

**EXPLORING A SCHOOL-BASED PEACE CLUB:  
THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG ADULTS AT A HIGH  
SCHOOL IN PIETERMARITZBURG, KWAZULU-  
NATAL**

By

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## Declaration

I, Lee-Ann Jasson, declare that

- 1) The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated is my original research.
- 2) This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- 3) This thesis does not contain any other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Lee-Ann Jasson

15 November 2016

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Dr. Vaughn John

15 November 2016

## Abstract

Conflict and violence have become ‘normal’ experiences in many South African homes and schools. Since the home and the school are the two places where children spend most of their time, these are places where they should obtain the most support and care. However, research has shown that violence and victimisation in schools is ongoing and escalating (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Furthermore, according to Burton and Leoschut (2013) schools have exceeded communities as the breeding ground for social ills such as crime and violence.

Peace clubs have been introduced into a few schools as a new concept and have been presented as a possible form of peace intervention. The Mennonite Central Committee of Zambia have presented the concept of the peace club to South Africa as an opportunity for learners to become involved in the peace process. The objective of such an initiative is to impress upon learners that conflict should be dealt with peacefully before it escalates into violence.

This study was conducted in a high school in Pietermaritzburg where a peace club had been instituted. Using an interpretive paradigm, the study makes use of case study methodology to explore the learning experiences of a group of young adults in the peace club. Several data collection methods were used including questionnaires, observation, interviews, creating collages, journal writing and document analysis. The case study methodology and the various data collection methods contributed to gaining a qualitative insight into the peace club project. Numerous data sources were used to build the case which is framed by Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of Community of Practice. The key concepts of this theoretical framework were used as a lens and included *situated learning, legitimate peripheral participation, meaning making, knowledgeability and competence to form identity* (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 2014; Wenger and Trayner, 2015). Through these key concepts, the researcher was able to obtain a sense of the practice of the peace club, the experiences of the learners, a sense of who the learners are becoming and a sense of their peace community.

The findings of the study reveal that the peace club offers young adults a possible means by which to find peaceful solutions to deal with conflict. According to Maharaj, “Learners need to be involved in processes of creating a peaceful learning environment for all” (Maharaj, 2011, p. ii). Over time, members of the peace club developed a renewed sense of trust, improved self-confidence and a changed identity. Through their involvement in the peace club, the value of social learning and spiritual connection was also recognised by many participants.

The study does not set out to portray the peace club as an instant solution, panacea or ‘magic wand’ to end violence and victimisation in schools, but rather exposes the urgency for schools to implement a system for young adults to deal with such issues. This study therefore presents the peace club as a possible form of peace intervention for learners.

## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all young adults, who in their youth have experienced situations of conflict, rejection, victimisation and violence.

To my children Keelan and Kendall Stafford, I pray that as you journey through young adulthood, you too will know peace, embrace peace and live in peace.

**Bringing peace and peaceful living is a noble cause. It has been dreamt by every single civilisation, and it has been dreamt by every single society, and it is about time that it happens.** (Rawat, 2013)

## Acknowledgements

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My supervisor, Dr Vaughn John, for his wonderful disposition, sage advice and guidance. His patience, dedication, attention to detail and support at each stage of this project, gave me encouragement and determination to hold onto the wisdom of Nelson Mandela, who stated: “*It always seems impossible...until it’s done*”.

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## **List of Acronyms**

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
AVP	Alternatives to Violence Project
CJCP	Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention
COP	Community of Practice
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NIV	New International Version
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
NSVS	National School Violence Study
PEP	Peace Education Programme
PC	Peace Club
SATA	South African Teachers' Association
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA	United States of America

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# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

“To make a change, we have to start somewhere.” These are the words of a 17 year old male learner in response to my introduction and explanation for conducting research on the peace club. His exuberance at my presence during a meeting of the peace club, and his interest in my research of the peace club, was tangible. It became clear at a later stage, during an interview with him, that the peace club had supported him during a time when he had experimented with drugs and following an incident of being attacked and robbed. His statement provided some insight into the value of the peace club at this particular high school.

Children continue to remain the most vulnerable members of society since they are always exposed to the violent, intolerant side of some people within their family and community. Children are abused, victimised and exploited by people who are close to them. Conflict and violence in particular, have become regular occurrences within many homes and in many primary and high schools. Physical violence, bullying, sexual harassment and being robbed are forms of violence that affect children most and are threats to the well-being of society (Burton and Leoschut, 2013).

The challenges of such incidents of violence could be overcome if government and education departments could step in. According to the writer of an opinion piece in the *Weekend Witness* on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2016:

The government of South Africa has developed one of the most progressive legislative frameworks to protect the rights of children. However, the country performs poorly in terms of implementation. Much of the needed policy is in place but the Department of Social Development, Department of Justice, and others that deal with the protection of children, need to overcome the challenges preventing them from ensuring effective implementation of the policies. Ordinary South Africans must also voice their outrage.

There also appears to be tardiness within some management structures in schools to provide protection to school children who are exposed to violence and victimisation. Burton and Leoschut (2013) highlight the occurrence of violence and victimisation in South African schools by responding to the findings of the 2008 and 2012 National School Violence Study (NSVS) conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention. The findings of the NSVS indicate that something radical needs to be done to rectify what has become a serious

problem. Government key-players should not shrug off the realisation that violence is on the increase, especially within schools, and should, instead, adopt a pragmatic approach to developing strategies to counter it.

This study aims to investigate the types of violence experienced by the members of the peace club of a particular high school in Pietermaritzburg and to explore the role of the peace club within this context.

## **1.1 Background and Rationale for the study**

In March 2012, delegates from Zambia delivered presentations on the concept of peace clubs in Durban and Pietermaritzburg (Mennonite Central Committee, 2012). The message was simple: the promotion of peace in schools and communities through teachers, parents and pupils. Peace clubs, as Zambian non-governmental organisations, responded to the increase in violence and conflict in schools, and according to MCC (2012, p. 4), immediate, urgent intervention became necessary to “address not only the current conflicts, but also to prevent future conflicts”.

Incidents of school violence and bullying are on the increase in primary and high schools in South Africa. For example, according to *eNCA* (e-tv, 30<sup>th</sup> October 2013) an 18 year old boy was beaten to death within 30 seconds by his fellow pupils at Sizimisele High School in Dannhauser, KwaZulu-Natal. Another incident occurred on March 6<sup>th</sup> 2013 when two teenage girls stabbed a girl in the neck and sucked her blood during a fight at Lukhalo Secondary School (Mayo, 2013). The incidents of school violence mentioned above are just two of many that are reported by the media. One function of the media, both local and national, is to alert people to the escalation of violence in schools and violence between learners (Mngoma, 2008). Media reports, therefore, portray schools as the most unsafe places in South Africa. Xaba (2006, p. 565) reminds us that school violence is not a recent occurrence, as conveyed in the following news headlines:

School head gunned down (Sunday World, 2005); Thugs target high school (Daily Sun, 2005); Violence at schools the order of the day (Cape Argus, 2005); Teacher shot, learner held hostage at Cape school (SABC News, 2005).

As a teacher who is employed at a particular high school for 28 years, I am aware of the changes that have occurred over the years. Such changes include deteriorating pupil-teacher

relationships and almost non-existent pupil-parent relationships. A noticeable shift has taken place from teaching and learning being the main business of the school, to instead having to deal with instances of conflict and violence on a daily basis.

The school, at which the study was conducted, was at the time only one of four schools where peace clubs were operational. Peace education and peace clubs are unfamiliar concepts. However, despite the disinterest and ignorance shown by the teachers towards the peace club, learners have taken the reigns and are leading the way towards trying to deal with conflict and violence.

I have chosen to use a case study method to gain insight into the peace club and its members, with particular focus on the development and learning of the peace club members. According to Rule and John (2011) a case study approach allows for an in - depth study of a case in point. As a researcher, I am motivated to investigate the operations within the peace club and to ascertain whether the challenge of promoting peace in this school is feasible.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The principles of peace education are not new in schools and communities. Social clubs such as church youth groups; peer-counsellor groups where older learners offer support and guidance to younger learners; Student Christian Associations as in the school of this study – all advocate human decency, respect, peace, trust, tolerance and non-violence. However, violence and conflict are existing problems in schools and communities, and continue to pose a challenge to the various organisations that attempt to decrease the rate of such incidences.

### **1.2.1 Main research question**

The intention of this research is to explore the experiences of young adults in the peace club of this particular high school in Pietermaritzburg, and to establish if and how peace clubs are beneficial as social groups to youth in schools.

#### **1.2.1.1 Sub-questions**

The key research questions that framed this research study were therefore:

1. What learning occurs through participation in a peace club?
2. What are the processes of learning and development for peace club participants?
3. To what extent does peace club participation impact the behaviour of participants?

Answers to the above key research questions could help school principals, parents and teachers, to determine whether peace clubs are valuable spaces for individuals who are vulnerable to violence and conflict.

### **1.3 Positionality**

The researcher is a teacher at the high school where the study was conducted. The school is a government institution located in a suburb that has experienced many incidents of domestic violence and crime. The socio-economic conditions within the school and community are challenging since the majority of learners are from previously disadvantaged schools and poor families. Some learners travel from across town to get to school while a large number of learners reside in the large informal settlement situated approximately one kilometre from the school gate. Furthermore, the school has a boarding establishment that caters for learners from places such as Escourt, Johannesburg, Newcastle and the Eastern Cape. A large number of learners, Black and Coloured, are from homes where poverty, violence, alcohol abuse and parental neglect are common occurrences. As a result of these factors, dealing with delinquent and anti-social issues has become part of a typical school day.

According to the peace club facilitator, the peace club of this school is a small gathering of young people with a common goal. The learners who attend the meetings do so by choice because they “have discovered the need for peace personally, in their homes and within their communities”. The peace club may have an important role to play in supporting the learners in their quest for conflict transformation. In addition, the peace club appears to provide an opportunity for learners to share their experiences and to seek solutions together. Based on the context in which the school is found, as well as the socio-economic challenges experienced by the school, the peace club has become an interesting phenomenon to study in terms of its success rate in achieving its purpose.

The researcher teaches Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 learners. This places her in a position of being known and trusted. The researcher currently holds the position for acting Head of Department of Mathematics and Science, as well as for Grade 10. As a result, she is often confronted with issues pertaining to discipline and therefore has first-hand experience in dealing with matters of conflict between learners and between teachers and learners.

## **1.4 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher obtained written consent from the Department of Education (refer to annexure 1), the school Principal, the parents of the young adults, as they are minors, the facilitator of the peace club and the peace club members themselves (refer to annexure 2, 3, 4 and 5). She also received ethical clearance for research from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (refer to annexure 6).

## **1.5 Structure of the Dissertation**

Chapter 1 introduced the topic and provided the background and rationale for the research study. It set out the purpose of the study and posed three key research questions. The positionality of the researcher, as well as the ethical considerations is also discussed.

Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review which comprises two parts. Part I starts by discussing the understandings of conflict, peace and violence. Attention is given to violence in South African schools. Peace education as a broad field and the need for peace education in South Africa are discussed. The literature review further gives insight into peace clubs as a form of peace education. Part II is a review of the theoretical framework of the study, namely Community of Practice theory as proposed by Lave and Wenger in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the research design and methodology of the study. The focus and purpose of the study, positionality of the researcher, methodology employed, as well as the data collection methods are discussed in the chapter. The methods of data analysis and type of sampling employed in the study follows. The chapter concludes with the limitations of the study and the issues of trustworthiness and ethics involved in the research project.

Chapter 4 gives attention to the findings of the research project by focussing on thematic analysis, discursive analysis and analysis of a particular participatory method. An interpretation of the data obtained from the different data collection methods follows.

Chapter 5 focuses on theoretical analysis and discusses the link between the findings of this study and the key concepts of Community of Practice theory.



Chapter 6 concludes the study by responding to the research questions, identifying limitations, discussing recommendations and personal reflections and making recommendations for future research.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the background and rationale for this research project. It also set out to explain the positionality of the researcher and discussed the ethical considerations of the study. The structure of this dissertation was also outlined. The next chapter focuses on the literature relevant to aspects of peace, violence and conflict, as well as on peace education and peace clubs. Chapter 2 also discusses the theoretical framework that was used in this research project.

# **CHAPTER 2            LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter is divided into two sections. Part I attempts firstly to provide an understanding of conflict, peace and violence. It also examines the level of violence within South African schools. Secondly, it focuses on the understanding of peace education as a sector of peace studies, followed by the need for educating for peace in South Africa. While peace education is offered as a formal part of the curriculum in many countries, its non-formal nature in the South African context is also explored. Finally, Part I of this chapter considers the role of peace clubs as an intervention strategy (or peace action) against the increase in violence and conflict in schools, homes and communities, as well as the importance of peace clubs as an agency for educating for peace.

Part II comprises the theoretical framework for this study namely the Community of Practice Theory. Firstly, the history and development of Community of Practice theory is discussed. Secondly, key concepts of the theory as pertaining to this study are explained. A third section highlights the use of Community of Practice theory in other studies. Next, a section outlines challenges of the theory and lastly, the suitability of the theory for this study is discussed.

## **2.2 PART 1**

### **2.2.1 Understanding Conflict**

The terms violence and conflict are regularly used interchangeably and are often confused. It is important for the purposes of this study to differentiate and establish the connection between the two. Conflict is often understood in the negative sense as it implies misunderstanding, disagreement, confrontation or even the disruption of a peaceful existence between two or more people, groups or countries. However, conflict may be positive if it brings about transformation. Lamb-du Plessis (2012) describes conflict for transformation as constructive particularly when it generates personal growth, empowerment, resolutions and improvement. Conflict for transformation portrays and emphasises that conflict is a natural and normal everyday occurrence, but can be managed in a way that leads to positive rather than negative outcomes. Therefore, how conflict is dealt with determines whether it is positive or negative. Anstey (2006) notes that while violence mostly has negative

connotations, conflict, which is a certainty in all relationships, if not controlled or managed properly, can intensify into violence and become difficult to solve, while violence is destructive and impedes personal growth. Lamb-du Plessis (2012) therefore implies that conflict is manageable. What impressions and understandings of conflict are portrayed by young adults? It will be interesting to obtain the perspectives of the young adult participants and to investigate if the curriculum used in the peace club includes activities to equip young adults to recognise, understand as well as manage conflict situations.

The term 'conflict' is defined in different ways. Wilmot and Hocker (2007, p. 15) define it "as an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources and interferences from others in achieving them". According to Bartos and Wehr (2002, p. 174) conflict is "a situation in which actors use conflict action against each other to attain incompatible goals and/or express their hostility". Zartman (2008, p. 1) comments that: conflict "is simply an incompatibility of positions, a static situation when mutually exclusive views are present".

South Africa is a country with a history of violence. Lamb-du Plessis (2012) maintains that in South Africa, violence is still structural and cultural, and conflict remains evident and inevitable in the various sectors of society. Therefore, it is necessary that peace-building approaches be implemented to enable people to resolve situations of conflict peacefully and in so doing, eradicate entrenched patterns of violence. The legacy of disparity and discrimination from the Apartheid era remains, and conflict and violence are steadily and sometimes silently escalating in South African homes between family members, and in our schools, between learners and teachers, and amongst learners.

Lamb and Snodgrass (2013) rightly argue that if youth feel powerless to deal with situations of conflict, such incidents may quickly intensify into violent situations. In a country like South Africa where violence is a normal way of dealing with conflict, and in instances where many youth live in homes where verbal conflict escalates to physical violence, worldviews and relationships of young people may be affected. Young people need support to manage their emotions when faced with conflict situations. However, this question begs an answer: 'How do young adults recognise, understand and manage conflict situations?' Another question one could ask is: 'Do peace clubs offer support to participants who feel powerless or angry to deal with conflict?'

How do young adults perceive conflict situations? The emphasis on the perceptions of the individuals involved in conflict is highlighted in Galtung's (1969) well-known triangle model of conflict (see Figure 2.1 below):

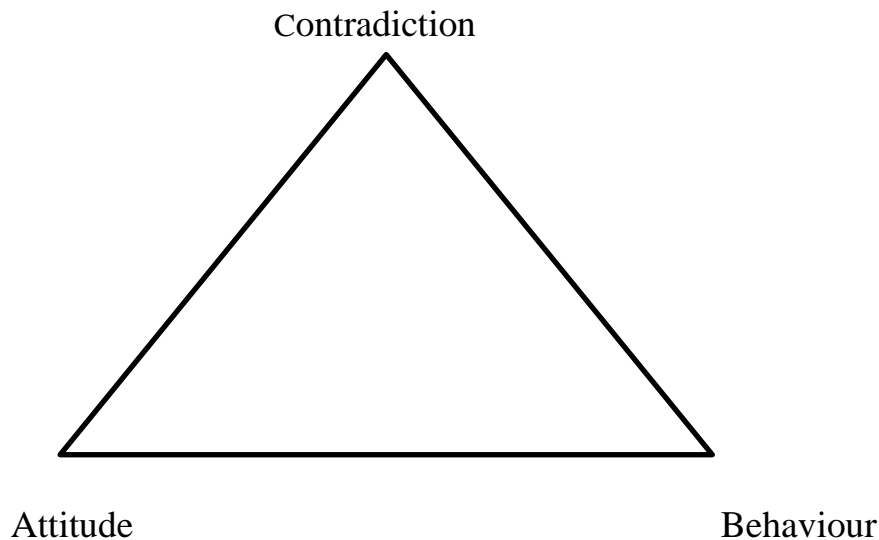


Figure 2.1: Galtung's (1969) Conflict Triangle

In the model, conflict is presented as a triangle with each vertex depicting contradiction, attitude and behaviour, respectively. According to Galtung (1969) the conflict situation is represented by the contradiction which may be actual or perceived. Attitudes comprise feelings, beliefs and thought processes of the individuals which may be negative or positive. Behaviour includes the actions of the individuals which may be that of friendship or hostility.

Galtung (1969) argued that all three elements need to be present for a full conflict. However, attitudes influence behaviour and contradictions, while behaviour and contradictions can affect attitudes and also affect each other. The model of conflict is a useful resource which may be used to determine the perceptions of individuals involved in a conflict. Galtung's (1969) explanation of conflict could be related to the symbol for peace clubs (see Figure 2.2 below) namely the indigenous Baobab tree in Zambia and the Acacia tree in South Africa, respectively. According to the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) (2012), the tree represents an understanding that the root of the conflict is the starting place for the resolution of any conflict situation. The tree also represents sustainable peace and it is where the older and wiser community members gather to discuss attitudes and behaviours in conflict situations and agree to conflict transformation and resolutions (MCC, 2012).

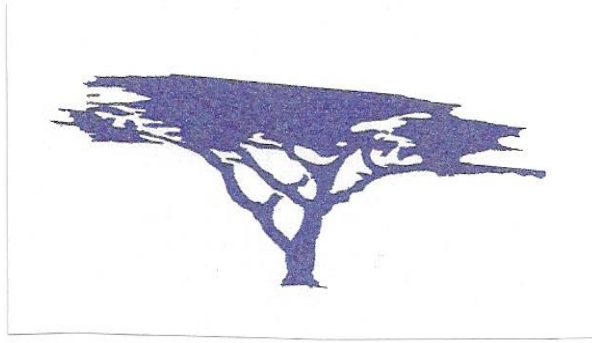


Figure 2.2: Acacia tree as symbol

Snodgrass (2005) cautions us about the danger of confusing conflict and violence and emphasises that preventing violence does not prevent conflict. To emphasise the difference between conflict and violence, Wehr (as cited in Snodgrass, 2005, p. 71) asserts that “much conflict occurs without violence and much violence, such as structural and criminal violence, exists without overt conflict”. It is worth examining the extent to which conflict is experienced by the young adults in the peace club of this study and to ascertain how they understand the concepts of conflict and violence.

### **2.2.2 Understanding Peace**

Everyone values peace (Bar-Tal, 2002). But what is peace? Peace often has a connection to “non-violence and conflict resolution, to justice and equality, to the establishment of orientations necessary for advocating tolerance, equality, human rights and the protection of the environment” (Garcia, Harris, as cited in Bar-Tal, 2002, p. 2).

If the recent xenophobic attacks in major South African cities as reported by Venktes (2015) are to be used as an indicator, one may conclude that South Africans are an angry people. These and other atrocities provoke expected emotions of ‘an eye for an eye’ retribution, whilst that of forgiveness, tolerance and peace, may dominate the hearts of observers. These shocking, horrific and inhumane public acts cement the realisation that violence as a social problem has increased locally in homes, communities and schools. Such senseless, violent behaviour, inflicted by human beings on one another, were allegedly orchestrated by individuals with the intention to harm and kill and similar person-on-person violence is escalating in type and occurrence.

Harris (2004) reminds us about the destructive nature of violence from World War II, and that when the war stopped, people sought peace. Aspeslagh (as cited in Maxwell, 2004, p. 124) confirms that it was during the 20th century that “interest in peace and peace education grew, with World War II and the Cold War acting as impetus for the debate”.

Galtung’s (1969) distinction between the concepts of peace as ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ peace, provide a better understanding about the nature of peace. According to Galtung (1969) peace studies help us to examine and understand the two aspects of peace and the connection to violence. ‘Negative peace’ is distinguished by the absence of conflict and violence caused, for example, by war and political violence. In other words, negative peace concerns the absence of direct violence or personal violence. Furthermore, Atack (2009) points out that occurrences of war and conflict involving weapons and violence of a political nature, mainly result from the non-existence of positive peace.

On the other hand, ‘positive peace’ according to Galtung (1969) is made distinctive by the presence and practice of justice, human rights, equality and well-being within the social and political domain. When situations of poverty, inequality and non-access to water, health-care and housing, for example, are eliminated, then positive peace occurs. Galtung (1969) thus refers to positive peace as the absence of ‘structural violence’. Similarly, Harris (2004, p. 12) posits that positive peace “is a condition where non-violence, ecological sustainability and social justice, remove the causes of violence”.

Positive peace attempts to address the root causes of violence while putting in place strategies for justice and respect. Harris (as cited in Salomon & Nevo, 2002, p. 18) states that positive peace “tries to build peaceful communities by promoting an active democratic citizenry interested in equitably sharing the world’s resources”. Peacebuilding education has the power to “transform societal attitudes and hurts of past trauma, as well as mind-sets, and to foster the culture of tolerance, diversity and inclusion” (Gill & Niens, 2014, p. 13). To what extent does the Peace Club of my study promote democracy and equal rights in young people who have grown up in a divided society? This will be a question pursued by this study.

Harris (as cited in Salomon & Nevo, 2002, p. 18) distinguishes between peace strategies thus: “peace keeping (peace through strength), peace-making (peace through communication) and peace building (peace through a commitment to non-violence)”. He points out that peace making strategies involve teaching individuals to resolve conflict through dialogue,

negotiation, mediation and empathy. These skills promote the making of peace rather than reacting violently.

Rawat (2015) asserts that the idea of peace is not new. He views peace as something more tangible and that peace is the manifestation of beauty and joy from within every person. According to Rawat (2015, n. p.):

Peace is within you so discover it. Peace is not the absence of war. Peace is not a declaration. Peace is a fundamental human need that needs to be felt from within ...

Peace building strategies such as the experience of kindness, joy, gratitude and understanding may serve to develop in individuals a desire for peace. Does the peace club engage with any of these peace strategies? Are the participants of the peace club of this study assisted in their efforts to avoid conflict? How does this happen? A young female gang leader who became part of *Peace and Respect on the Street Program* in Ecuador and wanted to see an end to violence and death testified:

My life used to be filled with conflicts, surrounded by enemies, without knowing how to control myself or how to think ... you react wrong and that creates violence ... listening to the message of peace, I've tried to change (Rawat, 2015, n.p.).

In this research I hope to uncover whether the peace club advocates the discovery of positive peace as the method of overcoming and avoiding conflict. There may be a possibility that the participants of the peace club are taught how to behave differently when faced with conflict or violent situations, and in this way, peace is attained. This research intends to explore the practice of the peace club with regard to issues of conflict, violence and peace.

### **2.2.3 Understanding Violence**

Harris (as cited in Salomon & Nevo, 2002, p. 16) defines violence, in both international and domestic forms, and states that in its broadest sense, it tends “to include physical, psychological and structural violence, and can be caused by thoughts, words and deeds – any dehumanising behaviour that intentionally harms another”.

Galtung (1969) provides a clear understanding of peace when he refers to three categories of violence namely direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence. Firstly, according to Galtung (1969) direct violence is personal violence and takes the form of physical

violence. Physical violence involves one person directly inflicting harm on another, for example, ethnic rivalry, gang attacks, sexual assault and even corporal punishment in schools or homes.

Secondly, Galtung (1969, p.171) describes structural violence as a type of violence that is “built into structures or systems of social, economic or political relationships at the local, national and international level”. The perpetrator is not seen and there is no direct harm inflicted by one person on another, but involves the recipients being harmed through poverty and being denied access to opportunities such as medical care, education and housing. Structural violence, according to Galtung (1969) is just as detrimental as direct violence in terms of human suffering. He explains that suffering caused by poverty is of the same degree of significance as suffering caused by war. Ultimately, Galtung (1969) maintains that direct violence can be generated by structural violence.

Cultural violence is the third category of violence identified by Galtung. He describes cultural violence as the norms, values, attitudes and belief systems within a society that permit the practice of direct violence and the continuance of structural violence (Galtung, 1990). Occurrences of cultural violence, for example, discrimination between racial groups, social groups or ethnic groups legitimizes the use of direct violence. Galtung (1990) therefore, asserts that the three categories of violence, namely direct, structural and cultural violence, are interdependent and have a relationship of mutual support. It is possible that the participants of the peace club of this study may have been affected by one or more of the three categories of violence put forward by Galtung (1969, 1990) and it is an aspect which will be pursued in this study.

Other forms of violence include environmental violence which is caused by pollution and in most cases created by human activities. Resources are therefore threatened and sustainability for future living is compromised. Violence at home in the form of sexual assault, domestic abuse, neglect of children and pensioners also generate feelings of fear, and results in the need to seek violent means to counter these (Harris, as cited in Salomon & Nevo, 2002). Moreover, Salmi and Seitz (as cited in Gill & Niens, 2014) point out that various forms of violence continue to be inflicted within formal education systems. These different forms of violence include: “direct violence (corporal punishment and sexual abuse), indirect violence referred to by Galtung (1969) as structural violence, (illiteracy, educational inequality),



repressive violence (deprivation of political rights) and alienating violence (exclusion of mother tongue, curriculum content)” (Salmi & Seitz as cited in Gill & Niens, 2014, p. 14).

It is important to recognise that South Africa has high levels of many of these forms of violence, which justifies the importance of peace education. Does the peace club of this study have the capacity to recognise and highlight the importance of dealing with different forms of violence in an attempt to embrace peace?

Galtung (1969) also makes reference to a form of peace education aimed at developing peaceful communities by using non-violent peace building strategies (Harris, 2004). This strategy of non-violence to solve situations of conflict resonates with the methods adopted by activists such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi. Their views of non-violent solutions connected with their spiritual beliefs (King, 1999). Spiritual belief is another connotation to ‘peace’ as people embrace the notion of being connected to a spiritual higher being, with the acquisition of an internal personal peace. Non-violence is, therefore, an effective choice made by particular groups of people, as a powerful method of dealing with conflict as opposed to employing violence (Galtung, 1996, King, 1999). The spiritual conviction which motivates those involved in non-violent campaigns negates a volatile situation with love and humility. Non-violence appears to be a viable option to counteract violence and conflict. It will be interesting to explore if non-violence is promoted within the peace club of this study.

Snodgrass (2005) emphasises that emotional abuse, verbal abuse, bullying, ridicule and labelling may also be characterised as violence. Schools, in particular, experience a high level of physical, emotional and sexual forms of violence and it will therefore be informative and valuable to the research, to discover how young adults deal with these within the peace club.

This study seeks to explore what types of violence are experienced by members of the peace club. It will be informative to determine how the peace club responds to violence in terms of imparting skills, values, knowledge and attitudes that may be useful in addressing them. Furthermore, the responses to violence employed within the peace club may seek to amend the situations that enable the violence, or at least may assist young people in understanding the causes thereof. The question that begs the answer is: ‘Is the peace club of this study able to do so?’

## 2.2.4 Violence in South African schools

Children and young people are prone to violence at school as much as they are in their homes and communities. A seventeen-year-old grade twelve learner reported to me incidents of physical and emotional bullying inflicted on her by her older brother, also a grade twelve learner. This isolated incident is merely one example of many traumatic incidents which occur at home and in school. Various forms of violence have occurred in schools for decades. Private schools have practised both mental and physical violence in the form of initiation. Corporal punishment, although legally prohibited, is still used by some teachers; and government urban and rural schools continue to endure blatant forms of violence (Burton, 2008).

Burton (2008) observed that there was a lack of data on the levels of violence in South African schools. The gap in empirical data on school violence led to the urgency to collect such information so that the levels and nature of violence in South African schools can be collected (Burton, 2008). As a result of this need, the current state of violence in South African schools has been highlighted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) which conducted the 2008 and 2012 National School Violence Study (NSVS). Burton and Leoschut (2013) have written extensively about the extent and impact of the ongoing violence and victimisation in South African schools. They based their findings on the reports of the two surveys which outlined a dramatic increase in the type and prevalence of school violence. The 2012 survey found that “22, 2 %, which is equivalent to an alarmingly high figure of 1,020,597 high school pupils nationally”, had experienced some form of violence in the year before the study was conducted (Burton & Leoschut, 2013, p. 12). These researchers posit that the kinds of violence that learners encounter at school, for example, assault, robbery and sexual assault, affects their learning, academic progress, and overall development (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

According to NSVS (Burton and Leoschut, 2013, p. 15):

- \*15.3% of learners in primary and secondary schools have been victims of violence at schools or outside schools;
- \* 25% of secondary schools have received reports of learner-on-teacher physical violence;
- and

\* 25% of schools report teachers physically abusing learners.

Furthermore, the “2005 CJCP Youth Victimization Study, which showed that the school was the most common site of theft, assault and sexual assault experienced by children and young people, provides some sense of the levels of violence within schools, with two out of five young people reporting that they had experienced some form of crime” (Burton, 2008, p. 15). This finding serves to highlight the need for the implementation of intervention programmes in schools. It is worth examining whether the data collected and analysed in this research study aligns with the findings of Burton and Leoschut (2013).

Burton and Leoschut (2013) in their study of school violence in South Africa, established that in South African schools, learners encounter various types of violence ranging from bullying to victimisation, such as assault, sexual assault (including rape), being threatened with violence and robbery, as well as cyber-bullying. The causes of school violence are numerous and complex. Burton and Leoschut (2013) maintain that the violent acts occurring in schools are influenced by the families and the communities in which the school is located. In other words, violence experienced at home and in the community, spills over into the school and increases in severity. This argument is consistent with De Wet (2007) who asserted that the most common causes of school violence are poor living conditions, high levels of poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, and racial and ethnic differences. The social ills which extend from communities into schools are: “crime, being a witness to violence, having access to illegal substances such as drugs and alcohol, as well as access to weapons such as knives and firearms” (Burton & Leoschut, 2013, p. 55).

Recently, there has been an increase in the number and nature of violent incidents in South African schools. The culture of violence is exacerbated by the manner in which it is portrayed by the media. De Wet (2007, p. 254) agrees that the “depiction and glorification of violence in the media may also foster a general acceptance and legitimization of violence amongst children”. In recent years there have been many publicised violent occurrences within schools, both primary and high schools. These include a teacher being attacked by a pupil armed with a stick, a primary school learner having his arm broken by a teacher using a metal rod, and recently, at the school at which I teach, a matric pupil threatening pupils and teachers with a gun. Violence is commonplace in schools, and according to the NSVS, the

number of incidents of violence in South African schools are noticeably higher than in countries such as the United States (Burton, 2008).

Incidents of violence which the media highlight are isolated occurrences which Burton and Leoschut (2013) claim actually divert attention from the physical and emotional forms of violence that are everyday occurrences in schools, and which affect the daily schooling of young people. In this regard, the results of the 2008 NSVS by Burton and Leoschut (2013) show that the violent acts which take place in schools, are on-going and not random experiences. Burton (2008) notes that South Africa is lagging behind many other countries in responding to violence in schools, and government has only recently acknowledged publicly, that violence is a problem in South Africa's schools.

### **2.2.5 Peace Education**

Peace studies, is a broad field and includes the relationship between peace theory and the practice of peace. In other words, peace studies, explores the relationship between peace research, peace education and peace activism (Atack, 2009).

Peace education is a large part of peace studies. The fundamental aspects of peace education, is firstly education, which entails the transmission and process of acquiring knowledge and skills, and peace, the nature of which is contested.

Peace education is defined as “an umbrella term for education about problems of violence and strategies for peace” (Harris & Morrison, 2002, p. 1). Peace education is a marginal, relatively unknown concept in adult education in South Africa. Johan Galtung, one of the founders of the field of peace studies commented: “there is more research on peace than on peace action, but when it comes to peace education – there is more action, all over the world and under a range of labels ...” (Salomon & Nevo, 2002, p. xi). However, there is a growing literature on peace education which demonstrates the value of thinking about peace and teaching about peace. For example, Harris (2004) describes peace education as a composite of five categories, namely international education, development education, environment education, human rights education and conflict resolution education. In light of the increase in violence and conflict in schools, the approaches described by Harris (2004) may be used by peace educators to promote interpersonal relations amongst youth in schools. Such demonstration of peace action, particularly in schools in South Africa, where the risk of

experiencing some form of violence, bullying or abuse is the greatest, becomes necessary. As a result, values such as learning to love and nurture life and the environment, and developing attitudes and behaviours to live a harmonious life with oneself, becomes possible.

