

An exploratory qualitative study of young, black men's involvement in "Train-Surfing"

A short dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Social Science (Psychology) in the School of Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

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2009

Declaration

I declare that *An exploratory qualitative study of young, black men's involvement in "Train-Surfing"* is my own work, and that it has not been submitted before any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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Date:

Signed:

Acknowledgements

Firstly I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Jude Clark for her dedication and support which enabled the high quality standards achieved in the research.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the participants who took part in the study. Without their passion and zeal for train-surfing and their commitment to this research project, I could not have carried out the study.

I would also like to thank Sphindile Tshambi, translator and friend, who was of great assistance during the interviews and Stephanie Walker who edited the final dissertation.

Last but not least, a big thank-you to all my friends and family and a special acknowledgement to Murray Hardman and to Hector, Jenny, Steph and Hayley Mackay, Bryony Midgley, Theresa Steyn and Helen Du Plessis who all shared and experienced the vision and passion that I felt throughout the research process.

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ABSTRACT

Train-Surfing is a high-risk phenomenon that has in recent years, become a trend affecting black male youths in South Africa. This study aimed at examining the motives behind the phenomenon. It also aimed at exploring the role that train-surfing plays in constructing a black, South African, masculine identity and what it means to be a train-surfer. A broader aim of the study was to explore the constructions of masculinity and their influence on high-risk behaviours in men. The reason for the choice of topic was that although train-surfing is not a recent phenomenon it appears to be a growing phenomenon in South Africa. Scientific publications are limited thus far with regard to international and local literature on this issue. This exploratory study used the social constructionist theory as a theoretical framework and presents qualitative research findings based on in-depth interviews of six juvenile train-surfers who reside in Soweto, Gauteng. Thematic Content Analysis was used to analyse the data. The study found that train-surfers tend to show evidence of family discord and are inclined to rely on support from their train-surfing peers. All of the participants lacked a substantial father figure, however many of them showed evidence of consistent support from mother figures. Reasons for participation in train-surfing include impressing young females, a desire for status and fame and peer pressure. Some participants perceived the activity as a sport or hobby, whilst others used symbols of addiction in describing the phenomenon. It was also found that the train-surfing participants used train-surfing as a means to define their identity as young, black males living in South Africa. Train-surfing was found to be associated with other high-risk activities such as taking drugs, drinking alcohol and gang-related behaviours. These findings are important as they highlight the role of high-risk behaviour in adolescents and uncover much needed research regarding men and masculinities in South Africa.

Key terms: *train-surfing, adolescents, high-risk behavior, masculinity*

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1 Contextual Background

South Africa has undergone numerous political, social and cultural changes that have taken place as a result of the first democratic elections in 1994. The legislation informing the Constitution of South Africa (1996) has been central in the promotion and advancement of gender equality in our country. These changes have had numerous implications, not only for the daily material realities of many, but for aspects of gendered and racialised identity. Despite being born in a time of democratic governance, the 'born-free generation' carry the legacy of Apartheid and of previous generation's disadvantages and as such, still face many challenges.

Many black males have less economic opportunities than their female counterparts and other white youths. The unemployment rate amongst black youth in South Africa is much higher than white youth, with the level of education being a key predictor of finding employment (Mlatsheni & Rospabe, 2002). Another significant development is that while government strategies such as Black Economic Empowerment and Affirmative action have led to an increase in opportunities for the previously disadvantaged, this has been particularly beneficial to black (and white) women with there being a significant increase in the promotion of black women as compared to black males. Many black men remain in economically marginalized positions despite these policies that have been put in place. Many black South Africans find it difficult to gain employment because of existing poor schooling system and due to a lack of skill recognition from employers despite their qualifications. Many black males from a low socio-economic status are particularly marginalized in South Africa as they do not benefit as much as they could from

equal employment opportunities nor do they have the funds and motivational support from significant others to further their education (Mlatsheni & Rospabe, 2002).

In addition to the economic and educational challenges mentioned above, South African youth are generally faced with many social problems, including HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, substance use and gang violence. According to Adar and Stevens (2000) South Africa has been found to have one of the highest rates of sexual violence in the world, with substance abuse also being a significant problem affecting youth (Meschke & Patterson, 2003). Adar and Stevens (2000) have found that South African youth are ranked as one of the highest groups of HIV positive people in the world. Gangs and gang-related behavior also appears to be a major dilemma affecting many young people, both in South Africa and internationally (Kinnes, 2008). Many of these social problems can also be conceptualised as high-risk behaviours, as they endorse an element of danger, thrill-seeking and a sense of freedom and independence.

Train-surfing is a phenomenon in which male youths climb on top of and underneath a moving train, in thrill-seeking behaviour attempting to achieve exhilarating feelings of speed and danger. It is a high-risk activity that has been found to occur in Indonesia, Germany, Britain and America. Although it appears to be a wide-spread phenomenon, very little academic research to date, has been conducted. Train-surfing has in recent times come to characterize part of a popular sub-culture involving young, black men in South Africa. This makes this study relevant to the academic knowledge base and useful within South Africa and internationally. This study is primarily interested in examining the reasons for black, young men becoming involved in train-surfing. Although not a recent phenomenon, train-surfing has in recent times become increasingly popular among some young people in South Africa. According to popular media sources, it has become popular among many youth in Soweto, and commonly takes place in central

Johannesburg, Gauteng (Grange, 2007). Many newspaper reporters have described the phenomenon as adrenalin-seeking activity and those participating in it, form part of a culture of high-risk behaviour (Kruger, 2006). Train-surfing, like many other behaviours, cannot be separated from aspects of identity and is certainly implicated in the construction and notion of masculinity in (and by) young black males. Similarly, masculinity is a socially gendered concept that is influenced by a set of day-to-day practices such as train-surfing (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007).

Focusing on train-surfing, this dissertation will focus on an understanding of the black, masculine identity in terms of high-risk behaviour. This study also aims to understand youth risk-behaviour in South Africa, as this research will have significant implications for understanding adolescent risk-behaviour and for the young, black masculine identity.

1.2 An Overview of Key Concepts

1.2.1 Train-surfing

Train-surfing shares some aspects of extreme sports like bungee jumping, abseiling and skydiving, which have become increasingly popular among the European and American white youth in the last decade. It has been found that some low-socio economic adolescence in Europe and in South Africa, have resorted to train-surfing as an alternative (Strauch, Wirth & Geserick, 1998; Russouw, 2008).

A more formal definition of train-surfing explains it as a voluntary activity involving an individual climbing onto the outer surface of a moving train for the purpose of pleasure and excitement (Strauch et al., 1998). The term ‘surfing’ was initially used in describing two water

sport activities, which include classical wave riding and wind surfing. Within the term ‘surfing’, emphasis is placed on high speed. According to Kruger (2006) train-surfing can take different forms. ‘Gravul’ which is a local term, involves hanging out of a train that is in motion and kicking the gravel that is found between the tracks. Another form of train-surfing involves hanging out of the train door and running along the walls of the tunnels. A further type of train-surfing involves climbing out of the train, over the roof of the train and back in on the other side. Train-surfing ‘proper’ refers to standing on the roof of a moving train. According to a journalist (Russouw, 2007) many train-surfers regularly abscond from school, some dropping out altogether, in order to partake in this activity. The majority of train-surfers are black males, usually aged between fifteen and twenty-three (Russouw, 2007).

1.2.2 Adolescence and Risk-taking Behaviour

Adolescence is a universal process of gross physical, cognitive and emotional development that takes place between the ages of twelve and twenty (Manaster, 1989). Hall (as cited in Manaster, 1989) in 1904 was one of the first individuals to define adolescence. He described it as a period of ‘storm and stress’. Erik Erikson (1963) describes adolescence as “a period of rapid change-physical, physiological, psychological and social; a time when all sameness and continuities relied on earlier are more or less questioned again” (p.261). According to Manaster (1989) “the adolescent period extends until the individual reaches adult maturity; until he or she is accorded the full power, social status, and responsibilities of the adult; and until he or she becomes physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and legally independent from the perspective of adult maturity” (p.10). Despite the generalised and common characteristics of adolescence, it is not a universal identity. It presents itself differently across different socio-cultural and political settings. It also differs from one adolescent to the next. This is significant as it stresses the

importance and contextual specificity of the participants of this study as it acknowledges that teenage black males living in Soweto post 1994, experience their youth and development in a way that emerges in and is embedded in that specific context.

The period between childhood and adulthood is not clearly defined and is less precise than it appears. Onset, rate of progression and chronological age at which emotional, social biological maturation ends varies from individual to individual (Tarter, 2002). Bearing these definitions in mind it is therefore possible that the six participants interviewed, who ranged in age from 15 to 20 years, can be considered adolescents. Four of the six are currently still at school, with the remaining two having dropped out of school and involved in temporary employment. Although they may have taken on adult duties such as financial responsibilities, they can still be considered adolescents in terms of the broader 'crises' of development with which they are faced. Erikson (1963) explained that identity versus role confusion is a 'crises' that takes place in adolescence. These young people may still be considered adolescents as they may still be challenged by the process of identity and role confusion. According to Erikson (1963) adolescents and young adults endure a journey of self-definition and a discovery of sexual, occupational and ideological identities. These multiple identities are greatly influenced by early childhood experiences, values, norms and standards that are shaped by a socio-historical system. Despite the critique leveled of Eriksonian developmental theory in terms of its applicability to the realities of the lives of young people in South Africa context, its broader construal of crises of development (in terms of identity) and the significance of social context will be drawn on in this study.

Risk-taking, also known as sensation seeking, can be defined as the search or desire for varied, novel and powerful sensations and experiences and the willingness to take risks (physical, social,

legal and financial) for the sake of such experience or circumstance. (Zuckerman, 1994 as cited in Miles, van den Bree, Gupman, Newlin, Glantz and Pickens, 2001). Risk-taking behaviours include a wide range of behaviours that reveal an adolescent's attempt for independence. Adolescence can also be seen as a transitional phase in which risk-taking behaviours are seen as the norm in some adolescent settings. It is however problematic to normalize some of these high-risk behaviours as been universally part of adolescence. This transition is fluid and non-static and therefore one should also be aware of society's norms of what adolescents should and shouldn't be doing. It is important to acknowledge that some youth face multiple challenges because of the environment in which they live and their behaviour forms part of this context, and that the manifestations of adolescence like any other life stage is context dependant. Risk-taking involves trying something different, dangerous, confrontational or competitive and includes taking some form of risk. Risk-taking behaviours can be seen on a scale ranging from low-risk to high-risk situations and activities (Robinson, 2004). Examples include gambling, speeding, drug and alcohol abuse and unprotected sex. According to Robinson (2004) risk-taking behaviours in adolescence tend to be associated with a lack of connectedness with significant others in the individual's life. High-risk behaviours that are most prominent in the South African context include unprotected sex, engagement in gender-based violence, abuse of substances' and gang-related behaviours (Whiteside & Sunter, 2000; Adar & Stevens, 2000; Meschke & Patterson, 2003; Kinnes, 2008).

1.2.3 Masculinity

International and local literature regarding men and masculinities has grown in the last few decades. In terms of South African literature, researchers have highlighted the influence and

impact of colonialism and apartheid on men and the understanding of masculinity (Morrell, 2002). For a long time dominant constructions of masculinity have relied on and emphasised biological differences of gender. In recent times it has shifted to the acknowledgement of gender as a social construction (Courtenay, 2000).

Masculinity is a socially constructed phenomenon based on a system of everyday beliefs and activities that control behaviour between men and women and men and men (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007) Masculinity takes on multiple diverse forms across different times and contexts and are affected by socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, religion, age and geographic location. It is therefore more appropriate to refer to masculinities, the plural rather than the singular (Ampofo & Boateng, 2007). Hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominant form of masculinity and refers to the social norms of cultural domination by men. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is restrictive in nature as it highlights a particular version of masculinity. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) prefer to use the term 'multiple masculinities' which enables a much wider use of the word masculinity. According to Wetherell (1996) masculinity forms an inherent part of men. It involves a set of decisions defining, what to wear and what to look like in different social circumstances. Dominant constructions of masculinity include particular characteristics such as not showing emotion, being assertive, not showing weakness, and a pressure to be aggressive (ibid). Masculinity is created through and by people within their particular environmental context. High-risk behaviours (like all behaviours) are linked to constructions of masculinity and ideas of what it means to be a man or boy. According to Hyman (1999) boys are generally socialised from a young age to be independent, aggressive and to take more risks. According to Reid and Walker (2005) men in South Africa have reacted differently to social, political and gender change. Some men have adapted well to the changes, whilst others

have shown a 'crisis' of identity. Although the field of masculinity has grown, the concept of black masculinity remains a necessary topic of study. This research hopes to shed further light on the concept of black masculinity in South Africa post Apartheid.

The above key concepts are dependant on the context in which they arise, which in this case is train-surfing. These key concepts bear different meanings across separate contexts.

1.3 Aims of the Study

The key aims of the study include the following:

- To explore the motives behind adolescents becoming involved in the phenomenon of train-surfing.
- To explore the phenomenon of train-surfing and what it means to be a train-surfer.
- To examine the links between train-surfing and identity in young, black, South African, males.
- To explore how constructions of masculinity and other contextual factors inform high-risk behaviours in black male youth in South Africa.

1.4 Research Question

In this investigation the research question has been tentatively defined due to the in-depth and exploratory nature of the study. The research question is to investigate the factors that may play a role in adolescent and young adult males becoming involved in train-surfing. The researcher would like to explore the phenomenon of train-surfing in terms of motives behind the phenomenon. The study would also like to examine their meaning ascribed to the role of train-

surfer and how these young boys construct their own masculinity through the participation in train-surfing. In so doing, it aims to examine the role of train-surfing in constructing a black, South African, masculine identity. As this study is qualitative in nature, and because the phenomenon under investigation has had limited prior academic knowledge, it is difficult to narrow down the topic into a very specific question. Making the research question too narrow would risk limiting the broadest understanding of train-surfing. Although this phenomenon is not well grounded in theory and little academic knowledge has been accumulated prior to this study, it is researchable in terms of other media literature. A characteristic of a good research question is that it increases the scientific knowledge base and it should show a gap in scientific understanding (Whitley, 2002). By studying this relatively rare phenomenon, this research may bring about varying and enlightening answers regarding train-surfing. This is intended to create a shared understanding of the phenomenon and inform future preventative programmes.

1.5 Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This exploratory study used a qualitative research methodology which involved conducting six in-depth individual interviews of adolescent train-surfers who reside in Soweto, Gauteng, based on their experiences of train-surfing. Individual interviews were used as opposed to another form of data collection, as it enabled the participants the freedom to open about subjects that they would not usually disclose in a group setting in front of their friends. Individual interviews also provided the boys the opportunity to have their own voice heard and share their own story. An initial focus group was used as a means to introduce the participants to the research and to clarify expectations. Thematic Content Analysis was used to analyse and interpret the data based on the transcriptions of interviews. This exploratory study used the social constructionist theory as a theoretical framework as a means to highlight the ways in which the train-surfing participants

create constructions of and come to understand their own reality. The social constructionist theory is appropriate to the study as it focuses on understanding how people assign meaning to their behaviour and lives which complement the goals of the study.

1.6 Rationale

Although train-surfing is not a recent phenomenon, there is a paucity of literature on this topic. This indicates a gap in knowledge, making it a relevant topic of study. This phenomenon is particularly relevant for academic study in South Africa, because according to popular media reports there has been an implication that train-surfing has increased in recent years, resulting in deaths and injuries (Grange, 2007). It would therefore be interesting to explore the possible reasons for this behaviour given the dangerous nature of train-surfing.

Since the first democratic elections in 1994, black adolescent identity has gone through a transition. It would therefore be of value to understand how black South African adolescents define themselves as black men and as South Africans in the context of their train surfing identity. In addition, the study would like to explore the social support from the family in the train-surfing participants. According to popular media reports, train-surfing is also associated with other social and criminal problems including, drug and alcohol use, skipping school and theft and robbery. Train-surfers bunk school in order to take part in this activity (Manyamalala, 2007). They smoke dagga and drink alcohol because it makes train-surfing seem easier and appear less dangerous. It is the role that train-surfing plays within the social context of South Africa and its possible link to other social problems including theft, drugs and alcohol that make it an interesting and relevant topic of study (Russouw, 2007). This study may uncover or enlighten researchers about other adolescent and young people's high risk behaviour, such as

unprotected sex, drug abuse and alcohol abuse. It is for this reason that this academic study will offer a valuable contribution to the discipline of psychology.

In essence, this research hopes to shed further light on the concept of black masculinity in South Africa, post Apartheid.

1.7 Chapter Synopsis

This introductory chapter has orientated the reader to the context in which the research took place. It has included a historical account of South African politics and its significance for black, young males living in South Africa. This chapter has given a general overview of the study and has included a brief discussion on the concepts train-surfing, adolescence, masculinity and high-risk behaviours. Finally, it has highlighted the aims of the study and the rationale for its usefulness.

Chapter Two will examine the local and international academic literature that has been conducted on the subject train-surfing, other youth risk-taking behaviours such as substance abuse and research conducted on masculinity. This chapter will also include the many local media reports on the topic of train-surfing as these reports highlight the prevalence of train-surfing in South Africa. Chapter Two will also incorporate a theoretical component. The social constructionist theory will be used to explore the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of train-surfing and masculinity.

Chapter Three will begin by explaining the research question and the key aims of the study. It will also highlight the reasons for the choice of the study and the broader issues that will also be investigated as a result of the study.

Chapter Four focuses on the methodology of the study and will begin by reiterating the research aims. It will also explain the participants' sampling method and the participants' demographical information. This chapter will also examine the data collection procedure, the data analysis procedure and the ethical considerations. This chapter will conclude with a reflexive discussion on the role that the researcher played in conducting the research.

Chapter Five presents the analysis and discussion of the data. Using thematic analysis, it will begin with a list of the main issues that were found in the transcripts. It will then list the themes and sub-themes that were drawn from the transcripts. This chapter will then explore the themes and sub-themes in an in-depth manner.

Chapter Six concludes the mini-dissertation. It will commence with a review of the research aims. It will then give a summary of the research findings. This chapter will also explore the possible limitations of the study and provide recommendations for further research on the topic of train-surfing.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Although train-surfing has a long international history and is a growing phenomenon in South Africa, scientific publications related to this particular high-risk behaviour are limited. The following chapter will describe the few limited academic publications on the phenomenon and explore the limitations of these studies. South African media reports have also been included in the literature review because of the scarcity of academic research. It will also review other related areas of high-risk behaviour affecting youth in South Africa. This chapter will also incorporate the Social Constructionist Theory as a means to explore a theoretical and historical understanding of the phenomenon of train-surfing, masculinity and adolescent high-risk behaviour.

2.2 Historical Context of Risk-taking Behaviours and the Development of Masculinity in Soweto

In order to more fully understand young, black male's involvement in train-surfing, it is important to explore the history of behaviours like train-surfing (which are generally seen as risk-behaviour) and the development of masculinity amongst young adolescent boys living and commuting within Soweto. Risk-taking behaviours should be seen in the context in which they take place. It is important to acknowledge the norms that society imposes on what constitutes risky behaviour. What is considered high risk behaviour in context may very well be considered adaptive behaviour in another context. The way in which South African black male youth have perceived themselves has changed over time, during Apartheid and post Apartheid. Black males' identity has been shaped by Apartheid which therefore highlights the idea that masculinity can be

viewed as being embedded within context. During Apartheid Soweto was viewed as the centre of and also a symbol of black South Africa. Due to South Africa's political instability in which Soweto was at the centre of, this township became a cornerstone for understanding and exploring issues of politics and black masculine identity.

