MEDIATING ADOLESCENTS' INSIGHTS INTO SHARED TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES THROUGH DRAWINGS

by

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment is my own original work and had not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any other university for a degree.

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Signature   **Date**

ABSTRACT

Drawings as mediators of communication are utilised in multiple contexts across national and cultural divides. The value of drawings in eliciting meaning that transcends the boundaries of words has been documented for centuries. In educational practice, drawings are utilised in a wide range of settings, ranging from therapeutic to psycho-educational assessment, disclosure in forensic and sexual abuse cases, and for artistic expression. Furthermore, research confirms the usefulness of drawings in empowering marginalised populations from a participatory action-research stance. Using drawing in research to mediate communication in a group context when studying adolescent perceptions of a traumatic event has not been explored extensively in South Africa. This study therefore sought to explore adolescents' experiences of a shared traumatic incident as facilitated through their drawings. The research process set out to answer the following research question: What insights regarding adolescents' experiences of a shared traumatic incident can be gained from using drawing in a group context?

This investigation is underpinned by an eco-systemic theoretical perspective which recognises the influence of the community in the experiences of its individual members. The African concept of *ubuntu*, meaning "whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual", thus informs the research. Within the context of psychoanalytical theory in trauma research, international literature acknowledges that families and communities are important resources to help bring about healing. The findings of this study confirm that the dynamic interaction between personal factors and interpersonal factors relating to one's peers, family and community influence how individual and collective experiences are shaped and assimilated.

The findings of the study led me to conclude that drawing became a non-confrontational facilitator for traumatised participants to express difficult feelings that may otherwise have been silenced. Furthermore, in addition to self-expression, the co-analysing of drawings in a group context created opportunities for collective remembrance. Its potential to empower marginalised populations such as the adolescent participants in this study to express their views on social injustice also emerged. The study's findings could serve as a motivator for further investigation of drawings as mediators of communication in a variety of trauma-related educational settings.

OPSOMMING

Tekeninge as bemiddelaar van kommunikasie word in talle kontekste oor internasionale en kultuurgrenseskeidinge heen gebruik. Die waarde van tekeninge ten einde betekenis te verkry wat die grense van woorde transendeer, word reeds eeue lank opgeteken. In psigo-opvoedkundige praktyk word tekeninge in 'n wye reeks omgewings, wat strek van terapeutiese tot psigo-opvoedkundige assessering, en tot openbaarmaking in forensiese gevalle en dié met betrekking tot seksuele mishandeling, gebruik. Daarbenewens bevestig navorsing die bruikbaarheid van tekeninge in die bemagtiging van gemarginaliseerde populasies vanuit 'n deelnemende aksienavorsingstandpunt. Die gebruik van tekeninge in navorsing om kommunikasie in groepkonteks te bemiddel wanneer adolessente se persepsies van 'n traumatiese gebeurtenis bestudeer word, is nog nie grondig in Suid-Afrika verken nie. Hierdie studie beoog dus verkenning van adolessente se ervaringe van 'n gedeelde traumatiese voorval soos gefasiliteer deur hulle tekeninge. Dit was vir die navorsingsproses van deurslaggewende belang om antwoorde op die volgende navorsingsvraag te kry: Watter insigte ten opsigte van adolessente se ervaringe van 'n gedeelde traumatiese voorval kan verkry word deur die gebruik van tekeninge in 'n groepkonteks?

'n Ekosistemiese teoretiese perspektief ondersteun hierdie studie. Vanuit hierdie perspektief word die invloed van die gemeenskap rakende begrip van die ervaringe van sy individuele lede as 'n essensiële deel van daardie kennisverkryging beskou. Die Afrika-opvatting van *ubuntu* lê ten grondslag van hierdie paradigma, wat beteken dat 'wat ook al met die individu gebeur, met die hele groep gebeur, en wat ook al met die hele groep gebeur, met die individu gebeur'. Teen die agtergrond van psigo-analitiese teorieë tot traumanavorsing erken internasionale literatuur dat gesinne en gemeenskappe belangrike hulpbronne is wat tot genesing kan bydra. Die bevindinge van hierdie ondersoek bevestig dat die dinamiese interaksie tussen persoonlike faktore en interpersoonlike faktore wat met portuur, die gesin en die gemeenskap verband hou, 'n invloed het op hoe individuele en kollektiewe ervaringe gevorm en geassimileer word.

Die bevindinge van die ondersoek het my daartoe gelei om tot die gevolgtrekking te kom dat tekeninge vir getraumatiseerde deelnemers 'n fasiliteerder word wat vir hulle nie antagonisties is nie aangesien dit hulle help met die uitdrukking van onderdrukte gevoelens wat andersins onaangehoor sou gebly het. Daarbenewens skep die gesamentlike ontleding van tekeninge in groepkonteks, afgesien van selfuiting, geleenthede vir kollektiewe herinnering. Dit hou ook potensiaal in vir bemagtiging van gemarginaliseerde populasies, soos die adolessente, om hulle waargenome sieninge oor maatskaplike ongeregtigheid uit te druk. Die bevindinge van die studie sou kon dien as motivering vir verdere ondersoek van tekeninge as bemiddelaar van kommunikasie in 'n verskeidenheid trauma-verwante onderwysopsette.

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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH ORIENTATION

1.1   INTRODUCTION

For generations, drawings have been regarded as a means of creative self-expression across the boundaries of race, culture, class, geographical setting and age. Drawing is seen as a universal language of self-expression for children. They are able to reveal their inner world spontaneously without inhibition or pretence. However, when children and adolescents experience trauma, they are often required to give a verbal account of these events. When trying to convey to adults an emotional trauma that has recently been experienced, children's or adolescents' language abilities may be severely challenged (Hardin & Peterson, 1997). Children and adolescents may therefore frequently find themselves at a loss for words when trying to express complex emotions. This is problematic since it could mean that they are not sufficiently understood, which could counteract the process of healing. Van Der Merwe (1998) cautions that when traumatic experiences are not dealt with adequately, they tend to become distorted in the minds of children and adolescents. In such cases, children need help to see reality. If they do not understand reality, they may fantasise, which may entrench much more frightening memories. In situations such as these, drawings could become vehicles to gaining access into their worlds.

Art and specifically drawing as a medium in therapeutic intervention is used locally and internationally in a variety of settings, such as in psychiatry, hospitals, special and mainstream education, clinics or day centres, social services and in prisons, as well as in private practice (Davis, 2000). Like Hardin and Peterson (1997), I argue that alternative methods need to be used to encourage verbal communication. My research interest is to investigate visual images, particularly drawings as an alternative communicative tool in group context. The aim of this study is to gain insight into the experiences of South African adolescents from a Western Cape school who had recently been involved in a bus accident.

1.2   PERSONAL MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

My interest in investigating drawings as a tool in educational research in the context of adolescent trauma started when I was an intern educational psychologist in 2005. Mental health professionals at the district-based support centre where I was an intern estimated that approximately two-thirds of referrals to this centre could be attributed to experiencing or witnessing trauma (Kemp, 2005; Ross-Gillespie, 2005). They were concerned about the negative behaviour that these children often exhibit in the aftermath of trauma. In this regard, literature warns that the effects of trauma are severe and longstanding if not promptly identified and treated (Byers, 2001; Mash & Wolfe, 2002). Thus, when a tragic accident that claimed the lives of three children from one Western Cape school occurred in 2005, I saw an opportunity to explore the value of drawings as a pathway to break through the communication barrier that is often evident when adults try to understand adolescent's experiences following trauma.

Merriam (2002) stresses the importance of investigating a topic that is personally engaging. Because of my active interest in the arts, this topic holds personal significance for me and so I adopted an inductive, participatory stance during this study. Associates to whom I had been introduced by the district-based support team made it possible for me to negotiate access to this specific school community. My role was that of a researcher interested in researching how adolescents, who had been traumatised by an accident in which four people had been killed, use drawings to make meaning of the shared traumatic incident. My research gave me the opportunity to document their experiences, mediated through their drawings in a group context. The value of this research, for me, lies in the contribution it could make towards a more comprehensive understanding of how adolescents create meaning from trauma and how these drawings can be used as a tool to contain trauma more constructively.

1.3   THE THEORETICAL APPROACH OF THIS STUDY

This study is undertaken from an eco-systemic perspective in an educational psychology context. Although there are variants of an eco-systemic perspective across different disciplines, this perspective seemed an appropriate theoretical underpinning for this study as the bus accident had an impact not only those directly involved, but also on the entire community associated with the school. Without disregarding the potential for individual excellence, from this perspective, a community is regarded as a set of interlinked systems that

have unity, continuity and predictability (Lewis *et al*., 2003; Weingarten, 2003). As reflected by Archbishop Desmond Tutu (in Sibaya, 2004), whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. Thus, an eco-systemic perspective in an educational psychology context is based on the belief that intrinsic and extrinsic factors from different systems in a specific social context influence one another in a dynamic and continuous process of balance, tension and interplay (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002). Psychoanalytical theory was also consulted in an attempt to understand the nature of traumatic experiences. In this investigation this means that participants' unique perceptions, feelings and expectations (intrinsic influences) were investigated within the broader context (extrinsic influences) of which the participants are part. These contexts are specific to people and place, time (past, present and future) and include the local community system, education system, family, school, classroom and peer group. For this study, a purposefully selected group of Grade 7 adolescents were asked to create drawings that illustrated their emotions, perceptions and expectations following the bus accident in which they had been involved. My assumptions were that the process of creating art brings a measure of safety and that it reveals the adolescent's potential to adapt, cope and thrive in spite of adversity. During my preliminary inquiry, it became evident that drawing as a visual-based research tool with adolescents who have experienced a shared traumatic incident has not yet been adequately explored in South Africa. International publications that discuss drawings as a visual-based research method were considered important in understanding the impact of trauma. Consequently, the literature survey focused on drawings as a means of communication in visual-based research, as well as the impact of trauma on young people.

Picasso believed that every child is an artist. Creating art has been found to be a satisfying experience for children because it blends many aspects of experience together. Creative expression is a medium that children and adolescents use to see their problems as a whole (Solomons, 1993; Rogers, 1997). Kramer (in Brems, 2002) contends that art provides the opportunity to relive experiences in an active role, whereas the original role may have been passive, overwhelming, or even out of the realm of control for the child. Furthermore, Case and Dalley (1990) assert that the art-making process offers an alternative language, non-verbal and symbolic, through which feelings, wishes, fears and fantasies central to inner experiences are expressed unconsciously. Within the context of visual-based research, the symbolic content of images created in the aftermath of traumatic experiences provides access

to unconscious and hidden dynamic processes, which would otherwise remain largely inaccessible to exploration (Lykes, 1994, 2003; Gauntlett, 2004). As discussed by Allan (1985) and Byers (2001), art transcends verbal language and provides a hands-on way of healing: visual symbols and metaphors create a bridge between the child's imagination and their actual world.

In certain areas in the Western Cape, children are frequently exposed to various forms of trauma, including physical assault, domestic violence, sexual abuse, crime, major accidents, injury and death. Since this study focused on understanding the experiences of adolescents from a Western Cape school that had recently been involved in the same bus accident, I looked at trauma specifically related to road accidents involving children in South Africa and internationally. According to a study conducted by De Vries and Kassam-Adams (1999), road accidents result in nearly one-million injuries annually and are regarded as the leading health threat to children in the United States. In local newspapers, road safety in South Africa ranks as the fourth worst in the world, and our roads are notoriously labelled "roads of death" that claim the lives of more than ten children daily. Statistics released by the Red Cross Children's Hospital show that trauma as a result of injury is the leading cause of death in childhood. This hospital treated over 10 000 children in 2002, 997 of whom were involved in road accidents. Although a National Burden of Disease study conducted by the Medical Research Council of South Africa in 2000 concluded that the mortality level is a fundamental indicator of child health, the lack of reliable vital statistics in South Africa makes it difficult to be confident about indicators relating to child mortality. In their study, Bradshaw, Bourne and Nannan (2003) estimated that the leading cause of death among 10 to 14-year-old children in 2000 was traffic and road-related accidents.

Exposure to extreme, traumatic events shatters the young person's assumption that the world is safe. According to Van Der Merwe (1998), children and adolescents often do not have the emotional strength, confidence and sense of security to cope when traumatic incidents disrupt their lives. They suddenly perceive the world as full of danger, loss and hurt. Lewis (1999) emphasises that any contact with trauma, through witnessing or hearing about the event, can have a damaging effect, and that symptoms of post-traumatic stress may be present after single or complex trauma. Although Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in children and their parents is recognised as a common consequence of traffic-related injuries, there is limited research in this field and little clarity on risk factors associated with PTSD development in young people (De Vries & Kassam-Adams, 1999). Unresolved childhood

trauma can lead to chronic psychiatric disorder, which may persist for decades and sometimes for a lifetime. If not dealt with, the young victims of trauma present a mental health problem in South African society (Van der Merwe, 1998; Mash & Wolfe, 2002). Within this investigation, I argue that drawings as visual-based research methods may be instrumental in gaining access to the innermost experiences of traumatised adolescents and could be a vital medium in facilitating recovery.