Peace education is one method of peace building. Together with peace-making, it promotes resolutions through the healing of memories, through listening, communicating and negotiating. It would be interesting to discover the role that peace-making and peace building play in the peace education strategies of the Peace Club of this study. Do the approaches employed within the Peace Club of this study develop in children positive images of peace? Harris (as cited in Salomon & Nevo, 2002, p. 23) argues that positive images of peace should be:

So attractive that humans' will choose to behave non-violently when faced with conflict, and thus provide young people with an image of a world in which humans work together to resolve differences, and live in a way that sustains the planet.

There are different interpretations and understandings of peace education in different contexts. These include “A-bomb education” which was introduced in Japan in response to the atomic bomb attacks; in countries in the South, “development education” emerged due to poverty related violence; in Ireland, the ongoing animosity between Catholics and Protestants led to “education for mutual understanding” and in South Korea “peace education is referred to as reunification education” (Harris, 2004, p. 7). These various programmes of peace education diversify with regard to objectives and foci, but all reflect dissatisfaction with a situation at present. This demonstrates that peace education is centrally about bringing about changes. In other words, it is about peace building, albeit a “mirror of the political-social-economic agenda for a given society” (Bar-Tal, 2002, p. 2). Similarly, Carl and Swartz (1996, p. 3) define peace education as “education for peace which is an educational process aimed at instilling in people essential values, attitudes, knowledge and skills which will enable them to resolve conflict and quell situations of violence in a positive manner thereby promoting peace”. This raises the following question: ‘What has peace education in South African schools focussed on?’ This study will explore one example of peace education in South Africa.

Peace education as a practice and philosophy is three-pronged. It is about social purposes (why teach), content (what to teach) and pedagogy (how to teach). Firstly, according to Kester (2009) the social purpose of peace education is to challenge issues of conflict and

resist violence, thus directing the mind-set of societies towards peace instead. Secondly, the content of peace education includes understanding the nature of peace by gaining insight into peace movements and peace makers, being knowledgeable concerning different categories of violence, adopting changed worldviews and responsibilities, and embracing non-violent communication through community and dialogue (Kester, 2009). To teach peace strategies, learn peace and maintain peace, the adoption of the five postulates of Peace Education is essential. Harris (2004, p. 6) lists the five postulates as follows:

1. It explains the roots of violence
2. It teaches alternatives to violence
3. It adjusts to cover different forms of violence
4. Peace itself is a process that varies according to context
5. Conflict is omnipresent.

The five postulates may contribute to peace building and peaceful behaviour, especially amongst young adults in schools. Furthermore, virtues such as kindness, empathy, communication and co-operation may be developed within individuals and may be further extended into the society of which he or she is a part. This aligns with Haavelsrud's (as cited in John, 2007, p. 6) view that "peace education needs to be related to the specific peace needs of any particular time and place". Thirdly, the pedagogy of peace education is collaborative learning which involves participation in activities, story-telling, role-play and reflection and discussion (Kester, 2009).

While the three aspects of peace education are collectively instrumental in fostering peace, a number of points have been made, and consensus reached, by various researchers with regard to what characterises the pedagogy of peacebuilding education. Gill and Niens (2014, p. 15) in their review, note that the aims of the pedagogical strategies for peacebuilding should involve "deep change affecting ways of thinking, worldviews, values, behaviours, relationships and social structures" (Jenkins 2008); "cultivation of peace-orientated values and attitudes" (Ardizzone 2002); "co-operative learning environments, critical thinking, participation and dialogue" (Dupuy 2008) and "cultivation of values such as re-humanisation" (Kester 2010).

It is, therefore, worth examining whether the Peace Club, as an example of a peacebuilding initiative, employs any of the above-mentioned prescriptions within the following four pedagogical approaches as reviewed by Gill and Niens (2014):

1. *Citizenship education* – concerned with public or civic duty, sharing knowledge, skills and values, living and practising equity, fairness and justice. However, Shuayb (as cited in Gill and Niens, 2014) notes that in Lebanese schools, learners are not always able to practise what they learn in school, in their daily life outside of school. Is this also the contradiction that exists for the Peace Club of this study? How equipped are peace clubs to reconcile past, present and future identities? (Smith, as cited in Gill & Niens, 2014). By contrast, Bekerman and Zembylas (as cited in Gill & Niens, 2014) argue that critically reflecting on the past, present and future identities may instead cause alienation and highlight differences between individuals. Are facilitators of peace clubs able to meaningfully guide young people through these identities, particularly within the contentious context of post-conflict and violence?

2. *Values education* – rooted in religious and moral education, promotes values and qualities for right living, shaping personal growth, developing respect, acceptance and tolerance for others, and building social relationships. Values education is influenced by the context of the society in which it occurs. For example, in a society experiencing violent conflict such as Palestine and South Africa, “children cannot learn and act on human values when they are exposed to violence and hatred, accompanied by feelings of fear, anger and hopelessness” (Affouneh, as cited in Gill & Niens, 2014, p. 18). Does the Peace Club of this study face a similar challenge to promote values education in a context of on-going conflict and violence at school or at home?

3. *Critical education* - encourages critical awareness, explores and questions the roots of violence while bringing about hope for peace; it causes rethinking about what, how and why we teach; it criticises social structures and power dynamics, and provides a way of transforming relationships between people in communities in conflict. Critical education for peacebuilding involves reflection and dialogue to enable transformation. According to Gill and Niens (2014) any attempt at peacebuilding should demonstrate the concept of humanisation and involve critical reflection and dialogue. These concepts are influenced by Paulo Freire’s notion of dialogue and humanisation. Writing from a Brazilian perspective, Freire posits that through dialogue, which involves listening, asking pertinent questions and working collaboratively, students are able to think critically, formulate their own views and

understandings and act collectively so that transformation can occur (Gill & Niens, 2014). In this way, humanisation is possible because people are able to re-build dignity and self-belief, and thus work towards a peaceful future. Similarly, Lederach (as cited in Gill & Niens, 2014) maintains that peacebuilding is about transforming societies which involves building relationships between people.

A peace club is just one form of a peacebuilding initiative, and it will be interesting to discover if, when and how the peace club of this study provides opportunities for critical reflection and dialogue. Does the peace club embrace and generate the notion of Freire's love, hope and compassion pedagogy? Furthermore, is the peace club of this study an example of humanising education? Education as humanisation should be relevant to peace clubs because Freire (1996), claims that as human beings, we should be aware of our full potential as humans that is, our human-ness. He further states that by critically examining the past and critically reflecting on one's own experiences through dialogue, we are able to identify and challenge contexts and circumstances which prevent us from being human. According to Freire (1996), dialogue, reflection and action is necessary for all human beings. If these are denied humans, then it is dehumanising because people are denied their rights to express themselves.

Gill and Niens (2014) argue strongly in favour of education as humanisation as a core value in peacebuilding education and refer to Freire's belief that people have the capacity to love and form strong relationships. Should this occur, then belief in self and others, in other words, belief in humanity, together with love and hope, helps people to develop the courage to act against differences and power imbalances. Likewise, Dewey (as cited in Gill & Niens, 2014) agrees that dialogue brings people together, that people need each other and they need to communicate and form bonds. In this way, a democratic and peaceful culture of being together and living harmoniously can occur. It will be interesting to explore whether the peace club of my research fosters such qualities between members, as well as between the young adults and their families.

4. *History education* – it involves using collective narratives and memories to heal past traumas, to remove resentment and anger and to build empathy for others. It also involves social togetherness, working towards peaceful living, especially in post-violent/conflict



societies. Humphreys (2000) employed a similar approach using story-telling within a spiritually-based mutual help organisation, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (A.A.). He found that when people talk about issues that affect them, healing and recovery take place. However, Korostelina and Lassig (as cited in Gill & Niens, 2014) caution that the use of narratives and collective memories can have a negative effect by reinforcing violence and feelings of injustice, which can lead to renewed violence and conflict. Alternatively, this method can help to build hope and enable young people to work together to break the cycle of violence and to let go of anger, hatred and bitterness, and instead empathise with each other so that peaceful living becomes a reality. In this regard, it will be interesting to find out whether the peace club of this study serves an intervention role or whether it contributes to the renewal of past traumas. History education may have a useful role in a peace club and I will investigate whether this is so in the peace club of this study.

### **2.2.6 Different types of peace education**

Salomon (1999) contended that too many programmes are labelled as peace education. Peace Education “deals not at all with interpersonal conflicts, but rather with conflicts based in ethnic (racial, national or religious) hostilities crossed with developmental inequities that have a long history and a bleak future” (Fisher, as cited in Salomon, 1999, p. 3). Writing from an Israeli perspective, Salomon (1999) argued that peace education initiatives deal with more than interpersonal conflicts, are more complex and deal with conflicts that have become entrenched in the history of nations.

Peace Education initiatives can boast the successful implementation of treaties and conventions such as the United Nations and the International Criminal Court which are responsible for controlling, in a peaceful manner, commerce and behaviour of people (Harris, as cited in Salomon & Nevo, 2002). Furthermore, worldwide environmental movements such as Greenpeace, are engaged in mobilizing people to take better care of the environment and instilling a greater awareness and action for the sustainability of the diversity of flora and fauna. In this way, by collectively caring for the environment, a sense of responsibility, appreciation and unity for a common cause, is instilled in people. Feminist and Gay/Lesbian movements are speaking out against domestic abuse and homophobia respectively.

Peace study programmes are gaining momentum in schools and universities, however, the South African Teachers' Association (SATA) (as cited in the Department of Education, 2000b, p. 3) defines the type of peace education needed or implemented in schools quite appropriately in context as follows: "Education for peace (in schools) is the exploration and development of concepts, values and skills to enable pupils to live in a more peaceable manner, even in a violent society". Other aspects of peace education, according to Harris and Morrison (2002, p. 1) include "education about gender violence, domestic violence, multicultural education, international education (global studies), race relations, and human rights education". These aspects signal the complexity of the nature of peace education.

Most peace education literature refers to programmes in the United States of America (USA), Europe and Australia. Nevo and Brem (2002) alert us to the small scale, but growing literature base on peace education. According to the results of their research, between 1981 and 2000 almost "one thousand articles, chapters in books, institutional reports, and convention-symposium presentations that dealt with the broadly defined topic of Peace Education, were published" (Nevo & Brem, 2002, p. 271). It is important to note the gaps highlighted by Nevo and Brem (2002, p. 274), namely that "only a few peace education programmes aimed at adults" and that most of the programmes were short-lived. Thus the status of peace education for adults is marginal. However, they concluded that generally, peace education programmes are effective, and as a result, augur well for future programmes (Nevo & Brem, 2002). This study focuses on a form of peace education with young adults.

### **2.2.7 The need for educating for peace in South Africa**

Carl and Swartz (1996) asserted that the level of violence in South Africa has escalated alarmingly. Sadly, since the end of Apartheid (1994), South Africa continues to remain a society divided by race, inequality, poverty, unemployment, crime and violence. Maxwell (2002, p. 2) pointed out that "decades of minority rule, brutally enforced, have left a country whose people, structures and institutions bear the scars of violence, of inequality, of opportunity denied". Academics such as Carl and Swartz (1996) and Maxwell (2002) recognised that in South Africa, the socially accepted means of dealing with such conditions, and for achieving change, is through violence.

South Africa has a legacy of violence which has continued to increase throughout the post-Apartheid years. According to Murithi (2009, p. 222), “an increasingly militarised world magnifies the challenge of inculcating the values of non-violence and effective problem-solving”. Murithi (2009) notes that African cultures have a vast knowledge of instilling, and sustaining, peaceful relations within communities. The African perspective on living and learning, ‘Ubuntu’, advocates and communicates the importance of inter-dependence and forgiveness. Peaceful relationships in communities can thus be attained and maintained. Murithi (2009, p. 225) explains that this type of peace-making process encourages a “move from a culture of violence and brutality, hatred and fear, social and political exclusions and economic marginalisation, to reconciliation and peace”. He further maintains that people are characterised through their interactions with others and that religious and family cultural values empower individuals to “heal past wrongs and thus maintain social cohesion and harmony” (Murithi, 2009, p. 227). This argument put forward by Murithi (2009) is consistent with the role played by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of South Africa in the initial post-Apartheid years.

The ability to reveal or expose wrongdoing, as well as being able to demonstrate forgiveness through talking and demonstration of genuine remorse is a positive step towards resolving conflict. Maxwell, Enslin and Maxwell (2004) however, note that South Africa is still a very violent country, and blames this violence on the high rate of criminal and domestic violence. Cairns (as cited in Maxwell et al., 2004) described South Africa as a country embroiled in community violence as opposed to political violence. An enormous long-term challenge, therefore, lies ahead for the country in its efforts to shift from a culture of violence, to educating for, and sustaining peace.

If Cairns’ (as cited in Maxwell et al., 2004) notion of community violence is relevant for South African young adults, then Stavrou’s (as cited in Maxwell et al., 2004) identification of the emotional and behavioural consequences for them is noteworthy. Stavrou (as cited in Maxwell et al., 2004, p. 105) lists the following consequences:

1. lack of ability to love and trust
2. loss of self-esteem and feelings of personal power
3. dehumanisation and desensitisation
4. adoption of ‘the culture of violence’

5. children becoming violent

6. self-destructive behaviour

The factors listed above are currently relevant to young South Africans. The broader environment of South Africa is one impregnated with violence and is a type of violence that inevitably spills over into the schools. Stavrou's (1992) description above of the consequences of community violence is validated in Maxwell's (2004, p. 130) assertion that "South Africa's familiarity with violence brings a level of urgency to calls for the implementation of peace education programmes". Bar-Tal (as cited in Salomon & Nevo, 2002) describes violence as a social problem and maintains that peace education is an indispensable commodity in any society because it creates awareness of the social ills, and hope for a better life.

According to the Congress of the People (1995) "peace and friendship amongst all our people shall be secured by upholding the equal rights, opportunities and status of all". Peace, as a goal, permeates the Constitution of South Africa and forms the fabric which attempts to unite all citizens.

The escalation of conflict, violence and victimisation in homes and schools, necessitates intervention and demands a paradigm shift in the way these incidents are viewed, handled and prevented. According to Bar-Tal (2002), the desire for peace is an inherent and covetable value of all people. He further stated that even though different countries have different conceptions with regard to peace education, they all attest to the fact that peace education programmes in schools have the capacity to bring about change in terms of "justice, equality, tolerance, human rights, and environmental quality" (Bar-Tal, 2002, p. 2). Similarly, Salomon and Biton (2006) noted that active participation in peace education programmes, equips participants to be able to deal with racial, national and religious conflicts between groups of people. Salomon (as cited in John, 2007, p. 4) therefore argued that peace education initiatives deal with more than interpersonal conflicts and can be regarded as a "long-term investment". However, this study will explore the extent to which the peace club as a peace education initiative in a school is able to achieve what Bar-Tal (2002), as well as Salomon and Biton (2006) claim ought to be achieved.

Currently, according to Mukarubuga (as cited in Salomon & Nevo, 2002), there are many organizations working in Rwanda and other African countries, that remain convinced that peace education is necessary for building a culture of peace. Mukarubuga (as cited in Salomon & Nevo, 2002, p. 234) noted that since the concerted attempts at peace making, there has been “a process of changing relationships, behaviours and attitudes ... and while peace building is a long and arduous process, through sustained effort and support, a culture of peace can be achieved”. Similarly, Enslin (as cited in Salomon & Nevo, 2002) argued that TRC of South Africa has successfully demonstrated the characteristics of a model of peace education. She asserted that the TRC “exemplifies peace education in the way the process followed by the TRC involved people by allowing their voices to be heard” (Enslin, as cited in Salomon & Nevo, 2002, p. 241). In the same way, through the telling of their stories truthfully, the peace club may enable young people to be critical of themselves, critical of their relationship with others and critical of their relationship with the world. Such story-telling may present evidence of reconciliation as it did during the TRC and align with Salomon (1999, p. 6) who said that “peace education sets out to change people’s attitudes and behaviour towards the other”.

However, not everyone agrees that the TRC was successful as a vehicle for forgiveness and peace. For example, after the assassination of leader of the South African Communist Party, Chris Hani in 1993, convicted murderers Janus Walus and Clive Derby-Lewis failed in their attempt to seek understanding and forgiveness through the TRC. Instead, their application to the TRC proved to be an example of “forgiveness not granted” (Munusamy, 2013, p. 1).

Peace education is mostly associated with peace building. In South Africa this action could mean an enormous turn-around strategy for a country struggling to overcome the wounds of the past and currently embroiled in different forms of violence. In this regard, Harris (2004, p. 11) reminds us that “peace education can change attitudes, but to make the world more peaceful, behaviour change is needed”. Harris (2004, p. 11) notes that “the goal is to accept others, respect the inherent humanity that resides in all humans and adopt a disposition to care for others who belong to different social groups”.

Attempts to introduce peace education in schools, has occurred through the introduction of Life Orientation as a subject in schools (Department of Education, 2002). Such a move is an

indication of government's intention, through policy, to create a place for peace education in South Africa. Maxwell (2004, p. 129) posits that the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995, Part 2, Chapter 3) declared that "it should be a goal of education and training policy to enable a democratic, free, equal, just and peaceful society to take root and prosper in our land".

In addition, with the recent abolishment of corporal punishment in schools, policy stipulated through the publication of 'Alternatives to Corporal Punishment; The learning experience' (Department of Education, 2000b, p. 4) that:

In a society like ours with a long history of violence and abuse of human rights, it is not easy to make the transition to peace, tolerance and respect for human rights. Schools have a vital role to play in this process of transformation by nurturing these fundamental values in children.

These directives demonstrate an effort by government to find a solution to the issue of violence and to build a peaceful future for the South African people. Maxwell et al. (2004, p. 103) stated that "South Africa is a wounded country recovering from years of political and social violence". However they argued that since the implementation of peace education programmes in schools, there has been a noticeable decrease in aggressive behaviour among children (Maxwell et al., 2004). The results of studies conducted show that the number of aggressions decreased with a noticeable change from aggressive to non-aggressive behaviour, as well as a change from anti-social to pro-social behaviour. With this development in mind, peace education, a complex field on its own, may bring about a change in attitude, behaviour and way of thinking about life situations. Peace education therefore is "not only teaching and learning about peace, but it also involves teaching and learning for peace" (John, 2007, p. 5).

South African youth need to be taught to recognise the worth in others, to value life and to acknowledge the precious quality of life. Shapiro (as cited in Salomon & Nevo, 2002, p. 71) states that a "pedagogy for peace does not in itself produce peace" but it does encourage hope and compassion, particularly when the contradiction between peace, love and compassion is evident against the reality of suffering, hatred and conflict. "More than ever", notes Shapiro (as cited in Salomon & Nevo, 2002, p. 65):

We need an education that will address why we make wars, destroy lives, brutalize and devalue others, and follow those who lead us into the blind rage of ethnocentrism or other forms of hatred and bigotry.

The introduction of peace clubs in schools may be valuable in meeting this need and may play a major role in peace making and peace building. Messages of peace education, peace-making and peace building may be conveyed through peace clubs as well as through the media, theatre and the arts. To what extent is this possible within the peace club programme of this study?

### **2.2.8 The non-formal nature of peace education**

Scholars have identified three categories of education: formal education, non-formal education and informal education, which is also referred to as informal learning. Coombs, Prossner and Ahmed (as cited in Fordham, 1993) as well as Smith (2002) agree that formal education is structured according to specialized programmes, and therefore, driven by planned curricula and occurs in all levels of schooling and tertiary institutions.

These writers define informal education as non-structured, unpredictable learning which provides learners with opportunities to engage with ideas and issues that are important to them. Learners thus gain skills, values and knowledge through interaction with the people and environment around them.

Coombs et al. (as cited in Fordham 1993) describe non-formal education as learning that involves programmes that are not classroom-based, and therefore, operate separately, often during a lunch break or after school, and has learning objectives which are relevant to what the programme wants to achieve. Similarly, Enache (2010, p. 86) submits that “Non-formal education refers to any planned program for personal or social education for youth, devised to improve some competencies outside of the formal curriculum”. According to Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (as cited in Spooner 2010, p. 5):

Non-formal offerings are characterised by having few prerequisites, being short term, voluntary, having a facilitated framework of curriculum, local and community based, time compressed, hands-on, interactive, and marked by informality and where the needs and interests of learners take centre stage.

The peace club initiative could be classified as non-formal education since the interaction that takes place is on a voluntary basis and is organised through facilitation. According to Cox (2013), the term ‘non-formal education’ is defined in terms of the country, context and learning programme in which it is used. An appropriate definition of non-formal education in

an African context outlined by Walters (1998) is paraphrased by Cox (2013, p. 21) as follows:

Non-formal education is educational activity which is planned but not usually certified, and is usually a short course which has been defined by the specific objective it aims to accomplish, and its relevance to the needs of the poor.

An analysis of the documentation outlining the objectives of the peace club of this study align with the definition expressed by Walters (1998), and therefore serves to describe the peace club as an example of non-formal education.

There seems to be several principles regarding non-formal education, but there is an overlapping agreement about what it entails. The definition, therefore, that accurately describes a peace club initiative in South African schools is that of non-formal learning which distinctively links family, community and the needs of the learners. In other words, in the South African context, as asserted by Cox (2013, p. 22), “non-formal educational programmes usually fall outside formal government education and educational programmes in private business”.

### **2.2.9 Peace Clubs**

Education has always been instrumental in preparing people to function in society. Education now has the opportunity, via peace clubs, to be instrumental in empowering young people to create a more peaceful world. It will be interesting to see whether the participants of the peace club of this study are offered this hope that people can live in peace, and whether they are able to practise strategies that they have learnt about, even to a small degree.

Education has a vital role to play in building peace and in sustaining peace, and in this way, communities and societies may be transformed. This is possible through formal, informal [and non-formal] education so that skills, knowledge, attitudes and values for learning how to live peacefully together, may be instilled in learners. Gill and Niens (2014, p. 10) note that the recent *International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World* (2001-2010) makes reference to these requirements as mentioned, for peaceful living.



Schools have been identified as sites for widespread violence (Burton, 2008) and yet they have the capacity and responsibility to provide learners with information and strategies as alternatives to violence. The seriousness of such situations has motivated the introduction of peace education in schools. This may, as noted by Burton and Leoschut (2013, p. 4) “change schools into places of safety and learning, where learners feel protected, appreciated and nurtured”.

Bar-Tal (2002), states that behaviour change is imperative for measuring the success and effectiveness of peace education objectives. Bar-Tal (2002, p. 1) further argued that “schools are often the only institution that society can formally, intentionally and extensively use to achieve this mission”. This idea can be extended by Harris and Morrison’s (2002) viewpoint that educating for peace is best achieved through co-operation and collaboration. Schools, therefore, provide an ideal environment for educating for and acquiring alternatives to violence since they create platforms for learners to have a voice in issues that affect them directly. Raundalen and Dodge (as cited in Maxwell, 2004, p. 130) substantiate this by stating that:

More recent research findings suggest that if young people are given a meaningful alternative to social and political violence in which they find themselves enmeshed, the majority of them will grasp it.

A peace club is one form of peace education offered in South Africa. There is scant literature on the influence and significance of peace clubs on the lives of youth in South African schools. This is possibly because it is a programme that has been introduced as recently as 2012 to South Africa from Zambia. According to the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) (2012, p. 5) “peace clubs began in Zambia in 2006 by a peace-building and conflict transformation graduate from Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, Kitwe, Zambia.” Peace clubs were initiated in Zambia in response to the increase of conflict situations in schools, and teachers, learners and parents were identified as the key role players in promoting peace in the schools and communities (MCC, 2012). Alty (2013, p. 1) provides a brief history of the development of peace clubs as follows:

2006: originated in Lusaka, Zambia

2012: 13 schools in Lusaka and 18 schools in Choma, Zambia have peace clubs

2012/2013: 3 pilot schools in Pietermaritzburg and Elandskop, South Africa have peace clubs

Gill and Niens (2014) maintain that the peace programmes that are currently operational in formal and informal educational settings are viewed as instant fixers to a situation and do not employ strategies for implementation and evaluation of peace building. It is important to ascertain what the peace building strategies within the peace club of this study are, and whether they are as suggested by Lederach (as cited in Gill & Niens, 2014, p. 11) “firmly rooted” in transforming societies and building relationships between people. In other words, do the peace club activities or programmes build on relationships between people and institutions, as well as between people and the environment so that transformation can take place?

The South African peace clubs emulate their Zambian counterparts by running weekly meetings conducted through discussions and drama, which are led by students and coached by teachers. In Zambia, field-workers describe peace clubs as helping students to work towards ‘right relationships’, building peace and speaking up for their own rights and safety. They maintain that peace is about having the right relationships with one-self, parents, teachers, community and environment. Young people learn how to create right relationships through acquiring skills for dialogue and communication as well as to take action with regard to asserting these rights (Alty, 2013). The specific objectives outlined by MCC (2012, p. 4) and which encompasses the curriculum for any peace club curriculum as developed by MCC, Zambia are:

- To introduce Peace Club as a course that empowers participants on how to use peace education in order to achieve sustainable, durable and positive peace.
- To unearth the potentials for improvement of relationships inherent in conflicts that affect all sectors of society.
- To acquire knowledge and skills that will make participants well equipped as peace scholars and practitioners, and able to set up peace clubs in their respective situations.

The emerging focus on peace clubs as a form of peace education and peace action, has its origins in the MCC (2012) whose main aim is peace-building and development projects, with attention paid particularly to “individual relationships using a family-like approach” (Welty, 2014, p. 68). It is interesting to note that MCC (2012) has a faith-based approach in attempting to achieve peace between people, by relying on religious concepts such as “humility, simplicity and community” (MCC, 2012, p. 6). Welty (2014), states that relationships are developed between people. The data collected through observation of peace

club meetings of this study may provide evidence of the Christian belief systems that could possibly form the foundation on which the peace club operates. Welty (2014, p. 69) explains that small groups that “take the form of individual stories of transformation, evoke solidarity, create a sense of community” and in this way encourage development. Subsequently, personal and interpersonal development may be monitored.

Maxwell et al. (2004, p. 117) posit that:

Teaching about peace within the Life Orientation learning area is not enough, but that educating for peace needs to be integrated throughout the entire curriculum to be more effective.

South Africans need to relearn methods of peace-making as well as build a commitment to peace-building. The youth of South Africa are in a prime position to meet this need. Similarly, Umurerwa (2003) argued that young adults are able to embrace and maintain peace values more than older people and are able to remain devoted to these values throughout their lives. In other words, young people have a longer lifetime to realise the importance of building a more peaceful and prosperous country. According to the MCC (2012), peace clubs have been tasked to assist young people in realizing their ability to bring about positive change. Furthermore, by exposing young people to the importance of peace education, resolving conflicts and averting violence, they are more likely to develop into healthy, emotionally stable, meaningful contributors to the society in which they live (MCC, 2012). This is confirmed by Maria Montessori (as cited in Umurerwa, 2003, p. 2) that “children are targets to inculcate peace values during their formative years”.

Non-profit organisations (NPO) often run programmes within schools, particularly for the benefit of the community. These NPO’s mainly rely on financial assistance from national and international donors. The peace club programme was introduced by, and is the responsibility of the MCC (2012), which organises the programme through its own curriculum outside of the formal education system. Currently, the Quaker Peace Centre in Cape Town is an example of a successful NPO which, according to its convenor, Carol Rakodi (2012, n. p.):

operates as a Peace Club, mostly in schools in the socio-economically challenged townships of the Cape Flats ... working mainly with young men and women and teachers to foster alternatives to violence and tolerance for diversity ... with a mission to increase the number of people who are prepared to act against all forms of violence ... and dedicated to working

towards building a safe, peaceful society by addressing the issues that contribute to a high level of insecurity and personal and institutional violence.

Some noteworthy objectives of peace clubs are to equip pupils, teachers and parents with skills which they can apply every day to resolve conflict situations peacefully, as well as to prevent them from occurring in the homes, at school and in the community. Furthermore these role-players must be able to communicate with each other with regards to matters of contention or peace (MCC, 2012). These objectives align with the African perspective Ubuntu on living and learning, which advocates and communicates the importance of interdependence and forgiveness, in attaining and sustaining peaceful relationships in communities. Murithi (2009, p. 225) explains that this type of peace-making process encourages a “move from a culture of violence and brutality, hatred and fear, social and political exclusions and economic marginalisation to reconciliation and peace”. He further maintained that people are characterised through their interactions with others and that religious and family cultural values empower individuals to “heal past wrongs and thus maintain social cohesion and harmony” (Murithi, 2009, p. 227). This notion demands selfless acts of revealing or exposing wrongdoing, as well as being able to demonstrate forgiveness through talking and demonstration of genuine remorse where applicable.

It is imperative, therefore, to acknowledge the “symbiotic relationship that exists between what occurs in schools and what happens in learners’ homes and communities” as reported in the findings of the NSVS, (Burton, 2008, p.75). Burton (2008) also states that the school is the centre where these different environments intersect, and is therefore, an ideal location to change the notion that violence is a normal, legitimate method to resolve conflict. It is also a place where young adults can teach each other as they share experiences and become empowered to apply the knowledge of peace in their everyday life.

However, Bush and Saltarelli (as cited in Gill & Niens, 2014, p. 14) draw attention to the possibility of peacebuilding education as being destructive in nature and thus able to preserve, instead of eradicate, the “root causes of conflict, such as inequality, negative intergroup attitudes and exclusion”. In other words, peace programmes may serve to foster and maintain differences between groups of people and instead of improving conflict situations, may worsen them. Does this happen in the peace club of this study? Is the peace

club an alternative space to afford young adults an opportunity to talk about issues of conflict and violence, and to offer hope, or do they continue to encourage the different forms of violence described by Salmi, Seitz and Harris (as cited in Gill & Niens, 2014)?

Peace clubs should offer a platform for young adults to speak up for themselves and for others, about issues that affect them. This notion is consistent with the peace club objectives, which, according to MCC (2012, p. 6), and for the benefit of this research study, is worth mentioning:

- To develop, research, and implement proactive peace education.
- To empower pupils, parents, and teachers with skills and knowledge of peace and conflict resolution so that they can resolve their own conflicts amicably.
- To carry out dispute resolution, and conflict-prevention and management in schools.
- To raise social, culture and legal consciousness among young people and others with a view of providing mechanisms for building the culture of peace in schools.
- To set up a forum where pupils, teachers and parents can express their view points around issues relating to peace or conflict and
- To promote the rights of the child and also their responsibilities.

According to the data collected by NSVS, secondary schools reflect higher levels of violence than primary schools, and through programmes such as peace clubs, what may appear to be an insurmountable task, can provide tiny stepping stones to meeting a need. Likewise, Burton (2008, p. 83) argued that “young people need to be encouraged to establish forums within schools where they learn to give voice to, and take responsibility for, the issues that affect them”.

The learning which occurs in peace clubs could, therefore, enable young adults to become less vulnerable and more empowered in their daily interactions within the home and at school. It is my interest to determine whether peace clubs are able to play a role in this regard.

However, a very successful Peace Education Program (PEP) (Rawat, 2013) has received widespread recognition all over the world and is therefore worth mentioning here. PEP is the signature programme of the *Prem Rawat Foundation* which was founded in 2001. The

president of the foundation explains that PEP is “awakening people all over the world to the possibility of inner peace in their lives” (Rawat, 2013, n. p.). The vision of the programme is “Dignity, Peace and Prosperity for all” (Rawat, 2013, n. p.). Peace education programmes give hope of a way out of situations that seem hopeless. Rawat (2013) asserts that in 2013 alone, 13, 000 people were enrolled in PEP workshops in 28 countries such as Ecuador, New Zealand and the United States. Such widespread affiliation to the programme is testimony to the belief that peace from within may be the starting point to overcoming social turmoil experienced by many.

The facilitators and participants of PEP believe that peace is more than just a dream, and instead “peace on this earth and in the heart of everyone has the possibility to be real” (Rawat, 2015, n. p.). The participants of PEP learn that the first step to experiencing peace is recognising that peace comes from within, and in this way, they are able to discover their own inner resources such as choice, hope and gratitude. One woman attending a PEP workshop for adults in Denmark remarked: “It is an oasis to come here and listen ... you gather tools to live a more conscious life” (Rawat, 2013, n. p.). Such attributes of peace may change the way young people think and behave. The findings of this research study may reveal whether the participants of the peace club understand the notion of inner peace. The message of peace according to Rawat (2013, n. p.) seems simple: “[to] be at peace with myself first ... then I can be at peace with others”. This notion raises the following questions: ‘Do the activities of the peace club endorse Rawat’s (2013) perception of peace from the inside out?’ ‘Do the participants feel motivated to be more mindful of their lifestyles and behaviour, and to therefore change how they respond in conflict situations?’ It will be interesting to discover whether the vision of PEP aligns with the learning and development of the peace club of this study.

## **2.3 PART II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The poet John Donne proposes that human beings are social beings and it is our nature to rely on one another for living and learning when he says that “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main” (Donne, 1967, p. 100). I have selected Community of Practice theory as a theoretical framework for this study, a decision

which requires that I provide a brief history of the development of the theory, explain some key concepts of the theory, explore the use of Community of Practice theory in other studies, highlight some critiques of the theory, as well as motivate why the theory is suitable for this study.

### **2.3.1 A brief history of the development of Community of Practice theory**

In the late 1990s, two researchers, namely Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, made an important proposition that learning is a social activity that occurs from interacting and participating in daily activities in a community. According to Lave and Wenger (1991) Community of Practice as a theory, began as a way of examining and gaining insight, into the learning that occurred within a socially interactive group of people (Li, Grimshaw, Nielsen, Judd, Coyte & Graham, 2009). This means that Community of Practice is a social theory of learning and involves interaction between individuals within the community. Wenger (1998) asserts that the origin of the concept of community of practice lies in learning theory, which he and Jean Lave discovered while studying apprenticeships. Lave and Wenger's (1999) theory of Community of Practice provides a suitable theoretical framework for exploring knowing and learning within a group constituted around a common theme and activity, such as a peace club.