According to Morrell (2001) many black youth were known for their active participation in the struggle and were referred to as the 'young lions' and the 'foot soldiers of the revolution' because they were trained to use military weapons and aimed to overthrow the Apartheid government. Some of these individuals expected to be rewarded post-Apartheid, but instead they were marginalized, unable to return to school, unable to find employment and often reached out to gangs for the support and appreciation that they had failed to receive. Morrell (2001) points out that the 'lost generation' find themselves in confrontation between 'struggle masculinity' and 'post-struggle masculinity'. A new set of gender norms have been established and appear to have left some of these black youth behind.

'Struggle masculinity' refers to a form of masculinity that developed out of many urban black youth who opposed the Apartheid system and broke many laws as a means to show their opposition. "Post-struggle masculinity" refers to a move away from law-breaking and the encouragement of tolerance and respect for legislation and government services, co-operating with police services and combating crime. According to Morrell (2001) the 'comrades' did not find confirmation of their masculinity from the new society where a new type of masculinity had been installed. These individuals have felt displaced and have turned to one another for support and affirmation. Morrell (2001) argues that people who cannot adapt with a new changing society tend to feel ostracized and strangers in their community. It is possible given the context and time in which these train-surfers have grown up in, which is characterized by a history of

political unrest and freedom fighting and the reality of not being rewarded for their political efforts and their parents political efforts, that they too feel displaced and forgotten, turning to each other and participating in train-surfing as a means to feel included and involved in something.

Glaser (2000) explored the history of street and organized gangs in Soweto from 1935 to 1976. Glaser (2000) found that many young, black, unemployed men turned to gangs as it provided them with a sense of security and dignity. These gangs were governed by their own rules, style and status, provided these individuals with a sense of belonging and identity. Gang related behaviours were viewed as strong resistance against Apartheid ideologies. Gang members were known as “comrades”, and were the forefronts of setting up boycotts and stayaways, rebelling against security efforts at mass funerals and meetings during the reign of Apartheid. These gang-related behaviours can be seen as a positive subversion of the black male identity and a form of agency and self-empowerment during a context and time in which they were made to feel powerless by the Apartheid government.

Glaser (2000) points out that the tsotsi gangs in the 1940’s and 1950’s and the Soweto gangs of the 1960’s and 1970’s seem to be presentations of young urban masculinity, which developed out of the political and historical Sowetan context. The masculine identity of gang members was characterized by specialized fighting skill, assertiveness, law-breaking tendencies, a particular type of clothing style and success with multiple women. Success in these areas, according to Glaser (2000) resulted in a tsotsi’s status as a “man”.

The reconciliation reformation in the 1990’s led to a rise in criminal activity by many black youth and the continual formation of gangs. The 1990’s was characterized by increasing rates of

unemployment amongst black youth in urban settings. A significant group of black youth felt that they were unfairly dismissed and underappreciated during the negotiation of political power in the 1990's. This group of youth are known as the "lost generation" as despite their efforts for political change during the Apartheid years, they were not fairly rewarded for their efforts.

The history of gangs in Soweto is of significance for the current study of train-surfing, as gang-related behaviour seems to have multiple similarities with the phenomenon and context in which train-surfing takes place in Soweto.

2.3 Academic literature on Risk-Taking Behaviours

Risk-taking appears to be closely associated with engagement in multiple high-risk behaviours. According to Miles et al. (2001) risk taking and drug abuse have been found to be closely related. Individuals who are high-risk takers and high sensation seekers are more prone to use marijuana. The correlation between marijuana and high-risk behaviour is more likely to be due to environmental factors than genetic factors (Miles et al., 2001).

Unintentional injuries can be seen as a major health concern among youths who engage in high-risk activities (Kontos, 2004). Risk-taking behaviours in men has in recent years become a topic of debate. According to Nell (2002) there are two theories to answer the question of why young men tend to take higher risks and perceive themselves as invincible. The first is that risk-taking in men is an evolutionary process in which men have evolved to be competitive and aggressive as a means for survival. The second theory is that risk-taking is emotionally driven and emotions and feelings are preverbal and irrational. Both of these theories have been severely criticised for failing to incorporate the broader social context into the understanding of high-risk behaviour. The evolutionary theory equates the involvement in high-risk behaviour to mere genetics and

does not explain the reasons for some men who engage in high-risk behaviour. The second theory argues that men engage in high-risk behaviour because of irrational feelings and emotions, over which they do not have control.

Nell (2002) also contends that risk-taking is a highly desired social virtue and that the fear of death does not deter young men from engaging in high-risk activities. Death is too distant and isolated to act as a preventative measure for risk-taking. "One's own death is beyond imagining" Freud (1915/1985 as cited in Nell, 2002). Psychoanalytic theory has also been severely criticised for its deterministic approach that overlooks individuals' uniqueness, diversity and social context (Sloan, 2001). A study by Kontos (2004) in which 260 male and female soccer players aged 11-14 years participated in a three month prospective injury study, found that individuals who perceive themselves as a low risk for injury and who have a low perception of ability are at greater risk for injury. Individuals who perceive themselves as a high-risk for injury and who have a high perception of their ability are at greater risk for injury.

Contextual factors are of utmost importance in understanding high-risk behaviour. According to Sloan (2001) "an individual's behaviour can only be understood in the context of interactions with other human beings within socially constructed institutions" (p.88). Due to the major political, social and acculturation changes that have taken place in South Africa youth may be at a greater risk of becoming involved in high-risk behaviour. An American study by Meschke and Patterson (2003) which examined the risk and protective mechanisms linked with substance abuse in adolescence. In this qualitative, in-depth study, it was demonstrated that a number of risk and resilience factors contribute towards an adolescent becoming involved in substance abuse. The Meschke and Patterson study (2003) was qualitative and aimed at understanding the motives and reasons for adolescent involvement in alcohol abuse. This study claimed that

adolescent high-risk behaviour such as substance abuse can only be understood in terms of the broader social environment.

South African literature pertaining to high-risk behaviour in youth and the spread of HIV/AIDS is vast. MacPhail and Campbell (2006) found that levels of heterosexually transmitted HIV infections are high amongst South African young people, despite their adequate knowledge about HIV. This study found that perceived vulnerability and the use of condoms to be very low (MacPhail & Campbell, 2006). This study also found that a number of different factors increase the likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviour. These include a lack of perceived risk of acquiring the virus, peer norms that devalue the use of condoms, lack of condom availability, adult attitudes to condom use, gendered power relations and the economic context of adolescent sex in which buying condoms is not a priority. Some of these factors have important implications to other high-risk youth behaviours including train-surfing, as they highlight the significance that peer norms and the perceived lack of risk may have on a young person who train-surfs. Studies have focused on the influential roles that attitudes and beliefs that peers have on other peer group members and how these attitudes influence high-risk behaviour in young people. According to Steifert & Hoffnung (1994) peer groups tend to expect conformity to group norms in return for popularity and acceptance. Another important factor is that of a perceived lack of risk. A requirement for connecting knowledge into behaviour is an acceptance of personal vulnerability to the consequences of high-risk behavior. In this study, the risk at stake was HIV/AIDS. The MacPhail and Campbell (2006) study found that adolescents tend not to perceive themselves at risk of acquiring HIV. In the same way, other high-risk behaviours such as substance abuse, smoking, driving under the influence of alcohol and train-surfing may also be linked to perceived lack of risk and the engagement in such high-risk behaviours.

2.4 South African and International academic literature on the phenomenon of train-surfing.

The literature review found two scientific studies that have examined the phenomenon of train-surfing specifically. A German study conducted by Strauch et al. (1998) aimed at analysing the fatal accidents due to train surfing in the local transport system of Berlin. This study is one of two studies relating to the subject of train-surfing. The Strauch et al. (1998) study took place between 1989 and 1995, in which forty-one train-surfing accidents were reported in Berlin. It was found that injured train-surfers ranged between the ages of thirteen and twenty-five years and the individuals were mostly male. According to their research, most train-surfing accidents occurred during the summer months, and more than half of the cases reported were affected by alcohol. It was found that most injuries were due to close-to-track obstacles and slipping from the trains. Train-surfing accidents were found to have occurred between 20:00 and midnight. Polytraumatisation injuries were found to be the most common and severe of train-surfing accidents. Certain physical characteristics of train-surfers were also observed. Individuals tended to be strong and slim and had an average height of 175 centimeters (Strauch et al., 1998). This study failed to acknowledge the psychological effects of train surfing on individuals, nor did it examine the motives behind this phenomenon. This study used an epidemiological approach to understanding a social phenomenon, which limited its usefulness in understanding this high-risk behaviour. This publication did not include an understanding of the phenomenon in other countries and appears to be outdated. The proposed study will not only explore the injuries and accidents of train-surfers, but will also examine the motives behind the phenomenon and investigate demographic elements as possible indicators of increased vulnerability towards this high-risk activity.

A scientific study by Hesselink (2008) has explored the role of train-surfing with nine adolescent males in Soweto. The aim of this study was to explain the participants' experiences and feelings related to train-surfing. The study found that the train-surfers were also involved in drug and alcohol abuse and were not necessarily involved in other criminal activities. The participants' motives for involvement in train-surfing were linked to thrill-seeking behaviour. Due to the limited number of participants and due to the qualitative nature of the study, the research findings could not be generalized to all train-surfers. However credit should be given to the study due to its qualitative nature, as it provided the first qualitative understanding of the phenomenon train-surfing in the South African context. The Hesselink (2008) study focused on the criminological aspects of train-surfing and failed to explicate a more in-depth understanding of what it means to be a train-surfer. This study provided a very basic and superficial understanding of the phenomenon and failed to explore the in-depth aspects of the way in which male juvenile train-surfers construct their black, South African, masculine identity. This study also used a very judgemental and distant approach in understanding the phenomenon. Due to the criminological underpinning of this study, it tended to focus on train-surfing as a crime and did not examine train-surfing as a possible adaptive phenomenon. It is for the critique outlined thus far, that an in-depth study will be conducted in order to further explore the issues involved in train-surfing and one that will examine the role that train-surfing plays in forming the train-surfers identities.

Due to the paucity of academic literature on the topic of train-surfing, it is important to acknowledge the media's role portraying train-surfing in the South African context. Train-surfing is seen by those who participate as a heroic sport and a sign of bravery and masculinity. It is also associated with making an impression on the other school girls also travelling on the trains (Russouw, 2007).

Many newspaper reporters have described this phenomenon as adrenalin seeking activity and those participating in it, form part of a culture of high-risk behaviour (Kruger, 2006). According to a journalist known as Russouw (2007) many train-surfers regularly bunk school, some dropping out altogether, in order to partake in this activity. The majority of train-surfers are male, usually aged between fifteen and twenty-three. Train-surfing is not specific to South Africa. It has been found to occur in Indonesia, Germany, Britain and America. Although it appears to be a wide-spread phenomenon, very little academic research to date, has been conducted. This makes the study under investigation, relevant to the academic knowledge base and useful within South Africa and internationally.

2.5 Theoretical and Historical Framework: Social Constructionist Theory as Applied to Masculinity

International and South African literature regarding men and masculinities has grown in recent years and has become a separate discipline in its own right. According to Connell (1990) the academic understanding of masculinity has evolved and developed in recent decades. In previous years theorists emphasised masculinity in terms of the position of men in relation to women. Recent research indicates that masculinity is now seen as a multi-dimensional concept of what it means to be 'male'. Theorists now claim that masculinity falls in a spectrum in which there are multiple ways of 'doing male'.

In terms of South African literature, researchers have highlighted the influence and impact of colonialism and Apartheid on men and the understanding of masculinity (Morrell, 2002). Black masculinity has changed in South Africa due to multiple political and historical developments. It is important to acknowledge the historical context in which masculinity has developed in South

Africa in order to make sense of the constructions of the black masculine identity of young boys living in Soweto today.

Apartheid practices had a major influence on South African township boys in that it formed a socially constructed form of masculinity during the period of Apartheid. These social constructions seemed to have changed post 1994. According to Frosh, Pattman and Phoenix (2003) the nature of masculinity is constantly changing and is influenced by the historical and political context. The ways in which masculine identities are adopted depends on the context in which these identities emerge. In examining the age demographics of these particular train-surfers aged approximately between the ages of 16-22, many of them would have been born in the late 1980's and early 1990's, placing them in an era characterised by multiple political, technological and media changes.

As previously mentioned, these individuals because of the political context in which they grew up in became known as the "lost generation". They also became known as the "Yizo, Yizo generation" (a popular television drama shot in Soweto with a focus on urban lifestyle, which had a significant influence in the young people in Soweto); the "YFM generation" (a popular radio station in Gauteng which was aimed at young people with an emphasis on African American culture, and which appealed to many black youth in Soweto); the "Coca-cola kids generation" (post-Apartheid youth that are allegedly disinterested with political matters, and only concerned with parties and alcohol consumption) ; the "Born-free generation" (the first generation born into a democratic South Africa); "Mandela's children generation" (the first generation after Nelson Mandela's release from prison); the "Ipod generation" (because of the great emphasis on cellular phones and technology; and more recently "Malema's generation"

(The ANC Youth League president known for making reckless statements about issues of class, race and gender).

These factors and symbols related to the political and historical context of South Africa and more specifically Soweto has a major impact on the way in which these train-surfing participants have developed their sense of identity. Societal symbols, use of language and tagging such as these examples are a significant indication of the importance of context in examining a group of people and in understanding the multiple constructions of black masculine identity in South Africa. This then confirms Connell (1995) in that constructions of masculinities are fluid, multiple, contradictory and non-static.

According to Morrell (2002) no one typical South African man exists. Much research has explored the role of masculinity and the contraction of the HIV virus and involvement in high-risk sexual behaviour. A study by Kauffman, Sheffer, Crawford, Simbayi and Kalichman (2008) explored gender attitudes and sexual power to HIV risk behaviour of South African men. The study found that the endorsement of traditional masculine roles was negatively linked with HIV risk behaviour. Although the interest in masculinity has increased in recent years, the notion of black masculinity in South Africa remains a neglected topic of research. The current study therefore aims to provide a fuller understanding of the concept of a black South African identity, specifically in relation to the uncommon high-risk behaviour train-surfing.

The central theory that will be used in this study is the social constructionist theory. No single author has been assigned credit for originating this theory. It examines how human beings create systems in order to give meaning and understanding to their worlds and experiences. It focuses on the ways in which individuals create constructions of and get to understand their own reality

(Raskin, 2002). This particular study aims to use the theory of Social Constructionism in order to understand how train-surfers assign meaning to their behaviour and to their lives. According to Burr (2003) social interaction between people determines the shared meanings of knowledge and truth. The ways in which individuals understand their world and the concepts they use to explain their world are specific to the individual's history and culture. The key factor in defining Social Constructionism is that individuals construct their own reality and that there is no such thing as an objective truth. Knowledge emerges from examining the world from a certain perspective (Burr, 2003). According to Totten (2003) masculinity is constructed differently according to the social conditions in which individuals are situated. According to Messerschmidt (1993) a social construction of masculinity theorist, masculinity is socially constructed in everyday relationships. Dominant and subordinate types of masculinity develop through practices that exist between men and between men and women. Contemporary hegemonic masculinity is based on the marginalisation of gay men and women and the relationship that exists between masculinity and toughness and competitiveness (Messerschmidt, 1993).

Language plays a key part in social constructionist theory. Language determines how people think and create categories and concepts about their realities (Burr, 2003). The way in which individuals talk about themselves and what is important to them determines the nature of their experiences (Raskin, 2002). An individual's reality is constructed through language. The use of language does not represent objective truth but is used as a way of constructing one's reality. Words and concepts such as 'train-surfing', 'bravery' and 'masculine' should be seen as deriving from communal constructions. An individual's understanding of his/her reality is influenced by guiding metaphors. People construct and use metaphors to organise and understand their ideas

and behaviours. It is important to understand how communities construct their reality in order to understand their behaviour (Raskin, 2002).

In examining constructions of masculinity and high-risk behaviour within a relational context, the social constructionist theory proposes that high-risk behaviours are used in social interactions in the social organisation of gender and power. Men and women behave in certain ways because of the masculine and feminine norms that they adopt from their culture. Gender can be seen as a dynamic, social structure that exists in social interactions. This theory also claims that high-risk behaviours are often symbolic of masculinity and the instruments and activities that men use in the construction of social power and status (Raskin, 2002). High-risk behaviours like any other social activities that men are involved in, become opportunities for demonstrating their masculinity. Literature suggests that men and boys tend to perceive greater social pressure than women and girls to enforce and adhere to gendered norms (Courtenay, 2000). These include beliefs that men are assertive, strong, robust and tough. In terms of the Social Constructionist Theory men are not weak sufferers of a socially endorsed role and are not merely socialised by their culture. Both men and boys can be seen as active participants in constructing and reconstructing dominant norms of masculinity (Courtenay, 2000).

Stereotypes of masculinity including aggression, reason, a need for control, competitiveness and emotional discretion are still very much alive in today's society. Masculinity is a socially gendered concept as opposed to the opposite of femininity. Masculinity is now appreciated as a fluid concept rather than a rigid one. Gender is influenced by social, cultural and historical factors and is less influenced by anatomical factors. Maleness can no longer be ascribed to a single meaning. Males include those that are fertile and infertile, those that are gay and straight and those that are organisers and followers. Social Constructionist theories of masculinity are of

the view point that gender is created through people and by people within their particular environmental context. The Social Constructionist approach recognises that there is no longer a distinction between sex and gender. Gender is not something that distinguishes us, but is something that we create in social interactions (Moynihan, 1998).

A study by Moynihan (1998) examined testicular cancer patients who had lost a sexual organ. Her study found that of the men who had been through this traumatic ordeal, many of them experienced anxiety and/depression. However none of them had sought psychological support. Moynihan (1998) concluded that men are less likely to be open about their emotional life because of the way in which gender has been socially constructed in our society.

Men actively construct and deconstruct dominant norms of masculinity and often engage in high-risk behaviours to demonstrate manhood. It is important to explore power and social inequality as a means to understand the reasons why men adopt unhealthy behaviour. It is equally important to explore social structures that cultivate behaviour among men. Men tend to adopt unhealthy beliefs and behaviours and demonstrate idealised forms of masculinity as a means to uphold positions of power in society. It is through risk-taking behaviours and avoiding healthy practices that men justify themselves as the 'stronger' sex. Men's risk-taking behaviours help to maintain social inequality and social structures that then reinforce and encourage men's poor health habits and risk-taking behaviours (Courtenay, 2000).

A study by Totten (2003) explored how young men who abuse their girlfriends construct their masculinity in the context of social and economic marginalisation. Thirty marginalised youth, aged thirteen and seventeen, were interviewed to explore masculine ideals and amongst others, pro-abuse beliefs. The study found that most of the participants were socialised into a role of

dominance and aggression, yet were unlikely to use their power outside of their close peer and family dynamics. Many of the participants were found to use traditional male characteristics including toughness, competitiveness and aggression. It was found that they tended to abuse their girlfriends as a means to hide the possibility of their manhood being threatened. These participants used abuse to actively construct their masculine identity because it was one aspect that they controlled over. Masculine identities were found to be a product of family and gender beliefs which were developed in early childhood and much of the abuse was learnt from parental modelling. This study found that poverty and a sense of hopelessness about the future was connected to abusive behaviour because this impoverished environment threatened their masculine identity. Many of the participants in this study placed significant emphasis on being the bread winner and tended to use abuse as compensation for an inability to achieve traditional breadwinner importance (Totten, 2003).