1.4   PROBLEM FORMULATION

When children and adolescents have been traumatised, they portray a tendency to shut down. They often have difficulty articulating their trauma-laden experiences effectively. This is problematic since it is an obstacle to recovery (Hardin & Peterson, 1997; Lewis, 1999). In this regard, alternative methods have been used to open up ways for children and adolescents to communicate. Extensive literature exists on the use of drawings with children and adolescents in various contexts: in individual and psychotherapeutic settings (Dalley *et al*., 1987; Case & Dalley, 1990; Allan, 1994; Gil, 1994; Freeman, Epston & Lobovits, 1997; Brems, 2002; Blom, 2004); in forensic work (Meekums, 2000); in psycho-educational assessment (Koppitz, 1968; Betensky, 1995; Malchiodi, 1998; Franklin, 1999; Sattler, 2002); in building resilience with children affected by HIV/AIDS (Franklin, 1999; Blom, 2002; Mallmann, 2002); and to facilitate disclosure in sexual abuse cases (Case & Dalley, 1990; Hagood, 2000). Visual methods such as drawings and photo-interviewing are also used in research to empower adults in a one-on-one basis (Lykes, 1997, 2003; Hyland Moon, 2002; Hurworth, 2003; Daniels, 2003, 2006). However, there is little research on drawings as a tool in educational research. To my knowledge, using drawing in research to mediate communication in a group context when studying adolescent perceptions of a shared traumatic event has not been explored in South Africa. In order to investigate this problem, the following research question was formulated:

- What insights regarding adolescents' experiences of a shared traumatic incident can be gained from drawing in a group context?

1.5   AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In view of the research question, the aim of this study is to gain insight into adolescents' experience of a shared traumatic event by drawing in a group context. In light of the above, the following objectives were identified:

- To review literature regarding drawings as image-based research with adolescents who have experienced a traumatic incident.

- To use drawing to mediate communication in this group in order to investigate the perceptions, feelings and expectations these adolescents have about the bus accident.

- To explore the drawings made by adolescents to facilitate collective meaning-making and constructive resolution of a shared traumatic incident in a group context.

- To make recommendations for using drawings to empower adolescents to voice their experiences in the aftermath of a shared trauma.

1.6   RESEARCH DESIGN

1.6.1   Introduction

This investigation was conducted from a qualitative stance. Patton (1998) explains that qualitative research is not a set recipe, but involves learning through doing. In qualitative research, as stated by Merriam (2002:15), it is the rich, thick descriptions, the words that persuade the reader of the trustworthiness of the findings. It is about making a concerted effort to understand situations in their uniqueness, as part of a particular context, and the interactions that happen in the research participant's inner worlds. Furthermore, a qualitative study is embedded in the paradigm that the researcher ascribes to. As such, my paradigm is defined by how I view the reality of the participants, and how knowledge is generated by the participants involved in the specific study.

The defining characteristic of basic interpretative research is its focus on describing the meaning of a phenomenon from the perspectives of those who have experienced it (Mertens, 1998). A basic interpretive study begins with an interest in learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world and the meaning it has for them (Merriam, 2002). Therefore, for this study, I am interested in authenticity and in understanding how the participants make individual and collective meaning of fundamental experiences related to a shared traumatic event. Within this context, I therefore sought to understand what the world

looks like from their particular perspective on the same bus accident as mediated through their drawings. This understanding is an end in itself and not necessarily an attempt to predict what might happen in the future. To initiate this study, participants' realities were seen as socially constructed and meaning was mediated through the researcher as an active instrument in data collection and analysis. In order to ensure that my results were valid, reliable and trustworthy, specific research methods were required.

1.6.2 Population

This study was limited to a group of 12- to 14-year-old children in the early adolescent developmental phase. They attended the same school in the Western Cape and had all survived a life-threatening bus accident while on a school outing. Merriam (2000) explains that in qualitative research a sample is selected on purpose according to specified criteria in order to yield the most information about the phenomenon of interest. In accordance with Merriam, Johnson (1995) defines purposeful sampling as a method in which the researcher specifies characteristics of the population of interest and locates individuals with those characteristics. This research sample consists of a group of thirteen adolescents. Significant educators were consulted as key informants to the population. A sensitive awareness of the fragile frame of mind of the population of the study dictated that participation had to be voluntary. The adolescents were informed that the drawings and paintings were to be used to facilitate the research process. Permission was granted beforehand by the Department of Education as well as the headmaster of the school for me to have access to the school and conduct the study at the school (Appendix A; Appendix B). The parents or guardians of the 13 participants gave written informed consent for the thirteen adolescents to participate in the study. In addition, all thirteen adolescents agreed to be part of the study (Appendix C; Appendix D).

1.6.3 Data collection

The primary methods used during this study were structured observation of the drawing process, facilitation of individual interviews through drawings, collective meaning-making facilitated through the discussion of drawings in focus group interview and guided interviews with key informants. The figure below (Figure 1.1) shows that the physical collection of data in qualitative research is not a linear process. An overlap between methods and data collection occurred in an interconnected manner. The section that follows gives a detailed account of the data collection process.
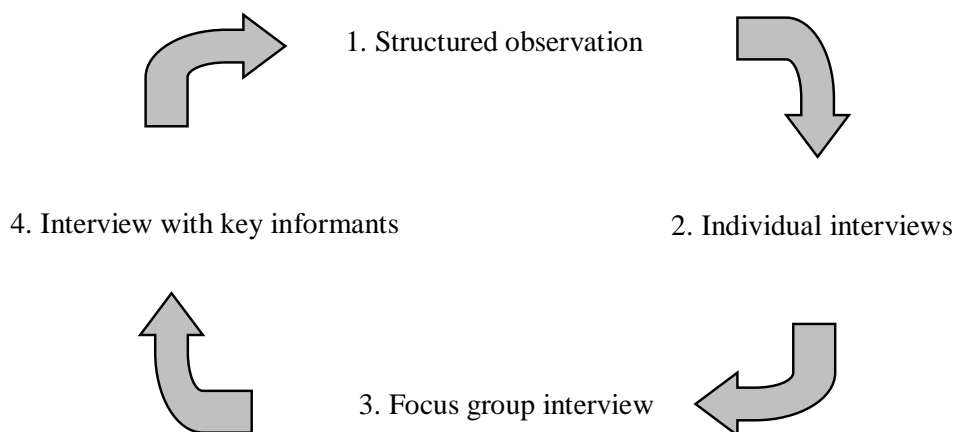
Figure 1.1: Illustrates primary methods used during the data collection process

As the researcher, I was an active reflective participant and so became the primary instrument during data collection and analysis. To provide rich contextual information, multiple sources were consulted. Research commenced with a comprehensive literature review, which highlighted the use of drawing with children and adolescents as a tool in various contexts, ranging from forensic work, psychotherapy and in the disclosure of cases related to sexual abuse and violence. Literature on visual-based data was also consulted. This included drawings and photographs in the empowerment of adults. It soon became evident that there was a lack of research about using drawings to gain insights into the shared experiences of a traumatic incident. The next step of this investigation was the use of multiple data collection methods. Firstly, observation of the participants took place while they were drawing. De Vos (2002:280) describes observation as an open-ended qualitative research procedure that studies the settings of a particular situation. Thereafter, individual interviews were conducted with all thirteen participants. I drew on the completed drawings to initiate the conversations and thus tried to gain insight into individual's perceptions about the bus accident. Each participant was considered the expert in their account of the accident. To facilitate further exploration of individual participants' perceptions, as well as collective meaning-making, focus group interviews were conducted where discussions of the drawings were the primary point of focus. Finally, guided interviews with educators as key informants took place to further inform this study. All interviews were flexible but were guided by particular themes.

Permission was obtained to record all the interviews audio-visually. These recordings were transcribed verbatim and the resulting texts were analysed. Extensive notes were also taken to enhance observation during data collection. Because the participants were minors, extra care

was taken with data collection procedures in order to protect their identity. As discussed with the participants and their caretakers prior to the study, all data, especially audio-visual material were treated as highly confidential and shared only with the researcher's supervisor. It was agreed that all audio-visual data would be destroyed on completion of the study.

1.6.4   Data Analysis

In qualitative research, the process of data collection and analysis is intertwined and is characterised by an interactive, fluid relationship. Analysis is topic-orientated, with the aim of trying to identify themes emerging from the data (Hardy & Bryman, 2004).
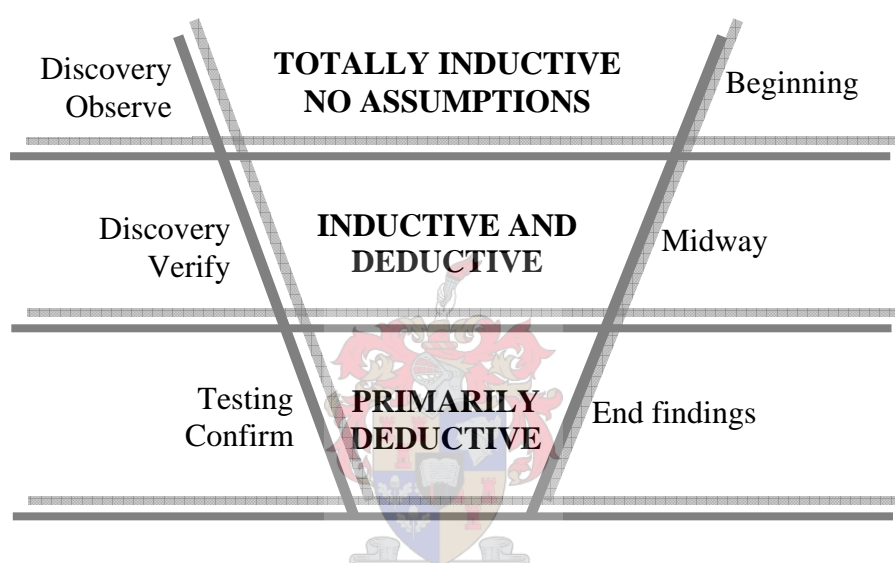
Figure 1.2: The reasoning behind qualitative data analysis
(Based on Patton, 2002, Merriam workshop and class notes compiled by Daniels, 2004)

Figure 1.2 illustrates that data analysis commences from an inductive stance at the early stages of the research process as the researcher starts thinking about what to research and conducts the literature review with a theme in mind that will direct the inquiry (Collair, 2001). Several ingredients are of critical importance during qualitative data analysis: the process should be systematic, flowing from an inductive to a deductive stance, should seek comparisons continuously and entertain alternative explanations. It should also be sequential and verifiable (Casey, Krueger & Morgan in De Vos, 2002). For the purpose of this study, data was firstly accounted for by means of re-reading through all the data collected. Data was then coded and organised by identifying recurring themes that cut through the data. These themes were linked to information from the literature study in order to gain insight regarding adolescents' perceptions of a shared traumatic incident, as mediated through their drawings. From the findings that were made, conclusions were reached. At that point, research could be

undertaken should new aspects regarding the research topic present the need for more intensive investigation.

From a basic interpretative stance, Mouton (2001) explains that the aim of the researcher in data analysis is to illuminate and to share what the interpretation means for theory, and for understanding the issue under investigation. According to Merriam (2002), this process is complete when the overall interpretation of the researcher as mediated by her particular disciplinary perspective merges with the participants' understanding of the investigated phenomenon. In this case, it was a major accident experienced as life threatening. Merriam (2002) contends that, before you implement any changes based on what you discover in the research, you need to be certain that the changes will help, not exacerbate the situation. In fields where the practitioner intervenes in people's lives, trustworthiness of results is especially important. I felt that this is a significant consideration within my research since I was investigating a tragic incident in the lives of adolescents.

1.7   CLARIFYING KEY CONCEPTS

Traumatic Incident

Lewis (1999) describes an overwhelming traumatic event as a sudden event that is outside the range of usual human grasp and experienced as horrifying and unexpected. Experiences associated with the traumatic incident have the potential to surpass the coping abilities of most humans and involve actual or threatened death, injury, or threat of one's physical integrity.

Adolescence

The Child Care Amendment Act (1996) states that any human being aged 18 and younger is considered a child. Literature differs on the exact age of the onset of adolescence. Lewis (1999) and Brooks and Siegel (1996) refer to adolescents as children between the ages of 13 and 18 years. However, Craig (1996) argues that adolescence is signalled by signs of physical and cognitive maturation and the onset of puberty that transforms a child into an adult and typically commences at the age of 11/12. For the purpose of this study, participants were 11 to 13 years old, which can be regarded as the early adolescent developmental stage. According to the NIMH (Sept, 2001), early adolescence is replete with major changes in cognitive and social functioning. Brems (2002) explains that adolescence is considered a time of great sensitivity to environmental factors since social and moral aspects of the self are internalised.

Drawings

In this text, the term "drawings" was used interchangeably with the term "expressive art". According to Rogers (1997), expressive art resonates with the emotional and intuitive aspects of personality, which may facilitate self-discovery and expression of feelings. Apart from artistic expression, movement, sound, writing or drama are additional forms of creative expression. McGregor (in Case & Dalley, 1990) believes that producing art is a satisfying experience because it blends different aspects of experiences and operates on various levels. Daniels (2003, 2006) states that images could be more effective than the word in decoding the multi-layered worlds of participants. In this regard, Vasarheyli (in Case & Dalley, 1990) verifies that children's drawings and paintings speak their own language. Their pictures communicate intensity, formulate pain and warn us of the impact an experience may have on their development and perception of their world. During this study, art in the form of drawing and painting were implemented as a research method to gain insight into adolescents' experiences of the same bus accident.

