up as important factors when building up one's masculinity and the young men behaved and talked in certain ways because they had learnt that it is how real men are supposed to act.

There has been an ongoing debate regarding the crisis in masculinity among the researchers of the men's studies and this debate can be reflected also when reading the results of this study. The political and social changes have sharpened the tensions between men and women in South Africa and according to the findings of this study it seems that young men oppose the changes related to the gender order. The young men supported traditional gender roles where a man works and earns money while a woman stays at home and takes care of the children. The conversations about marriage offered a

good example of how the social changes have influenced the young men's way of thinking. The meaning of the marriage evoked contradictory feelings among the young men. They wanted to get married because it was something that a good man was supposed to do, but they pointed out that marriages were under a threat due to divorces in addition to worsened possibilities for men to provide. Consequently, the young men even despised the whole idea of marriage. The young men were not pleased with the changes in gender order, for instance, if a woman worked instead of a man. They placed the blame of social issues such as divorces and early pregnancies on women, especially on the irresponsible behaviour of women. It could be argued that the young men felt threatened by the women's grown power. Thus, it seemed that the empowerment of women have a big influence on the ways the young men define themselves as men.

Therefore, one could claim that the young men who participated in my study were experiencing a crisis of some kind. The young men had learnt that men are supposed to dominate but because of the social changes they did not have the means to maintain this position anymore. Consequently, they felt being under a threat. On the whole, the crisis could be noticed mostly in the way the young men talked about the old days. It was mentioned many times in the conversations how things were better before. The young men had strong cultural roots and a traditional world view. They believed that it was important to follow and respect their culture. At the same time, however, not everything that was important according to their culture went together with the new modern values and ways of living. Thus, it could be argued that the culture plays one of the biggest roles in restricting the young men from reshaping the past models of manhood.

Some scholars (see e.g. Strebel et al. 2001, 519) argue that the problematic behavior of young men is a result of the overturning of traditional gender roles and high rates of unemployment among men. Men start to implement their masculinity, for example, through violence because of their incapability to dominate otherwise. In my study the young men did not show any acceptance towards violence. For instance, joining a criminal gang appeared more like a way to survive and getting income than a way to affirm oneself as a man. Being a member of a gang gave the needed protection in the communities and also provided financial support. According to my understanding, it would be too simplistic to think that men start to behave problematically because the women have gained more power. As I understand it, the problem is not the women's improved possibilities but the men's worsened possibilities. As this study has illustrated,

young men are not given real possibilities to participate and, therefore, it should not come as a surprise that they try to find alternative ways to become included and earn enough income to survive.

I have used the concept of navigation to describe the process in which the young men are when they look for their future paths. I have tried to examine where the young men wish to go, where they avoid from going and where they wish to go but are restricted from going. By looking at these factors it becomes possible to understand the wider societal situation in South Africa. The young South African men who participated in my study live in a society that has gone through an enormous transition and they themselves as well seemed to be in a transitional phase in their lives. They were living in between childhood and adulthood and all of them had a tough background which they tried to escape. In the conversations the young men emphasized that they wanted to direct their routes towards something else, something better. They appeared as active players in constructing their own lives but, at the same time, the environments surrounding them had an active influence on the young men and their possibilities.

Evidently, the context in which the young men lived had had a lot of influence on their childhood and also on the possibilities they had today. The communities where the young men grew up appeared in their talks as poor, violent and very masculine. It seemed that a man needs to be strong and tough in order to survive in the streets of Cape Flats. The young men saw youth as a fragile life stage when people are supposed to enjoy their lives but at the same time work hard to accomplish their goals. In the conversations it came up many times how important it is to make the right choices, although they stressed, however, that making right choices in their communities was not easy. They lacked good role models and the needed support when making those choices. This study illustrated well that when young people are navigating towards adulthood in the unsettled environments they are forced to improvise a lot and search for alternative strategies in order to survive.

Nevertheless, it was clear to the young men that the best direction to head would be to get employment and earn money by legal means. The young men's views about a good life and a good manhood were not only family-centered but also very work-centered. Although their dream was to educate themselves further and find a decent job, navigation towards adulthood in the context where these young men lived in seemed to be full of difficulties and obstacles restricting their possibilities. Gangs ruled in the

communities and substance abuse was common. It seemed to be hard, if not nearly impossible to be part of a group, feel safe or get income without joining criminal activities. The young men described the illegal activities as a “short cut” because by following that path they were able to earn money and respect easily.