The review of literature revealed a significant emphasis on high-risk behaviours and masculinity. However the scarcity in academic literature on train-surfing, places further acknowledgement in the necessity of this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology/design is a useful part of the research process in that it bridges the gap between the research question and implementing the research. The research methodology serves as a guide for the data collection procedure (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2007). This chapter will begin with a reminder of the aims of the research highlighted in Chapter Three. It will then describe the sampling method used in the study, as well as a brief background history of the participants. The data collection procedure and data analysis methods will then be illustrated, followed by the ethical formalities used in the study. The chapter will conclude with a reflexive discussion on the researcher's impression of the research that was conducted.

3.2 Research Aims

The key research aims included the following:

- To explore the motives behind adolescents becoming involved in the phenomenon of train-surfing.
- To explore the phenomenon train-surfing and what it means to be a train-surfer.
- To examine the links between train-surfing and identity in young, black, South African, males.
- To explore how constructions of masculinity and other contextual factors inform high-risk behaviours in black male youth in South Africa.

3.3 Participants and Sampling Method

The criteria for the selection of the respondents for the qualitative study was that they should be Black South African male youth residing in the Gauteng area and be between the ages of 15-22, who currently participate in train-surfing or have a history of participation in train-surfing. As mentioned previously the term adolescence in this study, includes young adults.

The snowballing sampling method was used as a means to obtain the sample for the study. This method was used as opposed to other sampling methods because of its practicality with such a rare phenomenon and because train-surfing is a social and cultural activity. Gaining access to such a specific and isolated group of individuals proved to be a great challenge. The researcher spent many months contacting Metrorail, media reporters and academics as a means to gain access to possible participants. Eventually the researcher was given a list of names and contact details of a group of train-surfers that lived in Soweto, Gauteng, many of whom were interviewed in a documentary that was aired on television. It must be acknowledged that the producers of this particular documentary should never have disclosed this information so hastily, due to ethical formalities.

The researcher initiated contact with one particularly affluent train-surfer who showed significant commitment to the study and in turn produced other contact numbers of train-surfers. Unfortunately this particular train-surfer was lost as his cellular number was no longer in service. Over the next couple of weeks, many conversations were spent with train-surfers explaining the research and answering multiple questions. None of the participants withdrew from the study. An original number of five participants were originally selected. However, on the day of the

interviews and additional participant arrived wanting to participate. Six participants took part in this study.

The six respondents, their background history and the context in which train-surfing took place will be briefly described. The use of their pseudonyms will also be introduced.

3.3.1 Participants (Demographical Information)

Respondent No.1 (Mthi) is a nineteen year old black male, who grew up in Soweto. He was brought up by his biological mother and stepfather. His biological father was absent and he rarely sees him. His home life was marked by poverty and negligence on the part of his parents. He previously attended a drug rehabilitation centre for six months. At some point he left his home to live with his grandmother in Orlando, Soweto. She passed away from breast cancer in 2006 and he moved back to his mother where he currently resides. He claims to no longer have any involvement in train-surfing and is currently completing grade 11.

Respondent No. 2 (Romario) is a sixteen year old black male. He grew up in Pretoria and is currently living in Soweto and is in Grade 11. His biological father passed away in a shooting accident, when he was much younger. He lives with his biological mother, sister and brother who is also a train-surfer and is Respondent No. 4 (Alex). It is unclear as to the extent of this respondent's current involvement in train-surfing although he did report that he does occasionally participate.

Respondent No. 3 (MacGyver) is a black male who is in Grade 11. His parents are separated and he sees his biological father twice a month. His father is financially responsible for him. He currently lives with his mother, two brothers and one sister. During the time spent train-surfing,

he reported that engaged in stealing from the other train commuters and drinking alcohol on the train. This respondent claims to no longer be involved in train-surfing and is currently employed by Metrorail as a “Safety Ambassador”.

Respondent No. 4 (Alex) is a twenty-two year old black male. His biological father passed away when he was sixteen years old. At the time of his father’s death, his mother was unemployed and struggled to support him and his younger brother. His upbringing was marked by poverty and tension within his extended family over his father’s material possessions and livestock. His brother is also a train-surfer is Respondent No. 2 (Romario). This respondent also claims to no longer be involved in train-surfing as he is employed by Metrorail as a “Safety Ambassador”, although he did report that on occasions he does continue to train-surf.

Respondent No. 5 (Loverboy) is a black male and his precise age is unknown. His biological mother died in 2006 and he currently lives with his grandmother, uncle and brother in Orlando, Soweto. He is uncertain of the whereabouts of his biological father. Loverboy is a handyman and enjoys making creative hand-bags. He was previously injured due to a train-surfing accident, but despite this he continued to train-surf. He has in the past been arrested for train-surfing. His engagement in train-surfing led him to join a train-surfing gang known as the “VD Group” (Vandalising group). According to Loverboy, this particular group of train-surfer spend their time vandalising the trains and other public property.

Respondent No.6 (Scorpion) is a twenty year old black male. He initially enjoyed gymnastics and soccer and later turned to train-surfing. He used to live with his mother, grandmother, aunt, uncle, sister and brother. When his family found out that he was involved in train-surfing, he was forced to go and live with his aunt, where he currently resides. The whereabouts of his biological

father are unknown. He currently admits to no longer being involved in train-surfing as there is no opportunity for it near his aunt's house.

3.4 Data Collection and Procedure

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, a focus group and semi-structured individual interviews were used as a method for data collection. This method follows an interview guide and directs the participants to specific issues and topics (Whitley, 2002). The interviews consisted of broad questions which allowed flexibility in the order of the questions and for the interviews to flow in a natural and conversational manner. Individual in-depth interviews were used (See Appendix A for Interview schedule). This method of interviewing allowed the participants to speak freely, without interruptions or influence from other participants. It also allowed the participants to speak openly without having the pressure to speak or behave in a particular way. According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006) many participants are motivated to participate in research studies because the issues under investigation are important to them. Prior to the interviews the researcher contacted the participants telephonically to make arrangements to meet. This initial contact with the participants allowed the researcher to develop a relationship with the participants before the interviews took place. During these telephonic conversations, the participants were allowed to express any questions or concerns regarding the research.

The interviews took place in July 2008. They were conducted at the Chris Hani Baragwaneth Hospital in Soweto. This particular venue was chosen as many of the participants live in Soweto, making it easier for them to attend the interviews. Prior to the interviews, the researcher made arrangements with the psychiatrist at the Chris Hani Baragwaneth Hospital to get permission for the interviews to take place there. The psychiatrist was more than accommodating and arranged

an empty office and reception area to be used for the interviews. The individual interviews took place in the vacant office, whilst the reception area was used as a waiting and gathering area and for lunch purposes.

The individual interviews were preceded by an initial focus group, during which the researcher explained what was to be expected during the interviews. All of the six participants attended the initial focus group, which was held on the first day before the interviews were conducted. The focus group was held in an office at the Chris Hani Baragwanth Hospital and included five of the six participants. The last participant was unable to attend the focus group due to work commitments. Both the researcher and the translator were present for the focus group. The focus group took an approximate period of 40 minutes and comprised of the researcher explaining the interview process, the necessity of the participant's participation and the conditions of the informed consent form. The translator translated all that was said by the researcher into isiZulu to accommodate the participants who did not understand English. The participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and the consent forms were given and read out to the participants. In reflecting on the transcript of the focus group, it was evident that the participants and the researcher felt awkward and uncomfortable. The participants spoke very little during this time and tended to make short comments and jokingly teased each other. It was perceived that the participants did not feel comfortable in sharing their personal experiences in a group setting (for possible fear of judgement). The younger participants tended to be more withdrawn, whereas the older participants tended to tease each other. According to Connell (1995) masculinity tends to be expressed and developed within a hierarchical system, where a negotiation of power is sought after. During the interviews, there was a sense of hierarchy with regard to chronological age. There are many reasons for this awkward reaction. This was the first face to face contact

between the researcher and the participants and it is more than likely that the participants felt awkward because of lack of familiarity of the researcher and the venue. The participants may have been unsure of their role in the research leading to their discomfort.

The interviews were conducted in a combination of English and *isiZulu* to allow participants to express their ideas in the language of their choice. The interviews lasted for a period of forty to sixty minutes. A translator was used to assist in translating the English and *isiZulu* to the researcher and subsequent participants. The translator used during the interviews was a peer and fellow psychology masters student of the researchers. This particular person was used to translate because of her extensive understanding of both the English and *isiZulu* language. The second reason was that she is a researcher and student herself and understands the psychological nature of interviewing.

No monetary incentives were used as a means to encourage participants to participate. They were however given transport fees and lunch on both of the interview days.

3.5 Data Analysis

The verbal interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. As this is an exploratory study, Thematic Content Analysis was used as a means to analyse the data. (See Appendix C for example of transcript). Within this framework, a rich broad thematic description of the entire data set was obtained. This technique was used as opposed to a more in-depth and detailed one that focuses on one particular method. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) this particular method is particularly useful in investigating an under-researched area. Stage one of analysing the data involved the researcher familiarising herself with the data. This stage involved reading the transcripts repeatedly and searching for meanings and patterns. According to Terre

Blanche et al. (2007) during this stage, the researcher should already have an initial understanding of the meaning of the data. This stage also involves transcribing the data into written form from the audio-recorded data. The data was initially transcribed by the researcher and by a research assistant. The research assistant transcribed the *isiZulu* data and then translated this into English. Phase two involved generating initial codes. In this study, coding was done manually. Coding involved identifying repeated patterns found within the interviews. This data is presented in Chapter Four as the 'Main Issues List' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Terre Blanche et al. (2007) this method is better than using abstract theoretical jargon to label main issues. Phase three was made up of searching for themes and involved sorting the different codes into potential themes. In this study codes were analysed and combined to form umbrella themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Phase four involved reviewing the themes and refining them. In this study, some themes were joined into one theme, while other themes were dropped because not enough data supported their inclusion. Phase five involved defining and naming the themes and involved identifying the essence of what each theme was about. This stage also involved elaborating on the themes more closely (Terre Blanche et al., 2007). The list of themes will be presented at the beginning of Chapter Four. For each theme, a detailed analysis was conducted. Each theme was analysed in terms of the broader social context of the phenomenon under investigation and literature was used to support the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

A number of ethical considerations were explored throughout the research process. Firstly, voluntary participation was promoted. Participants were neither forced, nor made to feel obliged to be involved in the study. It was this particular ethical consideration that led to the researcher not providing a financial incentive for participants' involvement in the study. In this

investigation, confidentiality was maintained as far as possible, as the topic under investigation is sensitive and may have made participants feel threatened about recourse. However as the use of interviewing was the means of data collection, anonymity was not fulfilled in this investigation. The researcher attempted to limit the amount and spread of identifying information and secured the transcripts and other identifying information in a safe location. The use of pseudonyms was used when the data was analysed and interpreted. The use of a tape-recorder may have put confidentiality constraints on the study. However, the researcher ensured that the contents of the recordings were not exposed to others, except the researcher's supervisor and the person who helped translate the transcripts from isiZulu into English.

Consent forms were given to the participants before the interviews took place. All participants reported that they were over the age of fourteen in line with informed consent stipulations. Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw consent at any time during the research. It should be noted that all of the participants were literate and therefore able to complete the informed consent forms. The consent forms were read out verbally by the researcher and translator in both English and *isiZulu* to ensure that all participants understood what was expected of them. (See Appendix B for Informed Consent form). Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw consent at any time during the research.

Due to the topic of this study and connotations of deviance attached to train-surfing, participants may have felt judged for contributing to this activity. It is for this reason that the researcher attempted to act in a neutral and non-judgmental way and attempted to obtain information from the participants using tact and sensitivity. A debriefing session was conducted after the interviews took place. Debriefing within this investigation took the form of an informal post interview in which the researcher was given the opportunity to educate the participants about the

research and allowed the participants to give feedback on their perception of the study. Participants were also given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study, which may have arisen during the focus group interview. The participants were also given the opportunity to contact the researcher regarding any thoughts or worries about the research, which they duly did.

3.7 Researcher's Reflection on the Process

Reflexivity involves the acknowledgement of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings during the research process. Reflexivity acknowledges that it is impossible to remain neutral whilst conducting research. It encourages exploration by the researcher as to how her involvement with a particular study impacts on the research (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999 as cited in Willig, 2001). The research process will now be explored from the perspective of the researcher and acknowledgment of her subjectivity on the research will be examined.

Undertaking this research study as a topic of investigation was a frustrating and exhilarating experience. Train-surfing was my chosen topic of interest during my honours year in 2007 during which the students were expected to complete a thorough proposal of a research study as part of a research module. My first understanding of the phenomenon came about when I was watching a Carte Blanche documentary on train-surfing in 2007. I was immediately drawn to the phenomenon due to its high risk and exhilarating nature. After completing my proposal in my honours year, I decided to formally investigate the phenomenon as my Masters dissertation in 2008/2009. I encountered vast problems throughout the research process. One challenge was being that of the scarcity of academic literature on the topic. I found it a great challenge to obtain scientific literature amongst all the sensationalised media reports. The other momentous challenge was that of finding participants who would be willing to be interviewed. It was during

this time that a fellow psychology masters student and offered her services to assist me in my interviews. The next difficulty that I encountered was choosing a location to conduct my interviews. I realised that the location had to have easy access for the participants. I eventually decided to conduct the interviews at the Chris Hani Baragwaneth Hospital in Soweto, Gauteng. I made contact with a psychiatrist in the hospital who organised two rooms that I was able to use during the time that the interviews took place in July 2008.

Regarding language, I realised that I would require a translator to conduct the interviews, as many of the participants found it difficult to communicate in English. Language barriers tend to be overlooked when conducting research and can hinder the validity of the research results, particularly when the translator used does not understand the role of translation. I found that the translator limited her capacity to interpret and was quite careful to not take control of the interview. In examining MacGyver's transcript, I noticed a particularly judgmental tone from the translator, especially in the context of her asking MacGyver about his issues with anger. In retrospect I remember this interview being particularly challenging as MacGyver showed resistance in talking about his family and other personal entities. This resistance appeared to project onto the translator who in turn became judgmental.

I experienced severe anxiety about my lack of experience as a researcher and was concerned that the participants would fail to attend the interviews. However this was not the case. The interviews were a great success. The participants were enthusiastic and reliable for which I am truly appreciative. The initial focus caused anxiety for both myself and the participants. My anxiety of being a young white female, researcher, interviewing young, black male train-surfers was definitely projected onto the participants during the initial focus group. My anxiety also stemmed from my own stereotypes of black males and general fear of crime, and was further

emphasised by anxiety on the part of close relatives. This anxiety can be seen as the result of preconceived misconceptions of black males based on past Apartheid ideologies and old white South African perceptions of black South Africans.

The individual interviews proved to be an emotionally draining experience and I was so grateful to have had my translator with me for support and assistance. This was due to the stress associated with the organisation of the interviews and the fear that things might go wrong. It was also due to the acknowledgment of actually taking responsibility for a research project and my lack of experience as a researcher. Some of the interviews were particularly interesting as they elicited both negative and positive personal responses. The first worth mentioning was the interview that took place with Mthi. Mthi, whose emotionally charged language regarding his feelings towards his parents elicited a certain element of empathy and a sense of sorrow for Mthi's losses. The interview with Loverboy was noteworthy. Loverboy, in the keeping with his nickname and personality elicited a sense of joy and connection with me. Loverboy spoke of the many women that formed part of his life and he came across a truly gentle, loveable and charismatic person. It is my belief that Loverboy was the most genuine and least defensive of all the participants. He appeared to trust me and the translator. The interviews with Scorpion, MacGyver and Alex were particularly challenging for me. I perceived these participants as particularly defensive and aloof. They appeared to give answers they believed I wanted to hear. In speaking about their role as 'Safety Ambassadors', both Alex and MacGyver appeared to give out clichéd or learned responses. These three participants also appeared to carry a significant element of anger and resentment. Alex spoke of his criminal activity without a perceived care in the world, which made me feel particularly uncomfortable at the time of the interview. Throughout the individual interviews, I got the sense that participants were performing or acting.

Some of the participants were boisterous and tried to evoke feelings of awe from both the researcher and the translator whilst others tried to evoke sympathy and unconditional positive regard. This desire for acceptance is a common characteristic of adolescence where many young people have a need to feel accepted. It is possible that some of the participants tried to mask their feelings of vulnerability and anxiety by putting on a show. It should be acknowledged that the participants were giving a particular version of their 'real' selves.

The research methodology was found to be a useful element of the research process that incorporated the process of conducting the research and the reflexivity associated with the research.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a set of main issues that were explored during the interviews. They do not contain any form of analysis but are merely a list of content issues that were brought up by the participants in the interviews. This list is followed by an in-depth list of themes that emerged out of the main issues list.

4.2 Main Issues List

Family Composition and Relationships

- Family discord
- Perceived lack of emotional and financial support from biological parents.
- Contact but distant relationship with biological father.
- Absence of biological father.
- Co-habitation with female family members.
- Family pressure to terminate engagement in train-surfing.

Friendships

- Friends are perceived as supportive.
- Peer pressure to steal.
- Friendship activities include taking drugs and alcohol and train-surfing together.

School involvement

- Bunking of school to allow for train-surfing.

Reasons for train-surfing

- To impress the girls.
- To gain popularity.

- Boredom.
- Fame.
- Peer pressure and to be accepted by friends.
- Train-surfing is perceived as an addiction.
- Considered as hobby or sport.
- Emphasis on putting on a performance.
- Part of one's identity.

Description of initial involvement in train-surfing

- Observed other boys train-surfing.
- Experimentation.
- Peer pressure.

Description of the average train-surfing day

- Lying to family members about involvement in train-surfing.
- Bunking of school.
- Drinking alcohol and using drugs.
- Train-surfing whilst under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Different classifications of train-surfing

1. - On top of train (train-surfing)
 - Between the doors and below the doors (staffriding)
 - Underneath the train (Gravul)
 - Platform train-surfing.
2. - Enjoyment and passion.
 - Stealing and vandalising.
 - Impressing the girls.
3. - Roughriders (16 years and older)

- Roders (14 years and younger)

Train-surfings association with stealing

- Intimidation and stealing from other passengers on the train.
- Teamwork when stealing.
- Purchase of alcohol and food with money made.
- Money used to buy things for girls.

Description of getting caught train-surfing

- Special Assignments documentary exposed train-surfers.
- Sense of pride for being on television.
- Newspaper reports on train-surfers.
- Security guards responsible for arresting train-surfers.

Reasons for terminating train-surfing

- Desire, but inability to stop train-surfing.
- Death of friends due to train-surfing accidents.
- Observing injuries of other train-surfers.
- Caught on camera/members of the community/family members.
- Loyalty to family members particularly mother figures.
- Employment and loyalty to Metrorail.

Reactions of family members in discovering child train-surfing involvement

- Family members in denial until concrete evidence established.
- Deceiving family members about involvement in train-surfing.
- Violent response from family.
- Maternal anger and shock.

Perception of death

- Lack of concern for those who have died as a result of train-surfing.

- Death seen as ‘the ordinary’.
- “We ride till we die”.
- Funerals become the norm.
- “We do not die, we multiply”.
- With the death of a train-surfer, comes a new boy that is initiated into train-surfing.
- Some anxiety and concern for safety and for those who have died.

Incidences of contact with the law for train-surfing, drug use and vandalising public property.

Description of how nicknames were acquired

Description of role as Safety Ambassador

Description of violent incidences

Economic deprivation

Description of hobbies

Train-surfing as associated with drug and alcohol abuse

Plans for the future

- Difficulty in achieving goals because of criminal record and bad reputation.
- Desire for independence.
- Desire for own family.
- Desire for success.
- Giving back to the community.
- Material possessions.
- Social inclusion.