1.8   OVERVIEW OF THE REMAINING CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 provides an orientation of the study. This chapter precedes the literature review, which provides a theoretical framework. For this research, in Chapter 2, image-based research, particularly drawing as a tool in educational research, is explored. Literature on the nature of trauma and its impact during adolescence is consulted. This chapter ends with a discussion regarding the implication of drawings in research with adolescents who have experienced shared trauma. Chapter 2 is followed by an explicit discussion of the research design and procedures followed (Chapter 3). In this chapter, an account of the qualitative stance of inquiry that was assumed and the methods of data collection and analysis used during this study are provided. This chapter concludes with a discussion on ethical considerations, as well as issues related to reliability and validity. In Chapter 4, the focus is on interpretation, discussion and analysis of the data collected during this study. A detailed presentation of findings that emerged from the data is provided. The final chapter (Chapter 5) presents a final discussion of the findings along with the strengths and limitations of the study. This chapter concludes with recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE STUDY

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Children and adolescents have a tendency to shut down after being involved in trauma-laden incidents. Difficulty in verbalising these experiences is an obstacle to the constructive resolution of trauma. This is likely to hinder the complex developmental processes associated with adolescence, including optimal intra- and interpersonal functioning. Developing young people incorporate patterns of behaviour, attitudes and myths learned from their parents/guardians, extended family and community into their own belief system (Vessey, 2004). In a shared traumatic event, where the school environment is significantly affected, "myths" from the media and society, together with unresolved trauma, can have a debilitating effect on the individual's potential to thrive as a unique member of the broader community. In this kind of situation, alternative methods that open up ways for children and adolescents to communicate are frequently applied. Research conducted on creative expression includes drawing with children and adolescents in various contexts.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there is extensive literature on drawing in individual and psychotherapeutic settings, in forensic work and psycho-educational assessment, in building resilience with children affected by HIV/AIDS and in the facilitation of disclosure in sexual abuse cases. There have also been investigations of drawings and photo interviewing as visual-based research methods to empower adults in South Africa and internationally. However, there is a dearth of research on the value of drawings as a tool in educational research, specifically in understanding the experiences of adolescents who shared a traumatic experience. My research interest is to investigate visual-based images as an alternative method of communication to gain insight into the experiences of adolescents involved in the same traumatic incident.

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical framework for this study and relevant literature is organised accordingly. The chapter commences with a conceptualisation of the problem under investigation. A discussion on drawings as a means of communication in visual-based research follows. Thereafter, an explanation of the nature and impact of trauma on young

people is presented. The value of drawing with traumatised adolescents in a group context is then discussed. The chapter concludes with recommendations to professionals working with traumatised adolescents.

2.2   VISUAL-BASED RESEARCH

Developmental trends in what Finley (2005:684) refers to as "new practices of human social inquiry" are characterised by interpersonal, action-orientated research that critiques political and social injustice, facilitates emotional and moral expression, demonstrates ethical competence, intellectual openness, creativity and spiritual qualities such as empathy. Within this "new" paradigm, the social sciences and arts merge and are restructured as a form of qualitative inquiry, known as arts- or image-based inquiry. Spirited by discovery and invention through emotionality, intellect, and identity, arts-based research is defined by Lincoln (2005) as a dynamic, boundary-crossing way of making meaning in contextual realms. According to Lykes (1997:739), the power of the visual image is warranted over any other form of communication since "it can facilitate discussion, documentation, and analysis of social issues" universally. Harper (2005) describes image-based research as an evolving method of qualitative inquiry, which has until recently been underutilised in fieldwork and inadequately focused on in methodological literature (Daniels, 2006). Despite the growing body of image-based researchers, fragmentation in this field is clear with distinctive focus in very particular, isolated fields (Prosser, 1998). As mentioned in Chapter 1, visual-based research is largely conducted from a critical, participatory action-based stance to inquiry (PAR) in order to empower marginalised populations and to address social injustice (Lykes, 1994, 1997, 2003; Daniels, 2003, 2006). Within a qualitative interpretative paradigm, the collective impact of image-based research is far from reaching its full potential. Exploring the significance of image-based research is vital (Prosser, 1998). In order to benefit social inquiry in totality, it is crucial that image-based methods are presented in an interactive context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Schwartz in Daniels, 2006). Within the context of this study, arts-based research was used to facilitate group discussion and collective meaning making as a way of exploring a particular issue, namely, experiences of a traumatic incident that had an impact on the community to which the participants belonged. As asserted by Gauntlett (2004) and Finley (2005), the aim is to elicit truthful findings that express "the multidimensionality of human life" and confirm, as vibrantly as possible, "the words, as well as the worlds of the participants."

2.2.1   Visuals and language-based methods

The aim of interpretative research is to obtain rich, descriptive ways of understanding complex human experiences (Merriam, 2002). Nagar (in Daniels, 2006) emphasises that fieldwork in qualitative research should strive towards knowledge that privileges the *participants,* that reinforces their "reflections, interests, agendas and priorities" and not to ways that benefit the researcher. However, literature shows that qualitative inquiry is largely conducted through language-based methods of data collection (Gauntlett, 2004). These methods of gathering information include individual and focus group interviews, as well as written questionnaires, and commonly demand more-or-less instant verbal responses from participants in a restricted timeframe. Guantlett (2004) asserts that spontaneous verbal, word-based methods are unlikely to generate in-depth, carefully considered responses. Arts-based research, therefore, questions the truthfulness of findings based exclusively on language-based methods of qualitative inquiry (Finley, 2005).

Arnheim (in Gauntlett, 2004) believes that visual imagery is the essence of logical thinking. When participants are engaged in creative, expressive activities versus language-based (spoken or written) activities, considerable alterations in mental processes take place. The thought processes and subsequent judgements or perceptions of human beings are impossible to reduce to words, since they transcend the boundaries that confine verbal vocabulary. Creative activities demand intensive use of the brain resulting in the generation of more in-depth, reflective responses (Guantlett, 2004; Finley, 2005). Changes in the pace of generating verbal statements occur, strengthening the potential for wider ranges of verbal responses. In addition to this, the participants' artworks present a simultaneous range of themes and interpretations to support further exploration.

However, visual-based methods are not necessarily more effective than verbal-based methods. As stated by Bell (in Gauntlett, 2004), fusion of word and visual-based methods could enhance reflective processes, and this could contribute significantly to the quality of the findings. The order that language supplies with clear-cut distinction warrants communication as trustworthy and enables perceptual image formation. As emphasised by Guantlett (2004), written and spoken language brings stability and facilitates meaning making from the visual image. Together with interviews, drawings "as a powerful, unique tool for documenting" adolescents' perspectives of a shared traumatic event, will facilitate this inquiry (Daniels, 2006).

I would argue that visual-based inquiry forms a bridge between physical and psychological realities as an alternative way of infiltrating a research context. Visual-based data collection methods can be a particularly powerful tool to enhance collaboration and collective meaning making. These methods challenge participants to make an active contribution while inviting creativity and reflective engagement as essential components of the research process. Furthermore, visual-based research may trigger memories, promote longer, more detailed interviews as compared to verbal interviews, and lead to new perspectives and explanations, thereby reducing possible misinterpretation. The combination of visual and verbal language may enhance the quality of communication, generate unexpected findings and make provision for multiple methods of triangulation, thus ensuring thoroughness and increasing the potential for reputable findings (Hurworth, 2003; Gauntlett, 2004). For the purpose of this study, images and verbal methods of inquiry are combined since these results are regarded as more conducive to qualitative inquiry than findings yielded from language-based methods alone.

2.2.2   Transcending silence: Drawings in educational research

In the previous chapter, an overview was given regarding the use of visuals in various contexts. With reference to qualitative inquiry, Daniels (2006) reflects that drawings as a medium of communication for children is almost exclusively focused within a therapeutic stance. Literature further contends that image-based research is predominantly conducted through participatory action research (PAR). In this regard, Lykes *et al.* (2003) proposed drawing in qualitative inquiry as an alternative strategy for breaking the silence to empower marginalised populations and to address social injustice. In educational research, drawing is seen as a means of gathering self-report data without some of the limitations of questionnaires or interviews (Cherney *et al.*, 2006). Finley (2005) demonstrates that using drawing as a research tool creates opportunities for communion among participants, researchers and those that read the research text. Lykes (1997) contends that creating through drawing is a passionate, instinctive activity for developing resources alternative to existing reality, which may facilitate a re-discovery and re-connection with oneself, as well as contact with others and with one's own story. This methodology thus empowers the subjectivity side of experiences by generating meaning in receptive minds (Rose in Goodman *et al.* 1998; Harper, 2005). It requires active participation and co-construction of a shared experience, thereby enabling participants and the researcher to deepen their understanding of the issue under investigation (Lykes, 1994). In agreement with Holzwarth and Maurer (in Gauntlett,

2004), the ever-increasing influence of audio-visual media in shaping children's and adolescents' lives cannot be disregarded. Therefore, rather than relying on verbal approaches alone, this study teamed it with visual approaches in an investigation of using drawings as a means of enabling young people to express themselves. The discussion that follows elaborates on drawings as facilitating creative expression.

2.2.3 Art as creative expression

It is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words, that an image can convey expression in a way that makes visible the invisible (Daniels, 2006). In this regard, drawing is considered a natural activity that children and adolescents use to explore and express their world. According to Betensky (1995), pictures give visual evidence of a capacity for self-expression and creativity. Rogers (1997) calls art "the language of feeling." They assert that the young have an instinctive tendency to express repressed painful feelings through art. No matter what the degree of stress children undergo, or whether their world is happy, peaceful, chaotic, or sad, the act of drawing stimulates awareness of the unconscious (Driessnack, 2005). Wakefield and Underwager (1998) further contend that drawing is less threatening for children who are hesitant to talk. Once a picture is drawn, the likelihood of a child becoming verbal about the inherent content increases profoundly. A drawing provides structure and empowers children to give a detailed, more organised account of their story. This enhances the opportunity for children to "voice" their thoughts and feelings, especially when their expressive language skills are limited. In this regard, Driessnack (2005) attributes brief or inadequate verbal responses to a child's information retrieval skills, rather than to their understanding of a subject. Numerous studies have found that richer descriptive information is communicated when children draw or re-enact, particularly about an event they might otherwise find difficult to describe, than when experiences are solely recounted verbally (Heegaard, 1992; Clements, Benasutti & Henry, 2001; Wesson & Salmon, 2001). Using their own creative productions as communication can provide a window into children's representational world which language barriers would otherwise render inaccessible (Lykes, 1997; Cherney, 2006). Consequently, drawings facilitate the ability to talk and are considered as doorways, thereby inviting an entry rather than a momentary glimpse into children's worlds (Salmon, Roncolato & Gleitzman, 2003).

Violet Oaklander (1978), a Gestalt therapist, contends that some children are not conscious of what their feelings are, but that talking about an artwork creates awareness of deeper associated emotions. According to Whetton and Mc Whirter (in Gauntlett, 2004), children

feel and understand experience, and empathise with the same wide range of emotions as adults. These emotions include anger, frustration, despair, remorse, guilt, embarrassment and relief, as well as delight, excitement and enjoyment. The only distinctive difference in emotional intensity between children and adults is that a developing vocabulary restricts effective emotional expression for children. In this regard, Redgrave (2000) contends that creative expression holds a curative force with the power to unleash a child's capacity for self-healing. The use of imagery and non-verbal modes allow for an alternate path for self-exploration and communication, as well as the sharing of experience, feelings and hope. Redgrave (1997) contends that the process of self-expression, rather than the product created, enables children and adolescents to claim their emotional experiences. Artwork can therefore provide a platform for communication in ways free of rigid systemic limitations (Clements, Benasutti & Henry, 2001).

A picture, as a "stand-in for the real thing", concretely represents an object that is not physically present (Cherney *et al*., 2006:128). The *maker* of an artwork decides on the symbolic meaning attached to the objects portrayed. In the Greek language, the word "symbol" means "to connect". From a psychoanalytical perspective, Jung (in Synder, 1997) contends that a dialogue with the inner self is born through myths, symbols and images. Furthermore, Rogers (1997) regards artistic expression through symbols and metaphors as a powerful integrative force that has the potential for healing. Symbolic expression connects what is separate with something that is concrete, communicable and consensually shared. A sense of unity is restored by integrating and connecting emotions, perceptions and thoughts. A further advantage of symbols in the art-making process is that metaphor transcends the meaning of words and provides a direct connection to unspoken issues (Kalsched, 1996; Goodman *et al*., 1998). In this regard, Allan (1988) emphasises that symbolic language can help children to integrate self-awareness and self-expression in times of stress. The child as maker of his/her artwork is empowered and there is potential for relief from tension and dealing with material of dangerous significance that is difficult to express verbally (Heegaard 1992; Lewis & Langer in Goodman *et al*., 1998).

2.2.4 Connections between trauma and drawings

According to Lykes (1997), traditionally, trauma is mainly conceptualised within a positivist paradigm. From this perspective, individual-based diagnostic tools and practises of psychological intervention, as well as structured interviews and symptoms checklists, are predominantly used to address or document experiences of a traumatic nature. These

conventional practices have contributed enormously towards contemporary understanding of post-traumatic stress symptoms and the subsequent biological and intra-psychic human responses to extreme terror. However, Lykes, Terre Blanche and Hamber (2003) identify limitations in traditional practices in that they are insufficient in providing a culture-based perspective of trauma. They contend that these methods fail to capture the lived experiences of trauma and are likely to disregard the collective nature of individual experiences, in particular, those of vulnerable populations whose voices are easily silenced by those in authority. Lykes (1997) argues that the reality of trauma, along with the symbolic meaning of terror, demands an alternative methodology for studying its effects. Bearing in mind the intrinsic, participant-based factors, this study aims to incorporate and combine everyday means of communication, such as drawing, thereby facilitating a re-conceptualisation of trauma within the participants' cultural context.

Daniels (2006) contends that visuals have the potential to facilitate fresh insights into the impact trauma has in the lives of individuals. The expression of trauma has great therapeutic value. In this regard, Meyer (in Levine, 1999:253) claims that artistic expression touches humanity and is essential for trauma survivors, people for whom humanity itself has become questionable, "nothing else is strong enough to contain the destruction of the self." Lykes (1994) explains that any response that claims to lead towards recovery demands creativity. The transitional space afforded by artistic engagement distances, while simultaneously providing a safe area in which to experiment with trauma-laden feelings. The process of art making can contain the "ugly" and the "beautiful", yet keep uncomfortable feelings at a comfortable distance. Art has the ability to revitalise suppressed parts of trauma through a dialogue in the present. Stronach-Buschel (1990) explains that art in therapy has the capacity to render life valuable by depicting both its horror and pity. It seems, therefore, that the act of expression through drawing or painting encodes overwhelming memories into something that is more than merely stored emotions (Lykes, 1997; Laub & Podell in Goodman *et al*., 1998). I argue that, in drawing participants invoke semiotic devices other than the spoken word. These images become part of their meaning making and serve as communicative tools.