Gangsterism, drug dealing and getting subsistence from an older lover were introduced as alternative strategies which young men could use in order to survive in the streets of Cape Flats. It is interesting to examine these navigation strategies in the framework of the theory of masculinity. To begin with, when talking about hegemonic and alternative masculinities, it should be acknowledged that the masculinities are always born in a context. The conversations with the young men revealed that in their contexts, the township communities, it was more normal to be a gangster than a working man. It seemed that the more alternative and also the tougher route to take in order to become a real man was to educate oneself further and get a decent job. Therefore, in the conversations an educated and working man seemed to represent an alternative masculinity whereas being a gangster or a drug dealer represented more hegemonic form of masculinity. In the European context the roles are often the other way round; being a criminal is something more alternative than being a working man. However, in South Africa the reality seemed to be different.

Regardless of the sometimes dark reality, the young men had strong visions of good life and good manhood and they were seemingly optimistic about their future. There is no need to question the authenticity of the visions of the young men but they got me contemplating the things that might restrict their visions to become true in reality. Thus, this study has compelled me to ask the same question which has been asked by many social scientists and philosophers before - how much can we influence our own lives? Can we make decisions about our own lives or are the societal structures making the decisions for us? In this study the young men felt that they themselves are the most responsible for their future. They carefully observed the society surrounding them and recognized some societal structures that restricted their possibilities. However, their message was clear: it is one's attitude that counts the most. On the whole, they put the blame easily on themselves when talking about unemployment or criminality. This finding is not unique but can be found in many other studies as well.

As a young person, it is usual to dream about things such as a decent work-life, proper education or belonging to the socio-economic system. However, in the case of these

young men modest dreams seemed to be difficult to put into practice. The results of this study have revealed that the South African society has not invited young people to participate in its social, political and economic life and many times the exclusion starts already the day when a person is born. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that if school-to-work transitions are not available for young people, they try to find other ways to become accepted in their communities. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that even though the young men were excluded from the wider societal practices, they seemed to feel included in their own communities. In the conversations they emphasized the meaning of their culture and traditions and it seemed that in South Africa the culture plays a significant role in building one's self-esteem and identity.

This study with the young men in Cape Town reflects only the views of a small group of men who were all attending a program whose main goal was to integrate the youth back into society. This inevitably had an effect and should not be ignored when reading the results of the study. The values and teachings of the Salesian Institute had had a strong influence on the ways how the young men conceptualized their lives, their past and their future. However, I do not think that this makes the young men's opinions or the results of the study less important. The data was born in its context and in this study the context was a Non-Profit Organization in Cape Town. The results would probably have been quite different if the data was gathered in the streets of Cape Flats or in the countryside.

Another issue that should not be ignored when reading the results is the method that I used for gathering the data. It has been found out in previous studies that when using group conversation as a method when studying men, hegemonic masculinity is reinforced. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that it undoubtedly had also an effect on this study and it influenced the picture of a real manhood that was elicited from the young men's talks. Strong personalities played a big role in the group conversations whereas the alternative opinions were not often present in the young men's talks. If there were comments that were in conflict with the general opinion, the comments were soon silenced. This can be seen as a weakness of group conversations but it does not make the data less valuable. According to the experience that I got from this study, group conversations are a good method when the aim is to get information about people's attitudes and ways of living.

If I could renew this study I would organize the conversation groups differently. It would be interesting to study the differences that exist between young men coming from different backgrounds because that could offer essential information about the meaning of the culture. How would the image of being a man differ, for example, if a man came from a deprived community or if he was from a wealthy neighborhood? It would also be interesting to carry out a comparative research in a Western country with local young men. A comparative research could show us which models of manhood are more global and which more dependent on the context. In addition, opinions and attitudes of young women should be researched. Questions such as what kind of womanhood is ideal according to young women could bring essential information about the surrounding society and about manhood as well.