According to Wenger (1998, p. 1), a community of practice is a:

Group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly ... according to what they are about, how they function and what capabilities they produce. It is a practice that develops around things that matter to people. Such communities are fundamentally self-organizing systems.

Serrat's (2008, p. 1) notion of a Community of Practice is a:

Group of like-minded, interacting people who filter, amplify, invest and provide, convene, build, and learn and facilitate to ensure more effective creation and sharing of knowledge in their domain.

In addition, Serrat (2008, p. 1) outlines criteria that characterise communities of practice thus:

1. They are peer-to-peer collaborative networks.
2. They are driven by the willing participation of their members.

3. They are focussed on learning and building capacity.
4. They are engaged in sharing knowledge, developing expertise, and solving problems.

In this study, it is important to ascertain through data analysis whether the peace club displays these characteristics of a community of practice as described by Serrat (2008).

Seaman (2008, p. 269) states that “when one shares commonalities with others, communities are formed”. He explains that communities are dynamic in nature, and therefore, work differently for different reasons. Seaman (2008, p. 270) thus maintains that “the goal of a community is improvement”. This study hopes to ascertain whether participation in the peace club encourages improvement, particularly in terms of the behaviour of the young adult participants.

Similarly, Hoadley (2012, p. 288) defines Community of Practice theory as a “community that shares practices” and as a process of learning, namely a “group in which a constant process of legitimate peripheral participation takes place”.

Furthermore, Wenger (2014, n. p.) stated that the theory implies the existence of “social competence” and defined learning within this perspective as “a tension interaction between social competence and a person’s experience”. In other words, Wenger (2014) implied that the ability of the members of the community to learn collectively is challenged by the individual involvement of a person. The individual responses of the members of the peace club as well as the degree of connection to the group will thus be explored in this study.

According to Wenger (n.d., p. 2) a Community of Practice provides opportunities for people to form symbiotic relationships of mutual support, and therefore, notes that:

The value of belonging to a Community of Practice is having people to turn to when there is a challenge ... people engage in the same practice, they form learning partnerships because they recognise each other as a partner or a practitioner and establish a learning contract.

Wenger’s (n.d.) definition of a Community of Practice has strong relevance to this study because it envisages the peace club under investigation to be a place where people come together and engage in conversations with each other so that they could learn about peace



together. All the above definitions imply that, in essence, communities of practice are the coming together of people, because they want to, they join freely and are not under any duress to do so, to share ideas and experiences in a social, open and informal environment, and they are therefore able to gain from belonging. I therefore hope to discover, via the lens of community of practice theory, the processes of learning that occurs for young adults of the peace club of this study. Communities of Practice are regarded as self-generating groups that exist outside of formal learning and this research explores the non-formal learning of the peace club.

### **2.3.2 Key concepts of Community of Practice Theory**

Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to various key concepts of Community of Practice theory which are relevant to this study, such as *situated learning* and *legitimate peripheral participation* (LPP). They argue that learning occurs socially and meaningfully to meet a particular need and is therefore situated. According to these researchers, the process of *legitimate peripheral participation* (LPP) is central to *situated learning* as “learners participate in communities of practice, moving toward full participation in the socio-culture practices of a community” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29).

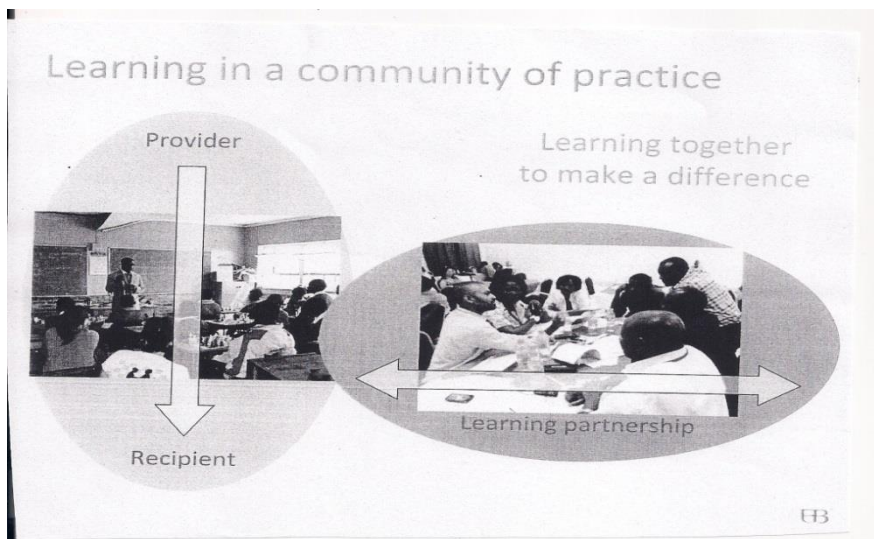
Firstly, the concept of *situated learning* describes the natural social environment in which learning takes place as opposed to being in a classroom. Kimble (2006), notes that, according to behaviourist theorists, classroom learning often involves a process of transferring knowledge from one person (teacher) to another (learner). He then notes that interest grew in the way learning occurred within communities as described by Social Constructivist Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivists focus on how knowledge is mutually co-constructed through interaction and collaboration. These two factors are relevant to the learning within the peace club of this study and it will therefore be relevant to explore if, when and how such interactive and collaborative learning occurs. Peace clubs are described as social, non-formal, interactive learning situations, and therefore, the concept of *situated learning* is relevant.

Furthermore, Brown (2013, p. 1) notes that in *situated learning*:

participants typically come together to solve a problem, for example, alcoholism or violence, and that learners who seek communities of enquiry do so because they have shared interests

and seek to benefit from the knowledge of others who may be more experienced or knowledgeable.

In the original master-apprentice model proposed by Lave and Wenger (1999) learning occurs in a hierarchical manner. However, Wenger and Trayner (2015) more recently advocate that learning together, that is, horizontal learning is more beneficial as opposed to hierarchical learning, from teacher (provider) to learner (recipient). They maintain that learning in a community of practice should be seen as a partnership between learners and between teacher and learners, as shown in Picture 2.1 below (Wenger & Trayner, 2015):



Picture 2.1

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the processes of learning in a peace club setting. It attempts to answer this question: 'In this community of practice, is learning a partnership in which people learn with and from each other? Or is the learning more a one way movement from the facilitator to the participants?'

*Legitimate Peripheral Participation* is a second key concept of Community of Practice theory. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 29) explains that this "provides a way to speak about crucial relations between newcomers and old-timers and about their activities, identities, artefacts, knowledge and practice". They refer to the interaction which occurs between the "novices and the experts" within LPP. According to Lave and Wenger (as cited in John, 2005, p. 53):

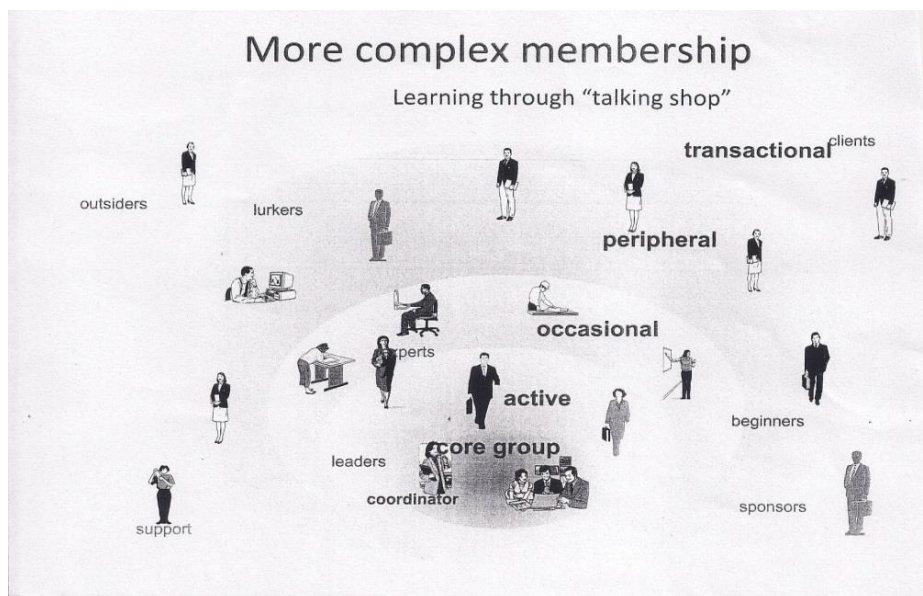
The process of learning begins with *legitimate peripheral participation*, where a newcomer is allowed access to a practice, but spends some time at the periphery of the practice and then gradually moves to the centre and becomes a full participant.

Brown (2013, p. 1) also explains that some members will be “core, long-term leaders”, while others will be newcomers, often with a “peripheral role, at least for a while”. In a situated learning space, learning and applying what is learnt takes place in the same location. Lave and Wenger (1991) found that apprentices learned a great deal through *legitimate peripheral participation*; that is, by participating peripherally in a practice where there were opportunities to learn from more experienced masters. Apprentice tailors in Africa, for example, gained entry to the practice at first by running errands and performing simple tasks, such as sewing buttons, which involved little risk, but gave them a good sense of the final product. In other words, initial, simple low-risk tasks allow the newcomers to familiarise themselves with the programme and thus gain confidence and experience. Wenger (2014, n. p.) describes the learning through LPP as:

A journey into a community and engaging in menial tasks which gave individuals a sense of what was needed, how things were done, enabled them to learn from their mistakes and to interact with the final product.

Does such development for the new, young adults occur within the peace club? This study hopes to explore this.

John (2005, p. 51) argues that the Community of practice theory helps to “explain how newcomers may enter the practice and how practices grow and evolve”. Wenger and Trayner (2015) do so by clearly outlining the trajectory of accessing a community of practice in the following depiction (Picture 2.2):



Picture 2.2

According to Wenger and Trayner (2015) a new member firstly engages in transaction, in other words a negotiation with others and self, regarding the community. Initially the member joins the community, but remains on the periphery as a lurker, concealed and possibly unsure. On the periphery, the new member is a beginner, learning through observation from the more experienced members who offer support. Next, the new member transforms from being an occasional participant to becoming more active in the group. The new member studies the interactions of the experts and eventually achieves core group status, no longer an outsider, but a full member of the community. This study will investigate how learning occurs in the peace club and will attempt to distinguish between, and observe the interaction between, long term, more knowledgeable members and newcomers. Therefore, through constant sharing of experiences, a sense of belonging may be nurtured among members of the group. This notion raises the following question: ‘Does the peace club as a practice grow and evolve as described by Wenger and Trayner (2015)?’

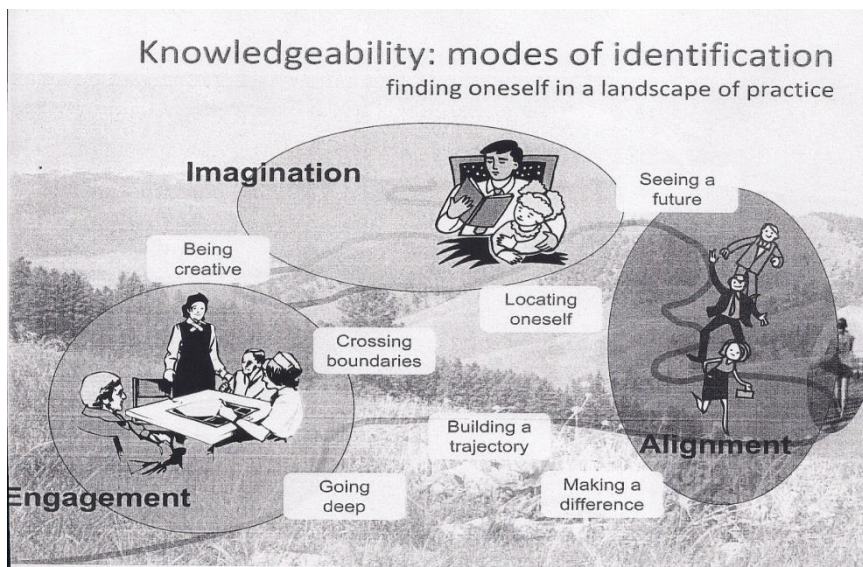
Another key concept within Community of Practice theory and which relates to the Peace Club practice, is *making meaning through participation*, and thereby developing an *identity* (Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) through the studies of apprenticeships notes that personal growth occurs through the sharing of knowledge and experiences, and therefore, ‘making meaning’ is central to human learning. This aligns with Wenger’s (1998) definition of a Community of Practice which he termed “mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire” (Li et al., 2009, p. 5). A Community of Practice is a means of problem-solving and sense-making within an organization. Kimble (2006, p. 227) notes that Wenger’s (1998) use of the notion “constellation of communities” stresses the value of Community of Practice to the wider social context in which the Community of Practice is positioned. My research will further examine the processes of learning and development for the participants and its spill-over into the wider social context. The aim is to determine if the learning that occurs within the peace club impacts life outside of it. Wenger’s (1998) reference to socialization and learning as well as to the development of individual identities is relevant, and will be explored in the peace club of this study.

In addition, Wenger (2014) makes reference to a new concept in the theory namely “competence”. Wenger (2014, n. p.) describes “competence” as “how members recognise each other” within the group. This concept hinges on the concept of *knowledgeability*.

Wenger (2014) recognises that being knowledgeable is an individual attribute and that no one person has the right to claim or assess competence or knowledgeable. Wenger (2014, n. p.) argues the following about learning in different contexts:

Learning is always thought of as a relationship between the student and the master, in which the focus is on the master, but that in a community, students learn from each other ... they share a practice.

This implies a sense of belonging as learners engage with each other around a common goal. According to Wenger and Trayner (2015, n. p.) knowledgeable is “an outcome of learning with respect to a landscape which includes a lot of practices in which one cannot claim competence”. Therefore, each individual may locate him or herself in a “landscape of practice” and develop his or her own identity by deciding what he or she wants to achieve, and work in cohesion with others within the community to achieve a common goal. However, no one is fully competent in achieving results. Wenger and Trayner (2015) describe such methods of identification as being able to bring into alignment imagination and engagement as shown in Picture 2.3 below:



Picture 2.3

Such learning capability within a community, in current times, states Wenger and Trayner (2015, n. p.) is “social, in real time and inventive”. Furthermore, in a Community of Practice, individuals need to recognise the contributions of others. This has relevance for the context of my study since the young adult members bring their own experiences to the community and learn with and from each other. In this way individuals develop their own identity and they

become accountable. Therefore, Wenger (2014, n. p.) notes that for the learner in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, “access to information is not the problem, but rather the problem is how to form an identity and become accountable”. It will be interesting to discover whether the young adults of this study are competent in contributing their own experiences to the group, as well as listening to others, and if they are able to formulate meaning and solutions for themselves and others. I will also investigate whether the peace club of this study has the tools to guide young adults to become who they truly are or desire to be.

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concepts of *situated learning* and *LPP*, as well as Wenger’s (1998) notion of *making meaning through participation* and Wenger’s (2014) concept of *competence in forming an identity*, are relevant to my research. Furthermore, these concepts are concerned with the community in which the Community of Practice exists and not outside of it, and this study will particularly explore the learning that occurs within the peace club.

### **2.3.3 The use of Community of Practice theory in other studies**

Community of Practice theory has been used by practitioners of businesses, government and non-government organisations and education and public life, as a useful approach to understanding knowing and learning, and to improve their situations (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Firstly, business enterprises adopted the idea of setting up communities (small groups) within their business structures in an attempt to build relationships among the workforce and to improve productivity (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002).

Secondly, Community of Practice theory is popular in health care learning and practice. A Community of Practice framework was applied to explain learning within community nursing in the United Kingdom in practice settings. It was discovered that the practice teachers used the concepts of Lave and Wenger (1999) namely that of *LPP*, *participation* and *making meaning*, to monitor the learning of new nursing students in the community nursing practice setting. LPP involved the journeying of the novice nursing student to becoming competent and knowledgeable. Furthermore, the students adopted an approach of participation that enabled their professional identity to transform. It was concluded that “socialisation

reproduces the community nursing profession in a way that explains its continuity and change” (Sayer, 2014, p. 430).

Another interesting example is the community of practice of witches. Merriam, Courtenay and Baumgartner (2003) studied a group of witches and examined how this stigmatised group employed the concepts of *participation, learning and identity* within their practice. They found that movement from the periphery to the centre was more difficult and because of the marginalized status of a witch coven, novices were not easily accepted as participants. Merriam et al. (2003, p. 184) refer to the lengthy progression from the periphery to the centre as “strong gatekeeping” and was in contrast to Lave and Wenger’s (1991, p. 29) LPP model in which “increasing engagement and activity characterised the core or centre of the community”. Merriam et al. (2003, p. 184) maintain that despite the differences in degree of difficulty, this study of a community of practice of witches demonstrated the “interrelationship of participation, practice, learning, and identity” and is largely supportive of the social theory of learning put forward by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998).

Community of Practice theory is also used in mutual self-help groups. For example, Humphreys’ (2000) in his observations of a mutual help organization, namely an Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) community, notes that the members engaged in concepts such as *participation, competence and making meaning* in their journey towards sobriety. Participants were able to bring their personal experiences through stories to the practice and thus “transmit the A.A. world view and resolve past traumas” (Humphreys, 2000, p. 504). Therefore, through interaction and participation, members of the community are able to form new identities and become competent in their lifestyles of sobriety. I hope to discover whether the peace club as a community invites members to share their stories so that they too may become competent in their efforts to overcome situations of violence and/or conflict.

Furthermore, Barnabas (2013, p. iii) in her study of the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) network, argues that a Community of Practice promotes opportunities for collaborative social learning and notes that “facilitators [participants] shared information, best practices, experiences, resources, as well as the AVP’s organisational culture”. Barnabas (2013) writes in response to the increase in violence in KwaZulu-Natal and the subsequent need for intervention in communities. She further notes that education for peace is necessary

so that people are informed and exposed to alternative methods of dealing with conflict, rather than using violent approaches (Barnabas, 2013). She considers the AVP network to be a community of practice for people who desired to educate others about peace building. In addition, the AVP network as a community involved the coming together of a group of young adults to share experiences (Barnabas, 2013). It will therefore be interesting to consider Barnabas's (2013) findings regarding Community of Practice, in relation to the peace club of this study, and to discover whether the meetings of the peace club promote alternatives to violence.

### **2.3.4 Challenges to Community of Practice Theory**

Li et al. (as cited in Barnabas, 2013) criticise Lave and Wenger's (1991) work for not making known the possibility of conflict between the expert and the novice. In other words, they do not deal sufficiently with all aspects of the relationship between the master located in the centre and the novice on the periphery. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 29) acknowledge that "newcomers who are separated from the experts have limited access to their tools and community and therefore have limited growth".

Brown (2013, p. 1) on the other hand argues that some newcomers wish to remain peripheral and that this needs to be respected, but cautions that "some teachers worry that children who are content to remain peripheral may be missing out". However, Wenger et al. (2002) point out that the people on the side-lines are in fact leaning a lot, albeit in a non-participatory, passive way. These writers explain that new members eventually drift into the centre as they become more interested and that the design of the community activity should encourage participation and movement between participants on the periphery and the experts.

Peace clubs, according to MCC (2012) are committed to empower young adults to contribute to and develop a peaceful environment, particularly in schools. Such advocacy for sustainable peace is built through the involvement and participation of the peace club community. However, participation requires mutual discussion of conflicts and situations of violence, and the inclusion of all members when sharing ideas and solutions. This research will seek to discover whether opportunities are given to new members, or if they are initially restricted to the periphery. On the other hand, Wenger et al. (2002) suggest that new members may make

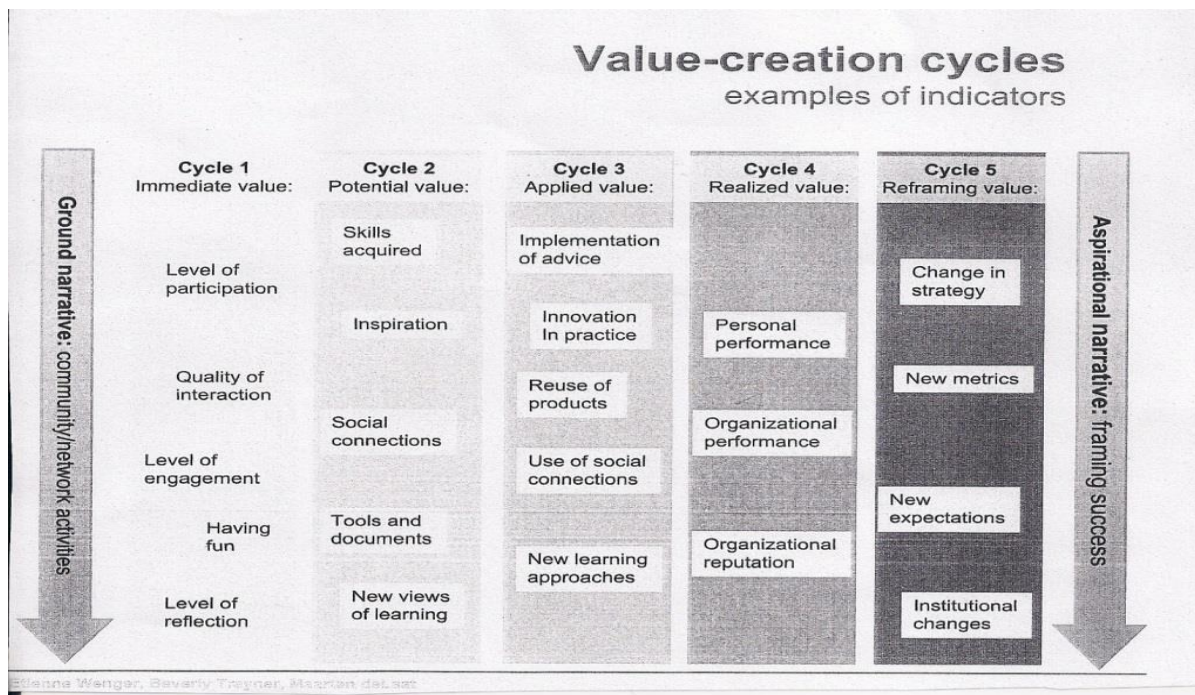


a 'silent' contribution in a passive way and such behaviour shall also be explored in this study. Does the Peace Club as a community of practice attract members, maintain an environment of relevance and value, as well as provide an arena of learning?

I also hope to explore the power dynamics between the facilitator and the young adult participants, between participants themselves, and between males and females, that may occur in the peace club and how such incidences influence learning. This is in keeping with Wenger (2014, n. p.) who argues that learning and power are always interacting and that within the community, "there is a danger that the community can be a channel for wrong knowledge to spread" and there needs to be negotiation in terms of the knowledge that is produced by the community. John (2005) agrees that the inevitability of power relations in community development projects exists and that we should be mindful of how participation is influenced by power relations.

John (2005, p. 51) argues that "the danger for inequality and injustice to be reinforced and sometimes introduced ... is always present". In other words, the practice of the community should always be examined and assessed in terms of its intentions. Do the young adult members of the peace club, facilitators, parents or even the principal of the school, have assumptions that the peace club community is a quick-fix to the traumatic experiences of violence which the participants bring with them? It will be interesting to discover what the expectations of the various role-players of this study are. It is therefore important for the participants and facilitator of the peace club to examine and assess whether the practice of the peace club is being informed and guided by the objectives as set out by the MCC (2012). In this regard, John (2005, p. 51) points out that "community development is not an inherently benevolent practice" and that as practitioners, "we need to constantly critique our practice".

Similarly, Wenger and Trayner (2015) note that practitioners should check whether the project is making a difference. Is the peace club as a community of practice making a difference? This study hopes to uncover whether the peace club is beneficial to young adults. According to Wenger and Trayner (2011) the value created by a community of practice may be assessed. The Value-Creation Framework below (Picture 2.4) is an example of indicators developed by Wenger and Trayner (2015, n. p.) to recognise the difference that the community of practice is making:



Picture 2.4

The Value-Creation Framework outlines many aspects of value that frame the success of the community of practice. Each cycle 1-5 loops into the next, that is, from implementation to achievement. For example, the Immediate Value (cycle 1) involves participation by members of the group. Potential Value (cycle 2) picks up ideas from the participation and develops new ideas that could work. Applied Value (cycle 3) involves putting into practice or applying what has been learnt in order to generate knowledge. Realised Value (cycle 4) is about the action taken and the achievement of results (which may be improved or not), systems are then put into place. Reframing Value (cycle 5) takes into account successes and failures and the feedback of this important information then leads to further knowledge. Wenger and Trayner (2015, n. p.) note that the learning loops from one cycle to the next make learning “relevant, adaptive and dynamic”. These social learning theorists maintain that the Value-Creation Framework may be used to show where to focus attention and also highlight whether the project is making a difference.

Wenger (2014, n. p.) maintains that “a Community of Practice is not a community of agreement or competence, and if it was so, it would be a stale community”. I hope to explore whether degrees of disagreement and heterogeneity occur in the peace club of this study, especially as different experiences and identities of the young adults are communicated. Wenger (2014, n. p.) states that a “good Community of Practice is not a homogenous one”.

The intention of Community of Practice as a theoretical framework in this study, is thus to explore the various interactions that occur through the application of the concepts of situated learning, LPP, participation and meaning-making, as well as forming an identity.

According to Li et al. (2009) the concept of Community of Practice is changing and it is difficult to differentiate between Communities of Practice and other types of group structures. For this reason, my study of a peace club will use the theory of Community of Practice as a lens to explore if and how learning and development occurs.

### **2.3.5 Suitability of Community of Practice Theory for this study**

This study will explore the experiences and value of learning with others within a peace club. It will examine the journey taken by young adult participants as they go through a process of knowing and becoming, and gaining an identity. Lave and Wenger's (1999) theory of Community of Practice provides a suitable theoretical framework for exploring such learning within a group around a common theme.

It is my view that the theory of Community of Practice has relevance to the Peace Club initiative. This is because it involves a group of learners meeting willingly and non-formally, to share experiences and ideas around a common issue of conflict and violence and the hope for peace. As previously mentioned Wenger (as cited in John, 2005, p. 53) states that the participants in a community of practice have a "mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire". In other words, the learning that occurs in a community of practice such as a peace club is a social process rather than an individual or cognitive one. It focuses on how people learn through non-formal interaction with others, about a common or shared practice and how they develop the identity of the practice through such participation. Wenger (2014, n. p.) describes this as a "learning partnership which defines its own agenda about how learning occurs", in other words, "the participants create a practice for learning".

The suitability of Community of Practice theory for this study is also supported by Humphreys (2000) who writes about the use of story-telling or narratives in a spiritually-based mutual help organisation *Alcoholics Anonymous* (A.A.). Humphreys (2000) posits that talking about issues is important to the healing and recovery process. He draws the

conclusion that sharing ideas of a common nature, providing support, sharing stories or experiences, becomes a form of self-teaching and forms a world-view for the individual. The result is a personal change and a new mind-set. This study will explore such possible developments.

Community of Practice theory is further relevant to my study because it is much about how a person learns within a group. Wenger (2014, n. p.) points out that “the notion of Community of Practice is an emergent property that people need each other to make sense of what they are doing”. This is significant for a group of young adult learners in a peace club, attempting to make sense of their past and present experiences of violence and/or conflict. It is also important that these young adults are able to make meaning from interactions with others so that the knowledge gained becomes useful to them. In this regard Wenger (2014, n. p.) claims that from a social perspective, “learning is a sense of becoming ... it is a transformation of who you are ... gaining an identity ... not just an accumulation of information”. The Peace Club is a place where the nature of learning is within a group. This makes it a community, and not peer to peer learning, nor a mentorship relationship.

Furthermore, Wenger (2014, n. p.) asserts that “continuity is an important aspect of learning, particularly within a community that has been cultivated”. Such created communities, invite others into a learning experience where there is a sharing of experiences, engagement with each other and with meaningful activities, and thus involves sharing a practice. Will the community of the peace club of my study survive the different practices that are brought into it? Wenger (2014) notes that people in a community have to overcome different ways of thinking and talking, as well as overcome different power relationships. They have to “reconfigure a whole landscape of practices” (Wenger, 2014, n. p.) and come together to learn from and with each other.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the value of peace education within South African schools which are currently steeped in violence. It has also sought to understand the role that peace clubs play as a form of peace education and action in schools and to explore the capacity of peace clubs to enable young adults to promote peaceful living amongst their peers and families. This chapter further identified and examined Community of Practice Theory by Lave and Wenger (1999) as the theoretical framework for this study.

# **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

## **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the design and methodology that was used in this case study. Firstly, it explains the purpose of the study and presents the three key research questions. Secondly, it presents the position of the researcher and outlines the approach and methodology. It further describes in detail the data collection plan, methods and analysis, and incorporates impressions and changes made during the data collection process. Finally, the chapter discusses sampling, declares limitations and ethical considerations, and outlines decisions concerning trustworthiness of the data.

## **3.2 Focus and Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to explore the learning and development of participants within a school-based peace club. It investigates the possible benefits to learners who participate in the peace club, as well as determines the significance of the peace club to the school. In other words, it explores the essence and features of a peace club at a local high school. In addition, it explores the impact of the peace club on the behaviour of the participants both at home and in school.

The key research questions that frame this research study are:

1. What learning occurs through participation in a peace club?
2. What are the processes of learning and development for peace club participants?
3. To what extent does peace club participation impact the behaviour of participants?

I have taken an interest in peace education following the introduction of a peace club at the high school at which I teach. The club was started in 2014 and has a membership of approximately 30 learners between the ages of 13 to 18 years old and who are in grades 8 to 12. There are more female than male learners and the peace club membership is mainly Black while 2 members are Coloured. The peace club is convened by a Black male teacher at the school.

When peace education was introduced to our school, the reaction displayed by some teachers and pupils was that of disinterest and indifference. Such reactions are possibly the result of a lack of understanding since peace clubs and peace education are unfamiliar concepts in schools. Furthermore, concepts like peace education deviate from the prescribed curricula that form the blueprint for teaching and learning (Dovey, as cited in John, 2007). I agree with John (2007) that peace education positively influences the thinking of youth, and teaches peaceful relations between people. Furthermore, there are long-term benefits to doing so.

High school youth, who are impressionable and mostly open to new ideas, may be able to embrace the notion of peace between peers, family and adults easier than older people. They are, therefore, the means by which the attitude of tolerance and peaceful relations can be passed from one generation to the next. For this reason, schools are the ideal places where education of this nature can occur. This study, therefore seeks to explore whether the peace club provides opportunity for dialogue, discussion and debate.

In addition, this study will examine how the learner's participation in the peace club influences personal and interpersonal development at school and at home. Therefore this research will help to develop a better understanding of the contribution that peace clubs make in promoting peaceful relations in the homes and schools of young adult learners.

Based on the literature available on peace education, and the introduction of peace clubs in schools, this research is considered to be a worthwhile endeavour. It will make it possible to assess the feasibility of such an intervention in empowering young people, their teachers and their parents, to deal with conflict and violence. Furthermore, the study seeks to investigate whether the participants are able to work towards maintaining peace and development in their homes, schools and communities. This is a study that may be replicated in other schools where peace clubs are operational, or it could inform the introduction of peace clubs in other schools. It is therefore possible that this research study can contribute towards the limited literature on peace clubs and peace education in South African schools.

### **3.3 Positionality**

I have been employed at the selected school for 28 years as a Biology teacher of senior grades. I have an amicable and respectful relationship with the senior students as I am able to

relate to them. This rapport creates and helps to maintain a trusting and relaxed relationship between myself and the students. For the purpose of this study, I decided to make more than one observation visit to the peace club meetings so that learners whom I had not taught before, would become familiar with me and would develop a level of trust in my presence. I did not know whether this familiarity would positively influence or negatively affect the interactions between the researcher and participants. However, I needed to be aware of my position when collecting and interpreting data so that I could remain unbiased, and so that the effects of power-play could be minimised.

### **3.4 Research Methodology**

I have chosen to employ a qualitative methodology which, according to Lichtman (2006) is suitable for the study of a small, purposely selected group, with the intention of constructing meaning and understanding of social interactions within it. The purpose of this study was to gain in-depth insights into the peace club, its programme and its participants. Johnson and Christensen (2008, p. 34) describe human behaviour within qualitative research as “dynamic, situational, social and personal”. It was, therefore, the objective of this research to explore, discover and construct particular findings by studying such behaviour.

The research study and the researcher are located within the interpretive paradigm, which as Bailey (1978, p. 23) explained, is “a perspective or frame of reference for viewing the social world”. This has enabled the researcher to interpret, and develop a deeper understanding of the behaviour and experiences of the participants. The contextual setting in this instance is the peace club within a school. The researcher has therefore attempted to garner the perspective of the participants, as it is their experiences and perceptions that are important and not whether they are in fact true.

A case study methodology has been selected for the purpose of exploring the learning and development of young adults within a single setting. The case is a peace club and the setting is a particular school. A case study methodology is fit for the purpose of providing an in-depth study of the peace club.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 129) describe a case study methodology as an opportunity to “present and represent reality, in other words, to give a sense of being there”.



Cresswell (1994, p. 12) defines a case study as “a single instance of a bounded system, such a child, a clique, a class, a school, a community”. The appropriateness of a case study for this research is endorsed by Yin (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289) who argues that “it is the study of a case in a context and it is important to set the case within its context which will allow rich descriptions and details”.