In the aftermath of traumatic events that shook the world, such as the terrorist attacks on America on September 11, 2001, and the destruction of large parts of Indonesia and Sri Lanka by the tsunami on December 26, 2004, mental health professionals used drawings to get children to talk about their suffering and loss. In war-torn nations such as Burundi, Rwanda, Palestine, Darfur and Guatemala, drawings have been extensively used with

traumatised children as a means of getting them to express their fears and innermost thoughts (Daniels, 2006). Researchers who were sent to war-torn Darfur by Human Rights Watch in February 2005, assert that the children's drawings represent a visual record of the atrocities committed in Darfur, which could not be obtained through any other source. These researchers cited in Zuckerman, (2005), report that:

> What the children drew came straight from their hearts, uncorrupted and undiluted by external influences or even anxiety about what others might think or say. Their pictures show to what extent such incidents have affected their minds, to have stayed on so powerfully. It is disturbing to think of what images, and in turn, attitudes and beliefs such children will grow up with.

Taking a similar point of view, Mishara (in Goodman *et al.,* 1998) explains that making art allows translation from a purely emotional to a cognitive experience, thus changing the child's relationship to their trauma. By creating a tangible object such as a drawing that confirms the reality of a traumatic event, the artist can "know" the trauma. The void between the tracks might begin to mend (Howard, 1990). Exploration and resolution of toxic images in a context that is more acceptable may give form to chaos and facilitate closure. This enables taking control of feelings and provides an opportunity for transformation from victim into survivor (Meyer in Levine, 1999).

When children are engaged in an absorbing sensory activity, the brain engages in an indirect conversation with the visual stimuli. This may result in a release of verbal communication, explaining why most children find it easier to draw a traumatic experience than to talk about it (Cherney *et al*., 2006). According to Heegaard (1992), the presence of emotional indicators in their art is normal for children who have experienced loss and change or crisis. Clements, Benasutti and Henry (2001) stress that children's accounts of emotionally laden events offer a unique window into their internal world, providing privileged information that cannot necessarily be obtained from significant others in their lives. To present their true core feelings, older children tend to combine words and pictures in their artworks. Yet, with reference to children and adolescence, frightful reminders of trauma and nightmares reportedly stop after drawing them (Heegaard, 1992; Redgrave, 2000). Used in conjunction with talk therapy, the drawing of traumatic events thus empowers children and is helpful in exploring their feelings surrounding death, loss and accompanying trauma (Wesson & Salmon, 2001).

2.2.5   Interpretation of drawings as visual-based research

The quest of this inquiry, as grounded within a qualitative, interpretative paradigm, is to obtain contextual insight that is trustworthy and rich in quality. From an interpretative stance, reality and meanings attached to the world are underscored by personal theoretical convictions (Merriam, 2002; Daniels, 2006). Driessnack (2005) argues that it is not until recently that children's drawings were revisited as potential facilitative methods of communication. The focus has shifted from direct interpretation, based solely on adult's perceived meaning of drawings, to children's own explanation of what their drawings are about and exploration of the context within which associated feelings are based. In order to obtain genuine descriptions of the participant's reality, it seems sensible for the researcher to become the co-creator of meaning, thus adopting a stance of "not knowing." Principles that underpin certain fields in art therapy entail clients talking with the therapist after completing their artworks. According to Arguile (1990), instead of the therapist interpreting the image, the clients interpret their own work. Levine (1999) asserts that the therapist's aesthetic response is indicative of the quality of the relationship and announces their bearing witness to and sharing the child's world. A compassionate attitude is important as it facilitates understanding of young people's thoughts and feelings (Wadeson in Clements, Benasutti & Henry, 2001).

Furthermore, Meyer (in Levine, 1999) warns that blind analysis of a child's artwork is dangerous. It is important to rely on observations and on what makes sense in the context of the actual encounter. Wakefield and Underwager (1998) explain that, although drawings may be valuable in building rapport and in facilitating communication, they cannot be used to draw conclusions in the absence of a description given by the child. It is therefore imperative that the individual be granted an opportunity to actively explain the meaning of a picture (Allan, 1988). Daniels (2006) confirms that the researcher's account can never replace the reasoning of the participant, nor clarify what influenced the creation of a specific artwork:

> Without the participant's own description of his/her artwork, no new insights, and knowledge about their experience can be gained. The researcher could miss the complexity, drama, and courage in the participants' lives when visuals are analysed without the participant's input.

2.3   TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES DURING ADOLESCENCE

2.3.1   Introduction

As discussed in the preceding section, the process of creating an artwork evokes an intuitive reflective process during which traumatic memories are located outside of the self. Psychoanalytical theory was consulted in an attempt to understand the nature of traumatic experiences. According to the literature, the act of artistic expression is reportedly beneficial in itself. It can bring immense relief to traumatised individuals since it makes it possible to "express the externalised problem in a symbolic yet physically experienced way" (Freeman, Epston & Lobovits, 1997:148). However, the potent, out-of-the-ordinary nature of traumatic experiences is widely documented. If they are not provided with alternative means of expression to words, the unique "voices" of certain young persons may be silenced. At this point, it is necessary to establish the nature of trauma as part of the effort to construct a sound theoretical backbone for this study.

The word "trauma" assumes different meanings associated with an experience that is emotionally painful, distressful, or shocking, often resulting in lasting mental and physical effects (Giarratano, 2004). Jacoby (in Kalsched, 1996), defines trauma as the rupture of developmental transitions in the interior world of those who have suffered agonising life experiences. Each traumatic situation is unique, whether it is a motor vehicle accident involving friends or family members, or a plane crash resulting in the death of many people. Literature suggests that the most important relationship one has is to oneself. When trauma occurs, it often results in a breach of this integral relationship and one loses the sense of having a safe place within or outside oneself to deal with frightening emotions and experiences (Stronach-Buschel, 1990). Traumatic events involve the most basic of threats. Our fragility as physical beings becomes painfully obvious, our own survival and that of those we care about becomes seriously questioned (NIMH, 2001). The forced recognition of the real possibility of annihilation, of serious illness and our own mortality, essentially confrontation with survival, is the defining feature of any traumatic event.

Defining features of physical trauma also characterise psychological trauma: a violent shock, the idea of a wound and the idea of consequences affecting the whole organisation (Harvey & Pauwels, 2000). Although emotional response to any life event affects the body, trauma does so to the utmost (Rothschild, 2003). It is imperative to grasp that traumatic events do not

produce the psychological counterpart of shallow scratches that heal readily, but deep bodily wounds that require far more in the way of restorative hard work (Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

According to Kalsched (1996), trauma associated images and thoughts are believed to reside within the survivor's internal world. Studies report that these images are powerful and intensely painful, and threaten to overwhelm the survivor (Janoff-Bulman 1992). The normal reaction of the psyche to a traumatic event is to withdraw from the scene of injury. Recent clinical research shows that when trauma strikes the developing psyche of a child (or adolescent, in this case), and withdrawal is not possible, a fragmentation of consciousness occurs in which the different "pieces" of the self must be withdrawn by a process of forcible splitting (Corey, 2001; Nelson-Jones, 2001). Kalsched (1996:5) highlights that the most disturbing findings made through literature in the exploration of the inner world of trauma are as follows:

> The traumatised psyche is self-traumatising, meaning that trauma continues unabated in the inner world of the trauma victim. Persecutory inner figures often haunt dreams. The victim of psychological trauma continually finds himself in life situations where he is re-traumatised as though the persecutory internal world somehow finds its outer mirror in repeating self-defeating re-enactments. It is almost as if the individual becomes pursued by a malignant fate, or possessed by some diabolical power, a power within that is very bad or annoying.

The essence of trauma lies in injury and abrupt disintegration of the inner world. Overwhelming life experiences split open and threaten to shatter most fundamental core assumptions about oneself and other people, as well as one's basic trust in the world as a safe place. The resulting feelings of intense vulnerability replaces a sense of security and the private internal world of the trauma survivor becomes infused with thoughts and images representing malevolence, meaninglessness and self-abasement (Kalsched, 1996; Edwards, 2003).

2.3.2 Responses to traumatic events

Although the response to any particular life event must be understood in terms of the unique individuals involved, the literature concludes that human emotions reach a point beyond which they cannot extend (Kalsched, 1996). Human beings are unable to remain open to experiences of extreme intensity for an undetermined duration of time (Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

Table 2.1 depicts different responses to traumatic events. These responses appear to be universal amongst those who have experienced extreme, negative life events. As indicated in Table 2.1, responses to threat fluctuate from a sense of feeling emotionally detached or being unable to feel anything to re-experiencing the traumatic event through intrusive recollections of distressing dreams or involuntary thoughts and memories that are persistent, recurrent and psychologically disturbing (Sadock & Sadock, 2003).

Differential Responses to Threat	
Dissociation	Hyper arousal
Detached	Hyper vigilant
Numbing	Anxious
Compliant	Reactive
Decreased heart rate	Increased heart rate
Suspension of time	Alarm response
De-realisation	Freeze: fear
Mini-psychoses	Flight: Panic
Fainting	Fight: Terror

Table 2.1: Different responses to threat
(Compiled from Eth, 2001; Perry, 2001)
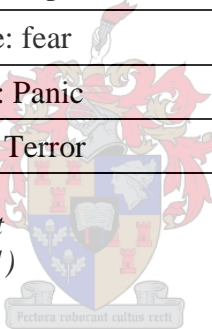
The literature makes it clear that no two survivors have identical reactions to extreme events (Everly & Mitchell, 2003). An understanding of trauma lies in grappling with the totality of the survivor's psychological experience and in the process we learn about ourselves. The survivor's perceptions of why the traumatic incident occurred and perceptions of control over the past and future are modifiable factors. This has important implications for recovery (NIMH, 2001). Those who suffer the long-term effects of trauma often believe that, because the trauma happened, they must have done something wrong, that they failed to stop it. Preoccupation with the question "Why?" may suggest that a survivor is still trying to make sense of, or find meaning in, the event. Finding answers to questions such as "Why did this happen to me?" and "Will this happen again?" seems particularly important for victims of sudden and unexpected traumatic events (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Emotional harm is essentially a normal response to an extreme event and involves the creation of emotional memories about the distressful event that are stored in structures deep within the brain. Self-forgiveness, healing and reuniting the inner self become essential since a part of the self feels

betrayed or let down (Rothschild, 2003). It seems that the more direct the exposure to the traumatic event, the higher the risk for emotional harm (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; NIMH, 2001).
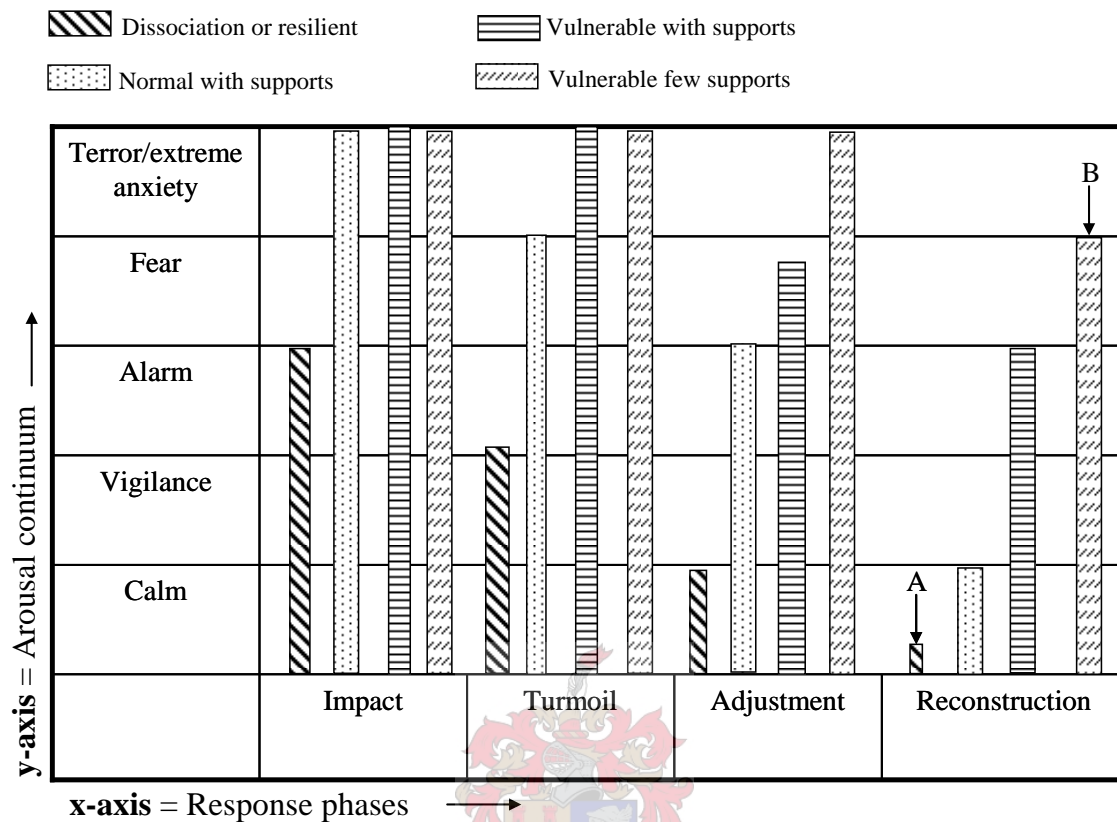
Figure 2.1: Emotional responses phases to trauma
(Compiled from Perry, 2001; Everly & Mitchell, 2003)

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, each traumatic event has a beginning and an end. When the traumatic incident happens, the individual will move along the arousal continuum, (on the y-axis) with emotions varying from calm, to vigilance, alarm, fear and then terror, or extreme anxiety. These emotional states correspond to the various response phases to threat as indicated on the x-axis. The size of the bar graphs indicates different responses to trauma with varying degrees of support. It is evident from Figure 2.1 that resilience enables a person to reconstruct a traumatic event rapidly (see point A). This point, however, may also indicate dissociation, a façade that can be mistaken as rapid reconstruction. Point B depicts a lengthy reconstruction phase for a person rendered vulnerable or who has few support structures. Additionally, Frazier (2000) states that individuals who are able to attribute meaning to tragedy tend to cope more successfully.