In recent years there has been an increasing concern about African youth which has extended to include the European youth as well. People are worried because of widespread youth unemployment and the consequences that it might have. The restlessness of young people in some countries has proven that the worry is not groundless. The aim of this study was to focus on this current and global phenomenon from the South African young men's point of view. Especially because of the current situation it is important to do research among young people. Young people play a crucial role when building up the future in any country and too often young people's opinions and experiences are dismissed. It would be essential to learn how young people think about their lives and their future and what kind of strategies they use when navigating their ways. This study has shown that the young people try to get the best out of the resources they have in the situations where their possibilities are restricted. Even though this study concentrated only on a limited number of South African young men, it can be argued that the knowledge that the young men produced together in the group conversations offers a unique contemporary description of South Africa.

Furthermore, the results of this study can be reflected on a more global scale. For instance, it is interesting to examine the results in a framework of the so called activation policy. Currently in many societies, such as in Finland, social workers' role is to work as a part of the activation policy aiming to integrate unemployed people back into society. In Finland people tend to think that unemployed young people need to learn to be more active in order to be able to become accepted members of the society. This idea gets new dimensions when reflecting it from the perspective of the South

African young men. The results of this study reveal that the core issue in the South African young men's lives was not the lack of energy but, instead, it was the restricted possibilities to target their energy at good things. It would be essential to ask also the Finnish youth how they see their lives and future prospects. Could it be that instead of "activating" the youth, the social workers should focus their work on the positive resources that the young people have and furthermore, on the structures that restrict the young people to use those resources?

In May 2014 the first parliamentary elections will be held after the passing of the first president of Democratic South Africa, Nelson Mandela. It will be interesting to see how South Africans vote now when the figurehead of the ruling party ANC (African National Congress) is not present anymore. The young men of this study and the young people of South Africa in general could play a crucial role in these elections. They represent a substantial population group and their opinions should not be undervalued. However, the results of this study have raised a worry that the young people are not given a real possibility to influence and take part in the future of South Africa and that the voices of young South Africans will keep falling on deaf ears.

Conducting a study in Africa was in many ways a contradictory process for me. Knowing that Europeans have done so much harm in that continent made me question my position as a researcher there. In addition, the role of a white woman in South Africa is special in many ways and often I would have liked to switch roles with the local people just to become more invisible in the communities. The inequality of the country hit me every time when I walked the five-minute walk from my flat to the Institute which was located in the city center whereas my study participants travelled every day at least for one hour from the townships to get to the school. Nevertheless, conducting a study in South Africa was an amazing adventure of which I am extremely grateful and the conversations that I had with the young men gave me a unique chance to get a better understanding of the complex South African society and the lives of the local young people. According to my beliefs, the moments that we shared together with the study participants offered me as well as the young men a possibility to rethink our positions in the world and question the inequalities and power relations we are surrounded by.

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Spoken sources:

Interview with the project director. 28.5.2013, Salesian Institute. The material is in trust by the researcher.

Appendix: Themes of the group conversations

FIRST SESSION

Themes: BEING YOUNG IN SOUTH AFRICA

- **Transition to adulthood**
 - What does it mean to be a child?
 - Do you feel that you are a child or an adult or something in between?
 - What is a difference between being a child and being an adult in South Africa/ in your community?
 - How do you become a man in your community?
 - When is a person an adult? Is it about the age, having a work or a family or something else?
- What kind of challenges you face in your everyday life?
- How would you describe the society and community you are living in? How is to be a young man in that community?
- Do you feel that you can influence on your own life and how it will be?

SECOND SESSION

Themes: BEING A GOOD MAN

- What kind of man is a good man?
- How can you see if someone is a good man?
- What is expected from you as a man?
- Is it ok to show feelings? Positive/negative feelings?
- What do you think about violence?
- How do you earn respect in your community? What kind of manhood is respected?
- What about a good woman, how is she?
- Marriage?

THIRD SESSION

Themes: UNEMPLOYMENT

- What do you think about work? Have you ever worked?
- What kind of work you would like to get and why?
- Is it hard to get a job in South Africa and why?
- Why is it important to have a job?
- How would you feel if you were not able to get a job?
- What happens when a man is not working?
- What kind of work is appropriate for a man?

DREAMS AND FEARS

- Where would you like to see yourself in 10 years time?
- What are the obstacles on your way there?