According to Cohen et al. (2011, p. 293) some of the strengths of a case study are that:

they are far-reaching and inclusive of a wide audience because they are written in ordinary everyday language; they are easily interpreted and understood; they are akin to reality and because they are small scale, they can be carried out by one person and are able to capture unique features that may otherwise be omitted or ignored in a large scale method of data collection such as a survey.

In addition, Yin (2003, p. 13) notes that case study “relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion”. This study employs multiple data collection methods intended to strengthen the study, and are discussed in the next section.

### **3.5 Data collection plan**

The data collection methods of this study include observations, questionnaires, interviews, journal writing, collage-making and document analysis. The data collection methods are guided by the research questions of the study.

The researcher began with observation of the peace club meetings. Questionnaires were then administered to all peace club members. This was followed by semi-structured interviews with six of the peace club participants, their parents and the peace club facilitators. In the interim, the six participants engaged in journal writing and collage-making. An additional discussion was held with the facilitator for thick description of the case. Peace club documents and artefacts were also analysed.

Table 3.1 below is a summary of the data collection plan followed by an explanation of each method.

Table 3.1: Data Collection Methods as related to the research questions of the study

<b>Research question</b>	<b>Data collection method</b>	<b>Source of data</b>
1. What learning occurs through participation in a peace club?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Questionnaires</li> <li>- Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>- Journal writing</li> <li>- Collage-making</li> </ul>	<p>All members of the peace club.</p> <p>6 young adult members of peace club, parents and facilitators</p> <p>6 young adult participants</p>
2. What are the processes of learning and development for peace club participants?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observations</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>- Email or telephonic conversation</li> <li>- Document analysis and artefacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peace club meetings</li> <li>- All members of the peace club</li> <li>- 6 young adult participants, parents and facilitators</li> <li>- Educator: former assistant to facilitator</li> <li>- Documents, minutes of meetings, manuals, field notes, audio material/websites/ artwork</li> </ul>
3. What impact does peace club participation have on the behaviour of participants?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Questionnaires</li> <li>- Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>- Collage-making</li> <li>- Journal-writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All members of the peace club</li> <li>- 6 young adult participants, parents and facilitators;</li> <li>6 young adult participants</li> </ul>

## **3.6 Methods of Data Collection**

### **3.6.1 Observation**

The first step in data collection was to attend the peace club meetings with the intention of observing the practises and interactions between the facilitator and members. The unstructured observations took place twice a week for three weeks. Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 84) claims that an observation is “an essential data gathering technique as it holds the possibility of providing us with an insider perspective of the group dynamics and behaviours in different settings”. Notes were taken during the meetings, and these focused particularly on the format of the meetings, as well as the activities and interactions that transpired.

The observed meetings were short as they took place during the school lunch breaks and thus necessitated additional visits before the questionnaire could be administered. A further obstacle was the noise from outside the classroom which interrupted the flow of the meetings. During the second observation meeting, the facilitator granted me the opportunity to present my research plan and to obtain permission from the members of the peace club to conduct research. The students who were familiar with me showed enthusiasm, and responded positively to my presence.

### **3.6.2 Questionnaire**

Step two was the collection of data via a questionnaire which consisted of open-ended and closed questions as well as Likert scale responses (see annexure 7). Twenty four members of the peace club participated. The aim of using a questionnaire was to obtain an overview from all members (whom I shall refer to as the peace club population) regarding the peace club. The intention at this point was to collect information for breadth rather than for depth. A major concern was the time factor. The questionnaire was relatively long and the open-ended questions required the respondents to engage meaningfully with them.

In order to ensure quality, untainted individual responses, the questionnaire was to be answered after school, in one venue, rather than rushing through it during the lunchbreak. An explanation was offered to the participants about the intention of the questionnaire. Learners

did not object to staying after school, and the researcher rewarded their participation with a selection of freshly baked and colourfully iced cupcakes.

The questionnaire was then analysed and participants to be interviewed were then selected. The selection of the six young adult participants (whom I shall refer to as the sample) for the semi-structured interviews, were selected based on the responses to the questionnaire in terms of quality and maturity. Gender, race, length of participation in the peace club and regular attendance of meetings were further criteria used to select the interviewees.

### **3.6.3 Semi-structured interviews**

The interviews of the sample of six learners, their parents and the facilitators formed the next step in the collection of data. The sample of six learners was interviewed first. The interviews were conducted in a relaxed manner in a classroom at a time convenient to the respondent. This was mostly during a free period (for both the researcher and the respondent). It was important that the interview did not take precedence over the learner's studies or school work, and as a result, each interview progressed over a period of two days. However, one of the interviewees opted to withdraw from the research at this stage. She indicated that she was no longer interested in participating.

The researcher invited the parents of the selected participants to be interviewed. These interviews served as a secondary source of data to ascertain any influence that the peace club may have had on the attitude and behaviour of their children. The interviews were conducted at the homes of the parents at a time convenient to them. The assistance of an interpreter was required for one parent whose first language was French and not English.

One of the parent interviews interestingly provided insight into relationships between parents and their children, and the need for research confidentiality. A young adult, in his interview revealed that at some stage in his high school career he had resorted to taking drugs and that his mother, a single parent had always been ignorant of this fact. The parent, during her interview told a different story and proudly described her son as a “good boy who never does anything wrong”, and “he doesn't tell lies because he is able to talk about painful things [to me].” At this stage as a researcher, I was obliged to maintain confidentiality, but it did make

me question whether parents responded to the interview questions with answers that they thought the researcher wanted to hear. Perhaps more probing questions were needed here.

The interview with the facilitator was conducted next, at a time convenient to him so as not to interfere with the teaching and learning work of the school. This interview also took a few days to complete due to time constraints. An assistant facilitator indicated that she did not attend many of the peace club meetings nor did she participate in any of the workshops or camps organised by MCC, and therefore she did not participate in an interview.

### **3.6.4 Journal writing**

The researcher asked the sample of learners (in relation to research question 1 and 3, see Table 3.1 above) to write in reflective journals for a period of one month. The aim of this data collection method was to encourage participants to reflect on their experiences and feelings so that the responses gained from the interviews and observations might be enhanced and triangulated. Chirema (2007) claimed that journal writing promotes reflection as well as learning by the writer. In other words, participants may learn new aspects about themselves while engaging in writing their journals. This is endorsed by Boud et al. (as cited in Chirema, 2007, para. 5) who posited that “reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it ... leading to new understandings and appreciations”.

However, the learners engaged in the journal writing process over two months instead of the planned one month because they were writing examinations at the time. Unfortunately, the longer time did not garner extensive participant reflections as expected. Some learners opted to use the journal as a diary, while others wrote poems, drew pictures, as well as pasting pictures to tell their story. One learner did not carry out the task as requested and instead used the journal to express his experience of unrequited love for a girl in his class. In view of this, four journals were analysed instead of five.

### **3.6.5 Collage-making**

The selected sample of learners were also invited to tell their ‘stories’ or experiences by designing collages. The task was labelled ‘Me ... before the peace club and me ... after the

peace club'. This creative technique involved the use of pictures cut out of magazines, artefacts and various coloured paints. The researcher aimed to obtain deeper understandings by involving the participants more actively, instead of only through the use of words. The collages were used as a means of encouraging further discussion and therefore as practised by Cox (2013, p. 7) "a second interview would take place thereafter, using the creative expressions from the collages as the starting point". This is consistent with Rule and John's (as cited in Cox, 2013, p. 55) claim that "participatory methods involve the participants of the study more actively in the data generation process and are helpful in situations in which language could be a potential barrier".

The learners created the collages in a classroom after school. The learners worked creatively in a relaxed, amicable manner while engaging with each other. On completion of the collage, the researcher asked each participant to give an explanation of the collage with particular attention to his or her choice of pictures, as well as the significance of colour and arrangement. The style of the discussion was conversational. This was a rewarding process as participants were able to provide rich and emotive explanations of their collages.

### **3.6.6 Document analysis and artefacts**

According to Yin (as cited in Cox, 2013, p. 53), documents are "relevant to most case studies and are useful to validate or provide a cross-check about information gained from other sources". Document analysis and artefacts as a data collection method were used with regard to research question two (Table 3.1). The researcher made reference to various documents and artefacts that were available and relevant to the research study. These included minutes of peace club meetings, resource materials used during the peace club meetings, information about peace clubs and peace education from literature and websites, curriculum documents, as well as collages created by participants.

### **3.6.7 Thick Descriptions**

It is also necessary in case study research to create thick descriptions. Rule and John (2011) maintain that creating thick descriptions is vital to producing a story with depth, and therefore, all data sources were used to create a thick description of the peace club. It must be noted here that in order to create thick description about the peace club, it became necessary

to invite the facilitator to a discussion on the peace club's perspective of peace education. The findings of this discussion will be noted in Chapter 4.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

This qualitative research employed tools such as content analysis, thematic analysis, discursive analysis and the use of a participatory method to find meaning from the data. Data was mainly analysed inductively since the various types of analyses were carried out by working from the data in order to make meaning of it.

The researcher made use of content analysis to give a descriptive, as well as an explanatory account of the peace club of the study and the personal experiences of the principal participants. Such accounts were obtained from observation of peace club meetings, analysis of peace club documents as well as analysis of journals and collages which were completed by the principal participants.

Thematic analysis served to convey what participants said about the peace club as well as the influence of the peace club in their lives. John and Rule (2011, p. 89) employ both content and thematic analysis in their own writing, and thus, believe that such strategies “allow for rich descriptions of the phenomenon under study”. Several themes were identified from the data and will be discussed in the next chapter.

Discourse analysis was used to elicit meaning through the use of metaphors and symbolic language (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). Examples of metaphors extracted from the data will be discussed in the next chapter.

Rule and John (2011) encourage eliciting meaningful ‘stories’ portrayed by participants. According to Rule and John (2011, p. 80) narrative analysis allows the researcher to “explore how participants convey understandings of their lives and social worlds through story”. The researcher chose to use a participatory method and asked the participants to make collages. The participants then told their stories from the collages, and consequently a better sense of the collages was obtained. In addition, the discussion of themes will be linked to the literature

review on peace education and peace clubs. Theoretical analysis will look at the themes in relation to the theoretical framework of this study.

### **3.8 Sampling**

This study uses purposive sampling because the researcher purposively selected the participants. Cohen et al. (2011) describe purposive sampling as hand-picking the participants according to the specific characteristics that are required for the research problem. In keeping with this, the six young adult participants were chosen for interviews, journals and collages according to gender, age, grade, race and the duration of their participation in the peace club. The researcher selected both boys and girls in the 16 to 18 year old category. This enabled the researcher to obtain accounts from both genders within the young adult category. The learners who attended the school were Black and Coloured. The researcher attempted to include in the sample of six young adults, both Coloured and Black learners so as to get a sense of different learners' experiences. Unfortunately, the two Coloured members of the peace club were 14 years old and in grade 8 and therefore did not fit the profile of young adults. As a result, the principal participants were all Black learners. In addition, the participants were also young adults who had regularly participated in the peace club since its inception.

The researcher used the responses from the twenty four questionnaires to determine the sample of six participants. The parents of this sample were interviewed as a secondary source of data. The facilitator was interviewed to provide further data. Furthermore, documents and artefacts were purposefully selected according to their nature and purpose for the research.

### **3.9 Limitations**

Time or lack thereof, was a limitation experienced during this research process. The peace club meetings, during the research period, were often held during the lunch break and not after school as previously done. The reasons for this were firstly that school examinations were approaching, and secondly the learners relied on public transport and were unable to



remain after school for the meetings. The meetings were at most times not concluded during the lunch break and had to be continued the next day. It is possible that the limited time available impacted on the gathering of data during the observation of the meetings. It would therefore be advisable for researchers to plan observations at a time when examinations were not eminent.

Another limitation of this study is that the findings cannot be used for generalisation since it focuses on a single case study. The site of this research is one particular peace club. A further limitation is that the sample consists of a small number of high school learners. This is largely due to the fact that peace clubs in schools is a virtually new concept. Furthermore, all the members of the peace club are IsiZulu first language speakers, and although they are conversant in English, their responses may not be as detailed as they would have been if given in their first language. In order to overcome this limitation, particularly during the parent interviews, the researcher made use of an interpreter.

In order to obtain a varied sense of experiences of learners of different race groups, the researcher had intended to include both Black and Coloured members of the peace club in the interviews. However, this was not possible. The Coloured learners were too young to be classified as young adults, and therefore, could only participate in the questionnaire and had to be excluded from the other data collection.

The researcher also considered the possibility that learners may have experienced violence, conflict and even victimisation, and was therefore sensitive to surfacing trauma and was prepared to offer support from professional counsellors. This was not needed by any participants during the interviews.

Furthermore, the researcher's status as a teacher at the school in which the peace club operates could have influenced the data collected. However, in hindsight this could have created a relaxed, trusting atmosphere which encouraged the participants to respond confidently. The researcher set out to overcome any bias caused as a result of personal status by selecting a sample of six learners that were not taught by the researcher. In this way, any power dynamics that may have existed between the researcher and the learner participants were minimised. Interestingly, the participants who were pupils of the researcher opted to be

part of the research and one of the learners who were not taught by the researcher chose to withdraw from the research study.

### **3.10 Trustworthiness**

Since this is a qualitative study, the researcher adopted Guba's (as cited in Rule and John, 2011) notion of trustworthiness to ensure quality research. Issues such as transferability, credibility, dependability and confirmability were addressed during the collection of data, as well as during the write-up of the research. In other words, the researcher was mindful that the quality of the research did not become questionable. The data gained through interviews, for example, should be trustworthy and as noted by Yin (as cited in Barnabas, 2013, p. 45) "poor recall, poor or inaccurate articulation could compromise the trustworthiness of the data". It was therefore important to make use of additional methods of data collection such as observation and document analysis in this research study.

Before the questionnaire was administered, it was first piloted with my 18 year old daughter and her 15 friends. This group of young adults included English first and second language speakers. According to Rule and John (2011) piloting is necessary to assess the questions in a trial situation before the final questionnaire is given to the participants. The piloting exercise proved meaningful as I was able to gauge the amount of time needed to complete the questionnaire and also to correct any misinterpretations. There proved to be no need for any changes to the questions nor was there lack of clarity. The questions were also devoid of ambiguity. The questionnaire was completed in a time period that was not tiring and was easily interpreted. The group of friends had no prior knowledge or exposure to a peace club.

In addition, further measures to ensure quality in this research study were taken. Immediately after the interviews were conducted with the participants, they were transcribed and checked by the participants to verify accounts given by them so that accuracy of information was ensured. Such verification also served to comply with ethical practice, namely, member checking, within the research.

I also made use of critical peer checking with the assistance of a master's degree graduate to check interpretation of data. This is in line with Rule and John's (2011) understanding that the critical opinion of another person can be instrumental in lending to the credibility and confirmability of the research.

Collages were revisited soon after completion. Participants were given the opportunity to explain the reason for choosing particular colours, pictures, artefacts, or words displayed on the collage. In this way, misinterpretation by the researcher was minimised. Furthermore, data from interviews, collages and journals were analysed immediately after they were collected to ensure validity of the data.

For validation and corroboration of findings, triangulation was used. According to Rule and John (2011), triangulation is the use of multiple sources and methods to support the findings in a research study. The various methods used were semi-structured interviews with young adult participants, their parents and the facilitator of the peace club, journal writing and the creation of collages by the young adult participants. The intention of triangulation was to obtain quality data by looking at all the responses from the different instruments.

Furthermore, thick descriptions, as discussed by Rule and John (2011), were produced in an attempt to obtain rich detailed accounts of incidents and experiences of the participants of the peace club. This ensures that the research project becomes a story with depth. Thick descriptions will be explored within the analysis and presentation of this case study.

### **3.11 Ethical considerations**

According to Durrheim and Wassenaar (2001), the major principles of ethics are autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence. This study followed these ethical principles which are discussed separately below, including the measures taken to ensure each of them. Reference can be made to Annexures 2, 3, 4 and 5.

### 3.11.1 The principle of autonomy

The researcher obtained gatekeeper permission and informed consent from all necessary authorities to conduct the research, namely the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the Department of Education, the school principal, the school governing body, the facilitator of the peace club, the parents, as well as the participants. Informed consent is vital to ensuring anonymity and confidentiality and also to protect the privacy of the participants. Pseudonyms and codenames have been used to protect the identity of the school as well as the participants of the study. Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the research study at any point and that their right to remain anonymous would be respected.

### 3.11.2 The principle of non-maleficence

The welfare of the participants was considered at all times during and following the research process. It is the responsibility of the researcher to be sensitive to any harm, “physically, psychologically, emotionally, professionally, personally” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 85) that may befall the participants. The researcher designed the data collection methods and instruments in such a way that the participants would not be harmed or embarrassed in any way. In this regard, the researcher would make sure that she was aware of, and sensitive to, issues of culture as well as to any power dynamics that may exist. Examples of power dynamics are fluency in English, literate and illiterate participants and also the power of the interviewer.

Furthermore, the researcher informed participants that professional assistance in the form of counselling was available if and when it was required, to ensure that “the participants do not leave the research worse off than when they started it” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 85). Should a need for counselling and social support have arisen, professional assistance through the Special Needs Educational Services (SNES) of the Department of Basic Education, or the Child and Family Centre of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, would have been made available to participants. The researcher did not face any ethical dilemma and by the end of the research project, none of the participants required counselling.

### 3.11.3 The principle of beneficence:

The participants were informed about the value of the research for the recognition and continuance of peace clubs in schools. During the research process, the researcher provided regular feedback to the participants so that they could review transcripts and reports written about them. This served to encourage accuracy and honesty in the analysis process. The

findings of this study will be made available to the school principal, the sample learners, parents of the sample learners and the facilitator of the peace club.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a description of the purpose of the research study, the positionality of the researcher, the paradigm and the selection of methodology. It then dealt with the various data collection methods. Data analysis, sampling, limitations, trustworthiness and ethics were also discussed. The next chapter deals with the analysis and findings of the data collected in this research project.

# CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and analysis from a case study of a peace club, within a high school setting in Pietermaritzburg. The findings specifically focus on the learning and experiences of young adults within the peace club.

Peace education is defined by UNICEF in Harber and Sakade (2009, p. 8) as:

The process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youths and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intra-personal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.

The quest by a group of learners of a peace club to develop skills and gain knowledge necessary for resolving conflict as described by UNICEF resonates with the objectives (previously referred to in Chapter 2 of this dissertation) of the Mennonite Central Committee (2012, p. 4):

- To introduce Peace Club as a course that empowers participants on how to use peace education in order to achieve sustainable, durable and positive peace.
- To unearth the potentials for improvement of relationships inherent in conflicts that affect all sectors of society.
- To acquire knowledge and skills that will make participants well equipped as peace scholars and practitioners, and able to set up peace clubs in their respective situations.

According to Rawat (2014, n. p.), peace is the desire of the heart and he refers to the search for “a more human, emotional understanding of peace”. In other words, Rawat (2015) posits that individuals seeking to ‘survive’ situations of conflict should find peace *within themselves* first. Rawat (2015, n. p.) states that inner peace brings “hope, gratitude, contentment, choice and the possibility of personal peace”, which may be sustained through participation in peace education programmes. The findings of this study will reveal the extent to which this is so in the experiences of the peace club members.

The chapter commences with the demographic profile of all the participants who participated in the study. All thirty members of the peace club were invited to participate in the completion of the questionnaire. I have therefore chosen to refer to this group as the peace club population. The main findings from analysis of data from the questionnaires, is presented as that of the peace club population. Five of these peace club members then participated in the in-depth process of data collection, that is, interviews, collages and journal writing. One of the learners withdrew from the research process (refer to 3.6.3). I will refer to these 5 learners throughout this dissertation as the sample. The parents and guardians (five in total) of the sample were also interviewed. In addition, for the purpose of providing thick description of the peace club in this study, I present the findings of my observation of several meetings of the peace club, as well as of the analysis of peace club documents and the data obtained from interviews, journals and collages. The aim of the observations was to get a sense of how the meeting is run and how the participants engage with each other while gaining an understanding of peace.

The next part of this chapter relates to the life experiences and learning of the sample of learners which occurred in the peace club. Themes which emerged from across the data, as well as metaphors and symbolic language are also discussed. Lastly, the chapter focuses on the findings relating to the personal changes experienced by the sample members as facilitated by the peace club.

The questionnaires, interviews with the sample learners, the facilitator of the peace club and the parents, the journals, collages and observation sessions of the peace club meetings, each generated data in response to the following key research questions:

- What learning occurs through participation in a peace club?
- What are the processes of learning and development for peace club participants?
- To what extent does peace club participation impact the behaviour of participants?

## 4.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Tables 4.1 to 4.4 below indicate the demographic profile of all the respondents of the study. The respondents included the 24 members of the peace club population who responded to the questionnaire, the five sample learners, the parents and guardians of the sample members, as well as the facilitator of the peace club.

In each Table: **n** signifies the number of participants

Table 4.1 Respondents of questionnaire

<b>GENDER</b>	Female	Male			
<b>n</b>	22	2			
<b>RACE</b>	Black	Coloured	White	Indian	
<b>n</b>	22	2	0	0	
<b>NATIONALITY</b>	South African	Non-South African			
<b>n</b>	22	2			
<b>AGE</b>	13 - 14 years	15 – 16 years	17– 18 years		
<b>n</b>	6	9	9		
<b>GRADE</b>	8	9	10	11	12
<b>n</b>	6	4	4	4	6

24 members of the peace club completed the questionnaire. There were 22 female and two male respondents. Respondents were mainly Black (22) while two were Coloured learners. Of the 24 respondents, 22 were South Africans and two were immigrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Most of the respondents were older learners as nine came from the 15 to 16 year old category and nine were from the 17 to 18 year old age group. A small group (six) were in the 13 to 14 year old age group. There were four learners each in Grades 9, 10 and 11, and six learners each in Grades 8 and 12.



Table 4.2 Five Sample Members

<b>GENDER</b>	Female	Male	
<b>n</b>	3	2	
<b>RACE</b>	Black	Coloured	
<b>n</b>	5	0	
<b>NATIONALITY</b>	South African	Non-South African	
<b>n</b>	4	1	
<b>AGE</b>	Age 16	Age 17	Age 18
<b>n</b>	1	2	2
<b>GRADE</b>	10	11	12
<b>n</b>	1	1	3

The sample learners of the peace club consisted of two males and three females, between the ages 16 to 18 years old. All of them were in the senior phase of their schooling. Four learners were South African and one was from the DRC. All of the learners were Black African and preferred to respond to the research study in their second language, English. It should be noted here that all had a good command of the English language and coped well with the various forms of data collection methods in this language. As mentioned earlier, the sixth member of the group chose to withdraw from the research study at this point.

Table 4.3 Facilitator of the Peace Club

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>NATIONALITY</b>	<b>AGE RANGE</b>	<b>STATUS WITHIN THE SCHOOL</b>
Male	Non-South African	40 – 50 years old	Post Level 1 Mathematics teacher

The facilitator, who is Black, and is of Zimbabwean nationality, spoke English fluently.

Table 4.4 Parents of the Sample

	<b>RELATIONSHIP TO LEARNER</b>	<b>RACE</b>	<b>NATIONALITY</b>	<b>AGE RANGE</b>
<b>PARENT 1</b>	Father	Black	South African	40-50 years old
<b>PARENT 2</b>	Mother	Black	South African	40-50 years old
<b>PARENT 3</b>	Mother	Black	South African	40-50 years old
<b>PARENT 4</b>	Aunt	Black	South African	30-40 years old
<b>PARENT 5</b>	Mother	Black	Non-South African	40-50 years old

The interviews with the parents/guardians of the five sample learners were conducted separately at the homes of the respondents. All the parent participants were Black African and all requested to converse in English, with the exception of one parent, who responded in her mother-tongue, French. An interpreter was utilised for the latter interview. The five parents/guardians collectively consisted of one father, three mothers and one aunt. During each interview, only one parent/guardian was represented due to the partner being deceased or at work at the time. The aunt participated because both parents of the learner were deceased and the grandmother was unable to converse in English. It should be noted that the aunt resided in the home with both the learner and the grandmother, and was, therefore, able to respond to the questions in the interview. Interviews were conducted with these parents/guardians with the aim of exploring their perceptions of the peace club as well as exploring the impact of the peace club on the behaviour and attitudes of their children/wards.

### 4.3 Main findings from the questionnaire

The findings of the questionnaire are presented first because it pertains to the findings of the data across the entire peace club as a group. The findings of the data collected from the five sample learners, their parents and the facilitator are presented separately subsequently.

The membership of the peace club fluctuated between 25 to 30 members at a peace club meeting. Of the 30 members who sat for the questionnaire, 24 completed it. Of a total of 24 responses received, more female (22) than male respondents (2) completed the questionnaire. The participants named a variety of reasons for joining the peace club. For example, a female respondent stated: “I joined the peace club because I wanted to make peace in my life” while another respondent said: “I want and need to find peace in my heart and love people around me and God”, and a male respondent said: “I was interested in finding out what they do there”.

#### 4.3.1 Occurrence of violence at school

The peace club population was asked to respond to the statement: ‘At this school, some form of violence takes place amongst learners’ by selecting either ‘everyday’, ‘some days’ or ‘seldom’. The pie graph (Figure 4.1) below illustrates the responses given.

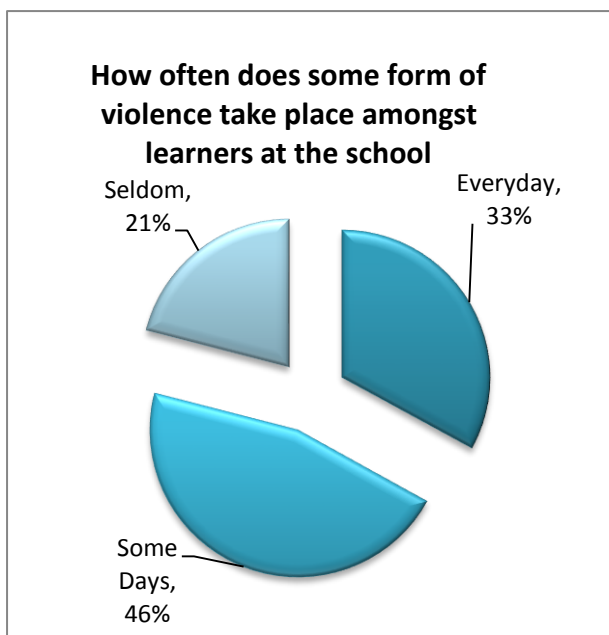


Figure 4.1: Occurrence of violence at school

A large number (19) of respondents reported that some form of violence did occur at the school. Some respondents (eight) mentioned that some form of violence took place every day while some of the respondents (11) noted that it took place some days. The high number (19) suggests that violence is prevalent and may be an ongoing experience for learners at the school, in this study. Some respondents (five) stated that some form of violence seldom took place at the school.

The questionnaire asked the learners to categorise the types of violence they might have experienced at school. The learners were allowed to select more than one category if it was applicable to them. The pie graph (Figure 4.2) below illustrates the responses:

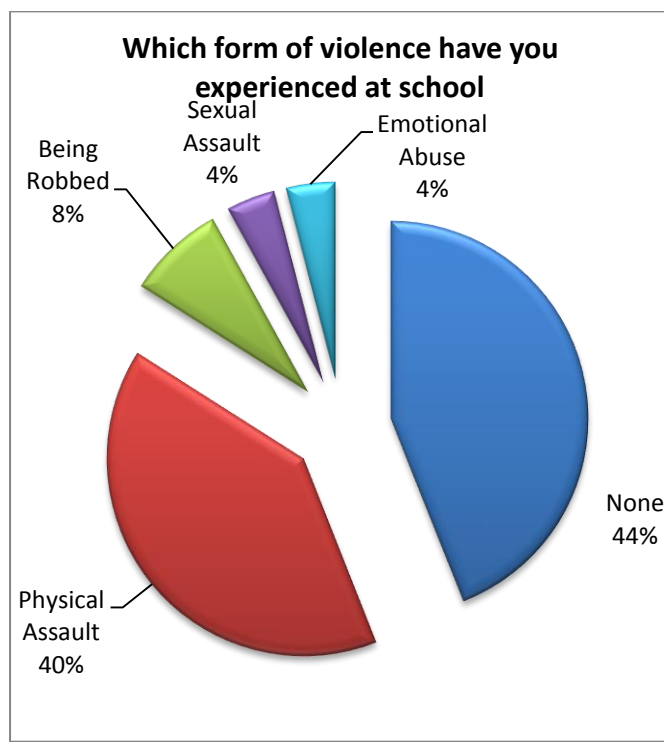


Figure 4.2: Forms of violence experienced

A substantial number (13) of the learners reported that they had suffered some form of violence at school compared to 11 of the learners who had not. Some respondents (10) had experienced physical assault, two respondents had been robbed. One respondent had been subjected to sexual assault and one to emotional abuse. The high number (13) confirms the findings that violence is prevalent in the school as indicated previously in Figure 4.1.

Bullying was presented in the questionnaire as another form of violence in the school. The graphs (Figure 4.3) below illustrate the prevalence of bullying and the degree of awareness of bullying in the school.

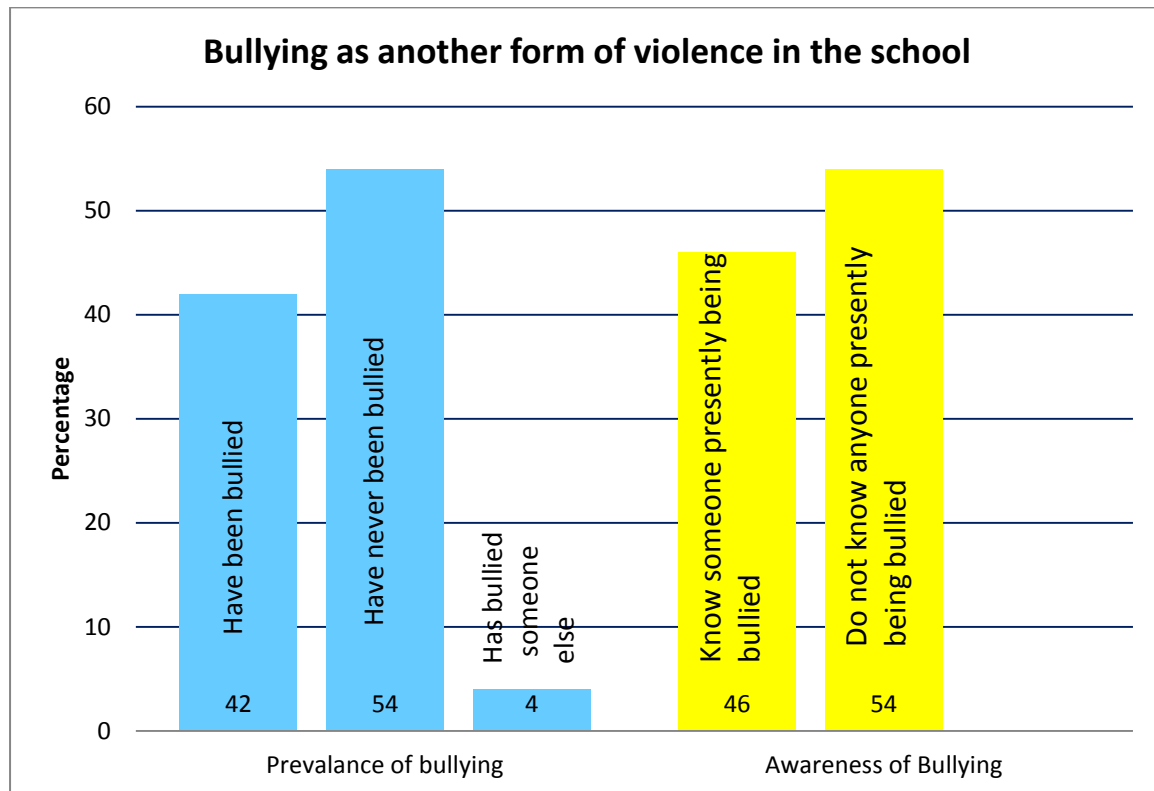


Figure 4.3: Bullying at school

The incidence of bullying appears to be high since some respondents (10) reported that they have either been bullied, know someone presently being bullied (11 respondents) or have bullied someone else (one respondent). The results indicate that the school appears to be an environment where the act of bullying may develop, and therefore, bullying may be considered as another form of violence in this school.

Maharaj (2011) listed the different forms of bullying as: physical bullying, verbal bullying, non-verbal bullying and cyber-bullying (involving the use of cell phones or the internet). Maharaj (2011, p. 15) explained that in her study of a Pietermaritzburg school, learners remained silent regarding bullying because they tended to “normalise and rationalise the different situations they find themselves in and see such situations as part of everyday life”. It is possible that the learners of this school had also accepted bullying as a normal occurrence in the school, and therefore, remained silent about it or actually did not recognise bullying for what it was.

### 4.3.2 Attendance of peace club meetings and value of peace club to learners

The peace club members were also required to choose one option in response to the frequency with which they attended peace club meetings and to describe what the peace club meant to them. The results can be studied in the tables (Table 4.5 and Table 4.6) below:

Table 4.5: Attendance

How often do you attend the Peace Club meetings?		
Attend all or most PC meetings	19	79%
Attend some PC meetings	5	21%
Attend very few or no PC meetings	0	0%

Table 4.6: Value

Describe what the Peace Club means to you		
Helpful to me	22	92%
A waste of time	0	0%
An extra subject	1	4%
Other	1	4%

As is evident from Table 4.5, the number of learners who regularly attend the peace club meetings is greater than those who seldom attend. The attendance figures reflect an interest by the respondents to attend the peace club meetings. One respondent said this is because:

*The peace club brings people together with their different innovative ideas on how to live more peacefully. [It]Makes people aware of what is actually out there like violence.*

The regular attendance by most members demonstrates that learners may have discovered personal value in attending the peace club.