4.3 Themes and Sub-themes

A number of different facets that make up the young, black South African male identity have been identified in the context of train-surfing. From the questions and the key issues that were

raised in the interviews, seven different themes (most with sub-themes) have emerged, as listed below:

THEME 1: TRAIN-SURFING AS AN ASPECT OF IDENTITY

Sub-theme 1: What's in a name?

Sub-theme 2: Desire for fame

Sub-theme 3: Issues of leadership, self-pride and responsibility

THEME 2: FAMILY DYNAMICS

Sub-theme 1: Issues of family support

Sub-theme 2: Absence of biological father versus ever-present mother figures

Sub-theme 3: Deception

THEME 3: TRAIN-SURFING: A SPORT OR AN ADDICTION?

Sub-theme 1: Train-surfing as perceived as a sport/hobby

Sub-theme 2: Train-surfing: An Addiction?

THEME 4: TRAIN-SURFING IN RELATION TO FRIENDSHIPS

Sub-theme 1: The significance of friendships

Sub-theme 2: The role of peer pressure in train-surfing

THEME 5: GANG RELATED AND DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR

Sub-theme 1: Gang-related behaviours

Sub-theme 2: Violence and its consequences

THEME 6: PERCEPTION OF DEATH: "You ride till you die"

THEME 7: FUTURE GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

THEME 1: TRAIN-SURFING AS AN ASPECT OF ONE'S IDENTITY

Sub-theme 1: What's in a name?

In order to introduce and have an understanding of, the train-surfing identity, a key element is to explore the social and personal constructions of the nicknames by which the train-surfers have adopted within their communities. Nicknames are a fundamental part of adolescent behavior. According to Canfield and Wells (1976) it is through nicknames that we discover each other's strengths. Nicknames have a tendency to affect the developing self-concept in both a negative and positive way.

Some of the participants used nicknames in their daily interactions in order to take on a specific role or character in the 'production' or 'play' of their train-surfing lives. Their nicknames suggest connotations of power, fame and prestige which they use in their fantasy world. The adoption of nicknames in the train-surfing world appears to be a common occurrence. During Blecher and Raphoto's (2007) Special Assignment Documentary 'Soweto Surfing' one particular interviewee referred to himself as Prince Shiba or "Bitch Nigga" which he adopted from an American rap song by the music artists Tupac and 50Cent (Soweto Surfing as cited in Grange, 2007). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the legal names of the participants will not be disclosed as a means to protect the participants' identity. It is interesting to note that many of the train-surfers made the choice to have their nicknames, used as their research pseudonyms. These nicknames in most cases are representations that the participants use to distinguish themselves from others within the train-surfing community and what they are referred to at home. The six participants' pseudonyms are once again mentioned:

- MacGyver

- Scorpion
- Loverboy
- Alex
- Mthi
- Romario

Of the six participants that were interviewed, the nicknames ‘MacGyver’, ‘Scorpion’, ‘Loverboy’ and ‘Alex’ are worth mentioning, as they highlight the role that fantasy plays in train-surfing generally and in the construction of a train-surfing identity. The name ‘MacGyver’ lends itself to a typical American concept and famous television character. The television series ‘MacGyver’ was produced in the 1980’s and was seen by many South African viewers. ‘MacGyver’ was an average man who managed to use everyday household objects to escape challenging and terrifying situations. He also managed to save the lives of everyday citizens and was known as a ‘Casanova’ by the ladies. The participant uses this typically western popular television hero to represent himself, despite the fact that he is a young, black, South African. The television character is viewed in a completely different context from MacGyver the train-surfer, in terms of generation and culture. Also interesting to note, is the role that MacGyver the television character adopts. MacGyver the television star is an every day person who has the spectacular ability to use practical methods to get out of danger and save the lives of others. Possibly MacGyver the train-surfer, may have taken on this nickname as a means to illustrate his strength, power and invincibility. The television star and train-surfer can be viewed as sharing some similarities in that they both use practical methods to engage in high-risk activities. Another possibility is that the train-surfer may have used this particular name as a means to

illustrate his fame as a train-surfer in his own right, one who puts on a type of production as a means to entertain others and gain celebrity status and fame. A significant point is that this participant did not link the origin of his nickname to the television series, but to a name he was given by his family because of his boisterous and aggressive nature as a young boy. It is possible that the participant's parents gave him the nickname after their own exposure to and interpretation of the television series. This also highlights the significance that media plays in the lives of young people. Watching television during adolescence is a common experience and television characters have been found to hold great influence over the behaviour of young viewers. According to Tickel, Sargent, Dalton, Beach and Heatherton (2001) the actions of television stars have a significant impact on the behaviour of young people. These researchers studied the relationship between adolescent's favourite movie stars who smoked during the film and the effect this had on adolescent smoking habits. The portrayal of tobacco use in contemporary motion pictures was found to increase the likelihood of adolescents engaging in smoking (Tickel et al., 2001).

One participant who preferred that his nickname (the name that he is referred to within his community) be left unmentioned is Alex (pseudonym). Although Alex's nickname will not be mentioned here, it does hold connotations of celebrity status, fame and power. His nickname also lends itself to the idea of inheriting power and a sense of entitlement. This construction is interesting to explore as it suggests that Alex desires fame and power, in a world in which he is generally insignificant. It is possible that Alex uses train-surfing and his nickname, as a means to feel special and acknowledged. It should be noted that Alex is referred to as 'King' in some of his quotations as a means to highlight the significance of the use of his nickname.

Another participant refers to himself as 'Scorpion'. The signifier 'scorpion' has several interpretations. Firstly it conveys an element of aggression, retaliation and isolation. The fact that Scorpion uses a poisonous animal as opposed to a human symbol to identify himself is interesting in itself. It could suggest a theme of defensiveness, aloofness and reluctance to engage. It also highlights the idea of 'if you get too close I will sting you'. This resonates with the way in which Scorpion came across during the interview. During the individual interview, Scorpion appeared cold, defensive and aloof which resonates strongly with the social construction of the word 'Scorpion'. Scorpion's nickname and body language highlight the importance of non-verbal interactions, which are equally significant to that which is being verbalised during the interview.

Loverboy is the final participant worth mentioning. Some important history to note is that Loverboy was not initially expected on the day of the interviews, but arrived having heard of the research being conducted. Loverboy explained that his nickname originated from his love for people. He explained that he is a 'lovable person' and is loved by many. This was demonstrated during the interview, as Loverboy had a certain charisma and came across as open and caring, smiling throughout the interview process. Loverboy also suggested that his train-surfing identity and nickname allowed him the opportunity to be popular amongst the young females and he explained that he had a history of having many girlfriends. The construction of the name 'Loverboy' suggests an aspect of popularity, likeability and fame within his community and particularly amongst other young females. The use of the word *Loverboy* is also interesting as it alludes to innocence, a lack of threat and charm.

Some of the participants use labels that have connotations of strength, sexual superiority, aggression and fame as a means of identification. These nicknames have been found to have

significant implications within black, masculine identity. The use of nicknames is a similar phenomenon to ‘tagging’, which is a graffiti subculture indulged by many young people across the world. According to Alonso (1998) tagging is part of the complex subculture of Hip-hop. The influence of this mainly African-American subculture has had influence over the rest of the world, not least of which being on young African males. Fame and a sense of power are both achieved through tagging. Power is exercised through making a personal claim to the surfaces that graffiti artists tag. In the same way, the participants use nicknames or tags to make their mark in the world, to feel acknowledged and powerful (Alonso, 1998). Nicknames can be seen as a universal element of adolescence and not just unique to these particular train-surfers. What is unique is symbolism associated with fame and aggression. It appears that these participants use these symbols as a means to take on the role that their nickname suggests and enter into this ‘fantasy world’.

It appears that the participants use the macho image of “MacGyver”, ‘Scorpion’ and ‘Loverboy’ to hide the ‘real’ self. Instead they mask their feelings of vulnerability and hopelessness. It is possible that they use train-surfing and other high risk behaviours such as drugs and alcohol consumption to hide their true feelings.

Sub-theme 2: Desire for fame

The desire for fame and prestige was a central focus throughout most of the interviews. This desire is two- fold. The first involves train-surfers staging a performance and using train-surfing for entertainment value and showing off their skill. The other, is that of the social consequences of putting on a performance and the desire to be well-known and well-liked. This finding correlates with other research. Strauch et al. (1998) found that engagement in train-surfing is

attributed to a desire for recognition. Hesselink (2008) found that involvement and support from the crowd was a major contributor to train-surfers becoming involved in train-surfing.

Most of the respondents in the current study attributed fame and prestige the number one contributor to their involvement in train-surfing. Loverboy explained that:

“Yes, indeed one thing excites you is when you enter the train, people know you are ‘so and so’ and you are capable of doing what [that].”

In the above statement, Loverboy explains that the ability to prove to others that one has enough skill to train-surf, leads to fame and popularity amongst the train commuters. Romario explained that by becoming involved in train-surfing, he would be acknowledged and known by others.

“I knew if I go into train-surfing, I would be famous and everyone is going to know me.”

Scorpion compared train-surfing to the success, failure and fame achieved in soccer games.

“When you are in the train, you take it as in the soccer game, because in the soccer game when you play well, people love it; when you don’t, they dislike you. You are aware that when you are train-surfing, you are being cheered by many people and that you are famous.”

Scorpion conveys how other people’s reactions determine his level of confidence and ability to train-surf. According to Taubman- Ben –Ari (2004) adolescents must have confidence in their ability to perform high-risk behaviour. Scorpion also spoke of the popularity he gained amongst the other school children because of train-surfing.

“Now the train that we are riding used to be full of school learners you see, and you know that when there are those children and everyone, you become popular.”

Scorpion highlights the far-reaching social implications within the school environment that occur from train-surfing. Not only does he gain popularity on the trains, but because many of the train

commuters are school-going children, he therefore becomes well-known in his school. According to a study by Coleman (1961, as cited in Manaster, 1989) being athletic and being in the popular crowd are of great significance in making a boy popular.

Alex explained how he had been selected to be cast in a train-surfing movie:

“It’s a real movie. They want to show the young, that to stop train-surfing because we lose a lot of peoples.”

Alex highlights the notion of being famous and popular amongst other train passengers and the public that is exposed to the media. He speaks of the documentary that aims to create awareness of the dangers of train-surfing. It is interesting to note the process of fame to which Alex has been exposed. Initially he speaks of how he was drawn to the popularity that one gains amongst fellow train-surfers and train passengers when train-surfing. In his statement Alex emphasises the popularity he gained by becoming involved in this documentary and thereby distancing himself from train-surfing. Alex initially suggests that by being a train-surfer he gains popularity and feels special. It is through deviance that he is able to become a celebrity within the train-surfing world. By becoming involved in the documentary, he again shows a type of deviance towards his fellow train-surfers and capitalizes on the ‘specialness’ that he feels and the ‘celebrity fantasy’ that he negotiates within the media.

This implies the train-surfers’ need for ‘specialness’ in a world that is characterised by being one of many ordinary boys. There is a historical and contextual similarity that can be drawn in considering the construal of ‘criminals’ or ‘gangsters’ in many South African townships. These individuals come to loom quite large in the imagination of communities, in many cases holding seeming celebrity status. These criminals are seen as heroes despite their history of wrongdoings. In the same way train-surfers have latched on to this ‘celebrity status’ as a means to feel

acknowledged and noticed in a relatively indistinguishable community. MacGyver explained the pride that he felt over being shown on the South African documentary ‘Special Assignment’. MacGyver said:

“I was brought [shown] on television, you see.”

MacGyver explained how by becoming involved in train-surfing, he would become the head of a popular peer group. MacGyver again highlights the ‘celebrity fantasy’ that attracts young boys to train-surfing. Adolescence is a period of finding one’s identity and the need to feel ‘special’. According to Payne, Reynolds, Brown and Fleming (2003) young adolescent boys tend to perceive athletes/celebrities as role models. Sports heroes perceived as role models can have both a negative and positive influence on adolescents. (Fine, 1987 as cited in Payne et al., 2003) found that adolescent boys tend to mirror the behaviour of sporting heroes both on and off the field.

Adler, Kless and Adler (1992) examined the role of popularity in gender socialisation among preadolescent children. They found that popularity or perceived status is of vital importance and that preadolescents perceive that boys acquire popularity on the basis of athletic ability, coolness, toughness, social skills and the ability to acquire a girlfriend. Involvement in train-surfing appears to cover all of these options thereby increasing their status amongst their peers.

In general, most of the respondents also placed a great focus on how impressing young females was one of the attractions to their involvement in train-surfing. It appears that there is a particular emphasis placed on performance and entertainment and showing off one’s success. Mthi explained that adolescent girls desire boys that are involved in dangerous wrongdoings rather than positive things.

“You see, but you think that they like you for the wrong stuff you do, not the right stuff.”

The notion of ‘celebrity fantasy’ is once again stressed. It appears that train-surfers would rather be noticed by young girls for being involved in wrongdoings than not be noticed at all for engagement in wholesome and honourable activities. Another participant indicated that there was peer pressure from adolescent girls to participate in train-surfing and that attention from adolescent girls builds one’s self-esteem. Mthi said that:

“At certain time I would say train-surfing was good. It was all this because you know all the girls were shouting at you ‘yay, yaya, galigala’, you see now you feel the pressure like at least somebody like me.”

From the above statement, Mthi explains how approval or encouragement from young female train passengers encouraged him to get involved in train-surfing. Mthi again highlights the notion of the desire to be noticed and feel superior. In examining Mthi’s transcript, it is clear that Mthi feels abandoned and rejected by his parents and by the world. This perception of abandonment and rejection will be discussed under Theme Theme 2: ‘Family Dynamics’. In this statement, he looks to young women for acceptance, acknowledgement and possibly the nurturing that he never received from his family.

Loverboy explained that his motivation for train-surfing was primarily to gain attention from young females:

“Ja I have grown up because I used to like the girls. That’s why they call me Loverboy. I used to have a girl at each and every station”.

Loverboy points out the popularity amongst young girls that is often associated with being a train-surfer. The self-reflection that Loverboy presents of having ‘grown up’ is interesting, as it

frames having many girlfriends as something juvenile and claims that for him this is no longer the case. A key element in the developing stage of adolescence is having a girlfriend or many girlfriends. According to Santrock (2005) adolescents spend a significant amount of time dating or thinking about dating. It appears that Loverboy perceives engagement in train-surfing in the same way. Through a process of maturing, he has moved on from both of these activities.

Alex explained that one's likelihood of obtaining a girlfriend increases when one participates in train-surfing. He also said that stealing whilst train-surfing is used as a means to buy material possessions for young girlfriends.

“Now if you go to the trains, if you not doing train-surfing; it's not so easy to get the chick, because that chick is going to tell you, you're useless, you can't bring me something. If you come and be honest on the trains, she's just going to look at you like that, this one is useless. But if you come on the train, you take someone's things, oh King, I know King will give the money.”

Alex conveyed that the ability to train-surf and steal on the train is an important indicator of success and leads to attention from girlfriends, which he perceives as linked to building his self-confidence. He explains that the benefit of stealing whilst train-surfing is two-fold. Train-surfing and stealing impresses young girls with an image of macho power which they find attractive. It also gives an image of giving and sharing that is associated with stealing on the trains. According to Alex, deviant behavior on the trains is seen favorably by young female passengers, as it is an opportunity for young girls to also receive monetary benefits. This quotation highlights the notion that being a train-surfer is perceived by young females as being 'the provider'. This sense of being 'the provider' can also be seen as a key developmental stage of adolescence. During adolescence teenagers begin to understand the roles and responsibilities expected of an adult. It

is interesting to note the irony that Alex suggests; that he understands the responsible role of a male adult as 'provider' yet he remains engaging in a relatively juvenile and impulsive activity. This quotation also lends itself to the broader gendered construction of male, as the provider, an expectation that endorses male stereotypes.

This also highlights the 'material culture' that forms part of the train-surfing phenomenon. The above statement highlights the pressure placed on the young train-surfers to be able to buy things in order 'to get a girl'. Materialism has in recent decades increased and appears to target the youth, who through their searching for their own identities' often become sucked into consumerism. According to Chaplin and John (2007) materialism tends to increase from middle childhood to early adolescence and declines from early to late adolescence. They also found that high-self esteem is associated with lowered expressions of materialism. Chaplin and John (2007) found that young people with a higher self-esteem tended to rely less on consumerism and materialism. It is possible that Alex's low self-esteem has caused him to feel pressure to buy material things for his girlfriends. Another possibility is that giving material possessions can be used in exchange for sexual acts. According to a study by Dunckle, Jewkes, Nduna, Jama, Levin, Sikweyyiya and Koss (2007) 17.7% of the 1288 young men that were interviewed admitted to giving material resources or money to casual sex partners, as an informal exchange for sex.

This statement also highlights the notion that train-surfers self-esteem is largely dependent on what young female passengers perceive of them. According to Taubman-Ben-Ari (2004) self-esteem has been cited on numerous times as a predictor for high-risk behaviour. Some studies suggest that high risk-taking adolescents have enhanced self-esteem and are less likely to suffer from depression than adolescents who are low risk-takers. Some adolescents may use risk-taking

behavior as way to enhance intrinsic growth needs. These adolescents use risk taking behaviours to validate their already perceived high-self esteem. Other adolescents who have a low self-esteem may use risk-taking behaviours to enhance extrinsic needs such as fame and positive perceptions in the eyes of others. These individuals protect their inferior feelings by taking higher risks. It appears that Alex and many of the other respondents fall into this category. From the above quotation it has emerged that Alex's self-esteem is largely dependant on what others perceive of him.

Finally, Alex also revealed that being a train-surfer showed an element of strength and power to young girls.

“Most of the chicks, I can say chicks; you going to be famous, okay King is on the top of the train, King is going to protect me on the train, because no one is going to take my necklace. When I propose you ne, even if you don't love me, you are going to say yes I love King, because King is fun on the trains.”

In the above quotation, Alex again highlights the 'protector' role that is expected of him as a young growing male. It also highlights the notion that even if young girls don't love him they should feel privileged to accept the proposal of Alex, the train-surfer. This desire for acknowledgement and fame, particularly from young females was found to be a significant motivation for involvement in train-surfing.

Sub-theme 3: Issues of leadership, self-pride and responsibility.

In attempting to account for the participants' constructions of identity, a number of different issues emerged from the interviews. They include issues of leadership, self-pride and a sense of responsibility as well as taking initiative in eradicating train-surfing in South Africa.

Two of the participants have been employed by Metrorail as “Safety Ambassadors”. This intervention is aimed at preventing the incidence of train-surfing through the use of reformed train-surfers acting as role models for the youth. Metrorail is a government-owned public corporation that is an urban passenger rail service offered to the public for transportation use (Prozzi, Naude, Sperling & Delucchi, 2002). According to Mabe (as cited in Grange, 2007) it is through this South African Rail Commuter Co-operation (SARCC) initiative that greater awareness about the dangers of train-surfing is brought to the public’s attention. An interesting comparison in the participants’ descriptions is the contrast presented between safety and risk. MacGyver and Alex were originally drawn to train-surfing because of the risk associated with the activity and are now employed to protect interested others from becoming involved for safety reasons.

The respondents within this study showed elements of pride, leadership and responsibility in their role as “Safety Ambassadors”. MacGyver explained his role as a “Safety Ambassador” as:

“Well I look after the boys on the train”.

MacGyver tends to perceive his role as a “Safety Ambassador” as one of a protector and role model for other boys. Alex expressed signs of leadership and authority when he said:

“Now I am working at Metrorail as a Safety Ambassador and we tell people ‘don’t do stuff like that’. ‘Don’t climb on moving trains, because it is dangerous.’”