2.3.3 Dissociation

The previous section referred to dissociation as an accompanying symptom of trauma. Dissociation hinders the process of recovery, and therefore deserves further exploration. Howard (1990) describes dissociation as occurring during overwhelming stimulation and terror. When this happens, the more highly developed cognitive systems are bypassed and intolerable memories are cast into the unconscious. Jung (in Hagood, 2000) recognised dissociation as a trick the psyche plays on itself, as a normal part of the psychological protection against trauma's potentially damaging impact. Kalsched (1996) explains that dissociation is not a passive, gentle process in which different parts of the mind become disconnected and "drift apart." It involves an aggressive active attack by one part of the psyche on other parts. Dividing unbearable experiences and distributing them to different parts of the unconscious aspects of the mind and body allow external life to go on, but at a great internal cost. The sequel of the outer trauma continues to haunt the inner world in the form of certain images, which cluster around a strong affect (Jung called these "feeling-toned complexes"). This prevents the integration of normally unified elements of consciousness, including cognitive awareness, the memory, affect, sensation and imagery. Therefore, a person whose life has been interrupted by trauma cannot tell a full narrative history. The memory of one's life has holes in it (Nelson-Jones, 2001). The resulting attempts to keep split-off parts out of consciousness leads to a reduced ability to symbolise, to attach words to feelings, and to fantasise, because linking affect to cognition may lead to re-experiencing the trauma through dreams, nightmares, or flashbacks (Kalsched, 1997; Rothschild, 2003).

2.3.4 Traumatic bereavement

The participants involved in this study were subject to traumatic bereavement, which involves an encounter with death that is not gentle and timely, but rather a sudden, perhaps horrific and shocking death of a loved one. The section that follows discusses traumatic bereavement and its effect on young people. Freud (in Bar-Tur & Levy-Shiff, 2000) regarded much of psychiatric illness as an expression of pathological mourning. Clements, Benasutti and Henry (2001) argue that traumatic bereavement predisposes children to complicated grieving, which can lead to posttraumatic stress disorder and manifests itself in depression, addictions, mental illness, or aggressive behaviour, and possibly exacerbates medical conditions. Intrusive images of the scene of the trauma could come to mind during this process, especially if the death had been horrific. These images, experienced as more powerful and immediate when the witness directly perceives physical violence or harm done

to another person, are associated with anxiety, intense distress that is a repetition of the shock, horror and fear. Memories of the traumatic event or scene and circumstances could relay the effect of terror, the image of a dead person, the smell of blood and the sound of sirens (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Frequently, there is an intense preoccupation with images and memories of the lost person as alive. Re-experiencing may capture a sense of the person's presence, which is usually reassuring and not linked to fear except when it is associated with traumatic elements (Raphael & Martinek, 1997).

Emotional attachment to people close to us, who are seriously threatened or harmed, essentially makes the traumatic event directly felt. For children and adolescents, the intensity of the experience of loss is related to how well they knew the deceased and the detailed memory of conditions surrounding the death (Brooks & Siegel, 1996). The literature shows that bereaved children may use drawings to express their thoughts and feelings related to the circumstances of a sudden and traumatic death, the nature of their relationship with the person who died and their present worries and fears (Heegaard, 1992; Clements, Benasutti & Henry, 2001). Harvey and Pauwels (2000) describe the coping process as frequently dynamic, with survivors and those close to them often experiencing an "evolution" of their grief. Even though bereavement is a painful process, it serves as a normal and necessary tribute to the deceased: pangs of grief are usually temporary and tend to diminish.

2.4   DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACT OF TRAUMA

2.4.1   General development during early adolescence

Adolescence is regarded as a crucial transition period when children are, under normal conditions, trying to tackle huge developmental shifts. Because of the change, loss and disruption of prior structure during this time, adolescence is depicted as a particularly stressful period in life (Eth, 2001; Giarratano, 2004). It is a "yo-yo" time characterised by fluctuating behaviour were young people bounce between dependence and independence in their journey from childhood to adulthood. Kuykendall (1994:11) describes adolescence as the "un age – unable to be an adult, unable to be a child, yet wanting to be both", "a confusing, in-between time when teenagers feel like trapeze artists who have released the bar of childhood but are hanging in midair, reaching for the bar of adulthood." It is a bewildering time of physical development with which only the first year of life can compete in terms of growth and changes. At adolescence, the chid is bombarded with a multitude of issues, for

instance, sexuality, morality, identity formation, relationship finding and awareness of commitments (Kuykendall, 1994; Giarratano, 2004).

The accessed literature cautions that adolescence holds the potential to shape the remainder of a young person's life (Williams & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1999; Giarratano, 2004). According to Winfield (1999), adolescence, especially early adolescence, is often a time of life when despair and hopelessness is highest, which often leads to aggressive behaviour. Furthermore, Erickson accentuates the crucial task of adolescence as the establishment of an own identity, which is referred to as the "ego identity" (Craig, 1996). This process comprises separation and pursuit of independence to answer the question "Who am I?" Signs of separation include assertiveness and rebellion, moodiness and the need for privacy (Kuykendall, 1994). According to Levine (1999:250), "the danger of expression is the fear of not being received." To prove their personal identity to themselves and to others, it is crucial that the adolescent be taken seriously. Social expectations and reliance on external factors such as acceptance from peers and significant others may render the young person vulnerable in the process of fostering a positive self-image and an own unique identity in order to react effectively to stressful life events (Craig, 1996). For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to understand developmental tasks specific to adolescents (11-13 years olds). These tasks are provided in Table 2.2 below:

Cognitive	Transition from concrete to abstract thought processes
	Use of abstract, emotive language
	Emergence of inductive, independent critical thinking skills
	Application of logic in problem solving
	Awareness of alternative options in problem solving situations
Social	Behavioural expectations standardised by peer group
	Idolisation of role-models
	Conformation to rules assigned by peer group
	Social interaction and team activities are integral to popularity
	Engagement in boisterous or rebellious behaviour
	Experience of pressure regarding decisions about alcohol and drugs
Self-identity	Attainment of socially acceptable masculine or feminine role
	Role clarification in heterosexual relationships
	Search for confidence in own ability to cope independently
	Quest for an individual identity accompanied by rebelliousness
	Hormonal change facilitates bodily transformations and self-concept
	Creation of anxiety about behaviour cause by self-consciousness
Values	Development of value system subject to social expectations
	Development of an understanding of ethical concepts (integrity, fairness)
	Emergent ability to engage in social or moral discussions

Table 2.2: Developmental tasks of 11-13 year olds
(Heegaard, 1992; Craig, 1996)

2.4.2   Adolescent response to trauma

Although adults display similar responses to traumatic experiences, trauma specific fears, anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts are more exclusively to adolescent reactions (Monahon, 1993; Lewis, 1999). Nader (1997) emphasises that somatic complaints, daydreaming, feeling unreal and detached from one's experience are common among adolescents. Flashbacks, nightmares, emotional numbing, avoidance of any reminders of the traumatic event, substance abuse, poor social referencing, problems with peers and anti-social behaviour are frequently noted in the literature (Walker & Roberts, 2001; Sadock & Sadock, 2003). According to the NIMH (2001), withdrawal and isolation, physical complaints, school avoidance, academic decline, sleep disturbances and confusion are also common responses to trauma. Failure to prevent the traumatic incident and a sense of responsibility for injury or death may result in feelings of extreme guilt, vulnerability and lowered self-esteem (Nader, 1997; NIMH, 2001; Giarratano, 2004).

Development depends partially on the imaginative transformation of experience. Levine (1999) claims that the ability to use the imagination is of critical importance to the developmental process from childhood into adulthood. If a young person is bound by trauma and unable to use imagination productively, one of the consequences is the inability to continue along the developmental line. Adolescents have acquired what Giarratano (2004) refers to as a developing understanding of the world. A measure of cognitive maturity enables a greater understanding of traumatic experiences and subsequent consequences. Yet, confusion and chaos may reign for some time as the young person attempts to digest the impact of the traumatic event. According to Vessey (2004), they may forget significant details of a traumatic event or fail to show alarm reactions in an attempt to repress psychologically distressing reminders. A feeling of terrible frustration at being powerless as a result of the traumatic event is experienced intensely. Giarratano (2004) elaborates, stating that adolescents often experience a sense of disruption or betrayal of the basic assumption that society is benevolent. The resulting behaviour may indicate an inability to resist coercive violation. Adolescents may harbour revenge fantasies and knowingly compromise their recovery by acting out or engaging in risky behaviour in an attempt to regain control over the situation (Brooks & Siegel, 1996).

2.4.3   Adolescent coping strategies following trauma

The development of coping strategies is a dynamic process. Major life changes, like those synonymous with normal adolescent development, are viewed as particularly challenging to one's coping abilities (Forcey & Harris, 1999). Ways adolescents use to cope expand with age. According to Williams and McGillicuddy-De Lisi (1999), younger adolescents may be especially vulnerable to stress due to insufficient skills in appraising situations and choosing appropriate coping strategies. Although confidence may be displayed when conditions are non-threatening, trauma may exacerbate insecurities due to a probable lack of experience in processing events of a traumatic nature (Kuykendall, 1994). Younger adolescents suppress trauma-related symptom by distracting themselves from the problem and may become inhibited at school. They reportedly deal with stress by becoming quieter in the classroom and focusing more intensely on their schoolwork (Nader, 1997). Although alliance with peers and friendships are extremely important during this phase of life, it is suggested that the fear of being stigmatised may cause the peer group to function as a source of stress rather than as a resource (Lewis, 1999).

Children and adolescents living in South Africa are exposed to ongoing violence, whether through the media or at firsthand. As a consequence, many youths grow up to be frightened, angry and in search of vengeance, notoriously labelled as "young, unemployed and armed" (Barberton, 1997). Former President Nelson Mandela stated that the youth are valued possessions, without whom there can be no future for South Africans. He emphasised that the wellness of the youth is one of South Africa's greatest concerns, since the challenges the youth face are immense and urgent (in Boikanyo & Donnell, 1997). An urgent need exists for exploring creative ways to re-install the youth as valued leaders of the future. In this regard, Winfield (1999:295) emphasises community-based intervention as an essential tool to "provide adolescents with an opportunity to discover and define their place in the real world." Enhanced coping skills through community-based support can provide adolescents with a strong sense of belonging and can foster self-efficacy, the power that enables them to combat feelings of despair and hopelessness that are common today in communities plagued by trauma due to ongoing unrest (Paulsen & Prins, 2001; Lewis *et al*., 2003).

2.5   IMPLICATIONS FOR THIS STUDY

2.5.1   Introduction

There are some reservations about the usefulness of supportive counselling, debriefing and psychotherapy in the wake of trauma (Slater in Edwards, 2003). However, the literature accessed for this study strongly recommends therapeutic intervention for traumatised individuals (Augustyn *et al*., 1995; Boikanyo & Donnell, 1997; Boscarino *et al*., 2005). In relation to trauma intervention with children and adolescents, Vessey (2004) argues that it is crucial to recognise that all children, regardless of racial, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, who have witnessed or experienced trauma are at a similar risk for developing PTSD. In many cases, the school is the first to notice changes in behaviour. Regrettably, assistance is only recommended when the situation has drastically deteriorated. As stated by Oaklander (1978:183), "the child often sees to it that something is done, by fighting harder and harder in some way until someone notices."

Successful trauma intervention is described as a process that facilitates ways to "make sense of," "process", "file away" and "digest" painful experiences (Giarratano, 2004). Careful documentation of exposure to traumatic events and symptom severity helps to ensure early and appropriate identification and referral of high-risk children (Freeman, Epston & Lobovits, 1997; Nader, 1997). Rogers (1997) contends that there is something magical about working together, side by side. The child and therapist form a unit capable of tolerating more affect-laden material than the child alone can tolerate. Internal strength increases as the child feels freer to reveal emotions, thoughts and opinions (Freeman, Epston & Lobovits, 1997). Rothschild (2003) regards the use of common sense and thoughtful consideration prior to and during contact sessions as the first, most important prerequisite for effective, safe trauma intervention. Additionally, Kaminer (2005) summarises eight features of trauma intervention that promote positive outcomes for youth. They are physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities for belonging, positive social norms, support for efficacy and mattering, opportunities for skills building and integration of family, school and community.

2.5.2   Group intervention through creative expression

It is important to note that children caught up in an emotional experience may have great difficulty expressing themselves in words. Instead, they may convey their experiences nonverbally, through facial expressions, posture and movement. Janoff-Bulman (1992)

argues that children and adolescents are extremely sensitive to the input of close others in making meaning of an extreme event. Significant others can potentially reframe and transform the event so that it is less frightening and less likely to challenge the child's inner world. According to a survivor of childhood trauma, together with group therapy individual counselling is essential to recovery for anyone at risk for developing PTSD (Macias *et al*., 2000). In a study conducted by Lykes *et al*. (2003), participants described group-based discussions as their first opportunity to talk about events they had been forced to keep silent, or could only discuss privately with family members. Mirroring of experiences, the realisation that peers share similar emotions, role modelling and peer/therapist feedback can facilitate development of socialisation techniques and coping skills in the aftermath of trauma (Williams & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1999).

The group is a contained space to learn to take responsibility, to discover how people interact with one another, to experience reactions and to experiment with new behaviours (Lykes, Terre Blanche & Hamber, 2003). Oaklander (1978) affirms that every child needs connection with other children. The group process stimulates creativity. It is a most valuable aspect of group work because it empowers children to realise that they share similar feelings. When experiences are shared, the task of talking about the work becomes one of talking about hope. Clear understanding of the interaction between thoughts, feelings and behaviours are employed. Lykes (1994) explains that the group context is structured to incorporate creativity. It is committed to supporting the group members it contains and it thus protects them while facilitating communication, development and truth seeking. Meyer in Levine (1999) emphasises that exploring the trauma story through the artwork gives the story and the group a shared focus.