The peace club population revealed their impressions of the peace club. From Table 4.6 it is evident that the majority (22) of respondents reported that the PC is beneficial, and valuable to them. One (4%) respondent referred to the PC as an extra subject. In other words, the respondent viewed the PC meetings as an extension of the school curriculum. On selecting the option ‘other’ the learners were asked to explain such a choice. One (4%) respondent chose ‘other’ and subsequently described the PC as “my home, my family”. The respondent possibly viewed the PC as a safe place where he or she felt secure. Two other learners described the importance and value of the PC in the following ways:

Learner 3 said: *I felt as if I needed to be part of it so I can find peace within myself and pass it on to others by helping them find peace within themselves.*

Learner 7 said: *I want to be a better person and a person that everyone looks up to. I joined the peace club as a motivation in my life due to the problems I have experienced as a teenager last year. Since I joined peace club my life has become easy and I feel confident when I'm around people. I don't feel the need to exploit them.*

The two statements above demonstrate that young people want to acquire peace in their lives. Some say that the peace club helps to build confidence, while others say that they want to change their behaviour and recognise the peace club as a place where they can learn to do so. In other words, the peace club has enabled learners to treat other people better, and as a result, they gain respect from their peers.

### **4.3.3 Reasons for joining the peace club**

The peace club members were asked to provide reasons for joining the peace club. The responses by the learners were then grouped into categories as shown in Figure 4.6 below. Responses to the statement 'I joined the peace club because ...' included the following:

Learner 9: *I wanted to learn more about peace and having peace within me.*

Learner 1: *A platform to find myself in high school.*

Learner 22: *A way of escaping from all the bad activities done at school such as smoking and bullying people or becoming a victim of bullying.*

Learner 16: *I am scared of violent situations basically ... I want to know how to solve conflict ... by joining the peace club I hope I will make a difference and teach other people the things I have learnt.*

Learner 5: *To learn about things and life ... to change the way I behave towards other people.*

Learner 12: *To learn different stuff to help people ... how to advise them from wrong things like drugs. I saw a potential in me to be a good example in my community and in school.*

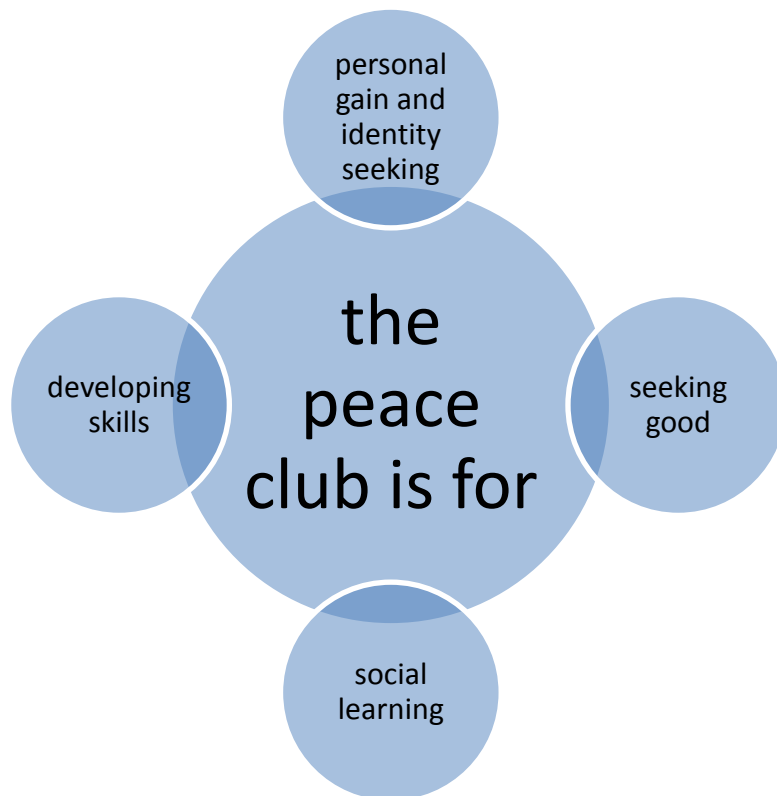


Figure 4.6: Reasons for joining the peace club

The four areas will be further discussed in the thematic and theoretical analyses as some of the reasons learners have given for joining the peace club.

These quotes show that the learners valued the peace club as a place that could offer opportunities for personal growth. While learners sought personal gain, the data reveals at a later stage, that through their interaction and shared experiences, most members were able to learn from each other. Such social learning, which forms my theoretical lens, will be discussed in Chapter 5.

#### **4.4 Thick description of the peace club**

During my visits to the peace club meetings, I made observations using an unstructured approach to get a sense of how the meeting was organised. I also wanted to observe the relationships that existed between members and between the facilitator and members. The interview and subsequent discussion with the facilitator regarding the peace club's understanding of peace, as well as the analysis of peace club documents, were sources which



shaped what is outlined in this section. I also relied on the responses of the parent interviews to understand what the peace club and 'peace' meant to them and their children.

The following extract describes one of the peace club meetings which I attended. My intention here is to provide 'a sense of being there' which Rule and John (2011, p. 52) call "creating a vicarious experience for the reader". The vignette below was created from the observation data:

*The meeting begins with a song. The lyrics of the song express praise and thankfulness to God. A female learner confidently leads the singing with great gusto. Everyone rises to their feet and joins in spontaneously, clapping hands as they sing. One can be forgiven for thinking that it was a prayer meeting of 26 teenagers with their teacher. The facilitator renders a short prayer, asking God for blessings for the school and for all the learners, as well as "for protection, success and wisdom to perform beyond expectation and to be shining lights as we strive to bring peace into school life". At the conclusion of the prayer the facilitator calls out loudly: "Give me a P" and the learners boisterously echo the chant of P-E-A-C-E. There is a sense of expectation as the learners noisily take their seats.*

*I glance around from my seat in the back row of the room. The participants are seated behind desks in rows since this is a classroom and there is possibly insufficient time to rearrange the chairs to suit a group meeting. I notice that some faces are lit up with excitement and appear to be comfortable and at ease, while a small group are subdued and uncertain. However, in the subsequent meetings that I observed for a period of almost two months, this uncertainty and initial hesitance, was replaced by participation, and eventually, by eagerness and a sense of being relaxed.*

*A number of learners are called to the front of the meeting to accept the peace club badge which is pinned onto the lapels of their blazers. The logo of the acacia tree, the symbol of the peace club in South Africa, is displayed by proud, serious-faced young people, as the facilitator applauds their dedication and commitment to being a peace club member.*

*Learners are addressed by a senior student regarding presentations on the topic 'The Dangers of drug abuse' which they were expected to deliver individually or in groups to every class in the school. I sense some apprehension; silence interspersed with low*

*mumbling as the reality of the task settles over the room. The same student encourages the members, switching between English and IsiZulu with ease. He talks confidently about the presentation he would make, which focuses on the effect of nicotine on the brain and lungs...*

*The reactions vary: some chew 'Go-Slow' chips loudly, a few whisper to each other, but all are alert, watching and waiting ... Another learner, a grade 10 boy, reads out aloud a poem he had written about drugs. Applause erupts! The mood in the room changes from uncertainty and anxiety, to excitement. Slowly an arm lifts up into the air and a petite grade 8 girl offers her personal story about the effect of drugs on families. All heads turn around to listen to the girl as she gives a subdued account of her brother, who, while under the influence of 'dagga' stole a car, caused a fatal accident, and voluntarily entered a rehabilitation centre, when the reality of what he had done, sank in. As a few more learners share their ideas, there is a tangible sense of 'working together' and fellowship, and then the siren wails to signal the end of the lunch break. The facilitator makes an announcement before calling participants to their feet. A female learner says a prayer and the learners are dismissed.*

I noticed that the facilitation style of the peace club meetings was well-organized, yet more informal than formal. In other words, the meetings were devoid of regimentation; planned, but with an atmosphere that was conducive to group interaction. The above excerpt shows that such an informal atmosphere is encouraging and beneficial to learners, as it dealt with issues that may not be easy to confront in a different setting.

The facilitator contributed information which provided clarity regarding the peace clubs' stance on peace education. For example, when the facilitator was asked during the interview, what the peace clubs' understanding of peace education was, and where this understanding came from, he replied:

*Peace education provides a platform for young people to learn skills, exchange experiences, teach others and apply the knowledge of peace in their everyday life. It's all about creating a learning environment without any form of violence. The understanding comes from experiences with other peace education clubs, and practical personal experiences of the members.*

The quote above shows that the facilitator had a clear understanding about the purpose of the peace club, which also implies that there is a need for peace education in the school.

The parents offered similar comments when they were asked about their initial understanding about the peace club. Their responses were:

Parent 1: *The word 'peace' made me happy. I knew my child belongs to something good ... about peace in the school and community.*

Parent 5: *It was about bringing peace among the students because there is so much violence in schools. They needed someone to be a go-between.*

Parent 5: *I thought this peace club is where they are taught to be at peace and not to do drugs and alcohol. So it's something that motivates them in their teenage stage.*

The parents' responses revealed that they perceived the peace club as something positive and necessary in schools. They recognised the constructive influence such an intervention programme could have on their children.

The following quotations convey the feelings of various members of the peace club and illustrated that the peace club may be regarded as a successful intervention:

Firstly, a peace club member's answer to the question: 'Would you recommend the peace club to other learners?' was:

Learner 4: *Yes, it's a beautiful place where you can learn new things and you can express yourself to others. It helps you find closure within and leads you in the right direction. It changed my life. I bet it can change yours.*

Secondly, some parents' answers to the question: 'What would you tell other parents about the peace club?' were:

Parent 1: *I will tell about what the peace club is doing for my child. I will even tell them to tell their friends about it ... somebody's life can also be touched.*

Parent 4: *It does change everything ... because I work with teenagers ... groups like the peace club has got a positive effect on teenagers today ... and a way to protect them from taking risks like drugs ... keep them out of mischief and they are able to think about what is right and wrong.*

Parent 1: *Because I see the change in my daughter I will tell them to tell their children to join the peace club. They will have a better relationship like me and my child ... we can talk better about all things ... about big things like marriage.*

Parent 3: *It is good for their children ... especially for withdrawn children. Once they join they know how to interact with other children and they know how to deal with different situations ... which is a good thing.*

Thirdly, the facilitator's response to the question: 'Does the peace club prepare young people to function successfully in society?' was as follows:

*Yes, definitely ... a life of peace is a life of success. What they learn makes them better and useful members of society which is a function of the broader peace education at national and international levels.*

The above excerpts represent positive stories and show the expectations of different role players regarding the peace club's potential to encourage a more peaceful lifestyle for young adults in school, at home and in their communities.

However, the data also revealed that there are shortcomings. In this respect, when the facilitator was asked about some of the problems facing peace education in the school, he stated:

*The lack of support from the school authorities in any form, for example making time available for the programmes; time constraints, and we haven't created enough awareness to the whole school; content of the peace club programme should be integrated into the main school curriculum for every learner to have access to peace education.*

The above quotation reveals concerns which may inhibit the peace club's ability to optimally achieve its objectives. These objectives, according to the facilitator were:

*To develop, research and implement proactive peace education in the school community; to carry out dispute resolution, conflict-prevention and conflict-management in the school; to empower learners, parents and teachers with skills and knowledge of peace and conflict resolution, so that they can resolve their own conflicts amicably.*

The sample learners also mentioned some concerns about the peace club. One of the sample learners, Mngqobi, stated that the peace club should be incorporated into the school curriculum because:

*It would be better if we all knew about peace club because there are people that are not in the peace club that really, really need help and if the peace club was part of the curriculum then everyone will at least know something.*

In the above quote, this learner voiced the need for the peace club to be extended to other learners. He recognised the value of the peace club in his life, but noted that there was a need to reach more learners.

The failure of the peace club to encourage more learners to join, as noted by the facilitator, and thus be more successful in achieving the objectives outlined above, may also be seen in the statement made by another sample member, Spring, regarding the value of the peace club to the whole school. She said:

*At the moment the peace club seems to be only valuable to those who attend, but if more children were involved then the peace club would be more valuable to more children. The peace club is needed more by those on the outside of it than in the peace club.*

This learner suggested that the peace club had not been successful in influencing a larger number of the learner population, and that it would be beneficial to them if they also attended. The above quote raises the question of whether the peace club was succeeding in its objectives, or whether it was only benefitting a small number of the learners who attended the meetings. The facilitator noted that the objective of the peace club was to provide a platform for young people to learn skills about peaceful living and to pass these on to other learners. However, the concern voiced by Spring, indicated that the extent to which this was being done was limited and that many non-members did not understand what the peace club was about. In the quotes below, two of the five sample participants demonstrated their sense of the ignorance of non-members as to the role of the peace club in the school:

Hope said: *When I don't answer back or fight with them like I used to, they say now it's because I think I'm better than them because I'm a peace club member. Then they act funny to me.*

Lion Cub said: *The children in my class call me names like 'snob' because I tell them to respect the teacher. There are some of us in my class who go to the peace club and we try to tell them it's wrong to not respect the teacher. These children will argue with us and be nasty.*

Another negative comment regarding the peace club meetings was made by Mnqobi:

*I wish that we can do things that are more interesting and fun, for example, when we are trying to find ways to solve a problem like alcohol abuse and fighting. Not only by serious speeches, rather by doing plays and poetry and music or drawing ... more exciting ways of expressing ourselves. Usually the meetings are just speeches, speeches, speeches, hardly ever plays and drama and drawing. For example, I don't get a chance to show what I am good at, to express what I am good at.*

The learner in the above quote suggested that the methods of learning in the peace club should change and become more practical than theoretical. The learner implied that the discussion style used was monotonous and tiresome. In the analysis of the peace club documents outlined below, it became evident that many of the topics in the curriculum were discussion-type however, the learners showed obvious dissatisfaction and wanted different methods to cover the topics. The sentiments expressed by the learners serve to show that the peace club of this study has the potential to attract learners to join, but it may also discourage many from being part of it.

The analysis of documents outlined below, provided an indication of the organisational structure of the peace club. The documents also provided evidence and communicated to the reader that an invisible, but strong thread of 'peace' extended through them.

(1) *Minutes of meetings:* The minutes taken during meetings showed organisation and structure and called for participants to be accountable. For example, they were to "behave in a way that paints a beautiful picture for the peace club" and to "live as a family".

(2) *Leadership positions:* Elections were held democratically, since there was a list of nominees for leadership positions. A list of all the leaders and a brief description of their duties and what was expected of them, was attached. For example, the President was required to supervise all other leaders and ensure the smooth running of the peace club; the two Deputy Presidents were each tasked with supervising the junior phase members and the

senior phase members respectively; the Discipline Officers were in charge of maintaining discipline and encouraging punctuality and attendance of meetings.

(3) *Notices of workshops*: Participants had been invited to attend various workshops. An example is the *Alternatives to Violence Project* (AVP) basic workshop, organised by AVP KwaZulu-Natal Network. “AVP is dedicated to reducing levels of violence in society by introducing ways of resolving interpersonal conflict without using violence” (Barnabas, 2013, p. 37). The workshops were offered to empower learners to lead non-violent lives based on respect, and care, for themselves and for others.

(4) *The Peace Club curriculum*: consisted of five modules:

Section 1(14 lessons) covered *Conflict*; Section 2 (9 lessons) covered issues on *Violence*; Section 3 (13 lessons) was on *Gender-based conflict*; Section 4 (12 lessons) dealt with *The Journey to reconciliation*; and Section 5 (10 lessons) covered *Trauma awareness*.

According to the facilitator, the lessons involved group discussions, group activities, sharing personal experiences, role-play, drama, poetry and presentations.

(5) *Certificates*: A list of names indicated that some members (18) had received certificates. The members had attended a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) programme for schools in Pietermaritzburg. The certificates were issued to members who had signed a pledge to:

Try and live a more peaceful life by avoiding alcohol, drugs, scenes of violence and sex, remaining celibate until marriage, avoiding bad company and to pray to God daily.

(6) *Badges for members*: The members of the peace club, who were issued peace club badges, were required to sign an agreement to look after the badge, wear it daily, with pride, and were congratulated for being peace-makers, capable of making a difference.

(7) *Notification to parents*: A letter was sent to the parents of the members of the peace club to inform them about the objectives of the peace club and read as follows: “The peace club endeavours to build peace-loving, responsible young people and create a violence-free learning environment in schools and beyond.”

The documents of the peace club which have been listed above demonstrate that the members of the peace club have been exposed to a non-confrontational approach to challenging for effective conflict resolution.

## 4.5 Life experiences and Learning in the peace club

Each of the five sample members created a pseudonym by which they wanted to be known, namely Spring, Hope, Lion Cub, Theodore and Mngqobi. A brief introduction to each of the five sample members is provided here before their experiences, the themes which illustrate their experiences, and the findings of their collages are discussed.

Spring, an 18-year-old female learner in Grade 12, was a friendly, confident, well-spoken person. She demonstrated a level of maturity and a sense of responsibility that was uncommon amongst her peers. She admitted that while she was eager and able to encourage others, she failed herself. Spring admitted that her sense of failure and feelings of loneliness began after the death of her mother when she was in Grade 11.

Hope, an 18-year-old female learner in Grade 12, was a combination of personalities. She shifted between being an insecure, embarrassed victim of circumstances, to being a determined young woman desperate to change her world. Hope, together with her parents and siblings lived in conditions that were in complete contrast to their previous home in the DRC, which she described as living like ‘royalty’. As a foreigner, she constantly endured ridicule and being labelled a *Kwere-Kwere* (a derogatory term used for Black African migrants in South Africa). She was, therefore, mainly sad, apologetic, angry, and haunted by her early childhood experiences since living in South Africa. Hope’s description of herself can best be conveyed in the following quote:

*I wish I can find the true me someday in life. I can be happy. I’m not the ‘drama queen’ or the talkative ... no these are just layers hiding the true me. No one knows the true me even my family and friends. I’m just hiding under layers, but there is this small innocent girl in me trying to come out but finding it’s difficult because of the layers. I’m sad ... of being teased, laughed at or even judged. So who am I?! A liar to my friends to make them like me? Or what? Maybe I’m just meant to be teased, laughed at or beaten. I hate myself and my life!*

Lion Cub, a 17-year-old female learner, was in Grade 12 at the time of the empirical research. She displayed a quiet, gentle nature and spoke in a soft, but confident manner. She described herself as a peaceful person. She attributed her personality to being appreciative of the life she shared with her grandmother and aunt. Lion Cub had been raised in her grandmother’s



home since the death of her parents when she was in primary school. She said that she had learnt from a young age to be content with the ‘little things’ and to be silent about the disappointments.

Theodore, a 16-year-old male learner in Grade 10, was an optimistic and self-assured young learner. He lived with his mother and step-dad and siblings. One of Theodore’s goals was to overcome feeling belittled. He expressed his feelings by saying:

*I have a problem at school. Every day I have to face my enemy. He is someone in my class and is always opposing me. But he has started to change his attitude. I am so happy that we are starting to get along and I am trying to forget the past experiences so that I can move on. I am stuck with him for the next three years.*

Mnqobi, a 17-year-old male learner in Grade 11, was proud of his newly discovered ability to motivate others. He had been challenged as deputy-head boy to present a motivational talk to senior learners about setting goals and striving for success. A well-spoken, confident young man, Mnqobi described the changes in his personality and views on life as beneficial self-discovery. However, he emphasised that his confidence and positive outlook on life had come at a cost. Recently, he had been addicted to drugs and dabbled in things which he admitted he was not proud of. Mnqobi lived with his mom and siblings. His younger sister had cerebral palsy and he had found this very challenging. He also admitted to a personal fear of not being loved.

The five sample learners had different personalities and backgrounds, but there were also some similarities amongst them. Firstly, they had all experienced some form of emotional instability in their childhood and even in their teenage years. Secondly, they shared a common purpose, namely a desire for stability, happiness and security in their lives. Thirdly, they had all joined the peace club during their senior phase of high school.

#### **4.5.1 Learners’ experiences of the peace club**

In describing their learning experiences in the peace club, the learner participants agreed that the activities and discussions in the peace club meetings were relevant to them. For example, issues that were discussed, such as conflict, bullying, fighting, drugs and alcohol abuse, were common to the school and occurred regularly.

Spring endorsed this by saying:

*Things that teenagers like me are facing at this time because drugs and alcohol abuse is really big ... we are learning about the consequences and how to help other people who are going through this problem.*

Similarly, Theodore mentioned that:

*Peer pressure and learners swearing each other are things we face and we can change that ... now we know we must not be easily irritated and not take out your anger on them.*

The learners also learnt the value of trusting relationships. This entailed trusting others and developing courage to speak out. Theodore stated that:

*The peace club has taught me that spending time with different people helps me to trust what they are saying ... so I must give back the trust. I have learnt courage to open up and share deep secrets.*

Hope mentioned that the peace club had helped her to develop confidence in herself. She said:

*The peace club has helped me to calm myself down and has given me hope of living. It's ok to not be angry. The peace club has not totally given me pride in myself, but I'm still learning to let go. I can avoid negative talks about me and the peace club has made my schooling happy because I can talk to my classmates about what is hurting me. It has helped me to be different in my life.*

Both Theodore and Hope's expressions show clearly that change was possible. This is what Gill and Niens (2014) alluded to when they spoke about the power of peace-building education to change attitudes and hurts of past trauma and to adopt the culture of tolerance and inclusion.

Lion Cub mentioned that she had changed her attitude as well. Her experience of working closely in a group meant that she had to give others a chance. She needed to listen to them and to talk about issues without resorting to violence. She said:

*I learnt to stop judging people before you really know the insides of the person because especially at school you only look at the outside of the person. You can live in*

*peace if you don't judge by the outside. I am able to do what I learn in the peace club ... like come up with solutions for fights.*

The above quotations show the understandings of peace from within. It resonates with Rawat's (2013) conceptualisation of peace, that it is a human need, and needs first to be felt from within, before it can be practised with others.

According to Mngqobi, the peace club encouraged him to become tolerant. He practised tolerance at home and in class since learning to cooperate with the group in the peace club. He stated that he had learnt to let go of his bad habits like drug addiction, by admitting to the peace club group that he had been addicted. The following quote is indicative of tolerance and changed mind-set:

*Even when someone is talking crazy things ... I wait ... I practice what I've learnt. At home, instead of hitting my younger brother when he interferes with my computer, I put on a programme to distract him. Hitting him will destroy the relationship between us.*

Mngqobi also described the peace club as the reason for being able to set personal goals. He had developed a positive attitude and felt motivated to encourage others to follow suit. He said:

*I learnt that goals are so important ... and you have to endure ... face discouragement. The peace club has given me the tools to deal with discouragement and setbacks. I have learnt commitment and to be patient. Studying is hard and even to stay after school sometimes for peace club activities when everyone is going home ... that's commitment.*

Mngqobi's learning experience in the peace club is perhaps best revealed in this quote:

*Now, whatever I do on this earth should be attached to love. My schoolwork must be approached with love. I believe that an individual should love what they are doing in order to succeed in it. I know I want to live in the type of environment where friends, family and all people feel love.*

This powerful statement from Mngqobi shows how learning in a group environment may bring an atmosphere of unity and a sense of clarity about common issues, to the members. This is reflective of Wenger's (1998) definition of a community of practice which he described as

“mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire” (Li et al., 2009, p. 5). I will expand on this in the next chapter.

Through the different learning experiences, it is evident that each person had discovered a degree of inner peace, which Rawat (2013) maintained is a necessary pre-requisite to peaceful relationships with others. Each of the learners recognised that forgiveness of self, and finding personal peace, was key to finding meaning and purpose in their own lives. Hurtful emotions were beginning to heal, and they developed self-confidence and determination. Furthermore, they showed a different way and a change in attitude, in dealing with the challenges in their lives.

The sample of learners became more mindful of their lifestyles and behaviour and thus changed the way they responded to conflict situations at home and in school. They all showed evidence of what Wenger (1998) called ‘making meaning through participation’. In other words, through sharing their experiences with each other, they were able to make sense of their personal situations. The positive outcomes gained through learning together resonated with Wenger’s (1998) view that there is value in having people to turn to, and to support, in challenging times. This is especially valuable in schools where learners are often faced with common experiences and they have the opportunity to learn together to bring about change. Wenger and Trayner (2015) more recently shared the view that learning together is more beneficial than hierarchical learning from teacher to pupil. The learning experiences of the learners, resonates with the theorists view that the peace club learners have benefitted from engaging in the learning process together. The lessons learned and the changed mind-sets, spoke of possibilities and of hope for a more peaceful life.

## **4.5.2 Thematic analysis**

Six themes were identified across the data which illustrated the various experiences of the sample learners.

### **4.5.2.1 A safe space which builds trust**

Participants indicated that the environment of the peace club meetings was safe and supportive and that it was a place where interests and expression of opinions were encouraged. Theodore, one of the male learners mentioned that he felt that his “thoughts were

valuable” because people listened to what he had to say even if his ideas were contrary to those of his peers. The learner has found the peace club to be a place that embraced the diversity of its members and where they could speak freely.

The participants described the peace club as a place where they felt comfortable to speak freely about issues and could express their feelings without being ridiculed. The peace club gave them a voice to share experiences. They did not feel embarrassed to do so because there was a sense of trust and security. Another learner, Lion Cub, said:

*Everyone there is friendly and loving and it's like a second home ... what happens in the peace club stays there ... we are not allowed to take it out.*

All the sample participants referred to ‘trust’ as the most important aspect of the peace club. Having faith or belief in something speaks about having something to be sure about and there is the expectation of protection. The participants reflected on this aspect of ‘trust’ in their responses. Theodore mentioned that sharing became easier over time and that he had learnt to speak when it was important and to listen when he needed to. He gave the following illustration of the peace club:

*Everyone in the peace club has challenges and we share these. And we talk about what that person should do ... we are a family ... it's a place where we can trust others to talk about what is inside. The peace club has made people open ... we help one another and we keep what is shared here inside.*

Theodore also stated:

*The peace club has taught me to trust what they are saying ... so I must give back the trust ... so I have been able to learn to trust and people have started to like me ... people used to say nasty stuff about me ... but I have learnt courage and the peace club has helped me to trust people, to open up and share deep secrets. Children come here with low self-esteem because of what has happened in their lives ... but the teacher encourages us to attend to problems. The club has grown more than what the teacher even expected because there is trust ...*

Trust is the most obvious attribute that emerges from the above quotes and shows that feeling secure and protected is important to the learners in the peace club. An atmosphere of trust enables learners to open up and share and therefore enables easier disclosing of

experiences by learners. Learners are then empowered and supported through their individual situations. Trust is, therefore, fundamental to breaking down tension and removing fear. Learners are able to confide in their peers and to have faith in each other. The above quotes show what Gill and Niens (2014) have described as Freire's belief that because people have the capacity to love each other and form strong relationships, they learn to believe in themselves and in others.

Furthermore, the participants testified to personal change, which has been encouraged by feelings of trust and safety. The peace club may, therefore, be considered a sanctuary for other learners in the school with similar experiences. It could also be seen as a space where the learners could explore another side of themselves without any preconceived judgements or expectations.

The safest place for any child should be the home. A family provides material and spiritual support and also instils principles, beliefs and values in children. The school should be the place that supports the home in nurturing the realization of such ideals. However, the family and the school as supportive institutions seem to be faltering, since both have become threatened by various forms of violence, thus leading to an unacceptable state of being dysfunctional. However, Gill and Niens (2014) maintained that the culture of trust and harmony between people, and the support that people need from each other, may be the turning point to restore relationships between learners and within families.

#### **4.5.2.2 Hope for restoration**

In the interviews, each of the five sample participants confirmed that they were initially uninformed and did not understand fully what the peace club entailed. They were, however, eager to learn more about its role in the school. First impressions of the peace club were varied. One participant found it boring and a waste of time, but after attending a few more meetings, began to understand its value to learners. Another learner presumed that it was about bringing about peace in the school, while other responses were as follows:

Hope said: *I was kind of impressed ... people were speaking their hearts. There were nice activities, speaking about ourselves, our likes and dislikes ... caught my attention.*

Lion Cub said: *It was an eye opener. I thought that if they live what they say then I must join them. I had hope. The one chance I could change my life.*

Hope said: *The peace club gives us hope for living ...*

The last two responses speak about hope. The learners recognised the possibilities that the peace club could offer them, for example, a way to ease their burdens by speaking about issues that affected them personally. The peace club, as noted by the learners, offered the promise of restoration and rebuilding, and the realisation that solutions were possible. Such experiences can be heard in the following statements made by the respondents:

Spring: *I now believe in myself ... I have so much confidence in what I do and I love what I do. I can be anything I want to be. Now I have to think twice about everything I do and whatever is going to benefit me in the future ... so the decisions I make don't come back and haunt me.*

Lion Cub: *We are all different with different backgrounds, facing different situations. The peace club helps me face the demons inside of me ... I don't easily open up ... the peace club has helped me to do so. The peace club also helps children facing challenges in life and will restore their lives for a better tomorrow.*

The examples above demonstrate the rebuilding nature of the peace club in a school setting. They all seem to be saying the same thing, that there may be a need for an organisation such as a peace club in all schools, a place to serve as a sanctuary, a beacon of hope for children and a place that helps to restore and rebuild .

#### **4.5.2.3 Emotional healing**

Throughout the data, I noticed that emotive words were often expressed by participants. As indicated in the findings of the questionnaire, many participants reported that they had suffered some form of violence, such as emotional abuse, verbal abuse and even labelling. In addition, many learners admitted that they had been bullied and had also witnessed someone else being bullied. As a result of the violence experienced by the participants, it is not surprising that emotions such as pain, anger and despair were very real to them. Such emotions are also revealed in the data gathered from the collages and journals (discussed below).

However, the data also revealed positive emotions like empowerment, love and self-control. Such emotions served to underline the need for an avenue of escape for learners who were

experiencing violence and conflict. Some learners admitted that since belonging to the peace club, they had experienced personal changes.

Hope said:

*Yes I had a bad temper. I used to hit my sister badly. I used to hit her with anything that was close to me like a spoon or a book or a knife or glass ... anything that can deeply hurt her badly ... but now I'm learning to control my temper and my anger ...*

Spring said:

*When my mother died I was very angry with my father. I blamed my father for everything. I totally hated him. I didn't speak to him for at least a year. Then I realised it's no use. It's not like she's going to come back. I realised by being angry with my father made our relationship worse and that we should try to work together and I need to forgive him.*

And Mngqobi said:

*I was in grade 8 when I was robbed. My friend and I took a short-cut after school. The men used our shoelaces to tie us up and left us for dead in the bush. That was a terrible experience. We were saved by someone taking the short-cut. I still see those men by the taxi rank in town. But I've learnt to forgive them. They recognise me and they hang their heads in shame ... I'm no longer worried about being angry with them.*

These three participants showed that relationships can be healed and improved through forgiveness and tolerance. Forgiveness is therefore an important part of healing and bringing about peace.

Other responses were:

Spring: *I have learnt to come to terms with my past ... the things that have happened ... to stop abusing myself emotionally.*

Hope: *I have my happiness back ... I feel like a better person ... I know how to face the world, knowing the difference between good and bad. I also have conflict with myself and I have learnt to forgive myself.*



The above quotes refer to growth and forgiving oneself, which is an important start to being able to forgive other people. Forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others are powerful foundations to the peace process, and supports Freire's notion of love, hope and compassion as cited in Gill and Niens (2014).

All the above responses show a shift from negative to positive emotions and demonstrate the positive influence that the peace club had on healing the emotions of the learners.

#### **4.5.2.4 Personal growth: a journey**

The theme 'Personal growth' became evident when the sampled five learners made reference to situations of growth and positive transformation in their personal lives, behaviour and decisions. For example, Spring mentioned that the peace club has "*helped me to be different in my life*" and Hope said: "*Now I believe in myself so much ... now I can be anything that I want to be*".

When the participants were asked how being a member of the peace club had brought about personal change, some of the responses were:

*Theodore: When I first came to high school I had a very low self-esteem ... I was not able to focus on school work or make friends easily. But now I have learnt to share my story and I can speak more freely. I have gained back the things I have lost about myself ... I have the power to conquer ... I can be a leader now.*

*Mnqobi: I am more honest ... about my drug addiction and stuff like that. I can't be a fake anymore and walk around with a fake smile while internally dealing with things.*

*Spring: Everything I do, I think ... is it right? Is it wrong? I want to do the right thing. My thinking becomes better. You become a better person intellectually, academically, socially. It grounds you. I see the change in me. I have grown now. I don't mean in age, but that my mind is at another level. Different to what I used to be before.*

*Hope: My life is still changing. It won't stop now. I'm a negative person, but the peace club is helping me find my happy self. After everything that I have been through, I'm starting to know the meaning of love.*

The above quotes show that some change has taken place for the better in the lives of the participants. None of them mentioned regression or deterioration in their personalities or behaviour since joining the peace club, and thus the responses seem to imply that the peace club is a successful enterprise. However, it is evident from the quotes that the learners are still going through a process of change. They have not overcome or mastered their different situations. Phrases such as ‘dealing with things’, ‘I’m a negative person’, ‘is still changing’ and ‘I’m starting to know’ indicate that the peace club is not an instant cure, but instead suggest that these learners are not ‘out of the woods’ yet. The participants spoke about striving for good, regaining self-worth and seeking holistic development.

Furthermore, each of the participants developed a sense of identity, direction and purpose. They spoke about what they recognised within themselves and what they wanted to accomplish. The following quote refers to the personal transformation which a male learner, Mngqobi, had experienced, and his desire to want to act on his newfound belief system. The sense of self comes through strongly as well:

*It is not about the peace club anymore. It's what I know. It's who I have become. I want to practice the new me. It's different from the way I was. I have become a better person. When my peers look at me they should see me as a leader and a motivator. I just want to see them do well, so I've injected this positive attitude into them so they know how it feels to be a happy person with a peaceful life.*

The latter quote shows that the learner had come to a place of revelation and transformation or what Freire in Gill and Niens (2014) called *humanisation*. Through reflection and dialogue the learner was able to internalise what he had learned and thus enabled personal transformation to take place in his life.