Alex expressed a conflict of interest between his loyalty and support for Metrorail and his loyalty and support to his train-surfing peers and his commitment to train-surfing. Alex’s statement highlights the ambivalence that many of the train-surfers experience. On one hand Alex takes on the ‘care-taking’ role, whilst on the other hand he identifies himself as the ‘risk-taker’.

“I have a problem, if the way you work ne, I find you train-surf; I can tell Metrorail take only the people that are train-surfing. I find you take some case, you get out and I am supposed to arrest you, you see. I can say that I am still doing surfing.”

Alex expresses the guilt and uneasiness he feels towards ‘selling out’ his train-surfing peers. In this above quotation, he also expresses the contradiction in his feelings towards the notion of train-surfing. On the one hand, in order to be perceived as the responsible and trustworthy “Safety Ambassador” he feels obliged, as part of his job responsibility, to oppose train-surfing. At the same time he is still intrigued by the activity and admits to still being involved in train-surfing. According to Seifert and Hoffnung (1994) adolescents tend to pressure one another to conform to peer-orientated activities. It is possible that Alex’s uneasiness regarding his involvement in train-surfing and being a “Safety Ambassador” stems from his desire to conform to his peer group. It is also possible that Alex’s discomfort lies in him having to decide which ‘source’ he is going to draw on at that particular time to feel good about himself.

It appears that both Alex and MacGyver feel a sense of responsibility regarding the increase in train-surfing. During his interview, MacGyver expressed an element of shame regarding his involvement in train-surfing and responsibility for some of the negative (and fatal) consequences thereof.

“For it was us who started it, so we must be in the forefront of stopping it....This year, we used to see thirteen dead by June, but we managed to do only four so far this year.”

The above quotation, expresses the remorse that MacGyver feels regarding his encouragement of train-surfing. It also highlights his sense of responsibility in taking on the burden of reducing the rates of train-surfing and train-surfing accidents. His views in the decline in the number of deaths due to train-surfing accidents indicates an element of pride and personal responsibility that he

has helped prevent train-surfing accidents. According to Manaster (1989) children become socialised by learning to incorporate roles of people around them. Through interaction with other adolescents they begin to identify and empathise with them. It may be that MacGyver's involvement in preventing train-surfing accidents reduces the guilt that he feels because he was one of the people that started train-surfing. MacGyver's above statement indicates that he has taken on the responsibility for people around him. It is possible that MacGyver wanted to portray himself in a socially desirable manner in the eyes of the white, female researcher.

The above analysis shows a shift from being an addicted train-surfer to being a 'Safety Ambassador'. This process of transition appears to not be an easy one, as it evokes feelings of sadness and loss in an unfamiliar world. It is possible that these train-surfers feel a loss of a certain kind of masculinity, manhood and 'celebrity fantasy' as they negotiate their roles as 'Safety Ambassadors'. These participants appear to be in a 'lose lose' situation. On the one hand they have outgrown train-surfing. They realize that it is not good for them and almost 'uncool' because of their age. On the other hand being a Safety Ambassador means being left out of a system and brotherhood that was once so close to them. They appear to cling on to this title 'Safety Ambassador as a means to feel that they belong to something.

Train-surfing appears to play a vital role in constructing the participant's identity. The train-surfing identity appears to be multi-faceted and includes the importance of nicknames, the desire for fame and prestige and the role of leadership and self-pride. It should also be acknowledged that train-surfing does not take place within an intrapersonal vacuum but also occurs is impacted by interpersonal family dynamics.

THEME 2: FAMILY DYNAMICS

Black South African families have a long history of discord and oppression due to South Africa's political history. For many decades black families have been fragmented due to limited employment opportunities and migration labour. Many black men were forced to work on the mines in Gauteng, leaving their wives, children and homes. This long history of dispersed family life remains a problem today, where it is commonly found that black men are forced to be migrant labourers as a means to support their families financially. Black men also have also been affected by a long history of political and cultural violence, and social problems that have been associated with alcohol abuse, domestic violence and other issues that have impacted on black family life. According to Seekings (1996) "urbanization, industrialization, expanding education, state repression and the context of political struggle, have combined to generate chronic authority and cohesion within the 'community'" (p.110). As a result, many black fathers end up in prisons or deceased.

A central theme that emerged out of the interviews was that of family dynamics and relationships. Three thematic issues were extracted from the transcripts circulating around the relationships that train-surfers have with their family members. The first being issues of family support. Many of the train-surfers spoke of a lack of financial and emotional support from family members. All of the participants spoke of the absence of a father figure. Some participants' fathers have died, whilst others have moved away or separated from the mothers. Many of the participants also spoke of how their emotional and financial support therefore devolved onto their mothers. Single parenting by mothers tended to impose a financial burden on the train-surfers. A final pattern that emerged was the sub-theme of deception. Many of the participants spoke of their dishonesty towards family members relating to their involvement in train-surfing.

Sub-theme 1: Issues of family support

Many of the respondents reported a lack of financial support from family members. Mthi explained:

“My mother was working a very good job, but you wouldn’t say. She never bought me anything. I had tekkies that were open; it wasn’t nice.”

Mthi’s highlights the financially impoverished environment from which he has come. He refers to his shoes being worn through, which provide a powerful symbol of his disadvantaged background. He uses this symbol to explain that he was not even given the basic necessity of proper shoes, despite the fact that his mother had stable employment and could afford this necessity. Alex explained that the death of his father increased the financial burden on himself and his younger brother when he said:

“At the time he passed away, my mother was not working. We agreed as young boys that we had to do something, we have to try, the situation at home is not good.”

The death of Alex’s father inevitably burdened him as he took on the responsibility of providing for his family members. Loverboy explained that he was not financially supported by his core family members, but by an older brother.

“But there the person that took care of me and my brother is working, so he moves on; but he is paying for me.”

The rest of the respondents did not make reference to a lack of financial support from their families. This finding could be due to the fact that financial difficulty is the norm in their environment. Many of the participants live in Soweto, a South African Township, like many

others characterised by widespread economic deprivation. It is also possible that because finances were not a question posed to them, the participants did not feel the need to incorporate economic deprivation into the interviews, as poverty in Soweto is the norm.

Another pattern that emerged out of the research was a reported lack of emotional support from family members. Mthi claimed that he was neglected by his biological parents.

“All I can say is that I never got any tender from my family. Like they were too busy to take care of me. I never felt any love from my parents.”

Mthi draws attention to the emotional abandonment that he experienced from his family members in his upbringing. Within this above statement and throughout the interview Mthi expressed an element of bitterness and resentment towards his family members as a result of his emotionally and financially impoverished environment. He explains that he is not a priority in the eyes of his family and acknowledges the pain that he feels in reaching this conclusion.

It is interesting to note the way in which Mthi uses the words ‘care’, ‘tender’ and ‘love’ in the above statement. Mthi appears to dramatise or sensationalise his feelings by using emotive language to describe his interactions with his family members. It is possible that Mthi does this as a means to feel acknowledged in the interview by the female researcher and female translator. It is important to recognise that words have gender associations and the words ‘tender’, ‘care’ and ‘love’ are generally feminised. A conflict arises with the use of these particular words, in that Mthi on the one hand portrays himself as ‘the train-surfer’ which elicits an impression of strength and bravery and yet on the other hand he uses these words to align himself with the female translator and researcher by using language that hold a feminine stance. MacGyver expressed an emotionally distant relationship with his family members and reported that he was not usually at home to interact with them.

Issues of financial support from family members were found to be noteworthy subtheme within the transcripts.

Sub-theme 2: Absence of biological father versus reliable mother figures

According to Grange (2007) a lack of adult supervision appears to be a significant trend amongst train-surfers. According to Mabe (as cited in Grange, 2007) train-surfers tend to originate from single-parent families and a poor family structure. The notion of adult supervision is problematic within the South African context, where many adolescents are not supervised after school, due to parents working or absent parents. It was found that although many of the train-surfers, like many other South African youth do not fall neatly into the traditional family structure, where there is an involved mother and father, many of them are located within a non-conformist family unit that is characterised by community, friendship and female family member's involvement. All six of the participants expressed an absence of a biological father. This finding correlates with the Hesselink (2008) study that found that of the nine participants interviewed, the majority of them spoke of absent fathers. MacGyver had contact but an emotionally distant relationship with his father.

“I don't live with my father...I see him twice a month.”

MacGyver revealed very little about his relationship with his father and showed an element of detachment when the subject of his father was brought up during the interview. It appears that his father is not a significant member in MacGyver's life. Some respondents explained that their biological fathers had passed away or were re-married with other children. Mthi explained:

“I can’t say my father loves me because even now, I’m turning eighteen but he doesn’t come to see me.”

Once again Mthi emphasises an emotional vulnerability and bitterness that he feels regarding the absence of an active father figure in his life. He places emphasis on the significance of turning eighteen and becoming an adult. He reveals the hurt that he feels in response to his father's lack of acknowledgement of reaching adulthood.

Another central pattern that emerged was that although respondents had no father figures in their lives, they did remain loyal and received support from mother figures. This finding correlates with the Special Assignment documentary by Bletcher and Raphoto (2006). They found that most of the interviewees had lost their biological fathers and had been brought up by their biological mothers. Many respondents terminated their involvement in train-surfing due to their loyalty to their mother figures. Scorpion:

“I said to myself let me stop, I want to make my mother happy.” “I saw that my granny was feeling the pain for she actually wept.”

Scorpion revealed a softer side when he spoke about his mother and grandmother. He reveals that his choices are greatly influenced by the mother figures in his life. It is possible that train-surfers use train-surfing as a cry for help and as a replacement of an absent father figure. The brotherhood bonds formed whilst train-surfing and the involvement in train-surfing may provide the boys with the support and guidance that they require from their father's who are not present. Family dynamics were found to be a major theme within the transcripts, with a focus on perceived support from caregivers.

Sub-theme 3: Deception

The majority of the respondents admitted to lying to their caregivers about their involvement in train-surfing. Some respondents believed that for a long time their caregivers had no reason to believe that their sons were involved in wrongdoings.

“At home, they never had anyone reporting me; they only knew their good boy, so they were alarmed when they learned because I did things, but hide them as I could.”

Scorpion emphasises the significance behind the constructions of the word ‘good boy’ versus ‘bad boy’. He explains the false perception or image that he believes his family had of him and the shock that they experienced in finding out the truth. Romario also explained that his family is yet to find out about his own involvement in train-surfing despite their knowing of his brother’s involvement. It is interesting to note the confidence and arrogance in Romario’s voice that he believed he is too skilled to get caught.

A significant pattern that emerged from the interviews was the activity of bunking school as a means to engage in train-surfing. Some respondents explained how they manipulated their caregivers into believing that they were attending school by wearing their school uniform and carrying their school books. Romario explained:

“I also decided to bunk school and would come with my casual clothes in my school bag.”

It is interesting to note how Romario describes the routine of a typical train-surfing day. The use of the term ‘casual clothes’ suggests an element of theatre and performance where changing into a new outfit can be compared to a prop in the new scene change of a drama. By changing out of

monotonous school uniform into interesting and different casual clothes, he takes on the character of ‘that train-surfer’ and ‘the performer’. Alex said:

“I can say I woke up everyday to go to school; at least that is what they knew at home.”

During the interview, Mthi role played the interaction between himself and his caregiver.

“Where are you going? No I am going to school. You have your books, you have your uniform on. No, you are passing the school.”

Mthi also portrays a theatrical element in which he role plays the experiences he has shared with his family. He appears to take on the role of a train-surfer in a production around train-surfing. His books and uniform can be seen as ‘props’ for the role of the school pupil.

Another theme that emerged was the peer pressure to bunk school, just as their train-surfing peers were doing. Scorpion explained how he befriended a train-surfer who bunked school and therefore he decided to do the same.

“So we befriended one another; they normally do not go to school, so I decided to bunk.”

Scorpion highlights the importance of conformity and peer pressure when making friends. The sub-theme of deception is a particularly interesting one as it highlights a key part in the developmental stage of adolescence. Family dynamics was found to be a significant theme in understanding the train-surfing identity and the life stories that these participants share. Presence or absence of support, absence of a father figure, single parenting motherhood and dishonesty by participants to caregivers, were all found to be relevant in understanding family dynamics.

THEME 3: TRAIN-SURFING: A SPORT OR AN ADDICTION?

A common pattern that emerged out of the interviews was the way in which train-surfing was perceived by the train-surfers. Some participants described the phenomenon as a hobby or sport, whilst others used symbols of addiction to describe their involvement in the activity. Also interesting to note is the drug and alcohol abuse that was found to be associated with train-surfing.

Sub-theme 1: Train-surfing as perceived as a hobby/sport

In general, most respondents perceived train-surfing as a hobby, talent or sport. Involvement in sport has become an integral part of South African culture. According to Santrock (2005) participation in sports can have both a negative and positive impact on adolescents. Involvement in sport can provide exercise, healthy competition, promotion of self-esteem and a setting for the development of peer relationships. Negative outcomes include pressure to perform, physical injuries, distraction from school work and unrealistic expectations to succeed as an athlete. In examining this definition and description of what involvement in sport provides, it is interesting to note the numerous positive and negative outcomes that train-surfing as a ‘sport’ can provide based on what was said in the interviews. Some respondents explained train-surfing as merely another athletic sport. Mthi:

“But now you know train-surfing is like, when you wake up in the morning, you feel that today is a day for train-surfing. You just have that feeling, like maybe today I want to go play tennis.”

Mthi compares his involvement in train-surfing to any other sport in which one invests time and interest. His description also highlights the normality of the phenomenon, that train-surfing is

perceived by him as something 'normal' or 'casual'. Scorpion compared the success and failures of train-surfing to the success and failures in a soccer game.

“When you are in the train, you take it as in the soccer game, because in the soccer game when you play, well people love it but when you don't they dislike you. So when train-surfing people love it but once you become injured you find that people are no longer happy and their hearts are sore.”

Alex refers to train-surfing as something much more significant than a petty hobby.

“I can say, because most of the people call the train-surfing a hobby, you see now we take the train-surfing as a sport.”

Romario claimed that train-surfing was a form of exercise. Train-surfing appears to provide an activity that bonds many of these young peers together. It is possible that train-surfing provides a route for healthy competition and promotes self-esteem and confidence in their abilities. In examining the context in which these participants belong to, these individuals are not exposed to facilities such as swimming pools or opportunities that encourage competitive sports.

Sub-theme 2: Train-surfing: An Addiction?

Many participants used metaphors of addiction in describing their involvement in train-surfing. Most of the participants were also very ambiguous about their current involvement in train-surfing, resulting in the conclusion that many of the participants continue to train-surf despite claiming to have stopped. Their contradictions in the interviews relating to their involvement in train-surfing highlight a possible addiction to the phenomenon.

Alex attributed his initial involvement in train-surfing to his attendance at a new unfamiliar school. He said:

“I think it was 1999, they sent me to school in Jo'burg and that is where I started the train-surfing habits.”

In the above statement, Alex refers to his involvement in train-surfing as ‘train-surfing habits’. The construction of the word ‘habit’ indicates that Alex perceives his involvement in train-surfing to that of a drug or alcohol addiction. This construction suggests that Alex is addicted to the phenomenon and lacks the control to stop himself from train-surfing.

Loverboy:

“Something that you get addicted to it, it’s like you want a smoke. Ja, it’s in the blood...Something tells you that you must also be there.”

Loverboy compares his addiction to train-surfing with an addiction to smoking. He explains the desire to train-surf is a type of calling found deep within his being. Loverboy:

“Sometimes we used to smoke all this stuff, dagga, cigarettes.”

“No, you passing the school, you going where? You going to Jozi. When you get there, you drink, you drink, you smoke. When you come back, you under the influence of drugs and alcohol and go ontop of the moving train...Sometimes it’s the stress that makes you go ontop, sometimes it was alcohol, sometimes it was drugs.”

In the above two statements, Mthi highlights the relationship between train-surfing and other addictions. He also highlights how he used to bunk school as a means to train-surf. Mthi suggests that train-surfing and the effects of alcohol and drugs allow him to escape the hardship and stress of his reality. Scorpion stated:

“You find that out of the five, one has died, killed by the train. You are all going to agree that you must stop the train because you are being killed. Not that we are saying lets stop, but we are saying we must stop it. We do not say lets stop today, now, we nonetheless agree that we are going to stop it, we are in actual fact carrying on until the next one dies. Then it becomes ordinary, you get used to it because most of your friends have died.... You see this thing becomes addictive.”

From the above quotation, Scorpion taps into the idea that train-surfing is a type of addiction. Scorpion conveys that he and his train-surfing friends to some extent realise the consequences of

train-surfing. He describes train-surfing as an addiction. They want to stop, they realise that it is dangerous, but they are unable to make a formal commitment to terminate. Scorpion explains and describes the deaths as ordinary occurrences. He highlights the notion that death whilst train-surfing is inevitable, but he no longer has self-control to stop himself train-surfing. This social construction allows him to minimise the powerfulness of his perception of death. According to Rios (1993) train-surfers in Brazil become involved in train-surfing because of the exhilaration and sense of adventure that they feel and because of the threat of death that is instilled in them whilst train-surfing.

Throughout the transcripts it was found that the participants had used symbols of addiction when describing their involvement in train-surfing. Many of them also compared train-surfing as a sport or hobby, that involved time, commitment and practice. It appears that many of the participants have formed part of the train-surfing recovery process in which many of them become addicted to train-surfing, relapse, feel guilty about relapsing and then terminate train-surfing temporarily.

THEME 4: TRAIN-SURFING AND FRIENDSHIPS: “My friends are my brothers”

Many of the participants attributed their involvement in train-surfing to peer pressure and friendships. On the one hand the activity of train-surfing appears to be associated with making friends and being involved in many different peer activities. While on the hand it has been found that peer pressure appears to be a significant contributor for adolescents feeling pressured into participation in the train-surfing activity.

Sub-theme 1: The significance of friendships

Friendships appear to be a major contributor to train-surfers' involvement in train-surfing. According to Sullivan (1953, as cited in Santrock, 2005) friendships play a significant role in adolescents' development and a sense of wellbeing. During the period of adolescence, teenagers become less reliant on family members and begin to turn to peers for emotional support. It appears that male peers provide love, care and nurturance. These friends seem to play a role in confirming one another's sense of manhood due to a lack of positive male figures in their lives.

Loverboy perceived his male peers as brothers.

“The people who surfers, I took them as my brothers, for they were taking care of me when I am with them.”

Alex looked towards his peers for financial and emotional support.

“Ja I can say my friends was important to me, since my father passed away. Because the one that was helping me with things, he was the one who give me shoes.”

This particular participant explained a conflict of interest between his loyalty and support for Metrorail as a Safety Ambassador and his loyalty to his friends who he should arrest if he catches them train-surfing.

Mthi explained his ambivalence about the role played by his peers. On one hand he perceives them as emotionally supportive. While on the other hand he claimed that his peers do not fully understand his pain. Mthi's portrayal of his peers as supportive and at the same time not showing empathy can be linked back to his relationship with his family. The rejection that he experienced from his parents is reinforced by the superficial relationship that he has with his friends. Mthi looks towards his friends for comfort and support after the rejection of his family and is severely

disappointed when he does not receive this. Interesting to note, is that this process of feeling misunderstood is universal to all adolescents.

Sub-theme 2: The role of peer pressure in train-surfing

Peer pressure can be seen as a key dilemma in the period of adolescence. Peer groups tend to demand conformity to group norms in return for status and acceptance (Steifert & Hoffnung, 1994). Loverboy explained how befriending train-surfing peers led to role modelling of their behaviour.

“So we befriended one another, they normally do not go to school, so I decided to bunk and I would come with my causal clothes in the school bag and when I arrive at the station I would change and wear them, and I will go with him. As we go, he is orientating me and went to this corner they played jukebox and they drank and I also drank.”