According to Kaminer (2005), group sessions are beneficial for teenagers. For young adolescents, a focus on the enhancement of metacognitive skills is recommended. The therapist takes a stance of being curious, inviting the individual to create an own, unique preferred meaning of the event rather than offering an expert opinion (Williams & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1999). New depths of communication evolve as the adolescent finds support and connection with the therapist and other group members (Kaminer, 2005). Opportunities to test new behaviour in a contained environment, enhancement of interpersonal learning and development of mutual trust may be influential to the healing process from trauma (Goodman *et al*., 1998). In relation, Niesyto (in Gauntlett, 2004:10) offers the following idea for intervention:

Nowadays, in our media-conscious society, if somebody wants to learn something about the youth's ideas, feelings, and their ways of experiencing specific events in their world, they should give them the chance to express themselves by means of their own self-made creative products.

2.5.3 Strengthening self-expression through visual-based research

Oaklander (1978) believes that the way a child approaches drawing is often the same as his/her way of approaching life. The very act of drawing, with no therapist intervention whatsoever, is a powerful expression of the self that aids the establishment of self-identity. Although traumatised adolescents generally display out of control behaviour and a sense of helplessness, research emphasises that it is possible to find an element of repair and restoration through art (Winfield, 1999; Hagood, 2000). Redgrave (2000) asserts that third objects are used as structured means of communication to facilitate deeper self-healing or insight promoting characteristics. According to Steinthardt (1993), a pride in creative ability and deep physical and spiritual satisfaction is a therapeutic result that may aid the child to advance to a healthier, appropriate mode of functioning. In relation to this, the benefits of art-making on adolescent self-image can have a calming effect and reduce defensiveness and thus enhance communication (Stronach-Buschel, 1990; Allan, 1988). It can be ego supportive, leading to feelings of competence and heightened self-esteem that may be transferred to other areas of development (Arrington in Driessnack, 2005). Rogers (1997) confirms the notion that the creative process, as experienced through the expressive arts, is one path to self-discovery, self-empowerment and self-acceptance.

2.5.4 Guidelines for conducting research in a group context with adolescents

Janoff-Bulman (1992) emphasises that traumatic events rupture trust. Providing guidelines for the session enhances understanding and builds trust. According to Clements, Benasutti and Henry (2001), adolescents generally appreciate an explanation about what exactly group therapy is about. They want to know what good it will do and how the therapist will go about helping them find out about themselves and the issue at hand. It is emphasised again that the researcher's role is that of researcher and not of therapist. However, due to the sensitive nature of this investigation, guidelines that are applicable to group therapy were incorporated into the research. To initiate the group process, individual expectations are clarified. At this point, a unanimous decision regarding rules for the sessions is made. These rules should promote positive responses, mutual respect and appreciation of each person's uniqueness and personal style of art (Steinthardt, 1993). Interpersonal relations are generally revealed in the

way group members experience each other, react and relate to each other in the group setting. Group members should therefore be encouraged to communicate with each other directly, rather than speaking through the facilitator.

Rogers (1997) stresses that the facilitator's values, attitudes and way of being is responsible for establishing a psychologically safe environment. Case and Dalley (1990) emphasise that it is essential for the therapist (researcher, in this case) to be trustworthy. The therapist's role is important in the group context in setting a tone for the group as a place where children can feel safe and accepted. Group sessions ought to be enjoyable experiences where each person feels interested, safe and accepted. According to Oaklander (1978), more happens when the therapist participates in group activities and shares personal awareness and feelings.

The group should be a non-threatening place that the group members can trust and discharge pent-up emotions (Lykes, 1997). If a group member is visibly hurt or upset, the therapist needs to be able to sense it (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Clements, Benasutti and Henry (2001) assert that they should be encouraged to learn to value their own internal standards, rather than rely on an authority figure. The group facilitator should not disregard hurtful comments or actions towards any group member. In a non-judgemental atmosphere, the group members can take emotional risks and venture into the land of authenticity (Roger, 1997). This provides an atmosphere where the potential for self-awareness, responsibility and listening skills is enhanced.
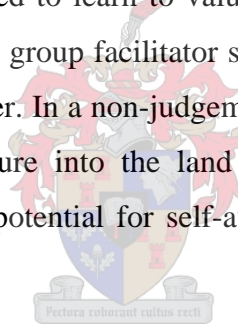
2.6   SUMMARY

In this literature study, a variety of sources were consulted on art as a means of facilitating understanding of adolescents' experience of a shared traumatic event. The literature underlines the potential of art to provide adolescents with a vehicle for self-expression. In the area of heath-care containment, drawing is regarded as an instinctive ability for children. Within the context of trauma intervention, drawing and art making may grant access to hidden resources, giving children the opportunity to gain new perspectives and to have their voices heard. For some children, especially the participants in this study, their natural ability to draw can be supported to become a lifesaver.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN
AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the research design and methodology for this study will be presented and discussed. The chapter commences with a description of qualitative interpretive research. It then describes my research process and the specific data collection methods considered relevant for this study. The data processing techniques, methods of establishing data interpretation, as well as reliability, validity and ethical issues, are explained. To conclude, a summary of what was discussed in the chapter is presented.

This study comprises a qualitative investigation, which, according to Merriam (2000), is distinguished by a search for meaning and understanding, with the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection. Patton (2002) argues that the essence of qualitative research is paying attention, being open to what the world has to show us and thinking about what it means. In order to investigate how drawing can be used to increase understanding of the adolescent's experience of a traumatic incident, an interpretive qualitative research process was undertaken. This qualitative research and is underpinned by constructivism (De Vos, 2002; Gravetter & Forzano, 2003), as these participants used drawings as a tool to reconstruct their experience of the accident. Gaining insight into participants' unique experiences and meanings attributed to these experiences is the defining characteristic of the basic interpretive paradigm (Merriam, 1998). Silverman (2004) explains that the aim of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the nature of the participants' setting, what their lives are like, what is happening to them and what their understanding of the research problem is. From this paradigm, my aim is to use adolescents' drawings as authentic information to capture the meaning of a traumatic experience in order to gain a rich, meaningful understanding of the topic under investigation, which in this case, is individual and collective insight into a shared traumatic incident.

3.2   RESEARCH DESIGN

Merriam (1998) points out that a research design resembles a focused guide for carrying out an inquiry. This design can be compared to a plan or map which helps the researcher get from here to there – from an initial set of questions towards answers or conclusions to these questions. However, in qualitative inquiry, the term "design" poses a paradox. On the one hand, it can be argued that design suggests a very specific blueprint or plan of action. On the other hand, it involves planning for certain broad contingencies to emerge, without an indication of exactly what will be done. Thus, the challenge is to figure out an appropriate design and the most useful research methods for a specific situation (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002; Daniels, 2006).

Patton (2002) and Mertens (1998) contend that a qualitative design needs to remain sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry – in this case, drawing as a research tool to gain insight into adolescents' experiences of a shared traumatic event. Descriptive qualitative research commences with a well-defined research problem. The researcher is not interested in people's surface opinion, but rather in unfolding what the world looks like from their particular setting (Merriam, 2000). Additionally, Rubin and Babbie (in De Vos, 2002) declare that more intensive examination of the problem is likely to be undertaken, and deeper meanings, thus thicker descriptions, are produced. In this study, I sought to understand the group of adolescents' deep-seated experience of the bus accident as a traumatic event. Authentic drawings were used as a mediator in the process of collective meaning making of this shared traumatic event. It was anticipated that the drawings of these young adolescents would facilitate their description of trauma on a deeper level, thus unpacking experiences and capturing their emotions, perceptions and expectations in this regard. I argue that this process holds the potential to contribute rich, meaningful insight pertaining to the individual, as well as collective experience of shared trauma.

In a qualitative study, Goodley (2004) contends that the methodology followed enacts an approach to research that combines a commitment to the participants and to the generation of new knowledge about the problem to inform the process. According to Goodley (2004), research methodology denotes the persuasions from which stories emerge and refers to different levels of active doing and participation on the part of the respondent in the process of research. In this regard, Patton (2002) further argues that the practical application of

qualitative inquiry comes down to paying attention, listening and watching, being open, thinking about what you hear and see, making connections, exploration, documenting systematically drawing on personal experience and applying what you learn.

3.2.1 The setting of the inquiry

The setting for this study is a Western Cape school. Learners from this school were involved in a bus accident in 2005 that claimed the lives of three fellow learners and the bus driver. The accident affected numerous members of the school community, which necessitated various interventions by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) immediately following the accident. Though separate from these interventions, which included trauma debriefing and counselling, this study builds on that process of working through the trauma. Within this study, I was both the researcher and facilitator of the drawing process. The focus of my research was to gain insight into adolescent's emotions, perceptions and expectations following a shared traumatic event. The participants' drawings were used as a research method to stimulate discussion about the accident. These drawings were also used to initiate collective meaning through group dialogue.

3.2.2 Sampling the population

The grade seven groups that attended this specific Western Cape school were regarded as a unit within the learner population. Consequently, the population for this study comprised all the grade seven learners, 108 learners in total. I would argue that this bus accident had an impact not only on the learners that were passengers in the bus that crashed, or witnesses from the other two buses, but also on all learners that attended school on the day of the accident, as well as the rest of the community affiliated to the school. Two buses were hired for the grade seven learners who decided to go on the outing. All of these learners witnessed one of the buses crashing. In the accident, three fellow learners and the bus driver were killed.

In qualitative research, Merriam (2000:20) regards it as important to select a sample from which the most can be learned. Information-rich cases are constituted by issues of central importance to the purpose of the study. This facilitates in-depth research, making it possible to learn a great deal about the problem directly (Patton, 2002). The sample for this study was purposefully selected according to specific criteria. In order to select a sample group, the following processes were followed: Though all grade sevens were representative of the population, the school management decided that the sample should only be selected from

those grade sevens who were willing to participate. Consequently, the sample population was drawn from a list of grade seven learners compiled in the following three ways: The headmaster and grade seven educators provided a list of learners as participants who could benefit from this process. Secondly, during a governing body meeting regarding the accident, parents/guardians were briefed on the nature of this research investigation. They were presented with an opportunity for discussion and could request that their child participate in the study. I also introduced the nature of this study to each of the grade seven classes and learners could place their names on a list if they were willing to participate in this research study. The sample for the study consisted of thirteen participants aged between 12 and 14 years, the early adolescence developmental phase (Craig, 1996). All the participants were literate in either English or Afrikaans.

To access the school population, written permission was sought from the Western Cape Education Department to conduct this research at one of its schools (Appendix A). Permission was also sought from the headmaster of the school (Appendix B). In September 2005, the thirteen participants and their parents or guardians were contacted telephonically and invited to attend an informal discussion with the aim of clarifying the nature of the research study. I hoped that this session would assist in building rapport and empower the participants to share their expectations. During this meeting, the parents and guardians of the participants were also approached to give written informed consent that their children could participate in the study. The research process was explained to the participants to prepare them for the fact that drawing techniques would facilitate individual and group discussions. All contact sessions with participants, as well as discussions with parents/guardians and educators, took place in the staffroom or in one of the classrooms at the school.

3.3   DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Johnson and Christensen (2000) argue that the process of data collection in qualitative research is aimed at obtaining thick descriptions of the issue under investigation and data that are detailed, where direct quotations are used to capture people's perspectives and experiences. For this study, the following methods were selected to facilitate data collection: observation during the sessions when the drawings were done, guided individual interviews, three focus group interviews and one guided interview with educators. For ethical reasons, I made myself available to counsel participants who might require counselling after having engaged in this research. Three counselling sessions that were not part of the research process

occurred during November and December 2005, after the research was conducted. The data-collecting process occurred during October 2005, even though this was preceded by approximately one month of negotiations and meetings with the school governing body, parents and representatives of the education department.

As shown in the table below, an initial research session took place with two different groups of six and seven participants respectively. Once the two groups had merged, a third session took place with the remaining five participants. Following these interviews, a guided interview took place with two educators as key informants.

Session	Number of participants	Methods of data collection
One	Six participants	Pre-drawing focus group interview Observation of participants while drawing Individual interviews with each participant Post-drawing focus group interview
Two	Seven participants	Pre-drawing focus group interview Observation of participants while drawing Individual interviews with each participant Post-drawing focus group interview
Three	Five participants	Observation during collective drawing activity Post-drawing focus group interview
Four	Two educators	Guided interview with key informants

Table 3.1: Presents the order in which data collection procedures were implemented

3.3.1   Observation through visual data

Visual inquiry is defined as not only the study of an image, but more specifically as the study of that which is seen and observable (Emmison in Silverman, 2004:250). According to Gravetter and Forzano (2003), observation of participants in a setting arranged specifically for observing and recording behaviour is known as structured observation. The uniqueness of each participant's behaviour in the group setting required an inquiring, flexible mode of observation, rather than structured observation. Daniels (2006) contends that visual-based data are similar to observations in that they are both inherently ambiguous with meaning negotiated through the perception of the viewer. Meaning is thus contained within the image itself. From an eco-systemic perspective in an educational psychology context, the viewer's observations of drawings as visual data is influenced by inter- and intrapersonal factors, as

well as the socio-cultural contexts, including the family, school and community of which the viewer is part.

Creative visual methods such as photographs and drawings as reflexive tools have been used successfully in research in Britain (Gauntlett, 2004), Guatemala (Lykes, 1997) and South Africa (Daniels, 2003, 2006) to understand sensitive issues in people's lives. Because of the very sensitive nature of this study, drawings were regarded as more effective than verbal-based data in accessing and decoding the multi-layered worlds of participants (Daniels, 2006). Therefore, observation, along with drawings, was used as bridges of communication to find out how participants create meaning from a shared traumatic experience. A detailed discussion follows on the application of this process.