Two other learners also spoke about their desire to change and the value of changing the way they behaved towards other people. The following quotes first by Lion Cub and followed by Theodore reveal this:

*I must be different. In the past I would not stop a fight ... it wasn't my concern ... that was my attitude. But now I have to step in and do something.*

*Before ... I considered myself of no value to anyone or anything. Now I realise I could be something good and by helping others, it makes me feel valuable. I am valuable.*

The above quotes demonstrate that the lessons learnt in the peace club may be beneficial to the participants in a number of ways. For example, participants could affect some change in their lifestyles, learn to make better decisions, be guided in being proactive rather than reactive, and may also be encouraged to engage in various degrees of personal introspection.

#### **4.5.2.5 Ubuntu “I am what I am because of who we all are”**

The traditional African philosophy of Ubuntu became evident during the interviews with the sample learners. The following extract by Boudreau (2012) serves to provide a clearer understanding of the philosophy of Ubuntu:

According to Ubuntu, there exists a common bond between us all and it is through this bond, through our interaction with our fellow human beings, that we discover our own human qualities (Boudreau, 2012, p. 1).

The learners indicated that it was better to learn about issues such as conflict from their peers or in a group rather than reading or researching such information on their own on the internet. Some responses were:

*Theodore: It is better with other people because you always learn something new from someone else. Everyone has different opinions and sometimes when you listen to someone you think ‘wow, I didn’t think of it like that’. You learn different things from different people.*

*Lion Cub: Even though you think as an individual how to solve issues, it is better to share ideas and thoughts. Together is better than on your own.*

*Hope: There could be a person who experienced the violence and could tell us about it ... how it happened ... how they felt and you can get a better understanding of it.*

The above three responses show that the participants understood the value of interacting with each other and that they were able to gain from such connections. They began to feel confident that they had the capacity to overcome situations that they previously considered impossible. They were also learning in a social and situated manner as discussed by Lave and Wenger (1991).

A female learner, Spring, said:

*I believe in myself so much more now. I have so much confidence in myself. I am now a better person. I am who I am because of me and because of other people in this club who have helped me through this process. I actually realise that 'wow, I am a different person now'.*

The learner has made a powerful admission that people need each other. She referred to a strong sense of *Ubuntu* and has captured what the Zulus would describe as *Umntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu* which means that a person is a person through other persons. We affirm our humanity when we acknowledge that of others (Boudreau, 2012, p. 1).

The learner showed an appreciation for the roles that other people played in her life, and was able to grasp the importance of the willingness, kindness and generosity that human beings were able to show each other.

The above responses demonstrated that it may be possible for young adults in a group such as the peace club, to be supportive of each other, to show compassion for one another, and to create a space where others do not feel threatened.

#### **4.5.2.6 Spiritual identity**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, peace and non-violent solutions (King, 1999) are closely aligned to spiritual beliefs. Some participants included references to a spiritual identity in their responses as the following quotes illustrate:

*Hope: Love is a big word for most of us and we are told in the peace club why we should love ourselves in order to love others around us. So for peace to happen, we should try to love each other as how God loves us all.*

*Mnqobi: My drug problem was heavy on me. I got a sense of closure to share my problem. It was heavy spiritually on me. By speaking to people, God helps us to offload problems.*

In the above two quotes, the learners demonstrated a connection to, and a belief in, a higher power and the positive outcomes in their lives. The peace club, being a Christian-based programme, seemed to connect some participants to God and evoked feelings of security, hope and positive thinking, while suppressing feelings of despair and anxiety.

Some learners said that they had learnt the following:

Hope: *What is right and wrong and to love God.*

Lion Cub: *Peace involves God.*

Spring: *We have the power to change people's lives for the better because anything is possible through Christ.*

These three learners have suggested the link between God and peace, between God and improved relationships and between God and right living. Furthermore, the responses showed that some participants had a spiritual conviction about love and humility. Love and humility also formed important foundations for peaceful relationships.

It should be noted that a lot of the data relates to positive findings and consequently gives the impression of the peace club as a complete success and a flourishing enterprise. It is possible that my position as a teacher at the school of this study may have influenced the responses given by the learners. The parents could possibly also have sought to point out the positive aspects only because they wanted the peace club to be a positive influence in their children's lives and because they assumed that I wanted positive responses from them. However, it should also be mentioned that the facilitator was very committed to his role and through his encouragement, ensured that meetings took place regularly. He also accompanied learners to workshops and exposed them to presentations and programmes offered by NGO's. The analysis of peace club data showed evidence that certificates were issued to learners, and thus learners were motivated to be a part of this group. The facilitator also gave the learners the opportunity to take on leadership roles in the peace club which showed that he placed value on giving them roles of responsibility. Therefore, this peace club should not be seen as the ultimate solution to violence and conflict, but rather show it to be an asset of learners who have to deal with situations of conflict.

### **4.5.3 Metaphoric and symbolic language**

I have identified a number of metaphors and symbolic language used by some of the learners. According to Henning et al. (2004), metaphors and symbolism in language are normally significant pointers in making sense of what is being said.

Each of the five sample learners felt that the peace club had added value to the school. The following discourse markers which emerged from the findings captured the metaphor and imagery that Rule and John (2011) posit brings meaning to the text:

The peace club is like a stepping stone

The peace club is a shadow to hide under

It's a platform to speak our hearts

It's like a second home

#### **4.5.3.1. A stepping stone**

Generally, stepping stones enable movement from one side of a situation that is possibly difficult, conflictual, causing distress or worry, to a place that is safe and peaceful. The first discourse marker and metaphor, as mentioned by Theodore: “the peace club is like a stepping stone”, depicted the peace club as a means of getting across to the other side.

Having been a victim of bullying, Theodore said this about the peace club:

*Bullying is common in the school and in the peace club we learn how to deal with bullies and how to find the weak spot of the bully. So maybe it won't end bullying but the peace club can help learners not to be victims.*

The above quote described the peace club as a way to restrict or manage bullying. The learner had experienced abuse through bullying and identified the peace club as a place where other victims could be empowered to turn the situation around. In other words, such a scourge may be able to be monitored and limited because the learners have been assisted in doing so.

Furthermore, the learners have mentioned that they have made progress in their personal lives, in their family relationships and even in their schoolwork since they have become more aware that they should do so. Mnqobi said:

*It has given me a boost ... I am able to work better and my attitude has changed. I want to work harder and better. It has helped me to change this and change that ... take a new way of life ... one step at a time it guides your life ... guides how you are to live ... the rewards ... you end up being someone.*

Hope said:

*There is someone in my life who has experienced sexual abuse and I experienced emotional abuse. The peace club children somehow made me feel that in life we will experience bad things, but we should try to be strong and tough and believe in God and we will be ok.*

The two learners have defined the peace club as a stepping stone in their lives, in other words, as a possible means to overcome personal, family and academic difficulties. The former learner said that the peace club helped him through a process of change, “one step at a time”, implying that the process may take time, but that it was rewarding. The responses above suggest the value of the peace club being a stepping stone to cross over from situations of conflict and violence, to situations of peace.

#### **4.5.3.2. A shadow to hide under**

Mnqobi said that the peace club “*provides a form of stability, a shadow to hide under when things go bad*”.

The second discourse marker ‘A shadow to hide under’ gives a sense of the peace club as a form of protection and security. Reference to ‘shadow’ may also be extended to a biblical connotation. Picture 5 shown below refers to Psalm 17, taken from the New International Version, verse 8 which reads: “Hide me in the shadow of your wings” (The Holy Bible, 2011). Young people who have experienced acts of violence, conflict, fear or hopelessness, would seek such a place to ‘hide’. In the above quote, Mnqobi referred to his addiction to drugs, as the time when ‘things went bad’ for him and he needed support and solace. The wings of an eagle are broad and long. When in flight, the wings form a concave underside which creates a shadow beneath it. Eagles are admired as living symbols of power, freedom and transcendence (Watts, 2014).



Picture 4.5

The peace club may thus be compared to the wings of an eagle, which suggests a place of safety, shelter, wholeness and refuge for its members.

#### **4.5.3.3 A platform to speak our hearts**

Mnqobi, who was recovering from drug addiction, further described the peace club as:

*A platform to speak our hearts ... deep things ... like right now I'm waiting for the 14<sup>th</sup> November ... one year anniversary being drug free ... I am able to speak about this which is so personal to me ... and speaking freely in the peace club gave me confidence to share my story at church ...*

The metaphor 'a platform to speak our hearts' symbolised the peace club as an opportunity for the members to speak confidently and to be heard without feeling ridiculed. The peace club may be seen as a means to elevate learners from a place of being demoralised, afraid, intimidated, or being silent, to a place where they may display their shared experiences and solutions. It also empowered this learner with confidence to extend himself beyond the safe environs of the peace club.

#### **4.5.3.4 A second home**

Spring described the peace club as being "like a second home" where sharing experiences and ideas were acceptable and supported. She stated that the peace club gave the learners a voice, free from ridicule and embarrassment.



According to Mngqobi, who further elaborated on this metaphor, the peace club “*is a family to the members*”. He went on to say: “*I felt safe to talk about this [battle with drugs] in the peace club*”. Other responses were that the peace club inspired trusting relationships, allowed members to make mistakes, and encouraged, as well as enabled learners to develop confidence through sharing their opinions. The learners, therefore, described the peace club as a safe space, in other words, it was a second home.

#### **4.6 Personal change facilitated by the peace club**

I have chosen to illustrate the personal changes experienced by each of the sample learners through their collages. Such visual data according to Rule and John (2011), showcase how the learners communicate their personal feelings and perceptions of their lives through the use of colour and pictures.

The learners were asked to create a personal collage which would describe the personal changes that they had experienced since becoming part of the peace club. They were enthusiastic about the task and admitted that it had been a long while since they had used crayons and paint to create artwork. The collage needed to convey the story of the learner and was guided by the statement: *‘Me ... before Peace Club and me ... after Peace Club’*.

This activity took about three hours after school on a Friday afternoon. The learners sat in a group in a classroom, but worked individually. The researcher considered leaving the room, but with permission to remain, sat at the table a short distance away, and discreetly observed their interactions with each other. They engaged with each other in a mixture of IsiZulu and English, in a light-hearted manner. Their conversations were often punctuated by laughter or sometimes subdued tones. Sometimes they would identify pictures that related to someone else, and they would pass them on to that person. There was a sense of engaged interaction as they cut out pictures and shared paints and ideas.

In the individual interview that followed, the learners relayed their stories, using the collage as the starting point. The style of the interview was conversational and served to reduce any anxiety that the learner may have experienced.

There were some distinctive illustrations through the use of colour, pictures and words in the collages, as well as some interesting interpretations of these during the interviews. The findings revealed the depth and intensity of real-life issues faced by the respondents, and in

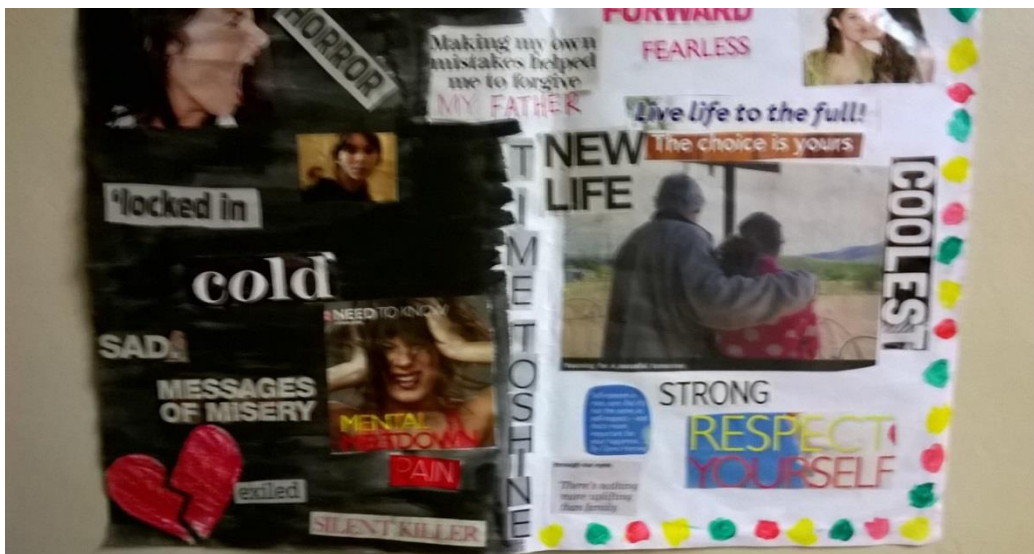
order to showcase this adequately, the researcher has chosen to present each learner's experiences individually. A brief explanation for the learner's personal choice of pseudonym precedes each account.

(1) Spring:

*Spring is the month when flowers bloom and new life begins after a very dry winter. That's where I am now in my life. I'm growing and blooming into someone that I can be proud of in the summer.*

Spring portrayed her life initially as a dark place, a sad and lonely place “with no-one to pick me up and bring me to the light”. She painted the one half of her collage black, which symbolised the despair that she felt (Artefact 1 below). Monosyllabic words like ‘horror’, ‘locked in’, ‘sad’, ‘pain’, ‘cold’, ‘silent killer’ and ‘exiled’ breached the blackness.

Spring stated that since belonging to the peace club, her life had taken a new direction. She mentioned that being able to share her experiences of her mother's death and her confrontational relationship with her father, with her peers, had helped her to live a life with purpose. She showed the positive emotions through the use of bright colours on white background on the other half of her collage. There were pictures of happy faces and phrases like ‘live life to the full’, ‘strong’ and ‘fearless’.



Artefact 1

She had also learnt from other members of the peace club that forgiveness was the first step towards self-respect and respect for others, and in so-doing, she could learn to love life. Spring described her personal experience like this:

*Peace is first of all forgiving yourself. You cannot bring peace upon others if you haven't got peace within yourself. You have to first forgive yourself and not always be angry with others who have done things to you. You can't live with hatred because it won't get you anywhere in life.*

This powerful statement from Spring showed that she was able to gain inner peace because she had realised the power of forgiveness. She also made the decision to forgive her father and was able to let go of anger and resentment. She released him from blame for her mother's death since she realised that she was not benefitting from doing so and in turn released herself from anger and hate.

The words 'Time to shine' separated the black zone from the white section of her collage and intended to signal making a new start or a transition from darkness to light.

(2) Theodore: *A man of theories who comes up with solutions to life.*

Theodore's formal school uniform, which included a blazer and tie, and his tall upright posture, matched his choice and description of pseudonym. His stature and neat sense of dress portrayed him as a young man with vision. Artefact 2 below was created by him.



Artefact 2

This learner mainly made use of words and phrases cut out of magazines, pictures of two naked male torsos and a picture of a sad faced puppy adorned with two red hearts. Theodore explained that the naked torsos symbolised how he felt prior to joining the peace club. Nakedness was synonymous to being defenceless. He described himself as being vulnerable to the taunts of his peers and thus developed a negative self-image and considered himself a failure. He also fostered a disinterest in family members and became almost reclusive. Theodore eventually became easily influenced by what he called “*the wrong crowd to hang out with*” and “*got into lots of trouble*”. However, he credited the peace club for helping him to forgive himself and to instead develop confidence and determination to take control of his life. Theodore described himself currently as being like the puppy (Artefact 2) still needing much support and love, but at the same time having a desire to make a difference in people’s lives.

(3) Hope provided the following statement:

*After everything that has happened to me, I am starting to feel alive. I have hope. Having hope is a comfort to me. It is a pleasant condition of being physically and mentally relaxed ... unlike other times in my life. I am not always hopeful, but I am always grateful for life because life itself taught me how cruel it can be. I need to have hope turn into a reality ... I need to fight back. I need to heal my wounds.*

Hope spoke at length about her life in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the frightening experiences that her family had to endure before seeking refuge in South Africa. However, the safety she sought soon dissipated when she entered primary school. She described her primary and high school years as being “turbulent and restless”. She experienced being bullied and teased and because she retaliated, was often punished by her teachers for fighting.

The overcrowded, overlapping arrangement and design of her collage (see Artefact 3a) represented her state of mind before joining the peace club. She explained that she constantly felt angry and anxious; was confused about issues and her life was complicated. Hence, she found it difficult to find structure and order.



Artefact 3a

Hope pointed to a picture of a young girl in fashionable attire and adorned with accessories. She said:

*I covered myself and became someone else so that no one could judge me or see what I was going through ... the pain of being called names because I was a foreigner... inside, I hurt ... no one understood me.*

The above quote describes Hope as a young girl who hid behind a mask. Outwardly she appeared to be in control and unaffected by the terror she faced every day at school. Inwardly, she was a terrified, misunderstood girl who so much wanted to be accepted by her peers.

Hope referred to a section of her collage (Artefact 3b) below, which illustrated how she felt since joining the peace club. The picture showed a large eye on top of a pair of running shoes and a hand displayed the 'stop' sign. The sentence in capital letters 'THE WHISTLE HAS GONE' was emblazoned above the picture. The significance for the turn-around of 'Hope's' life is contained in Artefact 3b.



Artefact 3b

Hope explained that listening to participants of the peace club sharing similar experiences, helped her to become courageous and she began to love herself. She noted feeling an inner peace and sense of calmness after realising that the emotional turmoil and sense of low self-esteem she had experienced throughout her school life could change for the better. It was time, she said, to stop self-recrimination, and she was able to envisage a happier life for herself. The eye symbolised looking into her soul and finding a happy, positive person there. The whistle signalled an end to fear and unhappiness and the running shoes indicated that even though her life was not perfect, she was taking steps towards improved relationships with her peers and family.

(4) Mngqobi:

*[Mngqobi is] a Zulu name which means 'conqueror'. I've conquered so many fears and inabilities since I joined the peace club, for example, drug usage, working with people and understanding the true meaning of peace in my life.*

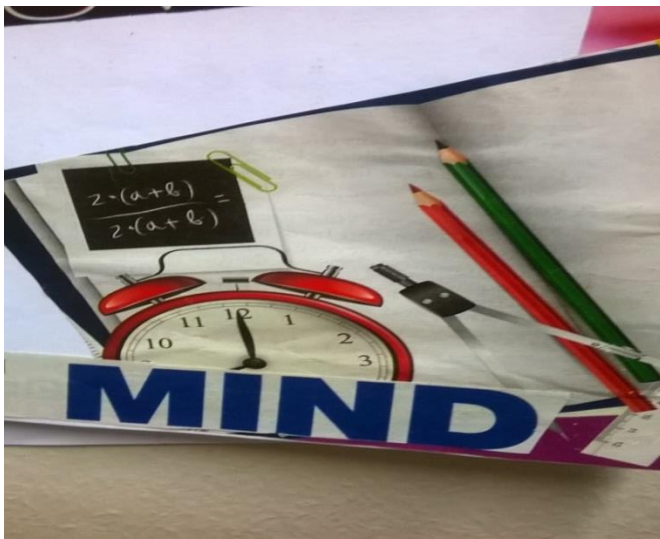
Mngqobi described himself as a conqueror and he expressed this in his collage. For example, he cut phrases from magazines (indicated below) and through his explanation of these words, he suggested that he had developed confidence and had taken charge of his life.

NO REGRETS - "I cannot change who I was, but I can definitely change the person that I will become". Here he implied that his attitude towards life was purposeful and he was self-controlled and motivated.

NEW HERO - “Before, I was at war with myself ... now I’ve conquered my emotional battles”. Mngqobi admitted that he had previously been careless in making decisions and consequently made poor judgements and his subsequent actions had gotten him into trouble.

I ALWAYS HAVE A PLAN B - Mngqobi described himself as ‘smart’ because “I have learnt not to attack a problem with a problem, but I must attack a problem with a solution”. Confusion and a negative attitude had been replaced by positivity, clarity and purpose.

There was also a picture (Artefact 4) of an alarm clock, accompanied by an algebraic equation and mathematical instruments.



Artefact 4

Mngqobi explained that the alarm clock symbolised the importance of passing time. He rationalized that having the ability and clarity to solve issues in good time was better than allowing misunderstandings to escalate to conflict. The mathematical equation and instruments suggested the value of reasoning in times of disagreement and not making hasty decisions or saying hurtful things. He had changed from being short-tempered, impulsive and reckless and had decided that it was wise to first think things through before acting on them. In doing so, he admitted that he was able to avoid confrontation with his family, friends and classmates and also spared him from the self-recrimination that would normally follow.

At the bottom of the collage he had pasted a button which he explained symbolised “my ability to keep things together”. Such a positive attitude was evident in his speech, deportment and physical appearance. He admitted that the afore-mentioned decisions were

not easy for him, but that he had decided that communication and negotiation was better than arguments and aggression.

(5) Lion Cub:

*When still a cub, a lion is unaware of its power, but when it matures, one can see and feel its power. I did not have confidence in myself before, but now I realise that I have the power to be a great leader.*

Lion Cub was physically small in stature, and at first glance, gave the impression that she was a shy girl. She spoke in a quiet tone and with great respect. Initially she was cautious, almost seeming to ‘test the waters’ but as she began to share her personal experiences and the changes that had taken place in her life, she revealed a confident, determined person. Artefact 5 below was created by Lion Cub.



Artefact 5

The collage was separated into two parts by a bold black line which she said “separates the old me from the new me”. Lion Cub described the ‘old me’ as an insecure, unsettled tom-boy who always felt discouraged and angry. She was angry at the world. Her parents died when she was a baby and she was raised by her grandmother and aunt. Her brother recently announced that he was a homosexual and their home was no longer a happy place to be in.



Her selection of a cut-out phrase ‘LIVING WITH ANXIETY’ aptly expressed her emotions at the time.

The ‘*me ... before peace club*’ side of the collage was painted with a mixture of red, blue and black coloured paint which suggested a time of mixed emotions and despair. The ‘*me ... after peace club*’ side of the collage was painted bright yellow on a white background. She explained that yellow implied a brighter future, so she was hopeful. The black line was a distinct separation of a previous time of unhappiness and a present time of hope, peace and a positive self-image.

She included pictures of a female model on a catwalk and a sophisticated-looking, bald-headed, Black woman pasted in the middle of words and phrases such as ‘THE QUEEN’, ‘BLACK GIRLS ROCK’, ‘I’M A SURVIVOR’, ‘HOPE’ and ‘SECURE’. These pictures, colours and phrases defined her in a way that she said surprised her. She explained that when she selected the pictures and phrases to describe herself, she realised that her feelings were synonymous with them. In other words, she realised that she had become a confident, beautiful, proud and optimistic person. She admitted that she was no longer defeated by her circumstances and that dwelling on them and allowing them to overcome her, was not beneficial to her. It was during an explanation of her collage that she came to the realisation that she was no longer as vulnerable and wounded as she used to be. This meant that making the collage had been a therapeutic exercise for her and she felt encouraged once again.

The collage made by Lion Cub suggested that the peace club may not have totally removed all her fears and anxieties, but had possibly been instrumental in unlocking the peace and confidence within her, thus giving hope a chance.

## **4.7 CONCLUSION**

Chapter 4 has presented the findings and analysis of data obtained through multiple sources. What struck me was the unanimous sentiment from the data that the peace club seemed to be a necessary and helpful intervention in the lives of the learners. This study shows that it was not the intention of the young adults to deliberately acquire skills and knowledge for conflict resolution, but instead they sought after peace within themselves. Furthermore, reasons for participation in the peace club varied, but the value and benefits were positive and encouraging.

The informal nature of the peace club meetings was conducive to the objectives being achieved which were, namely to promote peaceful relationships in the home and at school. The peace club also focussed on encouraging non-violent resolutions to situations of conflict. Furthermore, the goal of the peace club was to extend the message of peaceful relationships to the entire school body. However, the peace club, at the time of this study, had not succeeded in influencing more learners to become part of its membership. Instead, the influence regarding peaceful relationships and employing alternate responses to conflict appeared to be restricted to the current members.

Significantly, the five learners realised the value of personally adopting the concept of peace before passing it on to their peers and family. Parents also testified to the value of the peace club for their own children. The findings across the data indicated that the peace club has benefitted the members, and therefore, may be a positive feature in the school. There was evidence of personal change, positivity, healing, newness and hope. The findings have brought a clearer understanding of the role of the peace club in the lives of young adults. The peace club may be viewed as an encouraging sign of personal growth for the learners, a place where they could learn to engage in peaceful relationships with their peers and families. It may take some time for learners to be able to forgive themselves and others, to be able to choose alternative ways of dealing with conflict situations and to be able to practice peaceful behaviour. However, the findings obtained from the peace club learners have communicated a deeper message namely, they have provided encouraging early signals that through the peace club, change, healing and particularly peace, may be possible for all learners in the school.

# **CHAPTER 5            DISCUSSION**

## **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the findings of this study. These findings provide an understanding of the nature and activities of the peace club and the learning that it fosters at the school of this study.

In Chapter 2, the theoretical lens for this study was provided together with various definitions of a community of practice. Wenger's (2014, p. 2) account of a community of practice provides a suitable lens for understanding the peace club of this study:

... the value of belonging to a Community of Practice is having people to turn to when there is a challenge ... people engage in the same practice, they form learning partnerships because they recognise each other as a partner or a practitioner and establish a learning contract.

Chapter 5 is a discussion of the findings of this study, and sets out the understanding that the peace club of this study constitutes a community of practice for learning, and practicing peace in school and society. This argument uses Lave and Wenger's (1991) initial concepts of a community of practice and the later works by Wenger (1998; 2014).

## **5.2 Theoretical Analysis**

This section provides a theoretical analysis of the main findings of this study. It uses community of practice theory to provide a deductive analysis. A latter part of this section also engaged with some disruptions of the theory.

### **5.2.1 Value of learning together**

According to Wenger (1998), it is important that people are able to make meaning of what is transpiring, for themselves and for others, and by doing so they might be able to find solutions. Many participants of the peace club seemed to have benefitted as a result of belonging to the peace club. By participating in discussions and activities, they were able to

share their own experiences about violence, conflict and peace. They also learnt from the contributions of the other members.

One of the learners named Mngqobi' related his experiences with drugs and the adverse effect it had on his achievements and choices. He said:

*In the group we spoke about drugs. It's not only the older children who take drugs but now the grade 8 boys and even girls too are doing it. I told them that the only time drugs are free is when you are given it to try out ... after that you have to buy them. I have to tell people to stop taking drugs ... don't rely on drugs to make you happy. It's a false happiness ... something that can be taken away from you when you are low and you can't get your next fix.*

This learner encouraged the peace club group to make the right choices and to become someone else's role model. In this way, he had made a connection between his past, present and future, and by doing so, he had taken accountability for his actions. The learner was able to give guidance and advice to the other members of the group through the sharing of his own experiences. He was, therefore, an asset to the group, and other learners who may have had similar experiences could benefit from listening to him.

Another learner, Theodore, said he had learnt that issues were best dealt with in a calm way. He noticed that the other person quietened down when he did not retaliate angrily. Theodore related this:

*I used to hit back, but now I don't hit back. I choose to deal with it in a polite manner. I tell the person how I feel and I can tell when the person wants to fight. I want to react peacefully ... it causes the other person to quieten down. This is what some of the other boys said they did and it worked for them ... so I wanted to try it.*

Similarly, another learner, Spring, said that instead of reacting agitatedly or uncontrollably in times of conflict, she had learnt to walk away or to remain calm, and thus gave the impression that the other person had won. She said:

*The one activity we did was about conflict. This is something we always experience with our friends and even our family. Doing the activity taught me that if you are going through conflict you can just walk away. You don't have to try and prove*

*yourself. Sometimes you are right, sometimes you are wrong, just walk away. I have learnt to be a better person and just walk away.*

The changes in the above learners' behaviour and decisions have revealed that what had transpired during the peace club meetings, had meaning for them. They were able to practice the useful ideas and were able to choose alternatives and behave differently in conflict situations. Both participants discovered the value of listening quietly before responding or not retaliating at all and were able to keep control of the situation. They were able to make an informed decision to respond peacefully. They both demonstrated Carl and Swartz's (1996, p. 3) thoughts about the importance of peace:

Instilling in people essential values, attitudes, knowledge and skills which will enable them to resolve conflict and quell situations of violence in a positive manner thereby promoting peace.

The participants were able to understand their own feelings, situations and experiences through self-reflection and through listening to others and learning from others as well. Their attitudes changed and they were able to choose peaceful methods rather than violent retaliation when faced with situations of conflict.

Another learner, Hope said:

*I can learn a lot from everyone because we are all different and are sometimes experiencing similar problems. So learning from each other is better. My life is still changing.*

The learner referred to the value of talking and sharing stories with others in the group. By saying "my life is still changing" she acknowledged that her problems had not been solved, but that she could get support from the other members. She found value in the encouragement she received from other learners.

Most participants acknowledged that they were able to share and practise most of what they learnt in the peace club with their family and friends. Hope stated that:

*The peace club gives children hope of living. It has changed me as a person ... believing in myself and trusting people around me. I don't hit my sister anymore. The peace club helped me to calm myself down.*

Lion cub said:

*With the help of the other peace club members I was able to come up with solutions and to accept that my brother is gay. I shared with my grandmother that we should understand his situation so now our relations actually became better at home.*

Theodore shared the following:

*I have learnt to be humble by what they tell me and trust me with ... so I respect others more now ... in grade 9 ... I was out of hand ... but now I want to give the respect and this has affected me in a good way.*

The above responses from the learners show that they were able to share with others and were able to practise the valuable lessons that they learnt in the peace club. The peace club has therefore influenced the learners in a positive way. They were able to talk to each other in the group, form trusting relationships with their peers and family and make important changes about what was valuable to them. This is similar to what Freire (in Gill and Niens, 2014) describes as humanisation. Freire placed great value on dialogue, critical reflection, being able to form views and understandings, as well as in building relationships so that transformation could occur in societies. Similarly, Lederach, in Gill and Niens (2014) stated that when relationships are built between people, societies are able to be transformed. The interaction with other learners in the peace club had prompted the restoration of relationships. For example, the sample members of the peace club maintained that they chose to challenge conflict situations at home and with their classmates through discussions rather than confrontation.

Some learners acknowledged that their behaviour had also changed as a result of what they learnt in the group. For example, Spring noted that her lifestyle slowly started to change as she continued to attend the peace club meetings and participated in the various activities. She said:

*I practice the new me. This is how I should be because of what I learnt in the peace club. It's not what you say anymore – it's your actions. So I put into action what I have learnt. It's different from the way I was.*

Spring's father agreed that her behaviour and attitude had changed. He described his daughter in the following way:

*She was very quiet and sulky ... would not talk to me or anyone ... would lock herself in her room ... fighting with everyone, even with the small sister. She would not even cook but complained all the time. But I thought maybe she is angry ... the consequences of the death of her mother... but now ... now she is much better (he smiles broadly). She sometimes sits with us and talks.*

Theodore said: “*It has given me a good boost ... my attitude has changed*” while Mnqobi admitted: “*I’m more honest with my mum and with myself. I’m more patient with people. I used to get irritated quickly*”. The change in behaviour of these two learners was verified by their parents. Theodore’s mother was excited about the changes she observed in him. She said:

*He is the one now to tell his siblings about doing their chores and homework. He puts up the laws of the peace club in our home so we can see what is the right way to behave. He is more responsible ... he is now always early for school ... the first one to leave home ... before... ay ... but now he know his story ... normally he would shy away, but now he is clear minded ... he is a good child now ... no longer in the street late in the night.*

Mnqobi’s mother also confirmed that her son had shown a different attitude since being part of the peace club. Without hesitation she gave credit to the peace club for Mnqobi’s behaviour change. She recalled that he had belonged to another club called ‘Soul Buddies’, but she had not witnessed the changes then, that she saw now. She said:

*I like the way he is reacting now. He is interested in his brother and sister now. When I am saying something, he will challenge it in a nice way ... much better attitude. He has grown.*

The above quotes show that the learners had made conscious decisions to change the way they behaved. They had been convicted about their personal behaviours and attitudes. They were able to recognise their own flaws, decided what changes needed to be made and purposefully set out to be different. Society and family had taught them to react and behave in situations of conflict in a certain way, but the peace club appears to have influenced them to behave and respond differently. This is what Wenger and Trayner (2015, n. p.) refer to as “knowledgeability” which they say is “an outcome of learning with respect to a landscape which includes a lot of practices in which one cannot claim competence”. The above quotes

show that the members of the peace club have demonstrated knowledgeability by being able to apply what they had learnt in the peace club, in their actions and decisions. The learners had changed the way they previously dealt with situations and were confident about their decisions. They and their parents had acknowledged the transformation. The responses from the learners and their parents showed very clearly what Harris in Salomon and Nevo (2002, p. 23) conceptualised about peace:

Positive images of peace should be so attractive that humans will choose to behave non-violently when faced with conflict situations and thus provides young people with an image of a world in which humans work together to resolve differences and live in a way that sustains the planet.

Therefore, learning together and sharing ideas and experiences as a group may have value for learners who want to make the school a peaceful place, and who want to practise being peaceful.

### **5.2.2 Shared learning**

The concept of *situated learning* describes the social set-up in which learning takes place within the peace club as opposed to being in a typical classroom. Lave and Wenger (1991) contended that learning may be termed as ‘situated’ when it occurs socially and meaningfully in authentic contexts to meet a particular need.