In the above statement, Loverboy describes how he met his train-surfing peers and how they guided and taught him about the train-surfing phenomenon and activities associated with train-surfing, such as drinking and bunking school. This also reveals a movement from a more personal identity based on the individual to a more social identity- one that incorporates belonging to a group. According to Forehand and Wierson (1993, as cited in Taubman-Ben-Ari, 2004) the adolescent phase marks a shift between relying on parents to relying on peers. Peers become an important resource of reinforcement, modelling and support. Loverboy appears to mirror his peers' behaviour. This modelling of behaviour can be compared to that of a caregiver and infant and how a caregiver who teaches the child to become skilled in various developmental tasks. In the same way Loverboy looks to his train-surfing role models for guidance and direction. Train-surfers may seek this attachment from train-surfing peers as a means to compensate for a lack of guidance from their parents.

Alex spoke of the fear of being ridiculed by friends as a result of terminating train-surfing and how a lack of involvement in train-surfing leads to isolation and rejection by friends.

“Yes I can say I see someone doing it, because all my friends was doing the train-surfing, it was only me that was not doing the train-surfing, you see. They starting to pressurise me, they say you can’t go with me if you are not doing the train-surfings, if you not take someone’s phones, bags, you see. And I was in fact going to lose my friend if (inaudible) because if you are going to take somebody’s phone, you receive money, you see”.

It is interesting to note the construct of the word ‘pressurise’ that Alex uses in the above statement. Many of the train-surfers seemed to cling onto this word during the interview as a means to justify their involvement in train-surfing. Adolescence is a period in which peer pressure to engage in wrongdoings becomes a major concern for parents. School learners in South African schools are exposed through psycho-educational programmes of the dangers of peer pressure to do drugs or drink alcohol or engage in risky sexual behaviour. Mthi spoke of his dependency on his friends and his people-pleasing personality character.

“Sometimes, um let me say I like pleasing my friends a lot, you see. They pressurise me easily, you see.”

Mthi also portrays his involvement in train-surfing in this way, thereby disassociating himself from the blame and guilt that he feels about his involvement in train-surfing. Mthi also spoke of how he was pressured by his peers to steal on the trains whilst train-surfing in order to participate in normal friendship activities. Adolescent friends may join forces to engage in reckless behaviour together because they crave social desirability that results from participating in high-risk behaviours. These include being part of the group, making friends and having a good time. (Cooper,1994, as cited in Taubman-Ben-Ari, 2004).

“So at many times I would stress and get under pressure because sometimes I needed money. I didn’t get all the money I needed. Maybe like

sometimes me and my friends would go out to the movies, I don't have enough cash on me. Now I would feel the pressure, and what do I do to get the money? I go out maybe do something bad to some people..."

Again Mthi justifies his involvement in train-surfing by externalising the blame. He suggests that he is unable to maintain normal friendship activities such as going to the movies, without stealing on the trains whilst train-surfing.

Many of the participants spoke of peer pressure and friendships as one of the key influences in them becoming involved in train-surfing.

THEME 5: GANG-RELATED DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR

Gangs and gang-related behaviours have a long history in South Africa beginning in prisons in the late 1880's and later in the South African townships. The development of gangs in South Africa appears to have a close relationship with the forced removals instituted by the South African Apartheid government. According to Kinnes (2000) gangs develop out of an unequal distribution of power in a society. There are four main types of gangs and they include street gangs, family mafia, prison gangs and syndicate gangs (Kinnes, 2000). Some train-surfers appear to fit into the street gangs category which tend to be led by young people who exert their power of the rest of the group. Street gangs generally are involved in petty theft, robberies, drug dealing and distortion (Kinnes, 2000). A number of sophisticated gang-related manoeuvres in relation to train-surfing were discussed during the interviews. These include using train-surfing as a means to steal from train commuters, train-surfers involvement with the law, violent behaviours and group intimidation. These issues have been divided up into two broad sub-themes and include gang-related behaviours and violence and its consequences.

Sub-theme 1: Gang-related behaviours.

In examining the phenomenon of train-surfing, it has been found that train-surfers operate in groups or gangs. Whilst some attribute their involvement in train-surfing to the benefits of gaining popularity among peers groups others operate in groups who train-surf for the exhilaration. Still others operate in gangs who steal from other passengers. The transcripts showed a significant focus on train-surfers, who use this activity as a means to steal.

In general, the respondents attributed their involvement in stealing from other train passengers on the trains to economic difficulties. Many participants spoke of their involvement in group intimidation as a means to steal from other passengers and learners on the trains. Possessions such as jewellery, bags and cellular phones are sold for cash. Alex:

“I will go to school hungry as that, and one of my friend will come with a plan, then we would steal and get money. We would frighten the learners and then sell the things that we got, after that we’ll buy alcohol first and then buy food. We take people’s earrings, necklaces and a phone. While the train is moving, and maybe there is two of us, one will hold the door and then I will see the earrings and train I will quickly grab these things if one hold’s one neck I will run away”.

The above statement highlights the basic need for food and the notion that stealing prevents one from going hungry. It also highlights the priorities of alcohol and food. Despite being hungry, Alex explains that alcohol is bought first. Alex portrays a picture of group intimidation and teamwork, as a means to steal. The moving trains appear to be symbolic of an escape procedure. On one level the moving train allows the train-surfers to escape to crime scene. At another level, the moving train may be seen as an escape from reality and into the realm of fantasy. Alex explained:

“Yes it does happen, you take things from someone and the platform is in the margins and the people want to catch you, you jump into the spaces.”

It is interesting to note that this particular participant was interviewed by Russouw (2007) from the Saturday Star. During this interview Alex spoke of stealing bags, jewellery and cellular phones and using the money made, on drugs and alcohol. Of the six participants interviewed in the study, three of them admitted to stealing on the trains. However, in the Hesselink (2008) study, none of the nine participants admitted using train-surfing as a means to engage in criminal activities. The contradictory findings in examining the Rusouw (2007) media report, the Hesselink (2008) Journal article and the study under investigation will now be explored.

In looking at the findings in which different professionals (journalists and researchers) have come into contact with train-surfers, it is possible that some of the train-surfers have been interviewed by more than one investigator. This is certainly true for Alex who has been interviewed for the current study and the journalist’s interview. It is also possible that the current study coincidentally used participants that belong to the gang in which stealing on the trains is promoted. It is therefore possible that involvement in train-surfing to facilitate criminal activities is not as common as previously expected. It is also possible that the many media reports associating train-surfing with stealing were possibly sensationalised and over emphasised by journalists. Should this be the case, then the association between train-surfing and theft might have been exaggerated and based on a value judgement.

MacGyver reported that money made through stealing is divided equally amongst the train-surfers and the money is used to buy clothing.

“I spend it, maybe if we take we are four we will share it, buy tekkies because you know it will suddenly get finished.”

MacGyver's above statement highlights his basic and fundamental needs as a black youth living in Soweto. He highlights a type of order or understanding that he has with his friends, in which money made from stealing is split evenly. A noteworthy observation is the 'sharing' aspect associated with stealing. Although these particular train-surfers are involved in theft and deceit to the public from whom they steal, they do however remain fair in their friendships and split the money evenly. Loverboy spoke of the peer pressure associated with stealing.

"They started to pressurise me, they say you can't go with me if you are not doing the train-surfing, if you not take someone's phones, bags, you see."

Loverboy's above statement foregrounds the relationship between train-surfing, stealing and peer pressure. It appears that belonging to a group has great significance for many participants. While some respondents admitted to their involvement in stealing, Romario claimed that stealing was not his motivation for train-surfing and that he had no involvement in stealing.

Alex described a train-surfing pecking order that was established during the process of stealing.

"You see the rodors is the group of the young ones from the age of 14 years downwards and the riders are from age 16 upwards, but we were all doing the same thing. At the time we started there was what was called the stead pole, where we were taking the schoolbags from there we targeted the suitcases. The rodors were the ones telling us about the schools where there were these schoolbags called carrymore bags. When they have told us the elderly group we will take the bags and sell them about R200 each and the Rodors could only sell it a R100. So if I have sold the bag I will take a R30 and give it to the Rodor. So the Rodors brought us customers. This is where the stealing started from and the schools started pressurizing us by hiring security officers and there we saw that there are alternative ways of doing this, I can take your chain from the train, I can take away your cell phone in the train and get away while the train is in motion. This is where the idea of riding and running on top of the train started."

In the above statement Alex highlights the sophistication that has developed amongst the train-surfers who steal on the trains. Each train-surfer has his role in the execution of the plan to steal

from other train passengers. According to Kinnes (2000) gang members tend to adhere to the values learnt from other gang members. The train-surfers can be seen as opportunists preying on the vulnerable school children. Alex's description of group intimidation and theft can be compared to a pack of lions in the animal kingdom. Each lion has his/her role. Alex also suggests how the concept of train-surfing developed out of stealing on the trains. He also added that an increase in security presence at school had led to an increase in stealing on the trains. Alex admits to currently continuing to steal but not as frequently as before and he is more cautious about getting caught. He also described how stealing depends on the location of the rich and the measures of caution taken to prevent getting caught.

“So this thing we are still doing it but not as before. If things are bad I will not take the local train I will take the Randfontein train because it is rode by white people so you know if you can get to it you will find good things, take out my knife and stab and take a cell-phone and get a laptop, things that I know they will give good money after selling them. So that is why I do not go to the local train because there people know me.”

Alex reveals an opportunistic trait in this above statement. He explains that his strategies for stealing on the train have changed. He describes the unpopularity and suspicion that he experiences on the local train by the other train-commuters, due to his reputation. With this knowledge in mind, he has adapted his stealing tactics and has moved to a new white community, as a means to steal on the train, where people do not know of his reputation. Pule Mabe from the South African Rail Commute Co-operation (SARCC) was quoted in the Russouw (2007) media report. He reportedly said that the SARCC have increased their number of Metrorail security guards, private security and the South African Police Services to help prevent train-surfing and other connected criminal behaviours. However he was also quoted as saying “Still, where there's a will, there's a way.” Alex confessed to bribing security guards as a means to continue stealing without getting caught. He also spoke of a lack of remorse for victims.

“Even if you are a woman or a man, I do not fear to stab, even my group. Even when I have done my thing and I see that this is a white person, the olden days stuff just comes to mind. You see if it’s a woman, I take out my knife and stab her and we get good things.”

The racialised and gendered aspects of Alex’s description reveal the impact that the previous Apartheid system in South Africa has on his perception of white people. During the days of the Apartheid regime, black South Africans were discriminated in a number of ways by white South Africans. Alex explains that he holds bitterness and resentment to white people because of the consequences that he and his community experienced as a result of the Apartheid regime. In this above statement, he described previous incidences where he intimidated people, even women. The emphasis that he places on the use of the word ‘woman’ reveals the norm that is instilled in Alex, that it is unacceptable to harm a woman. This emphasis demonstrates the bitterness that he feels to white people, so much so that he is willing to harm white women.

Some respondents referred to group intimidation as a feeling of belonging and group gain. According to Seifert and Hoffnung (1994) adolescent groups provide a support structure that is separate from the family, which allows the teenager to take on different identity roles. However groups can also place powerful pressures to conform. Many of the participants spoke of a lack of remorse or concern for others and an indifference to the negative opinion of others whilst in a group. Scorpion:

“There’s a lot of us, when you insult one of us, you are insulting the whole group, I don’t care that other people hate me.”

According to the South African media (Blecher & Raphoto, 2006) train-surfers appear to ‘be looking for love and acceptance.’ It may be that belonging to a train-surfing gang fulfils this need even if it is at the expense of harming others. MacGyver spoke of how group intimidation

was used to steal from other learners. Alex described the violence and tension between the various groups of train-surfers.

Gang-related behaviours were found to be of pivotal importance in the transcripts, and although the focus of the interviews was not on gangs, many of the participants brought up this subject in their discussion, indicating its importance to them in portraying their masculinity.

Sub-theme 2: Violence and its consequences

Some of the participants did reveal an aspect of violence in their train-surfing lives. Many of them have been victims and orchestrators of violence. The interviews also highlighted the participants' involvement with the law.

MacGyver spoke of a violent incident between himself and his friends as young boys, which led to his imprisonment for two days. Mthi spoke of how his mother was arrested for neglecting her children. Mthi also revealed that he was arrested for train-surfing, and imprisoned for three months. He attributed his time spent in prison as a motivation for train-surfing.

“I was arrested for train-surfing. I went three months in prison in Krugersdorp, I stayed there. After coming out, I was even worse. I went straight to the trains.”

Later on Mthi described how he was again arrested for train-surfing and stealing on the trains and how his time spent in prison helped him change his lifestyle to a more positive one.

Loverboy was warned of an arrest for vandalising the trains. This incident appeared to have changed his life. [Loverboy]

“They were not arresting us for real they were just warning us and they let us go. So at home they found out because the police went home and asked for me and they found out about this again. So they told me that they caught

me two times and for the third time they would arrest me for real and keep me in jail for three years. When I thought of spending three years in one space I just saw that I could use that time to do so many things, so I said let me do something different, if I can do wrong and be professional in it this means I can do something better, smart, or impressive and be professional at it”.

The threat of arrest gave Loverboy the opportunity to reflect on a possible lost future, which led him to change his mind and make the most of his future. MacGyver spoke of an incident in which he was violent towards a friend and spent three days in prison at the age of seven. The above observations indicate the significant role that the legal and criminal justices systems play in many of the participant’s lives. However many of the other respondents did not mention any violent acts. Romario perceived himself as one that avoids conflict and is respected by his community.

“I’m a sweet person, I don’t like fighting.” “You are not going to find me doing wrong things for I do not smoke nor drink. I play soccer only. Even where there is a fight you are not going to get me. If there is a fight you will not find me there you’ll find for me at home or in soccer. People treat me right for they know I am not a trouble maker. I do not deny that there are other train surfers who are trouble makers some are pick pockets but I am not like them, they also know that I only train surf, and that I only surf when I am going to school and after school. There are those that do no longer even go to school, even at their homes they are no longer given money so they decided to rob people so I am not like those that is why I say I am right”.

In examining Romario’s transcript, it became clear that he denies his involvement in deviance. Throughout his interview, he attempted to portray himself in a positive light with a ‘good-boy’ image. He claims to have no involvement in deviance on the trains, for example stealing, yet admits to the deviant act of train-surfing. Romario, at only sixteen years of age was much younger than the other boys. It is possible that he perceived the researcher and translator as judgmental, parental figures and thus deceitfully manipulated his answers.

Gang-related behaviour was found to be the most spoken about theme in all of the interviews. Interesting to observe, is that this particular theme was not used by the researcher as a discussion focus point. This indicates that these participants value this part of their lives and that being involved in a gang is perceived as something central in proving one's masculinity.

THEME 6: PERCEPTION OF DEATH: 'YOU RIDE TILL YOU DIE'

All of the transcripts revealed participants' intricate and complex perceptions of death. Most of the train-surfers attributed the death of their train-surfing friends due to train-surfing accidents to the termination of their involvement in train-surfing.

Mthi spoke of his perception to death as a process. Originally he denied the reality of death.

“Even if a person dies in front of me, a dead person is a dead person; you don't care. You just move on, you train-surf. They say 'you train-surf until you die.' But that is not good. For like parents, they see like eish suicide, you are killing yourself.”

From the above statement, it is clear that Mthi's perception of death has evolved through his exposure to the deaths of fellow train-surfers. Originally death was perceived as inevitable, 'no big deal'. He initially showed a lack of concern about the death of fellow train-surfers. Some studies have shown that an increase in mortality due to a particular high-risk activity may lead to an increase in attraction of that particular high-risk activity for men (Taubman-Ben-Ari, 2004). It is possible that Mthi and other train-surfers initially perceived death as something exciting and alluring.

Mthi's words highlight an element of denial in which the perception of death is minimised or played down. According to Taubman-Ben-Ari (2004) he found that people are more frequently attracted to risky behaviour as a way to resolve their existential fear of death. Taubman-Ben-Ari

(2004) found that people do not necessarily decide whether they want to live or die when they engage in risky behaviour, rather it is 'walking on the edge' and a sense of being alive that guides the behaviour. Further on in the statement, Mthi speaks of how parents of train-surfers perceived train-surfing accidents. According to him, parents of deceased train-surfers perceive train-surfing as suicidal tactics and look down on those who train-surf. From this, it is clear that Mthi's perception of the death of train-surfers is influenced by the social construction of older members in the community.

Later on in the interview Mthi spoke of death again.

"The first time that I was train-surfing, I never thought of things. A dead man is a dead man. So what! Tomorrow I'm still living, I don't care about him. He has his family, his family will grieve him. But at a certain point, things used to haunt me. I never slept at night."

Once again, Mthi speaks of the reality of death as a process. Initially the death of train-surfers did not bother him. His initial involvement in train-surfing can be seen as a selfish endeavour. Numerous studies have been conducted on the association between death anxiety and risk-taking. According to Cotter (2003) males tend to have lower death anxiety and are more willing to engage in high-risk behaviours than their female counterparts. Mthi then admits that his perception of train-surfing deaths has changed. He then admits to having had nightmares and flashbacks of the train-surfing accidents.

Loverboy also spoke of his perception of death as a process. He claims that the loss of his friends due to train-surfing accidents has encouraged him to stop train-surfing.

"It was just time to stop; you see some of my friends were dying. Some of them lost their hands, but they were still in it. So we were pushing one another like that. We were multiplying. Even when someone had died from the platform; the very same train that killed him, we get on its top and surf."

From the above statement, Loverboy initially expresses his desire to terminate his involvement in train-surfing because of the loss of his friends. He then suggests that although he and his friends understood the possible consequences of train-surfing, this did not deter them. Loverboy reveals an element of denial of the real consequences of these accidents. He then goes on to explain a lack of remorse felt for the death of other train-surfers. This quotation suggests a possible defiance and invincibility of train-surfing accidents and an element of 'it won't happen to me'. According to Taubman-Ben-Ari (2004) adolescents that are high sensation seekers tend to perceive a lower level of risk in many high-risk activities. These individuals also tend to expect more positive outcomes than do low sensation seekers. This study also found that adolescents that expect positive consequences rather than negative consequences from their behaviours are more likely to become involved in high-risk behaviours (Taubman-Ben-Ari, 2004). Loverboy continues:

"We do not die, we multiply. You see there was this thing that when one died, five new comers were joining."

This statement suggests an element of immortality, that even if one of them should die, the train-surfing dream lives on. This also links to the idea of belonging to a group and the notion that the group has an identity and 'life' of its own, separate from an aggregate of specific individuals. It is possible that part of the train-surfing attraction is the feeling of belonging. The sense of fatality is overlooked when faced with being part of something much greater than the insignificant individual.

MacGyver spoke of how the concept of death due to train-surfing became part of his identity.

"I think when you are on the train, you only think of one thing: 'You ride till you die'. Now I have buried many, we were twelve."

MacGyver initially speaks of an indifference to death. Through his experience, train-surfing tragedies and funerals have become the norm. According to Myers (2000) adolescents who are exposed to the loss of loved ones may develop inhibited grief, where there appears to be an absence of emotion and element of numbness. From the above quotation it appears that there is also a type of ownership, loyalty and responsibility to the deceased. MacGyver is expected to bury his deceased friends.

Scorpion also describes a particularly interesting incident that has shaped his perception of death. During the interview, he described at length an incident in which his friends died due to injuries from train-surfing, whilst under the influence of alcohol. Although Scorpion was not with the boy at the time of the accident, the boy's family rejected him and blamed him for his death. Scorpion was forbidden to attend the memorial service.