During this study, participants were observed in the process of drawing, that is, while they were engaged in the construction of unique visual data. To facilitate this process, each participant could select an A3 or A4 sheet of paper and a desk space where s/he could work individually. Participants were asked to "draw something that represents your experience or memory of the accident, which will help others understand your perception of what happened." These drawings could represent their own experience or memory of the accident: what they saw and felt, and what their expectations were now. A selection of coloured pencils, crayons, pastels and felt tipped pens were provided for the participants to use. Approximately 45 minutes was allocated for this activity, followed by a break of 15 minutes during which the respondents were offered cool drinks and sandwiches.

Mason (in Silverman, 2004) states that visual material has been used as methods of data generation in conjunction with other methods such as interviewing or focus groups. Within this study, visual data is thus considered as a means of storing, preserving, or representing information. While observing, qualitative researchers try not to draw attention to themselves, so that they will have little influence on the naturally occurring behaviour and interaction being studied (Johnson & Christensen, 2000:312). Descriptions derived from the observation of visual data are embedded in the life-worlds of the "actors" being studied and produce insider perspectives of the actors and their practices (Mouton, 2001:148). As discussed in the following section, these observations were enhanced by linking them to informal interviews during which each participant was asked to explain his or her drawing.

3.3.2 Interviewing

Qualitative interviewing is committed to asking genuinely open-ended questions that offer participants the opportunity to respond in their own words and to express their unique personal perspective (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002) and Merriam (1998), the goal of qualitative interviewing is to capture how those being interviewed view their world, "what is in and on someone else's mind" and to capture the complexities of their individual perceptions. According to Daniels (2006), the quality of the interview data is dependent on whether the interviewee is able to give verbal expression to his/her thoughts in a clear and unambiguous manner. For the purpose of this study, two types of interviews were used, namely individual interviews and focus group interviews. With the consent of the participants and key informants all interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. A detailed discussion follows in order to reflect on interviewing methods utilized during this study.

3.3.2.1 Individual interviews

Greeff (in De Vos, 2002) explains that the individual interviews are ideal for obtaining comprehensive, comparable data about a certain topic of which the structure is known, but the answers cannot be anticipated. During this investigation, individual interviews were conducted with each participant. Their completed drawings were used as the primary method of data to facilitate communication. The aim of these interviews was to gain insight into individual perceptions, emotions and expectations after the bus accident.

3.3.2.2 Focus group interviews

Focus group methodology is defined as a way of collecting qualitative data which involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion "focused" on a particular topic (Wilkinson in Silverman, 2004). This discussion is usually based on a series of questions called the focus group schedule. Morgan (in Silverman, 2004) describes the potential analytic use of interaction with each other, as actively encouraged by the researcher as the hallmark of focus group research. The quality of focus group data depends on two primary factors: sound preparation and effective moderation of the group discussion (Wilkinson in Silverman, 2004). For the purpose of this study, the role of the researcher as moderator was to pose questions, to keep the discussion flowing and to enable all group members to participate fully. Furthermore, the aim was to draw attention to previously neglected or unnoticed phenomena with the hope that unexpected insights will be discovered. Researcher control was reduced in order to empower group participants to develop their own

themes related to their experience of the bus accident, as well as to encourage in-depth engagement with these themes. In total, three focus group interviews took place during this study. Detailed discussions of the nature of these focus groups are given below.

Two focus group sessions were conducted with six and seven participants in each group respectively. Ensuring confidentiality, setting ground rules, building rapport and debriefing are particular issues that should receive attention throughout focus group research (Wilkinson in Silverman, 2004). On commencement of the first session with each group, ethical issues were clarified and written informed consent was requested from each participant by asking that they sign their name on the same large cardboard sheet, along with the signature of the researcher. This would symbolise group unity and commitment (Appendix E) during this first focus group session, with each group discussion centred on individuals' unique reasons for wanting to participate in the research study and on their awareness of the goals of the research study. Perceptions of various methods of communication, including alternative ways of communication such as drawing, were discussed and participants were given the opportunity to share their expectations for the session.

The drawing session and individual interviews were followed by a second focus group interview with each group. This focus group interview commenced with the researcher acting as facilitator, inviting each individual to describe and explain what they had depicted in their drawings. This process was used as a catalyst to "get into language," thereby facilitating a more direct route to communication about their collective experience of the traumatic incident. In this way, drawings were used as stimuli for further discussion and engagement on a deeper level. It was hoped that personal interpretations would open up collective experiences and intensify understanding of perceptions, feelings and expectations regarding traumatic content. The aim was also to gather thick data on the meaning of this incident for each participant of the study. During this time, I assured participants that information shared in the session would not be discussed with parents/guardians or educators, unless otherwise requested by the participants.

After the first two sessions, three participants from each group had decided that they no longer wanted to be involved in the research study. Due to unforeseen commitments, two participants, one from each group respectively, had excused themselves from the third session beforehand. A unanimous decision was taken by the researcher and the remaining five participants that the two groups should merge into one group. The final research session consisted of a focus group discussion that was facilitated through a shared drawing activity.

The aim of this session was to create an artwork together that presented collective perceptions and expectations of how the participants' thought adolescents' voices could be heard more effectively in the aftermath of the bus accident. Through this activity, a synergistic effect could be created where respondents could react to and build upon the responses of other group members (Stewart & Shamdasani in Silverman, 2004). It was anticipated that sensitive issues and strong convictions would arise during this session. In this regard, focus group interviews were considered as a fitting means of exploring sensitive topics since solidarity amongst peers can decrease discomfort around the topic (Greeff in De Vos, 2002). For the purpose of this study, it was hoped that this final focus group interview would lead to a more elaborated account of participants' collective perceptions than was generated in individual interviews.

3.3.2.3   *Guided interviews with key informants*

In December 2005, after the sessions with the participants had come to an end, two grade seven educators were interviewed as key informants of the population. They were selected because they were familiar with the participants and could inform the researcher about those learners most traumatised by the accident. The purpose of this interview was also to elicit information on the educator's observation of behavioural changes that could be attributed to the accident. They were also given an opportunity to express their perceptions of whether participation in the study made a difference in the behaviour of these adolescents in class.

After completion of the data collection process, letters were sent to all the participants, their parents/guardians and to the staff of the school to thank them for granting me the opportunity to conduct research in the tragic context of the accident (Appendix F & G).

3.4   DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is described by Wilkinson (2004) as all-inclusive, typically addressing in great analytical depth the issue of "what is going on" between the participants in specific segments of the data. In analysing, the researcher should consider the words, the context, the internal consistency, frequency and extensiveness of comments, what was not said, as well as finding the "big idea" (Morgan, Krueger & Casey in De Vos, 2002). Content analysis was used to analyse the data derived from this investigation. This is any qualitative data reduction technique that facilitates sense-making. Content analysis involves taking a volume of qualitative material in an attempt to systematically and objectively identify core consistencies, special kinds of messages, and insightful units of meanings (Holsti in Collair,

2001; Patton, 2002). In this investigation, the data analysed consisted of participants' drawings, interview transcripts and field notes based on the researcher's observations. Since this data represents the reality of the experiences of the group members, my analysis aims to be contextual, to ground interpretations in the participants' views, and to look for trends that reappear within the data and between participants and key informants.
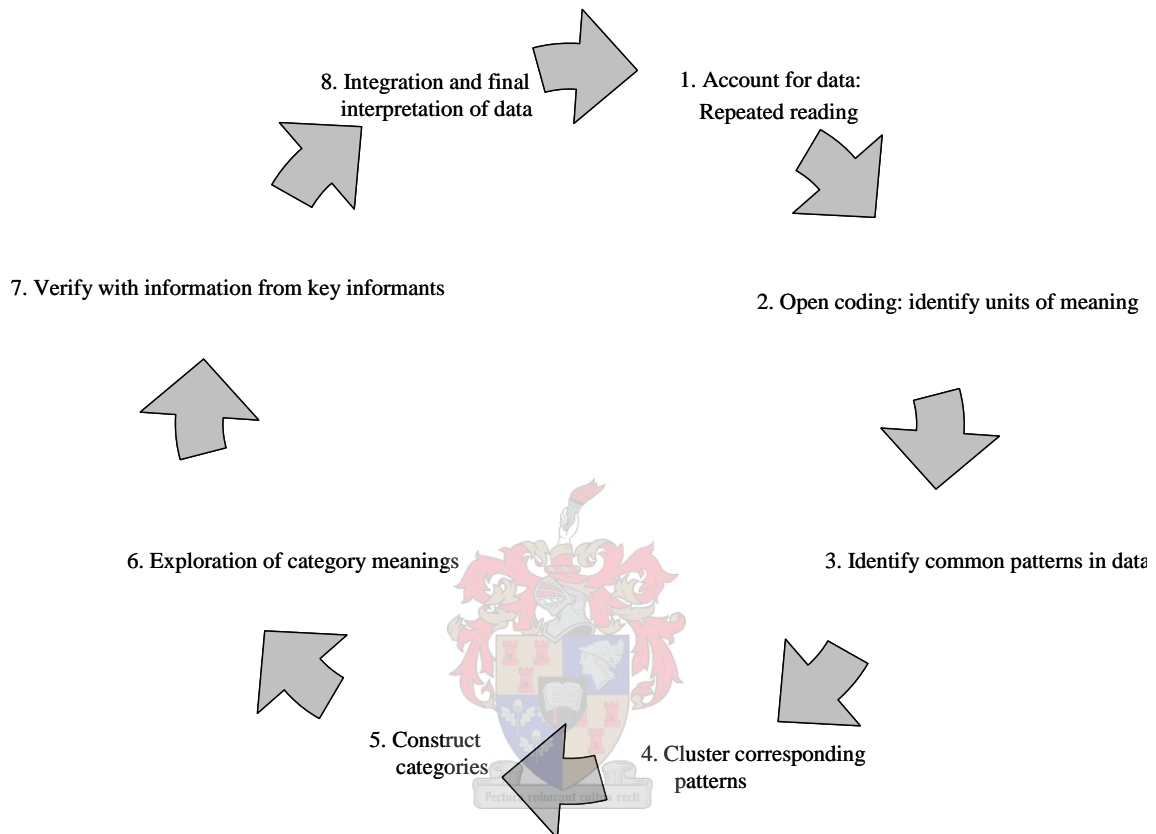
Figure 3.1: Depicts the steps implemented during data analysis
(Compiled from Collair, 2001; Creswell, 2003)

The following section explains the process of data analysis as depicted in Figure 3.1. The data was organised and prepared for analysis. This involved the transcribing of audio-visually recorded data obtained from interviews verbatim, optically scanning participants' drawings and typing up field notes. All the data was accounted for in order to form a general understanding by repeatedly reading and reflecting on the transcripts and field notes while keeping the problem under investigation in mind. Textual information and participants' drawings were organised into thematic categories related to the meanings attached to them. These categories were labelled according to specific codes and topics (codes) related to each other were grouped together. Tentative themes were then linked with information from the

literature study in order to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences of trauma as revealed in their drawings. Meanings derived from these themes were verified in accordance with information gleaned from key informants. The final themes were categorised and interpreted by the researcher. These interpretations were integrated and framed within an eco-systemic perspective in an educational psychology context, and presented in a final discussion.

With regard to the analysis of focus group data, Morgan (in De Vos, 2002) emphasises that a balance should be sought that acknowledges the interplay between individuals who make up the group and the dynamics of the group as a whole. This permits a detailed, more or less descriptive account of features in the social world through processes occurring within the group and is seen as a means of access into participants' lives. Data is generally presented as accounts of social phenomena substantiated by means of extensive quotations from the focus group discussion. Key issues in analysis are how to select the material that will be presented, how to give due weight to the specific context within which the material was generated (while retaining at least some sense of the group discussion as a whole), and how to best prioritise participants' orientations in presenting an interpretive account (Mertens, 1998; Patton, 2002). Within the context of this study, ethical guidelines render it crucial to keep in mind the constraints of doing research in a school community that is regarded as vulnerable as a result of this tragic bus accident. It is important to consider the participants in totality, looking at their family factors, scholastic interactions, as well as noticing non-verbal cues during the sessions. Audio-visual recordings are therefore critical to ensure thorough investigation. However, due to the potential for exploitation of data, assurance was given that all documented information would be destroyed once the research was completed. Ethical considerations will be elaborated on in the section that follows.

3.5   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sound ethical conduct is of vital importance when research is conducted on sensitive topics and across cultural boundaries. The researcher has an ethical obligation to ensure personal competence and adequacy in undertaking this study. In the context of this study, some of the participants witnessed the death of three fellow pupils in a tragic bus accident and all have been traumatised by the experience. Due to the very sensitive nature of this study, careful arrangements were made beforehand regarding confidentiality and the privacy of the participants. According to Lee (1993), privacy, confidentiality and a non-condemnatory

attitude are important because they provide a framework of trust. Sensitivity potentially affects almost every stage of the research process, from the formulation of a research problem, through the design and implementation of a study, to the dissemination and application of the findings (Lee, 1993). Ethical considerations were discussed comprehensively with various role players, namely the participants, their parents/guardians, respective educators, the school principal, trauma workers and officials of the district-based support team that were affiliated with the school. The need to clarify a number of issues warranted several meetings before the process of data collection could begin (Johnson & Christensen, 2000; Mouton, 2001; Strydom in de Vos, 2002).