Most of the members of the peace club were involved in the activities and were eager to share experiences, ideas and information. Even though they were initially reluctant, through the encouragement of their peers they were able to gain confidence. For example when some members shared their ideas on how to present the topic to the rest of the school on ‘*The dangers of drug abuse*’, many members became more willing to participate. This relates to Wenger’s (n.d.) view that learning partnerships are valuable because they enable people to have others to turn to when there is a challenge.

Lion Cub, one of the female learners, learnt that she could support her brother and his homosexuality because in the peace club, she had learnt to be compassionate to others, and that challenges were easier if handled peacefully, instead of with anger. The members also learnt different or new ways of dealing with conflict issues. They noted that they felt comfortable to share their own stories and there was an atmosphere of trust and a sense of



belonging. Hope, another sample learner revealed that the peace club was a safe place where she could disclose her secret of being bullied and rejected, and could deal with the feeling of being ostracised and being referred to as a *Kwere-Kwere* (a derogatory reference to Black, African foreigners). Hope was able to teach her peers not to ridicule others. Her peers learnt from her that mockery and derision were both disrespectful and hurtful, and could ‘break’ the spirit of a person.

The above examples are in line with Brown’s (2013, p. 1) view about participants in a community of practice that: “they typically come together because they have shared interests and seek to benefit from the knowledge of others”.

As a teacher, I was able to recognise that learning in the peace club was different to learning in a typical school classroom. Firstly, I noticed that the rules that governed the social organisation of the peace club and the behaviour of the members deviated from that of the formal classroom situation. For example, in a formal lesson in the classroom, the teacher stands in the front of the classroom and delivers the lesson while learners sit behind desks and absorb information. Such hierarchical learning signals an “expert-teacher” and inexperienced-learner relationship which takes place with the intention of completing a prescribed syllabus, which is examination-oriented. In the peace club meetings, however, the facilitator was seated as part of the group and encouraged interaction within the group. Several learners agreed that the facilitator encouraged them to work together and to have their own opinion.

Learner 22 said: “*He guides us and is like a father*”.

Learner 10 said: “*the teacher encourages us to attend to the problems that are being discussed ... if we cannot solve them he also takes part*”.

The above comments show that the learners and the facilitator engaged as a team. The members were encouraged to lead and participate in discussions together with the facilitator, while the facilitator intervened when necessary. A sense of unity and a sense of family were therefore promoted since everyone was able to contribute if they wanted to.

What the researcher has highlighted above is Lave and Wenger’s (2015) description of learning in a community of practice, that is, as a partnership between learners and between the teacher and learners. Even though the meetings were guided by an agenda or curriculum, the members and the facilitator shared a common understanding that they wanted to live in peace and learn in peace within the school and community. In other words, learning about

peaceful living and learning how to implement peace in their relationships with others, as well as learning to resolve conflict situations non-violently was constructed through collaboration and interaction. Minutes of the meetings were kept and there was a degree of order and control, but the learning style differed to that of the traditional classroom because the education was non-formal as noted in Chapter 2.

Lave and Wenger (1991) stated that learning is a social process. The participants were members of the peace club because they had a common interest. Social connections were made as the participants mentioned that they were able to learn from each other as they connected and interacted with one another through the sharing of similar experiences. According to Wenger (2014, n.p.), in a community of practice, “members learn from each other ... they share a practice”. The practice of the peace club was to enable the learners to choose to use alternate ways of reacting to situations of conflict. Together, by sharing their experiences and offering support to each other, the learners learnt to be more peaceful. Therefore, the process of learning was situated and was about the interaction amongst the learners in a peace club community where they learnt valuable skills, which they could implement in their relationships with family members and friends.

### **5.2.3 Levels of Participation**

According to Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 29), “learners participate in communities of practice, moving toward full participation in the socio-cultural practices of a community”. What this means is that in many communities, learning begins at the periphery before learners progress to the centre for full participation. Even though the latest version of community of practice theory does not refer to *Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP)*, it is used in this study based on the researcher’s observations in the peace club meetings. Some of the participants have made revelations which correspond to what was termed LPP in the early stages of Lave and Wenger’s community of practice theory. Lave and Wenger (1991) stated that the process of learning in a community of practice begins with *Legitimate Peripheral Participation* where “a newcomer is allowed access to a practice, but spends some time at the periphery of the practice and then gradually moves to the centre and becomes a full participant” (John, 2005, p. 53). These researchers formed this conclusion following their observations of different apprenticeships. They noted that initially, people who joined a community firstly familiarised themselves with the practice, gained confidence and

experience, then when they had become more competent, participated fully. The learners in this study mentioned that new members initially learnt from the older members by first observing them. In other words, new members perceived older members to be more experienced and knowledgeable because they had been in the peace club longer, knew how 'things were done', and therefore, had more to contribute.

Spring, one of the female learners, explained that when she first joined the peace club she felt uncomfortable and nervous. She said:

*I was not used to how things were done in the peace club. Then I started to realise that no-one judged me, no-one cared if I was young or new, or if I was a girl. I started to feel comfortable and eventually also feel at home. After three or four times of going to the peace club meetings, I started to feel OK.*

The older members reported that the new members were initially shy, tentative and quiet. These are some of the comments made by older members:

Theodore said: *Some are shy and don't want to answer and we encourage them to try.*

Mnqobi said: *They are first quiet but the games help them. The games we play make them comfortable and they start to trust us. We encourage them to take part by getting to know them ... their likes and dislikes ... and we let them know how we can help them with their problems.*

Lion Cub said: *The new members feel smaller and find it difficult to express their opinion. For example, if a matric pupil shares something, the grade 8 pupil feels their opinion will sound stupid. They underestimate themselves and feel not good enough. They feel unsure if what they share is important or will be accepted.*

Hope said: *Most of the new members are afraid but depend on the older members to make them feel better. Some are afraid of being rejected ... like it was for me. When they feel they know someone or something they feel OK.*

The above quotes show that the newer members remained on the periphery for a while, but eventually began to interact with others through support from the more experienced, older members. The older members showed greater levels of confidence, and therefore, participated in the peace club activities more than the newcomers did. Lack of confidence to share an

opinion or experience, fear of being ridiculed or initial hesitance and being unsure about the rules of the group, were some of the reasons for why newcomers did not participate.

The experiences by the new learners is what Wenger (2014, n. p.) describes as “a journey into a community and engaging in mental tasks which gave individuals a sense of what was needed, how things were done, enabled them to learn from their mistakes and to interact with the final product”. In other words, the movement of the new members or ‘peace club apprentices’ towards participation, may be seen as the accomplishment of becoming a certain type of person, as a result of acquiring the identity of a peace club member.

However, the new members did not admit to being ignorant or ‘missing out’. Spring felt that the older members knew more than she did and preferred to watch and listen first. She admitted that her quiet observation of the older members gave her the opportunity to learn a lot from them. This is consistent with an observation of Wenger et al. (2002, p. 4) that “peripheral members drift into the centre as their interests are stirred”. The initial reaction of the newcomers, which was first being an outsider, to eventually being able to participate, demonstrated Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of the slow movement towards full participation.

Another participant noted that new members at times would check with each other to ensure that they were doing what was expected of them, or would have quiet discussions amongst themselves, but would not fully contribute to the activity or discussion. According to Wenger et al (2002, p. 4):

The peripheral members watch the interaction of the core and active members ... they gain their own insights from the discussions ... they have private conversations about the issues being discussed ... in their own way they are learning a lot.

The behaviour of the novices at the periphery of the peace club, is what Kimble (2006) described as contributing to knowledge via reification. In other words, while the older members participated to a larger extent at the centre, the peripheral learners contributed to the peace club meeting by having discussions amongst themselves and by being guided by the peace club’s ‘ways of doing things’. This, according to Wenger (1998), is reification in practice, which is when the novice members interact with the other members via the artefacts of reification, namely, the tools, language and symbols of the peace club. Although the older peace club members engaged directly with each other, and the novices contributed to

knowledge by means of reification, both the peripheral and core members, each in their own locus, were able to contribute to creating an identity for the peace club community. The combination of, and balance between, participation and reification, is regarded by Wenger (1998) as necessary to achieve the learning outcomes in communities of practice. Therefore, Wenger's (1998) notion of participation-reification was evident amongst the new members and the older members of the peace club, since both seemed to contribute to the acquisition of knowledge for the group.

Similarly, Hope, a female learner, disclosed that as a novice, her desire to be accepted and understood was made possible through the caring and support shown by the older peace club members as well as the facilitator. She said:

*The other members don't judge me but they try to understand that I'm from D.R.C. I'm a refugee here ... us refugees are humans, created by God himself, why treat us like dirt. They didn't treat me funny.*

In the above quote, Hope had been offered the opportunity to develop confidence in herself as a result of being accepted by the other members of the peace club. She said that when she first started to participate in the activities of the peace club, she "found herself" and she wanted to be honest about herself to people. Smith (as cited in Gill and Niens, 2014) referred to this as reconciling past, present and future identities. *Legitimate Peripheral Participation* in the peace club may thus be viewed as a sense of gradual confidence building, trust-building and identity development.

However, despite being novices, the two learners, Theodore and Mngqobi, were immediately able to share their experiences and contribute meaningfully to the discussions and activities during their first visit to the peace club. Their ability to immediately progress to such full participation was contrary to the common understanding of *legitimate peripheral participation*, which, according to Lave and Wenger (1991), is the slow movement towards the centre made by apprentices as they first acquired skills and knowledge of the practice, before they were equipped to become masters. These two learners shared their motivations for being able to move swiftly to the centre:

*The peace club is different. We work together a lot in groups ... so that it becomes real. You can't be afraid in that environment ... there are no bad influences ... only to promote growth and development.*

*The teacher put us in groups and each group had new members and old members. We were encouraged to take part and try to attend to the problem we were given. He also joined us and there was a comfortable feeling.*

The two learners have demonstrated that if a setting is conducive to learning and participation, novices too may be able to contribute to the group more confidently or knowledgeably than the older and more experienced members. Therefore, the assumption that novices are always less informed was not the case here. Participation in such social settings, which promote trust and participation, may, therefore be more multi-directional from early on in the interactions.

#### **5.2.4 Developing practice and identity**

Wenger (as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 3) defined a community of practice by its “joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire”. Firstly, joint enterprise is understood as the process in which the members are involved while working together to achieve a common goal; secondly, mutual engagement is when the members are seen to be a social unit, interacting with each other around a common goal, and thirdly, shared repertoire refers to the routine, the language and the symbols that the members have developed over a period of time. In this study, the researcher has observed the members of the peace club demonstrate “joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire”, allowing for the peace club to be understood as a community of practice in terms of the criteria set out by Wenger (1998). The joint enterprise of the peace club entailed the weekly meetings of the peace club where learners met together around particular topics and activities towards creating a more peaceful school and community. Their mutual engagement could be seen by the interaction between members of the group which enabled them to establish connections and partnerships amongst them as they discussed issues and engaged as a social unit. The procedures, prayer, slogans, songs, vocabulary and symbols of the peace club represent what Wenger describes as a shared repertoire. This chapter expands further on these three elements of a community of practice below.

Lave and Wenger (as cited in Mc Cormick & Paechter 1999, p. 26), referred to members of a community of practice engaging “in a context in which they can make sense of what they observe and hear”. I noticed this when the learners interacted with each other around a topic, agreed and disagreed about issues and listened to others, or contributed their own experiences

to the group. The learners were learning by mutual engagement. They met with and talked to others who understood them, and gave them confidence. They shared conversations and debates about issues that were common to them such as conflict, bullying and various types of abuse. Such engagement and interaction with each other created unexpected solutions for some, and many learners shared how they had benefitted personally from networking with others. These acknowledgments are set out at a later stage in this chapter. Wenger (2014) argued that when learners learn with and from each other and share experiences, as individuals they develop their own identity and become accountable. The members of the peace club wanted to be more peaceful. They wanted to implement peace in their relationships with family members and peers. There was also a strong sense of wanting to influence others to be part of their goal for peaceful living. This was evident especially in their discussions on topics like bullying. Thus, being a member of the peace club community of practice also involves developing an identity of such a community of practice. This identity involves being a peaceful person at school and at home, being able to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner and representing the principles of the peace club on a daily basis.

Wenger and Trayner (2015, n.p.) state that knowledgeability means “negotiating identity in a complex landscape”. This meant that the learners were hoping that what they did through the peace club would have an effect on the learners in the rest of the school, and in the way they handled conflict situations. In other words, peaceful living and being a peaceful person constituted the practice of the peace club and distinguished the peace club as a group that wanted to be different. The learners had a sense of the practice of the peace club because they were members of it. Their identity was developed as they became peaceful learners, dealt with conflict peacefully, and tried to make the school a more peaceful place. This was the practice of the peace club community. These learners had adopted the identity of the peace club and shared joint enterprise by engaging with their goals.

Furthermore, Wenger and Trayner (2015, n. p.) state that the concept of knowledgeability is “an outcome of learning with respect to a landscape which includes a lot of practices, in which one cannot claim competence”. These theorists imply that the learners engaged in the practice of the peace club and by sharing their experiences and learning, the practice became relevant to them and they were able to recognise each other as practitioners. However, being competent as an individual was dependent on the competency of the group to enable them to become peace advocates.

The learners were in an environment or setting which had developed certain procedures, routines and language use. For example, the meetings always began with a prayer and a song in praise to God. The learners also shared ways of participating in the discussions and activities, which demonstrated that there was a shared understanding within the group about procedure and meeting etiquette. Most of the learners were comfortable with each other, and shared laughter and inside jokes which the researcher could not immediately relate to. Most of the members wore the peace club badge on the lapel of the blazer or shirt pocket which created a sense of belonging. This shared repertoire of the peace club was evident in the meetings as members took responsibility for procedures and it became evident that the learners adopted the routines, rituals and language of the peace club. Wenger (1998) referred to these as artefacts that the learners developed over a period of time.

Learners in the peace club said that by sharing their own experiences with others in the group and by listening to the experiences of others, they were able to change their own behaviour and attitudes for the better. Wenger (1998) stated that humans learn when they make sense of what they set out to learn. Some of the sample members shared the following:

Mnqobi said:

*Being in the peace club has helped me to think differently. They have given me hope for a better tomorrow. I will be able to make my mark in the world ... get my ideas out there ... I want to execute my ideas ... I'm young and I'm thinking about the conferences I'm going to attend ...*

In the above quote, the learner appeared focussed and motivated. He had gleaned useful information from the peace club sessions and was determined to put the knowledge to use. When saying that he was able to think differently, he implies that he had re-aligned his purpose in life. He had orientated his mind, and as a result, his outlook on life changed, and he was excited about his goals. He had become more knowledgeable. This supports Wenger and Trayner's (2015, n. p.) notion that "knowledgeability is an outcome of learning".

Spring said:

*Because of the peace club I am a better person. My thinking became better ... intellectually, academically and socially ... my mind is at another level ... different to what I used to be before. I am who I am because of me and other people who have helped me throughout this process.*



Wenger (2014) states that 'competence' refers to the way in which members of a group recognise each other. In the quote above, the learner recognised the influence of the members of the peace club in making her a better person. She gave credit to her peers for impacting her positively and acknowledged that because of their positive influence, she was able to journey through a difficult time in her life.

Many of the peace club members noted that since joining the peace club they felt more confident, had greater self-esteem and had made great strides due to a sense of pride instilled in them. These personal accomplishments communicate the identity of the peace club. They had also developed a sense of self-worth, for example, Spring stated that since she had learnt to believe in herself, she could achieve anything that she put her mind to. Theodore also gave credit to the peace club when he said:

*... but through the peace club I will get there ... they say I stand out and that one day I will be head-boy ... these things show me that I am different ... and I can accept these things ... I am an inspiration to others.*

It is evident from these quotes that the members felt a part of the group. They described having a sense of ownership and belonging. Learning together, as well as sharing responsibility for what they had learnt and how they learnt in the peace club was challenging for some, but they had to engage in discussion and try out new ideas to experience any personal achievement. This is what Wenger (2014) referred to as learners being accountable for their learning. In other words, learners engaged in social learning while at the same time they developed and benefitted in some way. The learners have shown evidence of individual identity development which has emerged from the practice of the peace club.

Furthermore, Gill and Niens (2014) remind us about Freire's notion of education as humanisation and his belief that people have the capacity to love and form strong relationships leading to belief in themselves and others. The result is that together with love and hope, people develop courage to make changes in their lives. The effect such strong relationships may have on young learners, became clear when Theodore voiced his aspiration to become head student at school. He believed in himself as a result of others believing in him.

Lion Cub described how her renewed appreciation for her family had started to influence everything she did. She developed a greater appreciation for her grandmother whom she

credited for guiding her through her development into a young woman. As a result, she began to apply family values to the decisions that she made. This relates to Burton (2008, p. 83) who said that “young people need to be encouraged to establish forums within schools where they learn to give voice to and take responsibility for, the issues that affect them”.

Lion Cub had been raised by her maternal grandmother since the death of her parents and through the support of the peace club members, she had evolved from being an introverted, disheartened person and had decided to find the good in her situation. She also expressed regret that the peace club had not been introduced to her at an earlier stage so that her life could have been different. She believed that the peace club was a valuable asset to her, and she was proud of the person she had become. The individuality of Lion Cub began to emerge as she established that the peace club had influenced her life differently to what it used to be in terms of relationships with her family, and in terms of her own personality.

When learners in a group such as the peace club talk to each other, share their individual experiences and realise that their situations could improve, they discover that they want to do so and then begin to develop their own identity in alignment with the practice of the peace club. For example, the members of the peace club were at this point of knowing and understanding themselves better. They understood that the identity of the peace club was to seek alternative ways to dealing with situations of conflict. They were at a place of knowing who they were as illustrated by the following quotes:

Spring said:

*You have to first forgive yourself and not always be angry with others. You can't live with hatred. I blamed my father ... I totally hated him when my mother died ... I learnt that I must practice peace. I realised by being angry with my father made our relationship worse ... I needed to forgive him. I am now a better person. I now want to do my best because I believe in myself more now. Wow! I am a different person now.*

The above admission by the sample learner was consistent with her father's suspicion that his daughter was angry with him and had chosen to distance herself from him. He said: “*She was very quiet and sulky ... would not talk to me or anyone ... would lock herself in her room*”.

The sense of knowing and becoming is evident in the above quote. Wenger and Trayner (2015, n.p.) refer to this as “building a new trajectory” where individuals began to know who

they were becoming in the community. This learner testified to a personal change and the strong desire expressed by her to nurture and develop the need to forgive her father, had taken root during her time in the peace club. She seemed to experience liberation from the burden of hatred. In the next quote she made a powerful statement about making choices:

*Sometimes I drift away from people by choice because it's not how I think or react or behave anymore. It's not them ... it's me. Because it's not about the peace club anymore ... it's what I know now ... it's who I have become ...*

This learner has demonstrated that her involvement in the peace club, which encouraged mutual engagement with issues, had helped her to self-reflect, and to come to a place of revelation about her personal dilemma. This is what Wenger (n.d, p. 3) meant when he noted that “the practice of a community is dynamic and involves learning on the part of everyone”. By recognising herself as a part of the group and learning with them, and then developing her own identity, Spring had become more equipped and motivated to deal with her situation. The angry, almost rebellious and careless circumstances which Spring found herself in, was informed by the death of her mother, and seemed to progressively worsen. Through the peace club, she was able to let go of the hatred for her father when she realised that their relationship was deteriorating which resulted in improved relationships at home.

Mnqobi said that he realised that he was accountable for a better relationship with his younger brother. He said: “... *instead of hitting him, which will slowly destroy the relationship between us, I put on a programme to distract him*”. He also stated:

*I don't value materialistic things ... I just want to be happy ... peace, happiness and love ... this is what is valuable now. Time is precious. We cannot take back lost time.*

This powerful statement from Mnqobi, showed how certain situations that young people find themselves in, may cause their demise if there was no way out. He referred to time lost when he dabbled in drugs, and recognised that he needed to make up for that time by seeking peace, happiness and love. Gill and Niens (2014) allude to this when they referred to Freire's notion that dialogue enabled people to think critically, create their own opinions and understandings and act as a group so that transformation can occur.

The following acknowledgement by a learner named Hope and the above quotes by Spring and Mnqobi, demonstrate that the learners had adopted the practice of the peace club and were able to meaningfully use it to achieve peaceful relationships.

Hope shared this:

*The peace club made me aware of how I would lead by example. I can now avoid other children's negative talks about me. I must talk to the peace club children and even to my friends and family about what is hurting me. I want to make my schooling happy. In life we will experience bad things, but we should be strong and tough and believe in God. I want to tell the other children this.*

This learner has shown that people are able to rebuild dignity and self-belief and work towards a peaceful future. Her bad experiences in South Africa as a refugee from the D.R.C were compounded by her own experience of emotional abuse and being aware of someone in her family who had experienced sexual abuse. Her determination to rise above her sadness and regret, and her desire to want to help other children as well, is admirable. She commended the peace club for making her a leader and for giving her the capacity to forgive and the desire to want to help others. This relates to Burton and Leoschut (2013, p. 4) who stated that “peace education may change schools into places of safety and learning where learners feel protected, appreciated and nurtured”.

The sample learners have demonstrated an engagement with the practice of the peace club. They were also able to orient themselves in order to know who they were in the world of the peace club, and in the greater society of the school. These learners were learning to align themselves and what they were doing, with what other learners were doing, so that they could be more effective in relationships. In other words, the peace club seemed to be a catalyst in changing the mind sets of learners with regard to improved behaviour, and alternative ways of dealing with conflict situations.

### **5.3 Some disruptions to community of practice theory**

Some of the findings of this study have highlighted various disruptions to community of practice theory. Firstly, according to Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of *Legitimate Peripheral Participation* within the theory of community of practice, newcomers to a practice spend a great deal of time at the periphery before they gradually move to the centre to participate. They concluded that the learners at the centre were more experienced and knowledgeable and that the novices observed them and learnt from them. The findings in this study have shown this to be partially true of the peace club because some new learners who

joined the peace club were initially shy and hesitant to participate in the activities. Eventually, as they became familiar and sure about what to do, they joined in the activities and discussions. For example, Hope said:

*Most of the new members are afraid but depend on the older members to make them feel better. Some are afraid of being rejected ... like it was for me. When they feel they know someone or something they feel ok.*

However, the findings show that some newcomers did not follow this trend, and therefore, disrupted the common understanding of *Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. For example, two male learners, namely Mngqobi and Theodore, found that the mood of the peace club meetings and the fellowship and support offered by the members and the facilitator, immediately made them feel comfortable and confident enough to participate as newcomers.

According to Mngqobi, the sense of unity and purpose within the group made him feel included. He said:

*We work together a lot in groups ... so that it becomes real. You can't be afraid in that environment ... there are no bad influences ... only to promote growth and development.*

Similarly, Theodore said:

*We were encouraged to take part and try to attend to the problem we were given. He also joined us and there was a comfortable feeling.*

Theodore described the peace club meeting on his first visit as being meaningful and insightful. From the outset he established that everyone was included and he was able to participate confidently. Both these learners confirmed that newcomers did not necessarily always linger quietly or nervously on the periphery, nor did they have to move slowly towards the centre to participate. Instead, they have demonstrated that it was possible to immediately join in and become involved in the group. However, their ability to participate without hesitation could also suggest that they were confident young men who displayed a natural assertive nature. The above incidents deviate from the concept of *Legitimate Peripheral Participation* as put forward by Lave and Wenger (1991), and rather imply that learners on the periphery do not necessarily learn from the 'masters' who are deemed more knowledgeable and experienced. Instead, newcomers may be able to contribute confidently

and be more well-informed and conversant than the older, experienced members. Participation in the social setting of this peace club had obviously changed direction from novice to master.

Another deviation from the learning trajectory as set out in the concept of *Legitimate Peripheral Participation* was the participatory nature of learning between novices and older members of the peace club. Lion Cub described the new members as very quiet, but that the games helped to make them comfortable. She also described some of the role-play activities and noted that the new members enjoyed the activities which helped them to trust the older members. In this example, there is evidence that the activities are designed in such a way as to encourage participation and movement between participants on the periphery and the older members. Such participatory pedagogy appears to flatten formal and informal learning hierarchies. The democratic and inclusive values of the peace club and its highly participatory pedagogy could be influencing such patterns of participation. Further research on how the values and pedagogy of particular communities of practice shape participation patterns could shed more light on this.

Secondly, the findings of this study showed that the ethos of the peace club as a safe and trusting community of practice, served to enhance learning. For example, the most noticeable quality noted by the participants, was the sense of trust. Theodore said:

*The peace club has taught me to trust what they are saying ... so I must give back the trust ... but I have learnt courage and the peace club has helped me to trust people, to open up and share deep secrets. Children come here with low self-esteem because of what has happened in their lives ... but the teacher encourages us to attend to problems. The club has grown more than what the teacher even expected because there is trust ...*

Other features that enhanced learning are the sense of family and safety. These characteristics were experienced by the participants as illustrated in the following quotes:

Spring said: *I believe in myself so much more now. I have so much confidence in myself. I am now a better person. I am who I am because of me and because of other people in this club who have helped me through this process.*

Mnqobi said: *The peace club provides a form of stability, a shadow to hide under when things go bad.*

Hope said: *The peace club is a family to the members. I felt safe to talk.*

In the initial version of community of practice theory, Lave and Wenger did not make reference to qualities such as trust, security, self-belief and kinship as noted by the learners. The ability to feel secure and part of a family where there is love and support was appreciated and significant to the learners, and therefore, may be useful in a group where social learning takes place. Trust is valuable in any learning environment because it encourages learners to open up and share easily. In the peace club of this study, the learners were young and vulnerable, and the security offered to them by the trusting atmosphere and the family support from the other members, made sharing their personal experiences easier. This had significant implication for their learning and development.

Thirdly, the original theory of community of practice did not engage with the therapeutic nature of a community of practice in the context of violence and conflict. The following quote by a female learner named Hope, revealed the extraordinary healing experience of being part of the peace club.

*After everything that has happened to me, I am starting to feel alive. I have hope. Having hope is a comfort to me. It is a pleasant condition of being physically and mentally relaxed ... unlike other times in my life. I am not always hopeful, but I am always grateful for life because life itself taught me how cruel it can be. I need to have hope turn into a reality ... I need to fight back. I need to heal my wounds.*

This learner embraced the inner peace and healing offered to her by being able to speak freely about her life's experiences. She was able to 'off-load' her burdens to her peers who were willing to listen and offer advice, and in return, she felt comforted, happy and hopeful. The peace club was an escape from her daily terror and was her place of refuge. However, Humphreys (2000) wrote extensively about the healing and recovery experienced by members of the Alcoholics Anonymous group, which was brought about by the sharing of experiences. While the Alcoholics Anonymous group was seen as a community of practice, the similar experiences by the sample learner highlighted the need for further research on the healing and therapeutic value of communities of practice, in the contexts of violence and trauma.

## 5.4 The peace club: A catalyst for peace

Burton (2008) has highlighted that schools in South Africa have been identified as places with widespread violence. The seriousness of the ongoing occurrence of violence, as discussed in Chapter 2, has been echoed in the findings of this study with regard to this school. The formation of a peace club has been embraced by a small group of learners' intent on initiating personal change and improving their relationships in school, family and the broader community.

While analysing the data, I noticed that the members of the peace club did not join the group with the intention of 'off-loading' their personal experiences of conflict and violence, nor did they have preconceived ideas of finding solutions to the violence within the school. Instead, the idea of change took root as a result of participation in the peace club and through self-discovery. The introduction of peace education through a self-generating group like the peace club, may well achieve what Burton and Leoschut (2013) deem important in changing schools into safe, nurturing and non-threatening environments.

The following comment by the facilitator defines where the peace club stands in relation to the goal of peace education:

*As a group, the members make an effort to change their behaviour, improve their schoolwork and even reduce the cases of violence in the school and community. If they are better able to solve their own problems or conflicts, they can have good, sound relationships. They will grow up being responsible in life, being aware of their rights and responsibilities and therefore have social, moral and even spiritual development.*

It is a potential that contentious situations may be dealt with better in a group that presents the peace club as a possibly important initiative to provide skills for leadership and conflict resolution.

However, the benefits of belonging to the peace club seem not to extend further than its immediate circle of influences, namely, to that of the members and their families. One of the sample learners said that the peace club seemed to be beneficial only to those learners who attended the meetings. This participant, Lion Cub, said:



*It would be better if we all knew about peace club because there are people that are not in the peace club that really, really need help and if the peace club was part of the curriculum then everyone will at least know something.*

Through the opportunity of self-discovery and listening to ‘the inner voice’ which the peace club afforded the participants, the peace club members may have an advantage over other learners in the school, of being able to recognise what they want to achieve. Theodore made mention of such an advantage when he said that the members of the peace club “*do things that the school should do ... we have the advantage to change things in the school*”.

The benefits of having a peace education programme in a school may be short-lived according to May (2008). May (2008, p. 40) cited Simpson’s reference to the phenomenon “memorised routine” which she had observed with students in a school-based peace education programme. In this context, she had noticed that the students were still able to repeat the slogans of the programme several months after participation, but completely lacked a practical use of them in everyday life, as they were obviously unable to activate their meanings. However, the opposite is true with the peace club of this study. The many positive disclosures by the members seemed to show that the learners in this peace club study were able to find a practical use for what they had gained in their everyday life. Such admissions by the learners serve to give an account of what is happening in the peace club and for that reason there may be value in having such a peace education programme in schools.

Theodore and the other sample members recognised that the peace club had made a difference in their lives and had changed their way of thinking, but admitted that change did not occur in one day, but that it would take time to happen. It is, therefore, possible that these members may one day look back and reflect that the peace club was the turning point for them. The findings of this study raise the question: “Can the influence of the peace club on this small group of learners in a school, lead to the much-needed catalyst to address the escalating violence and conflict currently permeating our schools?”

## **5.5 Conclusion**

Chapter 5 has offered a theoretical analysis of the findings of this study using the lens of community of practice theory. It also looked at some disruptions to the theory. The chapter concluded with a consideration of the peace club of this study as a potential catalyst for peace in schools.

# **CHAPTER 6 Conclusions, Limitations, Reflections and Recommendations**

## **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter concludes the dissertation. Firstly, it responds to the three key research questions, followed by the identification of limitations of the study. Next, it outlines some personal reflections about the researcher's learning in the research process about a peace club. Finally, it offers some recommendations, and calls for further research on peace education through peace clubs in schools.

## **6.2 Responding to the Key Research Questions**

In order to understand the learning and experiences of young adults in a school-based peace club, the researcher set out to obtain quality data through multiple sources and methods. Since this was a case study project, it was important to engage in the process of triangulation by using multiple sources and methods to support findings, so that the quality of research could be strengthened (Yin, 2003). In Chapter 4, rich descriptions of the findings, which contributed to thematic analysis, as well as discursive analysis, were provided. Chapter 5 produced a discussion of the themes and findings in relation to the key concepts from community of practice theory. While Chapters 4 and 5 have provided answers to the research questions, the intention of this chapter is to bring together significant aspects from those chapters to answer the research questions more directly.

### **6.2.1 Response to research question 1:**

#### **What learning occurs through participation in a peace club?**

The peace club group met regularly and engaged mainly in social and situated learning. In other words, the members of the group learned together through participation, sharing experiences and suggesting solutions. The support and interaction that occurred amongst the members, and between the members and the facilitator, were indicative of a sense of learning in relationships.

Possibly the most obvious types of learning that occurred through participation in the peace club were social, situated, collaborative and participatory learning. Most members engaged in

a joint exercise with a mutual objective. Learning mainly occurred in the form of group activities and group discussions. Smaller groups would discuss an issue or topic and after some time, there was a session for each group to report back to everyone. Some members were hesitant at first, but the support from their peers and their shared experiences connected their learning. Connecting with others indicated that peace club members engaged directly with each other, and allowed the participants to acquire the basic human value of empathy towards their peers. While negative energy was sometimes experienced in the group, consideration for others and being motivated to make social connections, influenced attitudes positively. It was noticeable that everyone was given a chance to have a say in the meetings. Such inclusive learning made members feel that their opinions mattered and thus positive, open and constructive relationships, built on care, love and trust, were mainly experienced.

Secondly, collaborative and creative learning also took place as a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding was developed. Learning took place in the form of role-play and games. The learners appeared to have fun while learning socially. Such creativity made issues real to them, and contributed to making the group a safe and peaceful learning environment where the learners felt happy. An environment free from intimidation and anxiety is important and may be valuable when learning new knowledge.

Practical learning also occurred. In other words, the personal performance of members was realised since most members indicated that they were willing to practise what they learnt in the peace club. For example, most members indicated a willingness to promote peace with others outside of the peace club. They did this by choosing not to engage in arguments, to remain silent instead of retaliating and by encouraging other learners to do the same. Some learners had the confidence to promote peaceful relationships and topics such as anti-bullying to the rest of the learners in a school assembly. Learners also mentioned that doing this has had a positive influence on their personal behaviour and attitudes, and had thus improved their relationships with their parents, siblings, classmates and teachers.

## **6.2.2 Response to research question 2:**

### **What are the processes of learning and development for peace club participants?**

The theoretical lens of community of practice enabled an analytical viewpoint through which to examine the processes of learning and development for peace club participants. This was made possible via observation and through the responses of learners in the questionnaire and in the interviews. The following was noted:

Firstly, learning in the peace club was through talking and sharing experiences and ideas. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Lave and Wenger (1991) described learning in a community of practice as human beings interacting with others and with their environment. They further state that during such interaction, learning takes place as a result of relationships being adjusted between people and with their environment. The learners in the peace club demonstrated such interactive learning by joining in activities and discussions, and by making decisions together. Lave and Wenger (1991) also described learning as ‘situated’ when it occurs socially and meaningfully for a specific reason. Such situated social learning became evident when the members of the peace club reported that they were able to form trusting relationships with their peers in the group because they could share their experiences, and learn from each other about real, every day experiences. They were, therefore, also able to form supportive and encouraging connections with each other. Wenger (as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 3) defined this as having “joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire”. The learners had formed a group and adopted their unique way of doing things during their meetings as they interacted with each other.