“His mother said ‘I killed him’ and dropped the telephone. The family came to Morafe and they arrived, they looked at me with strange eyes thinking that I was with him; they looked at him and they cried. On the day of the memorial service they said they do not want me there....That family said that I mustn't come anywhere near them because it was me who took Mrekzo to the train station...People would ask me as to what is happening tomorrow, and I will tell them we will meet at the train station, because I am human and I still love the train, despite the fact that I lost a friend and was accused.”

From this statement, it is clear that Scorpion's perception of death due train-surfing is influenced by the perceptions of older community members. Scorpion perceives death as extremely painful. He is reminded of the rejection, blame, shame and loss he felt after his friend's death. He uses train-surfing as a means to hide these painful memories. In reflecting on the interview with Scorpion, the researcher recalls a significant amount of anger that Scorpion revealed during the telling of his story. His story itself also contained elements of anger. This reflection and the previous statement correlates with a study by Myers (2000) who found that adolescents who

experience loss that is not sufficiently processed and supported, are much more vulnerable to exhibiting angry and defiant behaviours than those that did not have such experiences.

This important statement also highlights the social hierarchy and leadership of certain train-surfers. It appears that the death of this train-surfer caused a certain amount of chaos and disruption amongst the harmony of train-surfing. Within this chaos, the train-surfers look to Scorpion for leadership, even though he is the victim of blame and rejection. Scorpion takes on the leadership role and re-builds the structure and order lost in the disruption. This statement also highlights a certain amount of adaptability and self-protection that the train-surfers possess. In the wake of a traumatising event, the train-surfers continue in their train-surfing routine. They perceive the train as something familiar and protective in the midst of the unfamiliar and uncomfortable.

Scorpion claims to be addicted to train-surfing, even in the wake of his friend's death. It is possible however that he believes that he perceives the train as a place of safety, away from judgment and pain. The train for him may represent movement and life in his dark, dead world. People with a high sense of self-efficacy or internal locus of control tend to cope better with the shock of death and therefore tend to avoid taking unnecessary high- risks. Those who have a low self-efficacy or who have an external locus of control may feel helpless and may look for alternative ways to calm them. These may be high-risk behaviours despite the long-term consequences of such high-risk activities (Taubman-Ben-Ari, 2004). It is possible that these participants have a high sense of external locus of control and may use train-surfing as a means for self-empowerment to increase their sense of agency. Train-surfing may be used a survival mechanism and to create a sense of purpose.

They have suffered many disappointments in their lives and have been let down by many people. It is suggested that these train-surfers take risks such as train-surfing as a means to feel alive and do not focus on the consequences of such actions. It is possible that train-surfing in the context of this study may be equated with self-mutilation or suicidal ideation. The participants seem to be ‘disappointed young males’ in the words of Field (1998, in Morrell, 1998). It seems that their attempt in constructing a positive sense of masculine identity has been hindered by their historical and political context in which they live. According to Barker (2005) many men are frustrated by their realities which are characterised by social exclusion and poverty. They are not given the space to reflect on their frustrations and struggles and often turn to high-risk behaviours as a means to mask their feelings.

THEME 7: FUTURE GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

A major theme that emerged out of the interviews was an optimistic attitude regarding future endeavors and opportunities. Despite the pessimistic circumstances that the participants face, they generally perceive their futures as full of hope and opportunity. Most of the participants expressed a desire for a solid family structure, having a wife and children and a desire for furthering their education and obtaining highly qualifications and professions.

Alex spoke of a desire for economic prosperity and material possessions. He also spoke of a desire for social inclusion and desirability.

“I can say that in the next ten or fifteen years, I see myself having my own things, a car so I can live like everyone else. See my peers are already in offices, they have a good life.”

Alex's above statement highlights the inadequacy that he feels due to his economic deprivation. He believes that economic prosperity and material possessions will give him the opportunity to enjoy a comfortable, secure and stable life. Alex also suggests a desire for freedom and autonomy.

"I cannot be free, I am only at liberty when Metrorail says Alex go to Cape Town, that is where I am going to feel freedom... I cannot walk to Zola because I know many people do not like me, but I did that to myself. So if I can stay out of these things, I can be free and see my life being elevated."

In the above statement, Alex admits that his involvement in train-surfing and other wrongdoings has left him feeling trapped and constantly threatened by other community members who want revenge. Alex has decided that it is only through staying out of trouble that he can feel free and make a satisfactory life for himself.

Mthi also highlighted a change in lifestyle:

"You have to change, you see. I can't change by maybe one person, lets say Nombuthle. She can't change the whole me, you see. Somebody must help her, but not a friend, only God."

Mthi throughout the interview spoke of himself as already in the process of changing his lifestyle. In the above statement, Mthi admits that no human is capable of changing him, not even his best friend. It is only with the help of God that he can change. Mthi then continued:

"I regret ever going on tv, because now they saw the things I did and some people think maybe I haven't changed. I'm still the me, and they don't like look up to me. I can't like follow my goals because I already have a criminal record."

Here Mthi points out the difficulty he has in feeling optimistic about his future. He believes that his past wrongdoings have made people judge him, which will prevent him from

reaching his dreams. Despite this reality, he remains optimistic about studying a Chemical Engineering degree.

Scorpion spoke of an aspiration to teach his own children about good values.

“Yes, I want to teach my children, what I have done, and if you must do this and if you must do that.”

In this statement, Scorpion highlights the importance of having a family and teaching the importance of right and wrong. It is possible that Scorpion does not want his own children to make the same mistakes that he has. Loverboy spoke of a longing for a spiritual transformation with God, and a desire to show others his transformation.

“I want to see myself as a changing person, with God, because you know I don’t like to do something that you can see is wrong forever. You have to change, improve to show people that I am a new man.”

The above statement suggests a process of transformation that Loverboy wants to begin. Initially he speaks of a change on a spiritual dimension. He then admits that his wrongdoings have gone on for long enough. The final stage of the transformation will be one in which others accept him as a changed person. He refers to himself in this statement as a man, no longer a boy. It appears that train-surfing has bridged the gap between child and adult.

The notion of having an optimistic and hopeful perception about future endeavors, have strong implications for the black, South African, masculine identity. It is possible that these participants perceive their futures with a positive outlook as a coping mechanism in dealing with their bleak life circumstances. It is also possible that these participants do not perceive their lives’ as bleak, and may seem their lives with far more hope and opportunities than their predecessors living in Apartheid. It is also possible that these particular youth are no different than other adolescents, in

that they as other adolescents perceive their futures with optimism. These participants seem to aspire to a 'reversal of roles'. Many of them showed a desire to be good fathers and husbands, unlike their fathers who left them. It seems that the participants also want to achieve goals and dreams that their fathers failed to achieve and lead their families out of poverty and misery. These goals tend to represent an escape from the harsh realities of life in Soweto. As the researcher, in reflecting on the goals and aspirations, I felt that these goals were idealized fantasies. It does however serve a purpose in that it allows these young men to survive in their ruthless reality.

In examining these themes and sub-themes, it is clear that the black, masculine train-surfing identity is multi-faceted and incorporates a wide range of social and personal constructions and metaphors.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This final chapter will include an overview of the fundamental issues of train-surfing in adolescence and the importance of the study. It will then give a review of findings. It will conclude with possible limitations of the study and further recommendations for future research on the topic.

South Africa's vast cultural, historical, political, social and economic changes since the first democratic election in 1994 have had significant implications for the black, masculine identity. This dissertation focused on understanding the black, adolescent masculine identity in terms of high-risk behaviour. Publications on the phenomenon thus far are limited, making it a relevant topic of study. The numerous deaths and injuries as a result of train-surfing are particularly

disconcerting. This necessitates an understanding of the motives for adolescent involvement in train-surfing.

5.1 Review of findings

In analysing the themes from the interviews, it was found that the phenomenon of train-surfing played a vital role in the formation of the participants' identity. It was found that many of the train-surfers used (socially constructed) nicknames as a means to distinguish themselves within their train-surfing community. Their nicknames were found to include connotations of fame, power and prestige and were used as a means to enter into a type of 'fantasy world'. This has implications for the black, masculine identity, in that many black South African males use nicknames to separate themselves out and be noticed by their others. These nicknames are used by these young men to portray images of strength and fame, as a means to connect the title of the image and the actual reality. It is hoped by these young men, that by using these symbolic nicknames that they will actually live this reality. Nicknames are also universally common amongst adolescence and this shows one of the many similarities between black, South African young men and other male adolescence.

The desire for fame was found to be a significant focus in many of the interviews. Many of the participants have used train-surfing as a means to entertain others and show off their ability or as a means to be acknowledged and liked by others, particularly young females. Leadership, self-pride and responsibility appear to form part of the train-surfing identity. Some of the participants showed a sense of pride and personal responsibility in their role as "Safety Ambassadors." This common desire for fame or popularity resonates strongly with the phase of adolescence, where young people will go to great lengths to be noticed. What is different about these individuals is

the ambivalence that they portray in their quest for achieving fame. On the one hand, these participants partake in deviant behavior as a means to be noticed by young, female passengers. On the other hand, some of these participants have become assistants in preventing train-surfing through this activity have also achieved acknowledgement. The term 'Ambassador' has connotations with leadership and self-pride, which has very similar connotations to train-surfing. In both settings, these black male youth have used train-surfing as an opportunity for acceptance and acknowledgement, both of which are common in identity discovery.

Family dynamics play a significant role in the lives of train-surfers. Many of the participants in the study spoke of a lack of financial and emotional support from family members. Out of the six participants interviewed, all of them spoke of an absence of a father figure. Some of their fathers had died and the rest of the participants had little or no contact with their fathers. It is interesting that all of the participants spoke of an ever-present mother figure in their lives. Many of the participants also spoke of deceiving their family members about their involvement in train-surfing. A lack of an influential father figure can be seen as predictor in some black male youth becoming involved in deviant acts such as train-surfing. It is possible that the role of the 'brothers' or belonging to a gang is attractive in that it holds much needed role models for these young men. The role of the ever-present mother in many of these boys' lives may have a connection with one's involvement in train-surfing in that as a means to prove one's masculinity in a feminine environment, train-surfing is one such measure.

A significant finding was the different ways in which train-surfing is perceived by the train-surfers. Some participants perceived the activity as a sport or hobby, whilst others used symbols of addiction in describing the phenomenon. An interesting finding was that train-surfing was associated with other high-risk activities such as taking drugs and drinking alcohol. A common

finding was that many participants attributed peer pressure to their involvement in train-surfing. It appears that train-surfing, and its association with drugs' and alcohol may prove one's masculinity.

Gang-related deviant behaviour was also found to be associated with train-surfing and included group intimidation, stealing from other train commuters and coming into contact with the law. Violence appears to be a common occurrence in the lives of train-surfers and they particularly spoke of how they were both initiators and victims of violence.

The most interesting finding for the researcher was the train-surfers' perception of death. Many of them spoke of death as the norm and appeared numb to its finality. Witnessing the death of train-surfing friends gave some deeper understanding of their perception of death and witnessing the death. This had a profound affect of them and many of them have developed post-traumatic stress symptoms as a result. Many of the train-surfers attributed the fact that they no longer engage in train-surfing to these deaths.

A final finding was a strangely optimistic attitude that all of the train-surfers have regarding their future. Most of the participants expressed a desire for a solid family structure, having a wife and children and a desire for furthering their education and obtaining high qualifications.

5.2 Possible Limitations of the Study

The first very obvious limitation of this particular study was its qualitative nature of the study and therefore limited use of sample size. Qualitative analysis has disadvantage in not being able to draw any substantial conclusions about the phenomenon under investigation. Bearing this in mind the researcher could not generalise the findings of these participants to all train-surfers.

However due to the in-depth nature of the study, together with the other literature on the phenomenon, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the lives of train-surfers because of the clear-cut set of generalised findings and patterns which emerged in the interviews.

The inexperience of the researcher was found to be another limitation. The lack of mature interviewing skills restricted the depth of the interviews. It is my understanding that if my interview skills had been better at the time of the interviews, certain issues (for example the real essence of 'peer pressure') would have been more thoroughly examined.

The participants themselves were also found to have confounded the research, due to their immaturity and defensiveness. Some of the participants were guarded and were very resistant to share their story, whilst others appeared to be putting on a show and gave the researcher what they thought she wanted to hear. This definitely has placed a limitation on the study.

5.3 Recommendations

Further research on the topic would require a much bigger sample in order to have findings which could be used in a more general application. A quantitative study would also be of great interest should there be enough participants to engage in this particular study. An interesting contribution to the research on this topic would be to compare the phenomenon of train-surfing in South Africa and some other international country where the role of train-surfing is seen to be very different. A longitudinal study of the lives of the same participants would also add value to the academic realm.

The aim of this research was to explore the phenomenon of train-surfing not to oppose or attempt to prevent it. I believe that train-surfing fulfills a certain need in the lives of these boys and it is

not for me to judge them. I do however believe that it is our role as citizens of South Africa to understand this phenomenon in the South African context, so that we can create awareness about the dangers of this risky activity.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

I, _____, give consent to participate in a research project titled 'Train-surfing'. This project is being conducted under the supervision of Dr Jude Clark and was approved by the University of KwaZulu-Natal on 01/06/2008. The nature of this study has been explained to me by the researcher, Lindsay Mackay. I understand that my participation is greatly valued and appreciated by the researcher.

I understand that any information obtained from this study that can be identified by me will remain confidential and will not be given to anyone without my permission. I understand that my name and identity will not be exposed during the research process. My pseudonym or false name is _____. I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded.

If at any time I would like additional information about this project, I can contact Lindsay Mackay on 0842061667, or her supervisor Jude Clark on I understand that if I do agree to participate in the study, I have the right to change my mind at any time and stop my participation. My signature below indicates that I have given my informed consent to participate in the above-described project. My signature also indicates that:

- I have been given the opportunity to ask all my questions about the above described project and my participation and that all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I am at least 14 years old.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

Appendix B

Interview Schedule

The following is a list of broad issues that were covered during the interviews:

Life history and experiences growing up

- Tell me a bit about yourself?
- Tell me about your life growing up? (Focus discussion around family life)

Current interests and hobbies

- Can you tell me a bit about your life now?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- Apart from train-surfing, what else do you enjoy doing?

Train-surfing experiences and train-surfing identity

- Tell me about your experiences of train-surfing.
- How do you feel when you train-surf?
- How did you get to be a train-surfer?
- What does it mean to be a train-surfer?

Future goals

- Where do you see yourself in the future?

Appendix C: Example of Transcript

TR = Train-surfer

R = Researcher

T = Translator

ts = train-surfing

Train-surfer: Mthi

: Zulu discussion

R: Um we are going to ask a bit, a couple of questions about your life. We are not just going to ask about ts, we want to know who you are as a person, your family. Um you mustn't feel pressured into asking, er answering anything you don't want to. You can also speak Zulu if you want to and Sphi can translate for me. However if you can speak a little bit of English, that would be great for me as well. Um and if you have any questions on the way, just feel free to ask me. okay? So um I think the first question we want to ask you can you tell us a bit about yourself (*TS cough*), where you grew up, your family, any hobbies that you have, just tell us who you are.

TS: Okay, okay my name is (Mtandi Mcobela). I grew up in Soweto. I was born in 1990 on the 22 of August. I started ts in 2001.

R: okay

TS: I was brought up by my father, my *step* father not my *real* father and my real mother and all I can say is that I never got like tender from my family, you see. Like they were *too* busy to take care of me. So all of these things, when I started all of these things I was very young, you see. (*T: mmm*) Now there was no like, I never felt any love from my parents. (*T: mmm*) So it's very hard to stay out of trouble and stuff because my mother was always busy, my father wasn't there all the time and my father wasn't really supportive, my *real* father. So at many times I would stress and get under pressure because sometimes I needed money. I didn't get all the money I needed. Maybe like sometimes me and my friends would go out to the movies, I don't have enough cash on me. Now I would feel the pressure, and what do I do to get the money? I go out maybe do something bad to some people, you see, all of this stuff and ay sometimes we used to smoke (inaudible) all this stuff, *dagga*, you see, cigarettes. Now my parents were people, they they did care, a little bit, you see. Now from my side of my story. I never got enough *love*, you see. Now these (inaudible) they make me to go outside and see the real world. (*T+R: Ja*) you see.

At a young age if you dont get love from your parents, you get pressurized, you see. You don't get things easy. So if you don't get things easy, you get them in a hard way, which is the wrong way. (T+R: *mmm*) There was nothing, I was under pressure. It's not like you know something that I liked doing.

R + T: *Ja..Ummm*

TS: It was like let me say..., umm theres a thing what can I call it, ummm I can say I used to please *my friends*, you see.

R: Ummm

TS: My friends like were always there for me. They'd talk to me to stay out of *drugs*, to stay out of all these things. But, when they'd talk to me I don't feel like they care for me. I just feel like they want me to do the things that they want to do. (R: *Ja*) I don't feel like they really understand the pain I'm going through. So, *sometimes* I would blame my friends for everything, you see. At the same time because my parents were wrong..... I never got love from them, there's nothing I can say. So at times like this let me say, you experiment with *alcohol*, under influence of *drugs*. You start like... wrong things, robbing people of their cash. What can I say it's like work, you see. That's the only way you get money, you see. Now, *my father*, I can't say my father loves me because even now, I'm turning eighteen but he doesn't come to see me. He never *buys* me anything, so it was very hard growing up, you see without love. You can't grow up without love. you see. Sometimes I would run away from home, go to Josi. From there on I would see, I don't care you see, what happens to my family. They would call, I would ignore their calls. I would do anything. Sometimes I would sell my cell phone just for money, you see. Not money just because I want alcohol or drugs. it was money in the right way, but in the end I ended up when I get money no I'm gona focus on drugs, Im gona focus on what. I even when to Selkasoweto, its like a rehab. I even went there for I think it was bout three months, and stayed there. I got clean for six months, if I'm not mistaken, I cant remember six or five. I got clean. Now, they arrested my mother for 'e'neglect...

T and R Neglecting

TS: ya, neglecting. They arrested my mother. But she was out on the same day. I don't know what happened. She went to this, therapy thingie.(*TS :cough*) I was still like I felt the change in me, ne, but they said if I want to change, my mother must change and support me, you see. She was supportive in such a way. Then I started *soccer*, I played soccer, then she started like not taking care of me anymore, you see. Okay I call my grandmother and ask if I can come to live with her because I know my grandmother has an open heart for kids, you see.(*T: mhmm*) Now that's the only way I could stay out of trouble. I went to my grandmother, she she was living in Orlando, just down there.

T: mhmm, yes

TS: She passed away in 2006. (*R: Ok*) She passed away in cancer, it was breast cancer or something. When she passed away I got back to my mother. My mother took care of me, about three months, just to take the pain away from my grandmother passed away. I... started school again, because I I I dropped out of school. I started school, I started focusing on things. Now my friends were very supportive but at most of the time I would blame my friends, you see as if they did something wrong, like maybe take *stress* out of them. You see, like you know nothing, You like, its easy for you to get things. Like for me, my mother was working a very good job, but you wouldn't say. She never bought me anything. I had tekkies that were open, it wasn't *nice*. What did I do? I ended up ts, you see. (*T+R: mhmm Ja*) That's, that's how I grew up. I never grew up as happy child you see, but now I've changed, you see. Because all of the counseling and things I went to, and all of this, that's how I grew up.

R: And when you went into ts, at that time for you, did it make you feel *good* that your friends were there with you and you could feel accepted and feel cared for by them, and did you enjoy. Was it something that you could um feel better about yourself when you did it?

TS At certain time I would say ts was good. It was all this because you know all the girls were shouting at you 'yay, yay galigala', you see now you feel the pressure like at least somebody *like* me.