Furthermore, according to Lave and Wenger (1991), in a community of practice, new members remain on the periphery before moving to the centre. Therefore, as an observer-researcher and as a teacher, I found it interesting to witness how learning took place in the peace club. Most members of the peace club agreed that new members initially felt unsure and remained on the periphery until they felt comfortable to participate. The older, more knowledgeable members were in the forefront of discussions and activities. Eventually the novices progressed from the periphery towards the core once they had developed their own identity within the group. The former observations were in line with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) earlier version of community of practice theory about learning as explained in the concept of LPP. The level of participation within the peace club meeting therefore also

extended from the more experienced members to an eventual full participation by all members. Such learning processes offered a picture of how people were more generally expected to behave in a community of practice, as posited by Lave and Wenger (1991) in their earlier writings.

However, subsequent phases of community of practice theory have moved away from the 1991 version which supported slow movement to full participation by newcomers. Instead learning in a community of practice has recently been described by Wenger and Trayner (2015, n. p.) as a “landscape of practice” where the individual may locate him or herself in an environment with particular procedures or routines, but develop his or her own way of doing things. The individual would have decided what he or she wanted to achieve and then worked together with others within the community to achieve a goal. In the peace club of this study, two learners demonstrated such multi-directional learning by immediately participating in the activities. Despite being newcomers to the group, the two learners did not hold back, but confidently brought their own experiences and contributions to the practice. This means that learning had become more multi-directional and shows that newcomers can teach old-timers in a community of practice.

The peace club members engaged in a non-formal, collaborative way so that the facilitator and members participated as a unit. As a teacher, I recognised that learning which was more interactive and social, offered numerous opportunities for dialogue, debate and sharing of ideas. Learners mainly supported one another because they firstly shared common experiences, secondly, they shared the practice of the peace club, which was about learning to be more peaceful, and thirdly, they gained a sense of belonging since they had acquired an identity of being a peaceful person. The learners also appeared to be mostly enjoying the interactions and I realised that this was because they felt a sense of ownership of the peace club. Whilst a few members conveyed an attitude of indifference, most members tended to listen and give support, and showed interest and a nurturing attitude, towards the hesitant members.

In addition, members engaged in critical reflection and in dialogue about their experiences. Participation in activities and discussions was therefore crucial to making learning meaningful for the members. It was clear that as members learned from each other and with each other, no one claimed to be more knowledgeable than the next person. If there was any indication of such superiority, there was always someone to challenge the claim, which

resulted in boisterous discussions. The discussions, debates, interactions and familiarity with routine gave a sense of inter-connectedness between most of the members, which created the atmosphere for participative learning occurring.

### **6.2.3 Response to research question 3:**

#### **To what extent does peace club participation impact the behaviour of participants?**

Change in the behaviour of the learners could imply that the peace club may be beneficial to learners in the peace club. Many learners admitted to being influenced positively through their involvement in the peace club. The sample members of the peace club and their parents claimed that spiritual, intellectual and relational changes had taken place because of the peace club.

Firstly, the sample learners demonstrated that they had adopted the identity of the peace club. They stated that they had learnt to be more peaceful by choosing to deal with conflict peacefully. For these members, this involved implementing what they had learnt in the peace club, in their own lives. For example, the sample learners mentioned that they had developed new attitudes and control mechanisms to enable them to manage issues of anger, confusion and conflict. New strategies included choosing to have peaceful, conflict-free relationships with others, rather than allowing disagreements to escalate into conflict situations. They also said that they had shifted from feeling rejected, lonely, victimised and unsure, to having a realistic sense of purpose. They had, thus, embraced the practice of the peace club, which was to empower its members to be more peaceful, to implement peace in their lives and to influence other people to choose peaceful ways of dealing with conflict.

Secondly, there was an improvement in the levels of confidence shown by the sample learners. They related moving from a silent victim position, to learning to take control. They developed confidence to communicate, and thus, formed better relationships with their parents and peers. The participants spoke about the future with hope and about building trusting relationships with family. They developed a sense of security and improved self-esteem, and felt that they would be able to take better control of situations, and to realise the goals they were now able to set for their lives.

Likewise, parents spoke about better relationships with their children who were peace club members. They mentioned aspects such as honesty, improved communication, fewer

confrontations, a decrease in episodes of aggression, acts of kindness and showing more respect, as the most noticeable changes in their children. Parents noticed that their children had developed a sense of accountability for their behaviour and actions, and had moved from a state of disinterest, to interaction and involvement in their families.

Participants also spoke about a change in their relationship with God. They made reference to the alignment of God and peace, and that when such a connection was in place, peace could be found within self and with others. In other words, the peace club seemed to have connected the participants to God and evoked feelings of security, hope and positive thinking.

Lastly, all the participants acknowledged that since belonging to the peace club they had been able to change their mind-set about conflict management. Some mentioned forgiveness and compassion, while others cited respect and self-control as important features that would enable them to avoid conflict. The learners also attributed their new-found hope in humanity to the peace club, and agreed that it was possible to encourage a peaceful and safer learning environment for all learners at the school. A few members were wise enough to caution that one cannot only always be positive because in life there are 'always ups and downs'. Figure 6.1 below shows a participant's use of a mathematical *Sine* graph to illustrate the 'ups and downs of life' that a person goes through. She explained that through the peace club she has learnt that "life isn't easy, but it's do-able".

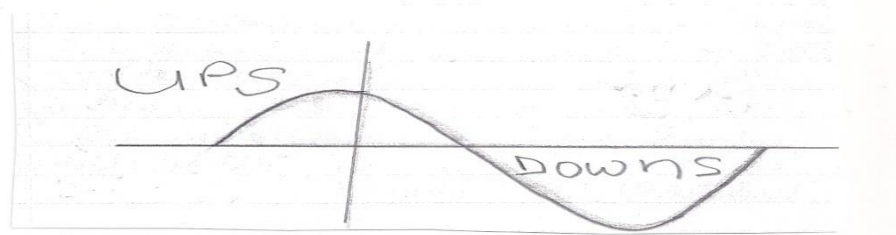


Figure 7: Sine graph - the 'ups and downs' of life

The learners have, therefore, shown that through peer support and unity, it was possible to deal with the challenging situations which they experienced.

### **6.3 Limitations**

The study was limited because it was a small-scale study and the findings are relevant to one particular school. For this reason, and since the observations made were conducted over a relatively short period, the study cannot make generalisations about peace clubs in all institutions. Furthermore, at the time of the research, no comparable data was available.

Moreover, the peace club meetings were short and gave the sense of being incomplete and rushed, since they were held during the school's half hour lunch break. By the time the members arrived, the time was reduced to about twenty minutes which meant that comprehensive interactions and discussions were also limited. If more time had been allocated to a meeting, the researcher might have been able to obtain additional insights and perspectives of the learning and experiences of the learners in the peace club.

A further limitation was the size of the sample. As a researcher, I relied on the understandings, experiences and personal feelings of only five young adult members of the peace club. The reason was that there were only a limited number of learners in the 16 to 18 year old category to meet the young adult requirement for this study. While the five participants made a valuable contribution to the research, it would have been more useful to have a larger sample. Another factor which may have influenced the findings was the noticeably compliant demeanour of some of the parents towards the researcher. Some parents appeared to be overly co-operative and may have provided responses that they felt the researcher wanted to hear.

A regrettable limitation that I experienced as a researcher was not being able to attend workshops and camps with some of the participants. The camps and workshops were organised by NGO's and were conducted over three days. I was unable to attend due to time constraints determined by my professional obligation as a teacher. I was, therefore, not able to observe the peace club members of the study in an interactive role with young adults from different peace clubs. Such opportunities would have possibly enabled me to compare and confirm my findings.

These are some of the limitations experienced when conducting a small-scale case study research within the constraints of a school schedule. However, the ensuing section alludes to



some personal reflections on my learning in the research process and may signpost areas for further research.

## **6.4 Reflections on the Research Process**

When I consider the time spent conducting this study, I appreciate what I have accomplished. I look back at my interactions with all the peace club members, the five sample learners and the facilitator, as an amazing experience enriched by many positives. It was also a learning experience improved by challenges and insights.

The study has helped me to become reflective. For example, in my own teaching practice, I have become mindful of my style of teaching and relationship with the learners when I teach. I have been challenged to consider using various ways of teaching concepts and have also been able to confirm that some of my teaching methods are successful while some are not. I have also tried to use more of a social learning style, particularly to include learners who lack confidence. In addition, working with the young adults in the study has made me realise that my pupils may be experiencing and concealing personal situations of violence, conflict, being intimidated or ridiculed or even being bullied. I have since tried to be more compassionate and more attentive to the body language, emotive and physical responses of my pupils.

One of the challenges which I encountered during the research process was time constraints. I had to manage my time with regards to my family, my profession as a teacher and conducting and writing up the research. Sacrificing family time was the most difficult. However, partly because of the volume of data produced from a qualitative case study, and having to make sense of the large amount of data, and partly because it is my nature to work to the best of my ability at any project, I managed to be positively resourceful and proficient in completing this study.

The research process has been a difficult, but interesting learning process for me. I have felt a sense of accomplishment since a study of this nature has not been conducted before. I hope that the study contributes to the implementation of more peace clubs which may be a step in the right direction for many school children.

## **6.5 Recommendations for further research**

The findings of this study have enabled me to obtain an insight into the work of the peace club through the experiences, views and observations of the members and parents. Other schools and small community groups could learn from the implementation of the peace club in this school and its attempt to use peaceful methods to deal with conflict situations.

As a teacher at the school, I was aware of the heavy workloads, and large classes that teachers had, and that they no longer had time to address the social or welfare needs of their learners despite being aware of them. A possible reason for this was that the school curriculum was overloaded and there seemed to be no space for peace education. As mentioned in Chapter 1, teachers in this particular school lacked knowledge about what peace education entailed. They had neither been adequately informed about the peace club, nor did they understand what it was about, and therefore, did not take any interest in it. On the other hand, some teachers preferred to remain excluded because they already had too much to do. Further research could, therefore, explore how the peace club could actively involve the teachers of this school in promoting peaceful relationships, or encourage teachers to become involved in the peace club.

The peace club of this study advocated peaceful relationships and had attempted, through a small group of learners, to encourage non-aggressive approaches to problems and conflict situations. I believe that a greater focus should be on how the peace club could extend such peaceful relationships throughout the whole school and hopefully serve to at least highlight, if not reduce, the number of incidences of bullying and conflict.

Furthermore, a possible research study on bullying could be undertaken in the school of this study, to determine its prevalence and how it could be tackled. Chapter 4 revealed that the incidence of bullying as a form of violence was high (92%) and could perhaps be explored as a project by the Representative Council of Learners, as accomplished by Maharaj (2011), and could be conducted parallel to the peace club.

A researcher may choose to investigate the third research question regarding claims made by the participants. The focus could be a comparison of the peace clubs in more than one school, and how the behaviour of participants was influenced through their involvement in the peace club. At the same time, the researcher would be able to compare and investigate the

theoretical proposals discussed in Chapter 5 in the peace clubs in other schools. The researcher may, therefore, consider performing a large scale survey across a number of schools where peace clubs are being implemented.

Moreover, further research could focus on the value of peace clubs in the communities where the learners live. The extent to which principals, teachers, parents and community leaders could become involved in establishing peace clubs in schools, and perhaps in the communities of which schools are a part, could be explored. The positive impact which may result is the improvement of relationships across all areas, namely school, family, community and in the workplace.

Further research would be useful on how the values and pedagogy of particular communities of practice shape participation patterns. Such research could focus on the concept of Lave and Wenger's (1991) version of *Legitimate Peripheral Participation* versus the more current notion by Wenger and Trayner (2015) that old-timers may learn from newcomers in a community of practice. Valuable information could be learned regarding the participatory pedagogy and how this changes participation patterns.

The recommendations put forward here could explore the idea, as implied at the end of Chapter 5, of the peace club as a catalyst for change in schools. As a teacher-researcher, I have recognised the value of young adults connecting with each other through the peace club. I therefore recommend that peace education be mainstreamed and be implemented in more schools in South Africa.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This study, through an extensive literature review and responses from the peace club population, the five sample learners, their parents and the facilitator of the club, has awakened a realisation of the extent of violence and conflict within schools and in society in general. South Africa is a society with long histories of violence. The youth of this country, in schools, at universities and in communities are caught up in this web of violence. This project has helped me to recognise and appreciate what the real challenge is: peace is a group effort and if real change is going to happen, if peace is going to be promoted in schools, many more schools, organisations and communities need to be working on ways of reducing the current high levels of violence and conflict. They also need to be finding ways through

education and community projects to build a culture of peace. This work has only just begun and the peace club of this study is one small example of this important work.

This study breaks new ground by highlighting the peace club as a possible solution to the increasingly high levels of violence in schools. Availability of support systems, and proper education for peace, and alternatives to violence as a means of solving conflict, can play a role in reducing the high rate of violence and conflict at home and at school. At the time of completing this dissertation, it was interesting to note the existence of peace clubs in more schools, being funded by Mennonite Central Committee. It would be valuable to explore the impact of these peace clubs in schools, so as to establish if they are beneficial or not on a wider scale, and in other contexts.

Despite the limitation of this study in not being generalizable, its findings have the potential to make a contribution to the literature on peace education. It may also contribute to peace-building efforts in a country badly in need of reducing violence and building more peaceful futures, like South Africa.

The findings of this study have shown that even a small degree of change may bring hope and direction for children who are, and continue to be victims of violence in schools and in society at large. Peace clubs began because change was needed in schools. It seems appropriate to return and end with the quotation of the 17 year old learner, introduced at the beginning of this dissertation: "To make a change, we have to start somewhere." The members of the peace club in this study should be applauded for recognising the need for change and taking the initiative to bring peace into their lives, school and homes. They did this by creating what we could call a compassionate community of peace practice in their school. Many more such initiatives are needed and should be supported by all sectors of society.

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## Annexures:

### Annexure 1 – Department of Education Consent Form



education

Department:  
Education  
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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Enquiries: Nomangisi Ngubane Tel: 033 392 1004 Ref.:2/4/8/437

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Mrs L Jasson  
PO Box 100354  
SCOTTSVILLE  
3209

Dear Mrs Jasson

#### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS


Your application to conduct research entitled: **“EXPLORING A SCHOOL-BASED PEACE CLUB: LEARNING AND EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG ADULTS”**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 15 June 2015 to 31 July 2016.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.



8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Connie Kehologile at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu- Natal Department of Education.

UMgungundlovu District



**Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD**  
**Head of Department: Education**  
**Date: 09 June 2015**

**KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa ...dedicated to service and performance  
PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 392 1004 **beyond the call of duty**  
EMAIL ADDRESS: [kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za](mailto:kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za) / [Nomangisi.Ngubane@kzndoe.gov.za](mailto:Nomangisi.Ngubane@kzndoe.gov.za)  
CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363; Fax: 033 392 1203 WEBSITE: [WWW.kzneducation.gov.za](http://WWW.kzneducation.gov.za)

## **Annexure 2: Informed consent form – School Principal**

27<sup>th</sup> March 2015

The School Principal

\_\_\_\_\_ Secondary School

Dear Sir

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT MY MASTERS IN EDUCATION STUDY ON THE PEACE CLUB AT \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL**

I am an Adult Education Masters student (student number 204411811) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg. I have applied for ethical clearance for a MEd study entitled: **A case study of a school-based peace club: learning and participation of young adults.**

Please note that the study does not attempt to make assumptions or judgements with regard to members of the peace club being problematic or otherwise. Instead, it seeks to explore the learning, development and impact of the peace club in this school.

The names of the learners and teachers involved in the study will not be revealed, nor will the name of the school be disclosed. I will ensure sound ethical conduct in this research and respect the rights of pupils, their parents, teachers and the school.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

1. To investigate what learning occurs through participation in a peace club.
2. To explore how learning and development occurs in a peace club.
3. To establish the outcomes of the peace club experience, in other words, the impact of the peace club on the behaviour of the participants.

The research will be conducted during the peace club meetings at the school and through questionnaires and interviews. I will consult in planning the research so that it does not affect the normal running of the school programme.

I hereby request permission to conduct such research at \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary School. For further information and any queries regarding this study, you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Vaughn John, on 033 2605069.

Thank you for your assistance.

Mrs Lee-Ann Jasson

## **Annexure 3: Informed consent form - Parents/Guardians**

Adult Education

College of Humanities

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Pietermaritzburg

Dear Parent/Guardian

### Informed Consent Letter

My name is Lee-Ann Jasson. I am an Adult Education Master's student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus. I am also a teacher at the school attended by your child/ward.

I am involved in an education research project entitled: **A case study of a school-based peace club: learning and experiences of young adults.**

The aim of the study is to explore the nature of learning and the participation experienced by young adults during the peace club meetings. It also focusses on whether a peace club in a school is beneficial to young adults in terms of their personal development and behaviour change.

I am interested in learning more about the peace club at the school. I would like to find out what young adults experience and how they learn in a school peace club and to also discover how it influences their behaviour.

Your child/ward is a member of the peace club and I have invited her/him to participate in a short **questionnaire** about the peace club.

Through your child's participation I hope to understand what learning the participants gained as a result of participating in a school-based peace club.

**Please note that:**

- Your child's /ward's confidentiality is guaranteed as his/her identity will not be revealed
- The **questionnaire** concerns participation in the peace club within the school.
- He/she has a choice to participate. He/she has the right to withdraw from the research at any time and will not be penalised for doing so.
- Any information given by him/her cannot be used against him/her. The collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in a secure place at the university and will be destroyed after 5 years.
- Should a need for counselling and social support arise, professional assistance through the Special Needs Educational Services (SNES) of the Department of Basic Education, or the Child and Family Centre of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, is available.
- Your child's/ward's involvement is for academic purposes only. There are no financial benefits involved.
- Once the research is concluded, a summary report will be made available to you. You will also be invited to a feedback session with other stakeholders where the main findings and recommendations will be shared.
- If you are willing/ not willing for your child/ward to complete the **questionnaire**, please indicate by completing the DECLARATION on the last page as applicable.

**I can be contacted at:**

Cell phone: 082 3270708

Email: [jassonleeann@gmail.com](mailto:jassonleeann@gmail.com)

**My supervisor is:**

Dr. Vaughn John

The School Of Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

Work number: 033 2605069

Email: [johnv@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:johnv@ukzn.ac.za)

**You may also contact the Research Office through:**

Ms P. Ximba

HSSREC Research Office

Work number: 031 2603587

Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

**DECLARATION:**

I..... (Full names of parent/guardian)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project.

I understand that I my child/ward may withdraw from the research project (questionnaire) at any time, without any negative consequences.

Please tick where applicable:

**Yes**, I hereby give permission for my child/ward to answer the questionnaire:

**No**, I do not give permission for my child/ward to answer the questionnaire:

.....

Signature of Participant

.....

Date

## **Annexure 4: Informed consent form - the facilitator of the peace club**

27<sup>th</sup> March 2015

The Facilitator of the peace club

\_\_\_\_\_ Secondary School

Dear Sir

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT MY MASTERS IN EDUCATION STUDY ON THE PEACE CLUB AT \_\_\_\_\_ SECONDARY SCHOOL**

I am an Adult Education Masters student (student number 204411811) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg. I have applied for ethical clearance for a MEd study entitled: **A case study of a school-based peace club: learning and participation of young adults.**

Please note that the study does not attempt to make assumptions or judgements with regard to members of the peace club being problematic or otherwise. Instead, it seeks to explore the learning, development and impact of the peace club in this school.

The names of the learners and teachers involved in the study will not be revealed, nor will the name of the school be disclosed. I will ensure sound ethical conduct in this research and respect the rights of pupils, their parents, teachers and the school.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

1. To investigate what learning occurs through participation in a peace club.
2. To explore how learning and development occurs in a peace club.
3. To establish the outcomes of the peace club experience, in other words, the impact of the peace club on the behaviour of the participants.

The research will be conducted during the peace club meetings at the school and through questionnaires and interviews. I will consult in planning the research so that it does not affect the normal running of the school programme.

I hereby request permission to conduct such research at \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary School. For further information and any queries regarding this study, you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Vaughn John, on 033 2605069.

Thank you for your assistance.

Mrs Lee-Ann Jasson



## **Annexure 5: Informed consent form - the peace club members**

Dear participant

I am an Adult Education Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg. I have applied for ethical clearance for a MEd study entitled: **A case study of a school-based peace club: learning and participation of young adults.**

**I hereby request permission from you to participate in my research project. This will take the form of questionnaires, interviews, journal writing and collage making.**

Please note that the study does not attempt to make assumptions or judgements with regard to members of the peace club being problematic or otherwise. Instead, it seeks to explore the learning, development and impact of the peace club in this school.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

4. To investigate what learning occurs through participation in a peace club.
5. To explore how learning and development occurs in a peace club.
6. To establish the outcomes of the peace club experience, in other words, the impact of the peace club on the behaviour of the participants.

Please note that:

\*Your name will not be revealed (if you so choose), nor will the name of the school be disclosed.

\*Any written or audio recordings collected from this research will only be used for my research.

\*Your participation in this research study is strictly confidential and you are free to withdraw at any time from participation, as well as free to refuse to answer questions. You will **not** be penalised for taking such an action.

\*The total time of your involvement should be approximately 21 to 25 hours during a period of two months.

\*I will ensure sound ethical conduct in this research and respect your rights.

\*Once the study is concluded, a summary report will be made available to you and you will be invited to a feedback meeting on this research.

This research is being conducted with the permission of the school principal, the School Governing Body, the facilitator of the peace club and my supervisor Dr. Vaughn John (033 2605069), University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Pietermaritzburg campus.

You may also contact the Research Office of UKZN through Ms Phumelele Ximba, HSSREC Research Office at (031 2603587), email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

If you would like to participate in my research project, and if the nature and purpose of the research are clear to you, please read and complete the declaration.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lee-Ann Jasson

**DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT:**

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby confirm that I understand the nature and purpose of the research project and I agree to participate in it.

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview	YES	NO
Video-record my interview/collage	YES	NO
Use any part of my written journal	YES	NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Annexure 6: Ethical clearance certificate from University of KZN



12 June 2015

Mrs Lee-Ann Jasson 204411811  
School of Education  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs Jasson

Protocol reference number: HSS/0398/015M

Project title: Exploring a school-based peace club: learning and experiences of young adults.

### Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 21 April 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

## Annexure 6: Ethical Clearance certificate from UKZN

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Dr Vaughn John  
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor M McCracken  
cc School Administrators: Ms B Bhengu, Ms T Khumalo & Mr SN Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



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## **Annexure 7: Research instruments**

### **Questionnaire:**

Dear members

Thank you for granting me permission to visit your peace club and for your interest in my research study.

I am an Adult Education Master's student at the University of KZN in Pietermaritzburg.

The topic of my research is: **Exploring a school-based Peace Club: Learning and experiences of young adults.**

The focus of this research is to learn about your Peace Club and your experiences of it. I'm also interested in how the Peace Club influences you and the school and want to find out what you learn from belonging to the peace club, to observe the activities that you take part in and also to find out how you learn in the Peace Club.

I would appreciate your participation in my research.

**Kindly complete this Questionnaire for me.**

Most of the questions require that you tick the answer you have chosen. Some questions are longer and I encourage you to write meaningfully when you respond to these.

Please note that everything you say in this questionnaire will be kept confidential. No names will be used.

Thank you very much.

Mrs L. Jasson

**Questions:**

1. What grade are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

3. I am a: Male  Female

Coloured  Black  Indian  White

South African  Non South African

4. I joined the peace club in 2014  2015

5. I joined the peace club because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. I attend: All or most of the peace club meetings

Some of the meetings  Very few of the meetings

Not yet attended a meeting

7. I find the peace club is: Helpful to me  A waste of time

Like an extra school subject  Other

If you chose other, please explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. At this school some form of violence takes place amongst the learners:

Everyday       Some days       Seldom       Never

9. I have experienced the following form of violence in school (please tick one):

Physical assault       Sexual assault       Being robbed       None of these

Other  If other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. I have been bullied       I have never been bullied

I have bullied someone else

11. I know someone who is being bullied at present in this school

I do not know anyone who is being bullied in this school

12. Tick one of the spaces for each item: **Attending the peace club meetings:**

	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Hardly ever</b>	<b>Never</b>
Helps me to think about the rights of others				
Makes me realise that the feelings of other people are important				
Makes me want to fight and argue with everyone				
Teaches me about right and wrong				
Has made me silent about my feelings				
Makes me confident to speak about certain things				

13 (a) Would you encourage other learners to join the peace club? Yes  No

(b) Why? / Why not? \_\_\_\_\_

14. List some things you have learnt about in the peace club meetings.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

15(a) What did you enjoy most about the activities / discussions / presentations?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(b) What did you **not** enjoy about them?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

16(a) Do you find it easy or difficult to participate in the activities/discussions? \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Give a reason for your response. \_\_\_\_\_

17. During the peace club meetings, who do you learn mostly from?

Other learners     The teacher     Both teacher and learners     Other

If you chose Other, please state who else you learn from in the peace club meetings.

\_\_\_\_\_

18. Do you feel that peace clubs are valuable and necessary in schools? \_\_\_\_\_

19. Give a reason for your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

20. (a) Has being a member of the peace club **improved or worsened** your relationship with:

Your parents/guardians? \_\_\_\_\_

Your brothers and sisters or cousins? \_\_\_\_\_

Your classmates? \_\_\_\_\_

Your teachers? \_\_\_\_\_

(b). Give a brief example of how this has happened in **any ONE of the cases (choose one or more)**:

With your parents/guardians \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

With your brothers and sisters or cousins \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

With your classmates \_\_\_\_\_

With your teachers \_\_\_\_\_

21. Based on what you have learnt as a member of the peace club, what would you tell the following people?

a) your classmates \_\_\_\_\_



b) your parents/guardians \_\_\_\_\_

c) all bullies \_\_\_\_\_

d) people who are easy targets for being victimised, bullied, abused, intimidated

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22. Tick one of the spaces for each item

	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Hardly ever</b>	<b>Never</b>
New members of the peace club learn from the older members (eg. watching and talking to them)				
New members are shy and quiet during the meetings				
New members bring new ideas to the activities and make suggestions				
New members are at first very quiet and eventually interact with others				
Newcomers depend on the teacher's help for all activities				
Some members are unwilling to share ideas or stories or to become involved in the activities				
Members who have been in the peace club for longer have more to share				

23. Tick one of the spaces for each item

	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Hardly ever</b>	<b>Never</b>
I share experiences and information about certain topics with the group				
Everyone is given the opportunity to contribute				

I benefit from sharing and listening during the meetings				
We learn from each other				
The activities / presentations / discussions are meaningful and helpful				
Everyone agrees on issues				
The teacher encourages us to make our own decisions / choices about activities / presentations				
We learn to practice what we learn about, eg. promoting peace				

24. Tick one of the spaces for each item

	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Hardly ever</b>	<b>Never</b>
I feel that my experiences are of value to others in the peace club				
Since joining the peace club, I feel confident, have self-esteem and am proud of myself				
Being part of a group makes me jointly responsible for what and how we learn in the peace club				
I move at different times from feeling nervous and alone to feeling confident and part of a group				
I listen to others and try to help them				
People see me differently because of my membership in the peace club				

25. Tick one of the spaces for each item

	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Hardly ever</b>	<b>Never</b>
I am able to share what I learn in the peace club with my family and friends				
I understand certain issues better as a result of the discussions and activities				
I use my own experiences about violence and peace to contribute to discussions and activities				
My behaviour has changed because of what I have learnt in the peace club				

26. Tick one of the spaces for each item

	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Hardly ever</b>	<b>Never</b>
In the peace club I only mix with learners that I already knew before joining the peace club				
I now mix with learners that I did not know before				
I acknowledge all learners as part of the team in the peace club				
Certain learners tend to dominate the peace club meetings				
The activities that we take part in are a shared group experience				

## **Interviews:**

### **Interview schedule for parents**

1. Do you know that there is a peace club at your child/ward's school? Do you know that your child is a member of the PC?
2. When you first heard about PC, what did you think it was about?
3. Would you describe your child's behaviour as being better or worse since belonging to the PC? Why do you say so?
4. How has your child's attitude changed towards his / her:
  - a) Schoolwork
  - b) Chores at home
  - c) Outlook on life / having goals
  - d) Authority
  - e) Church/God/Religion
  - f) Relationship with friends / responding to friends
  - g) Observing culture
  - h) Time management
5. Has your child's relationship changed with you? Why do you say so?
6. Has your child's relationship changed with his/her siblings? Why do you say so?
7. What would you tell other parents about the peace club in your child's school? Why do you say so?
8. What would you say to the school principal about the peace club in this school? Why do you say so?
9. Has your child attended a camp/workshop? Do you think these are valuable for your child? Why do you say so?
10. Does your child deal with conflict situations at home better since belonging to the peace club? Why do you say so?

## **Interview schedule for sample members of the peace club**

1. How did you become aware of the existence of the PC?
2. Did you initially understand what a peace club entailed?
3. What were your first impressions of the peace club?
4. Do you think that the peace club is an important part of / valuable to the school?  
Why do you say so?
5. Would you describe the peace club as a safe place/ like family/ a team? Why do you say no?
6. Do you think that the PC should be incorporated into the school curriculum? Perhaps in Life Orientation? Why do you say so?
7. Tell me about the peace club meeting:
  - a) Do all members participate or only some? Which members participate more? Why do you think this is so?
  - b) When new members attend / join the peace club meeting, how do they behave/react/respond? Would you describe them as quiet, eager, confident, afraid, shy? Why do you say so?
  - c) When and how do the new members eventually join in and feel part of the group?
  - d) Does the teacher encourage open discussion? Explain how he does so.
  - e) Are the topics relevant for young people? Which other topics do you wish could be covered in the peace club?
  - f) Describe / tell me about any activity/topic that you feel passionate about/ it influenced or affected you in some way.
  - g) Do you feel comfortable to participate in the activities of the peace club? Why do you say so?
  - h) Which activities / topics should be dropped? Why do you say so?

8. How has the peace club helped you to think differently and behave differently when in situations of conflict and violence?

9. a) Give an example of how belonging to the peace club has developed your confidence.

b) How has having greater confidence benefitted you as a person?

c) Has belonging to the peace club given you pride in yourself / made you feel like a better person? Why do you say so?

10. Is it better to learn about issues of conflict and violence and peace in a group such as the peace club, or would you rather read about or google such information on your own? Why do you say so?

11. Some members have mentioned that since belonging to the peace club, their relationships with their siblings and classmates has worsened. Do you feel the same? Why do you say so?

12. Do you learn valuable lessons in the peace club? Give examples of issues/ suggestions/ ideas that you are able to share with your family and friends.

13. Are you able to practice what you learn in the peace club at home or in your classroom? How do you do this?

14. What is your understanding of peace? How do you practice peace/promote peace with others?

15. Do you think you have changed as a person since belonging to the peace club? How have you changed?

16. How has the peace club influenced your behaviour and attitude:

a) Towards your school work?

b) Towards your teachers?

c) Towards authority figures?

d) With your classmates and peers?

e) In terms of making decisions?

f) Setting personal goals?

g) Reacting during times of conflict at home and in school?

17. Have you, or someone that you know, experienced physical abuse, robbery, sexual abuse, emotional abuse? Briefly describe/ tell me about it. How does being a member of the PC help you or others deal with this experience?

18. Do you think that the PC can help put an end to bullying at this school? Why do you say so?

19. a) Do the members of the peace club sometimes not agree on issues? Does this give off a positive or negative vibe? How are these disagreements/negative attitudes dealt with? What do you think about such members?

20. Would you recommend the peace club to other learners? Why/Why not?

## **Interview schedule for Facilitator of the peace club**

1. What is your role in the PC? How did you become involved in the peace club?
2. What is the purpose of the peace club in this school? Do you think that the PC is achieving its objectives? Why do you say so? And the long term benefits?
3. Is there a curriculum that is followed? Give a brief description of it.
4. How does the learning occur? Is it voluntary/interactive/group? Why do you say so?
5. Who runs the workshops and camps that the PC members attend? Do the learners benefit from the workshops and camps? Why do you say so?
6. Has the PC programme (topics and activities etc.) since its inception been relevant to young people? Why do you say so?
7. What would you like to change about the PC? Why do you say so?
8. Why do you think other learners do not join the peace club?
9. Do you think that a group such as the PC can impact the rest of the school learners? Why do you say so?
10. Are the parents aware that their children belong to the peace club? How are they made aware?
11. Do the parents understand the concept of a peace club/ see the need for it? Why do you say so? What role do the parents play in supporting the goals of the PC?
12. Do you think that peace club meetings are beneficial to the participants? Why do you say so?
13. Does being a member of the PC empower learners to deal with conflict situations? Why do you say so?
14. Does belonging to the PC have positive effects on the behaviour and attitude of members of the peace club? Why do you say so?
15. What have you gained personally from facilitating the peace club?
16. Would you encourage other members of staff to become involved in the peace club? Why do you say so?
17. Do you feel that the peace club can contribute to promoting peaceful relations between members of the PC and their families? Why do you say so?
18. The government has recently acknowledged that violence is a problem in SA schools. What is the role of the PC in response to violence?



19. Would you say that the PC is an intervention to break the cycle of abuse and violence? Why? How does the PC assist learners to deal with experiences of conflict and violence?
20. Does the PC attempt to influence the behaviour and attitudes of learners towards themselves and others? Why do you say so?
21. Does the PC prepare young people to function successfully in society? Why do you say so?
22. What stands out as the most successful story/incident/experience within the PC?