R + T: Ja, mhmm

TS: You see, but you don't think that they like you for the wrong stuff you do, not the right stuff, you see. Now in my mind I was thinking maybe like if I do this I'll become the centre of a group, the popular group you see. Now I feel me, I feel like I'm everything. I drop out of school *again*, I start on drugs *again*, just because I'm ts. Now, some people see ts as bad, it is bad, ne, but when you do it, you feel like let me say like after scoring a goal at a soccer match, you feel like excited, you see. There nothing I can say that I hated about it. Now, I was arrested for ts, I went three months in prison in Krugersdorp. I stayed there, I stayed there. After coming out I was even worse. I went straight to the trains, I did all this things. But my friends were there, they taught me the right stuff in the wrong way. Like no man you see ts is cool, you become part of the cool guys. Now you know eish *peer pressure*. (*R+T: mmm*) You don't think straight, those people are trying to kill me, you see. Even if a person dies in front of me, a dead person is a dead person, you don't care. You just move on you ts, they say you ts until you die. But that's not good. For like parents, they see like eish suicide, you see. (*T+R: mmm*) you are killing yourself and this is unacceptable, (*T: mhmm*) you see. I wont say like ts is that much good because you see after changing you see that eish...I almost killed myself just because of a stupid little thing, you see. Now I can say that my friends, they were not good guys but at that times, I saw them you know as friends. (*T+R: mmm, Ja*) They would do anything for me, they would give me *dagga* they would give me anything. But now you see, all these therapy things and counseling, they've really

helped me a lot, in realized that this is bad. Now my hobbies. I'm a person, I used to take part in the swimming, in the swimming competition down here in Orlando. I don't know when I stopped, why I stopped but swimming is my best hobby.

R: Is it?

TS: Yes.

T: Do you still swim?

T.S: Hmm?

T: Do you still swim for fun?

TS: No.

R: Not and would you ever consider going back to swimming?

TS; Ja I would, but I don't think I would become as good as before.

R: Ja, and would you ever like to do something else? Another sport?

TS: Ja, I used to play soccer but it was a long time so I wouldn't consider going back to soccer.
yes

R: Um, just going back to the ts, it sounds as if you quite undecided that there are certain things that you like about it and there are certain things that you don't like about it so um maybe you want to talk about a bit more about that. That there a good parts to it and then there are also bad parts to it. Ja

TS: Ok, I can say this, the good parts is... the women screaming for you, but the bad parts is, people die. (T: mmm) You don't like realize how their families feel, it you man. Like if it's your mother passed away doing ts, how would you feel? because this thing cuts you into pieces.

T: Mmmm

TS: It cuts you into pieces so there's nothing good to it, you see. The only good thing is that women like it but the only question is, do you like it?. You not sure, just do it for people now. Doing things for people is not *good*. (R: Ya)

R: And um would you say that you started to do things for yourself now and not for other people because you have changed?

TS: Sometimes...um let me say I like pleasing my friends a lot, you see. I come like... They pressurize me easily, you see. They take me but not into bad things. You see at the moment Im focusing on school, I'm in grade 12.

R: Grade 12

TS: Yes. I'm focusing on school. Now there nothing else that like I would do like *drugs*, things like *dagga*, you see, but I still smoke cigarettes. That the only thing I do wrong and alcohol like occasionally. Yes.

R: And are you happier now about everything?

TS: Ja, I can say ja I'm not like *quite happy* because now I have a few friends. you see. Like choosing friends, man its hard. You can see a friends, he's like good but after some time he changes. You see. (T+R: mm) He tells you no man go back to *dagga*. You become a fool if you don't smoke *dagga*. Then when you smoke *dagga*, ay you feel like...I don't know you in your own world, you see. Now things like this you just have to ignore them. Ja. (T+R: mmmm, Ja)

R: I don't know if you want to talk a bit about your family as well. Can you tell us a bit more about your family, have you got ja brothers and sisters?

TS: Um I've only got one sister, which she's 27 this year. She takes care of me a lot. She went to court, she does *everything* to me. She's like my mother, because my mother. I don't have enough love for my mother you see. Someone like I do care for her, you see but *love* eish. *Love* is a strong word to use on my mother, because I never got enough love from her. So I won't return the favour if she didn't do the same thing at the same time.....

T: Do you still live with your mother though?

TS: Yes

T: Okay, but it's your sister that takes care of you. What does your sister do?

TS: My sister used to work, in...what's this place, IDC I thinks its in Sandton, somewhere. Ja so I don't know at the moment, but she's studying on something.

R: And do you see her everyday?

TS: Yes I see her everyday, she calls me sometimes.

R: Okay.

TS: Yes.

R: And your friends now, do you see them um, do they support you? And um do you get on with them now?

TS; Mmm At the moment I'm *limiting* my friends... er... I've got two friends and one girl friend. She's just a friend. Someone that I talk to in hard times, because I won't talk straight to my friend, you see. Like a boy. When you talk to them, they see you like as if you a fool, you see. (T: Ja, mhmm) Now when I'm with *them*, we do our own thing. I don't talk my problems so I don't solve anything, you see. It's just friends that are there, just for time, you see.

T: Interesting!

R: Ja

T: That you want to open up to a girl and

TS: Ja because I know she wont go around *gossiping* behind my back.

R: She won't judge you.

TS: Ja, she wont judge me. She takes everything I talk in her heart and she returns it into a good thing and then I see that no (inaudible)

T: And your Dad?

TS: Uhh...My Dad lives in Diepkloof, but its not somebody like who supports me , doesn't call me, he doesn't do anything so I don't. Sometimes I even *forget* that I have a father because my step father is very abusive. (T: hmm) The last time me and my stepfather we fought, like hitting each other with fists just because he was swearing at my mother.

R; So is he abusive to *you* and to your mother?

TS: No, not to me. Not a chance.

R: Okay.

TS: Only to my mother. You see sometime like when they fight but he doesn't beat up my mother, he only swears. He *drinks*, you see. Now sometimes growing in that environment it

condemns you. Now sometimes I just ignore things like this.... And just get out of trouble and stay with my friends. Ja...

R: Okay (Short silence). When you were a train-surfing um, can you tell us what was like an average day for you. Um you woke up in the morning, if you weren't going to school, what would you do? Were you going to school and ts or did you just ts?

TS: no, you see at most of the time when I dropped out of school I was in grade 10 or 9, I can't still remember because I still failed two times. Now this year, it would happen that I finish last year. But now you know ts is like, when you wake up in the morning you feel that it is a day for ts. You just have that *feeling*. Like maybe have a feeling of today I want to go out and play tennis. Maybe you like tennis. You feel *good*, when you wake up. Just wake up, you take a bath and then you go out. 'Where are you going' No I'm going to school, you have your books, you have your uniform on. No, you passing the school, you going where, you going to Jozi. When you get there, you *drink*, you drink, you *smoke*. When you coming back you under influence of drugs and alcohol and you go on top of a moving train. *Then you die*, just like that, you see. Sometimes it was stress that made you go on top, sometimes it was alcohol, sometimes it was drugs.

T: Why, why did you ts? Because you said that it wasn't enough love from this home and everything?

TS: You feel pressurized like what can I do that can take my life easy. Not like taking my life straight, like killing myself like straight. What can make it like, maybe like let me say there are steps. Sometimes there are steps that you have to die you see. I felt that ay *living* ay, there's nothing I can do. Because at that time I was thinking that I can rely my parents. Now you know you think that let me drink, I'll forget all the worries, ag suga. You drink, you drink. Now you are under the influence of alcohol. Now the alcohol is controlling you. You know more people (inaudible). The alcohol is in your head, what you do is you think, let me do something to impress the ladies. Go on top. That thing is 3000 volts, you see. You go there, you do your thing. You don't *see carefully*, the cables are so small. You are drunk, you don't know. You see it's like, eish you don't see clearly. It's like blur. Now that's how people used to die, you see. Thinking that I going on top of a moving train, it's nice, its not. if you grow up you'll end up realizing that its not good. Doing things for your friends, friends will give you the trouble. When they are out, their family loves them. I went back to school, mm the same year that I left school. They kicked me out of school I found a new, oh I we went to Bramfontein. We went to the department of education. It was me, my sister and her boyfriend, er her husband. We went there, they looked for a school they find a school in Riverly Its down near langlaaste. Ay I went there. So when I got there I got some coloured friends. Ay, It wasn't easy, you see. It wasn't easy.

R: What do you mean by it wasn't easy? Are you friends with them or.

TS: Like, at the same time I'm used to like my old friends, you see. When going to the new school this new school is like starting your whole life from the start. You know *no one* there, they never see me again (inaudible). That's how I started over, but it helped me a lot. Meeting *new friends*. learning new things from other people, *teaching them* about ts. telling them that like its bad in a way, its good in a way, but in a way you don't do it at all.

R: And are you still friends with them?

TS: Ja some people still call me, maybe like talk over the phone.

R: And are you still at the same school?

TS: Ja I'm still at the same school.

R: And is it easier now for you to make friends, now that you are a bit more relaxed there and...

TS: At the moment, I don't feel like making friends. I'm *right* where I am. I wont go anywhere with friends, me and my friends, maybe like I'm quite right with Nombuthle, the girl I'm telling you about. She's been like, she's the only friend who talks to me in the right way. She 'carry on with my studies'', like that you see. Now friends, they can make you kick out of school even though you have changed, you see. Now in a way I'm not looking forward to meeting other friends.

T: How old is Nombuthle?

TS: Nombuthle is 18

T: And you go to the same school?

TS: Hmmm.

R: So that's nice, so you see her everyday as well?

TS: Ja I see her everyday?

R: Okay, just something I noticed, you are wearing a bracelet with a cross. Are you, are you a Christian?

TS: I'm Christian. I'm going to Holy Cross Anglican church, in Orlando.

R: And is that also important to you?

TS: Ja very important, because I just finished my confirmation class.

R: Oh, and when are you getting confirmed?

TS: Ah, October.

R: And then does the Bishop come?

TS: yes you get blessed you wear white.

R: Ja that's exciting hey?

TS: Ja

Talking over on another.

R: Carry on.

TS: You have to change, you see. I can't change by maybe one person, lets say Nombuthle. She can't change the *whole me*, you see. Somebody must help her, but not a friend only God, you see. God is only there for us all that's all I can say.

T: Were you always a Christian, did you always believe in God?

TS: Ja, I believe in God very much.

R: And even when you did ts as well?

TS: No in that time, I didn't believe that there was a God.

R: So do you think that your spirituality and God has helped you to get better and.

TS: Ja because sometimes ne, you know what I do. In the morning when I used to wake up, I used to forget like I have to pray, you see. At the first time I used to think that no, praying only saves me. I don't care if God, what happens to Him or where He is. I just pray for me, you see. Now at the moment I pray just for everyone, people at home, people at hospitals, like people like, the people who are like me, who I used to be. God can, God can help them see that the things they are doing is *wrong*. Ja.

R: Okay, what else do we want to ask? (short silence) Um

T: Im sorry I wanted to ask about ts, when you were still ts, would you only ts for show and no other reason?

TS No you see, under the influence you just go on top of a moving train because that's the only god you have under alcohol. Now in the morning you not drunk, you still sober, you are thinking straight. There is nothing that you say you are under the influence, no. You do it for yourself,

you are thinking straight. No I'm going to do this. Like taking what, taking the gun and shooting at someone, you are sober, you know what you are doing. You know the consequences. So I wouldn't say alcohol make me do that full time.

T: would you, would you do it for money?

TS No

TS: Ts. But there used to be like gambling and drinks, you see. Maybe like I do this and you can't do this, I give you fifty rand. (Inaudible) ja

R: Okay, so did you ever have like competitions where.....

TS: Ja competitions, there still are.

R: And are there rules to it?

TS: Ja there are rules. If you can't do a certain thing then you loose, you die you die. They don't care, you see. Now this thing is very cruel, like taking somebody's life (inaudible).

T: We also we also leant that sometimes people ts because they steal something from someone and they would run away and go on top of the train.

TS: Ja, I used to do this with Prince. Ja uPrince was my close friend because this. We were like let me say zulu like maybe I say to you know zulu You are not thinking straight. All you are thinking is taking this persons bag, take it to Jozi and sell it.

R: SHORT SILENCE And um we haven't asked any other boys but we know that there are different types of ts. Can you tell us a bit about that?

TS: Ja, theres different types of ts. Now ts actually means like going on top of a moving train. But when you are not on top its 'staffriding'.

R: Okay, so there's a difference.

TS: There's a difference. Staffriding is like between the doors and below the doors. Above the doors there's only ts, you see. Now youvé seen on the railway ne? At the bottom there are like stones?

R +T: Ja

TS: That's what we call "Gravul" If you don't have like money for the ticket, you go down there. And sometime you'd go under the train and it would chew you up and spit you out. When you come out your head, eish (inaudible).

R: So is that the only, so there's on the top, you go underneath that's staff riding and then theres 'gravul' or what you said (over Ja gravul). And is there any other.?

TS: Ah on the platform like what can I say, you just do your thing man, *be free*. Just hang around, do your things. People shouting, you see. Now you feel like eish "mora" these people are there for you, but they are not. They don't cry when you fall.

R: So they are their for you in the good times, but as soon as it's the bad times....

TS: (Overlap) The bad times. They just clap their hands, because I've seen this, its not good. You'd find this sometimes a persons hand is on top of the train, after the person was struck by a cable. *Eish!*

T: How did that make you feel, I mean you've seen people die, you've soon people loose parts of their bodies.

TS: At the moment you know as I'm telling you this, the fist time that I was a ts, I never thought of things. A dead man is a dead man, I saw his hands. So what tomorrow I'm still living, I don't care about him. he has his family. His family will grieve to him, but at a certain point things used to *haunt* me. I never slept at night.

R: At what point did you change, can you tell us a bit about that, whatmade you decide that this was not the right way to go?

TS: As I'm telling when I got back to school I found a friend Nomobuhle. Now she talked to me about things. I used to say *she's crazy* because all the time she was running after me, telling me all these things. Now, at a certain point I used to avoid her, run away from her. When I see her I just eish go back in the other way.

R + T: Laughter

TS: This one is here to lecture me. But in a way I saw that the things she was talking, they were *right*, you see. I started changing. I went to a church and she showed me around the church and that's how I changed.

R: Okay

TS: My mother is still impressed because eish I don't know, shes seen the change in me. She's very happy but I don't care what she thinks, you see. But I I I do have a feeling for her, she's as my mother, she's my parent., you see. As any other kid would do, you see.

T: How did they find out you were ts?

TS: Through tv

T + R: Laughter

R: Special Assignment?

R: and what happened then, did you get in trouble?

TS: Um, what happened? Oh Ja, we were watching television, all of us. Then my mother told me that she never even new that I went to school by train. She said to me there will be a poor granny playing on SABC 3 Special Assignment about kids killing themselves, you see.

R: Oh so she didn't know that you were actually going to be on it?

TS: *Ay no!*

T, TS +R: Laughter

TS: *I never new that I was going to be on it.*

R: Oh no.

TS: You see, because the people said that when, when they came ne, they told us like to do our stuff, and they would take it out on television. Obviously everybody wanted to be on television. Not thinking that the consequences, at home they find out, you see. Okay you watching television and you're eating. The *oh* my face is on tv.

T: laughter

TS: I just went out and never came back.

R: Ja

TS: I slept at my friends house. Before even going further, when they saw me. I just went out. The next day I came. My mother shouted at me, shouted at me. She *freaked out*, screamed all these things. But I didn't care, you see. Now she knows Ja.

R: So if you had to go back, would you not have wanted to be on the programme?

TS: Ummm because at the time I was on the programme I was still '*the me*' that did all this stuff, I didn't care. If anybody cares, if anybody sees me, it was the same, you see. And people started phoning, e asking if, if it was me on television. Like my friends, eh is it you on tv, is it you. Ah it's not me, I (inaudible) I je, its you.

T + R: Laughter.

TS: You see all these things, they would like, when I come to my streets, like everybody would be happy for me. That wasn't good, you see. Because they, they eish, I I *regret* ever going on tv. Because now they saw the things I did and some people think maybe I haven't changed. I'm still the me. And they don't like *look up to me*. They say Ay, this man does nasty things, you see.

T +R: Hmmmm

TS: Now at a certain point I do wish they eish I wasn't ... (inaudible)

R: Okay, future? Um what would you like to, to do after you have finished your matric, what is your goal your plan?

TS: My plans?

R: Ja

TS: Ummm eish I was thinking of studying for Chemical Engineering.

R: Okay

TS: But you know I can't like follow my goals because I already have a criminal record, you see.

T: Hmmmm

TS: But it depends, but I would try to get studying Chemical Engineering. I won't give up.

R: so, so that's what you'd like to do?

TS: Ja

R: And

T: You do all the subjects now?

TS: Mmmm now in the physical

T: (at the same time) In high school

R: Wow thats quite a big goal, that's a goal. And um where would you like to see yourself in the future. Like in about ten years time, what, where would you like to see your life?

TS: In ten years time?

R: ja

TS: I would say that I'm not looking for working for someone. I'm looking for working for *myself* and people work for me. Ja. Maybe open a business, or something. But I'll see in time. Ja.

R: And family is that important to you?

TS: Ja family, I don't have much family. Some of them are outside in Pretoria, P.E, Grahamstown, so ah family at the moment. The only person that I'm close to is my sister.

R: And one day, would you like to have your own family?

TS: Ja, obviously

R: laughter

TS: Two kids and a wife, that's all.

R: Laughter.

T: Okay that's interesting.

R: Do we want to say anything else? Is there anything else that's important, to share.

TS: hmmm, let me see. (short silence) JA there is something. Drugs and all these things. People don't, don't look forward in changing their lives just because of someone or something. Let me say drug, or a friend. You *won't* change your life, if you are following something that you don't want to disappoint. Smoking drugs ay, that thing, that things takes your life away, very easily. Very easily, that thing is not good, you see. That thing, you can't say that you because every time you smoke, you feel tired. Your brain, you feel you no more thinking straight. You know that this things, it damages you you brain cells. You thinking, sometimes you even become like one of my friends. He's like I don't understand him, he wears *many* hats, he wears *many* clothes. Like you see, drugs there's a consequence for it, you see. Not just when you are smoking today, but in the future. So all I need to say is that people need to stay away from drugs.

T: But how do you, how do you tell someone who is doing drugs, and you are thinking ah this is the best thing for me.

TS: Okay, as a person who used to smoke drugs I would say this thing eish. This thing, when you, when you like, the first time you smoke, it's like a *friend*. Close to it, its nice. You know you get this ah I don't need anything. You must think straight. You do feel after smoking. I would say for people who wants to train, not to even start. This thing will make you take your television from home. This thing will make you eish miserable. This thing is not a nice thing, *at all*.

R: And just one last question, if you had to talk to some young people who were using the trains and what would you say to them to try and stop them from ts?

TS: Hmmmm you see *nobody* can stop anyone from doing ts, you see. Like maybe you can't take your horse and take it to drink water, you can't you see. The person has to see himself the thing is not right. Like me, my mother talked to me I went to counseling sessions, I went to all these things, but still I carry on. But one single heart changed me, you see. Now I can't say, I can't say that there's a way that they don't have to do it. The only way is not starting, you see. Don't start what you cant stop.

T: How did you find out about the counseling, and who took you to all those places.

TS: Hmmmm like the court, you see. Because when they caught me, I was under the influence of drugs. They tested me, they found 88 percent of me and drugs in my body. I stayed in rehab as I told you. They took me to counseling. What, what, what happened to me. Now at counseling sessions, I lied. I lied a lot. You know because I wasn't straight, I wasn't looking for to quit ts and drugs. So I lied *big time*. That's why I'm saying counseling never changed me. You see *my friend* changed me.

R: Okay, are we done?