Respondents participating in this study were all minors and therefore regarded as a vulnerable population. Written consent was obtained from the parents/guardians of the participants beforehand (Appendix C & D). Participants were assured of confidentiality, orally and by means of a covering letter (Appendix D). Participation was voluntary; all possible information that might influence the decision to become involved in this study was disclosed to participants and their parents/guardians. This included an explanation on the nature of the research, along with a description of the intended proceedings. The purpose of the study, the consequences of investigating participants' experiences regarding the bus accident and possible benefits of participation, such as the opportunity to draw or talk about the accident, were discussed as thoroughly as possible. No information was withheld intentionally. Ground rules, for example that no ridicule or discrimination would be tolerated and that respect for an individual's opinion is expected from each group member, were communally decided beforehand to ensure a safe and non-judgmental space to communicate within. However, given the sensitive nature of the study, participants were allowed to withdraw from the group at any time if they became uncomfortable with the procedures. Debriefing sessions based on a need for further discussion regarding the bus accident were provided for unforeseen developments. The identity of the particular participants whose responses are cited was not revealed to anyone other than specific identified experts with whom the researcher consulted.

3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The credibility and objectivity of a qualitative investigation is dependent on the measure of validity and reliability with which the study was undertaken (Mertens; 1998; Creswell, 2003; Silverman, 2004). Peräkylä (in Silverman, 2004:299) states that "all serious qualitative research involves assuring the accuracy of recordings and testing the truthfulness of

analytical claims." Adherence to sound ethical principles and the extent to which reliability and validity have been accounted for reflects the degree of trustworthiness of the particular study.

Merriam (1998) and Mertens (1998) distinguish between internal and external validity. External validity or transferability specifies the degree to which the findings of the investigation can be generalised. Reliability, which is closely associated with transferability, is reflected by the measure of consistency portrayed in the findings (Merriam, 1998). According to Peräkylä (in Silverman, 2004), enhancing objectivity is a very concrete activity in qualitative research. During data collection, reliability is indicated by the extent to which the methods ured are free from error. The more reliable the method, the closer the researcher can arrive at a true estimate of the attribute under investigation (Mertens, 1998). For the purpose of this study, multiple sources of data, including detailed field notes based on the researcher's observations, the drawings of participants and transcripts of audio-visual material were utilised to enhance the authenticity and reliability of the findings. Due to the very sensitive nature of this study, interviewing guides used had to be adapted to the unique perceptions of individual participants. In order to enhance transferability, every attempt was made to obtain thick description from multiple cases when using these interview guides.

Internal validity, on the other hand, can be described as the extent to which research findings are comparable with reality. Internal validity is concerned with the quality and credibility of interpretations and observations, and can be warranted by adherence to systematic procedures throughout the research process (Hardy & Bryman, 2004; Peräkylä in Silverman, 2004). In this regard, Patton (2002:542) states that judging quality requires criteria which are creditable. "Quality and creditability are interconnected in that judgments of quality constitute the foundation for perceptions of creditability." In order to enhance the credibility of findings, the steps taken during this investigation were determined according to carefully selected criteria and conveyed explicitly. Along with an overview of the fieldwork, a detailed open account of data collection and management, analytical procedures and coding was presented.

Triangulation, which involves the comparison of responses provided by different participants in order to check for similarities, was used to enhance validity of the data (Mertens, 1998). According to Miller and Fox (in Silverman, 2005), the goal of triangulation is to obtain an objective truth of the topic under investigation, which was in this case, adolescents' understanding of a shared traumatic experience. The researcher is provided with a more

comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation by looking at the issue from more than one point of view. To address triangulation of data during this study, a guided interview was conducted with two significant educators as key informants. Checking of emerging findings took place by asking these key informants and peer participants to comment on the researcher's observations. Individual participant's verbal responses and drawing-based interpretations were elaborated on during these discussions. In this way, researcher biases and assumptions could be clarified during all phases of the research process.

3.7   SUMMARY

This chapter described the research process utilised to conduct this study. It commenced with a description of qualitative research. It then explored the empirical stance that was assumed, followed by a description of the research design and a justification of the choice of data collection methods. The data analysis techniques that allow for the categorisation of data collected during this study were explained. To conclude this chapter, ethical considerations and issues related to reliability and validity were discussed. The following chapter will expand on themes derived from data categories, followed by a detailed discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION
OF THE FINDINGS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of my study. First, the context in which the study was conducted is explained and a brief demographic description of the participants in the study is given. This is followed by a discussion of the practical issues related to the implementation of the study and a sketch of the time frame within which the study was conducted. The next section of the chapter describes the data analysis process and the categories and themes identified. The chapter concludes with a presentation of data relating to the identified categories and themes.

4.2   CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

4.2.1   Factors that influenced how data was collected

Due to the extremely sensitive nature of this investigation, it was necessary to gain as much background information as possible about discourses resulting from the bus accident. Consequently, in September and early October 2005, I attended governing body meetings regarding the incident. At the first meeting I attended, I was given the opportunity to introduce the proposed research study. Although most of the people present were in favour of my proposal to conduct research about the incident, they felt strongly that all grade seven learners be given the opportunity to participate in the study. Hereafter, it was agreed that research could be conducted on condition that all the learners be given the opportunity to volunteer for the study and that follow-up counselling sessions be provided following the research sessions.

During this time, I also observed an intervention conducted by a local non-governmental organisation that specialised in trauma debriefing. Immediately after this intervention, I observed learner interaction on the playground and saw that many of the grade sevens were hugging and offering consolation to their crying peers. When I asked one grade seven girl how she experienced the debriefing session, she responded that "we were all forced to go

although some people really did not want to. It opened up old wounds that were already healing." An informal discussion with grade seven educators echoed the girl's view that some learners had started to heal more rapidly than others, and that this forced debriefing was "too heavy" and opened up "old wounds." Another educator remarked that although whole-class intervention had its merits, when dealing with such a sensitive issue, a group of more than thirty learners was too big.

My initial plan was to select a maximum of twelve participants according to two distinct criteria: firstly, participants had to be in grade seven and, secondly, they had to have an interest in drawing. Since the three grade seven educators knew the learners' unique personality traits, they were regarded as able to select suitable candidates for the study. At this point, however, I realised that the research design needed revision and, specifically, that the selection of a sample group would be more complex than initially anticipated. Since I believed that these learners had been through enough, I wanted to steer well away from inflicting additional trauma. I decided to change my sampling decision since random sample selection could have led to inclusion of unwilling participants, as had happened in the intervention described above. From an ethical perspective, it made sense to give all the grade seven learners a fair chance to declare their willingness to participation prior to selecting a sample population.

4.2.2   Ethical issues related to sample selection

Due to the factors outlined in the preceding paragraph, random sampling procedures, which were initially planned to facilitate this study, could no longer be executed. Although all learners in grade seven were suitable candidates for this study, participation had to be voluntary. Instead of simply selecting twelve participants from a group of grade sevens that the educators had singled out as possible participants, I presented an information session. This session took place during school hours before the September holidays and the purpose and envisaged process of the study was explained to all grade seven learners in a classroom context. After the information session, those learners who were willing to participate in the research project could sign their names on a list. This no longer presented an automatic process of selection as any learner who signed their name on this list was considered a prospective participant in the study. Initially, 33 learners added their names to the list. However, when I returned to the school in the week following the September holidays to confirm numbers and to distribute letters to the parents or guardians of the 33 prospective participants, the number of prospective participants had dropped to thirteen.

The parents or guardians of the 13 prospective participants were invited to attend an information session about the research study, which was held late in September 2005, prior to a scheduled governing body meeting. Five of the participants' parents and guardians were able to attend this session. After the purpose of the study was explained, parents/guardians were encouraged to ask questions or to voice specific concerns. This was done to enhance my understanding of family-based factors, or behavioural changes detected at home pertaining to participant functioning following the accident. Hereafter, signed informed consent was sought from the parents and guardians. An informative letter of consent (Appendix C) was sent home with the remaining eight participants for the parents/guardians who were unable to attend the information session. Upon commencement of the first session, all parents/guardians had given their informed consent supporting their child's choice to participate in the study.

4.2.3   Demographic information of participants

The sample population, depicted in Table 4.1 (below), consisted of 13 grade sevens. These participants were drawn from three classes within the grade seven groups and consisted of six females and seven males. Furthermore, Table 4.1 is a compilation of the demographic data collected on the participants in the two sessions held. The table presents a summary of relevant demographic information, including information linked to the accident (i.e. whether the participants were witnesses or on board the bus involved in the accident). Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants in an effort to protect their identities. The pseudonyms in the table below are used to refer to the participants throughout the study.

Participant		Gender	Class	Passenger on bus in accident	Witness aboard second bus
P1	Jerry	M	7 B		*
P2	Terry	M	7 B		*
P3	Dave	M	7 A	*	
P4	Zoe	F	7 A	*	
P5	Joe	M	7 A	*	
P6	Suzy	F	7 B		*
P7	Nina	F	7 A	*	
P8	Nora	F	7 B		*
P9	Keano	M	7 A	*	
P10	Rory	M	7 B	*	
P11	Hugo	M	7 A	*	
P12	Dean	M	7 C		*
P13	Mary	F	7 C		*

Table 4.1: Demographic information

The first research session was attended by four male and two female participants, while the second session was attended by three female and four male participants. Session three was attended by participants from both the first and the second groups. Since participation was voluntary, it was expected that some participants might change their minds about participating in the study, which was indeed the case as five of the participants discontinued their participation, while three participants excused themselves from the session due to previous commitments. Due to the anticipated trauma that participation in this study could cause, I felt it necessary to make myself available for follow-up counselling sessions should a need for such services arise. These sessions were however not to be part of the research. Three group counselling sessions took place, which were attended by participants from groups one and two.

4.3   IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

4.3.1   Educator and parent/guardian perspectives on the participants

Prior to starting the sessions with the participants, I set out to gain in-depth insight into how the participants function in their home and classroom contexts. The eco-systemic approach to educational psychology that underpins this study requires input from key informants such as parents/guardians and educators about changes in participants' behaviour following the accident. Systemic factors, such as educator and parent/guardian observations, were valuable in enhancing my understanding of how participants functioned within the school and home environment. Pseudonyms were also assigned to parents/guardians and educators in an attempt to protect their identities. These pseudonyms are used throughout the study. The codes KI 1 for Mrs Andrews and KI 2 for Mrs Botha were used to denote the interviews with the two key informants. For instance, KI 2: 5 refers to a statement made by Mrs Botha on page 5 of my field notes. For the purpose of data triangulation, concerns or observations made by educators and parents/guardians during these interviews were noted and are discussed next.

Keano's mother expressed concern about the change in attitude she observed in her son. According to her, Keano experienced frequent nightmares since the accident. Although the family was trying their best to be supportive, she reflected that Keano had adopted a moody, distant attitude, refusing to speak about the incident with family members.

Mr Tanner, Dave's mother, expressed similar concerns. She further emphasised that, as a single mother, she found Dave's behaviour had become unbearable since the accident. She

reflected that Dave seemed to take out his hurt and frustration on his younger sister as well as on herself in a way that was often verbally and physically abusive.

According to Mrs Davies, Nina struggled to sleep since the accident. She was a passenger on the bus that crashed and was seated close to Chevonne, one of the girls who died. Nina reportedly experienced recurrent dreams about Chevonne's death. According to Mrs Davies, Nina wanted to be held by her mother or sister when falling asleep. She also insisted that the light be kept on at night. Joe's parents reported similar concerns.

Zoe's parents explained that Zoe had become inclined to withdraw at home. According to Mrs Gants, Zoe spoke to her friends about the accident but became angry with family members, especially at her mother, when she is encouraged to share her feelings about it at home. Zoe's mother said that she had initially planned to go with on the outing, but had decided to withdraw at the last minute. She reflected that Zoe seemed angry with her for not being there when the accident happened. Mrs Gants attributed this to the fact that Zoe had struggled to get hold of her immediately after the accident and that she had gone to the wrong hospital first, with the result that Zoe had to wait for her.

As discussed in the preceding chapter, informal interviews were conducted with grade seven educators as key informants in order to validate my understanding of participants' perceptions. Although the two key informants were aware that the participants were involved in research sessions, they consistently referred to these sessions as "therapy". These educators expressed concern about the well-being of four of the participants. Mrs Andrews informed me that Nina and Hugo had been seated close to two of the deceased learners. They had witnessed the impact of the accident on the deceased very directly. Although both learners "seemed fine" in class, Mrs Andrews was concerned that they were trying to conceal their emotions, "to be strong for the rest." Although Nina and Rory seemed to adjust well, the physical injuries they had sustained due to the accident were mentioned.

Mrs Botha explained that, although Terry was not a passenger on the bus that crashed, he was a close friend of one of the deceased. She noted that Terry had become quiet and withdrawn in class, and that he seemed to struggle to come to terms with the loss of his friend. According to her, "Dean has always been a very, very quiet learner. He has never really talked that much." She said that no major changes had been observed in Mary's behaviour and that she has always been a learner who takes a strong stand for what she believes in.

4.3.2   The process of data collection with the grade seven participants

As discussed in Chapter 3, data was collected in three phases at different times during October 2005. To anchor the process of data collection, the first twenty minutes consisted of a pre-drawing focus group session, during which the process and purpose of the study was reviewed. During this time, participants were asked to share their expectations and reasons for choosing to volunteer their participation. Hereafter, participants were introduced to various drawing techniques and asked to depict either their experience of the bus accident or their reason for choosing to participate in this research study. Data was further collected by means of my personal observation of participants in the process of drawing, as well as informal interviews conducted with the thirteen participants individually upon completion of their artworks. The choice of questions asked during these individual interviews was determined by the content of the participants' drawings. The first two sessions were concluded with a post-drawing focus group session during which the participants were given the opportunity to explain their drawings and to reflect on one another's artwork. A third and final research session, with participants from both initial sessions, was conducted. The aim of this session was to offer an opportunity for clarification of individual views, as well as collective reflection and meaning-making to enhance understanding of issues depicted in the respective artworks.

4.4   THE PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS

As shown in Chapter 3, formal data analysis began with data organisation. To account for the data, the transcribed interviews and field notes were read several times. The data was reduced by summarising the content of each session separately. Simultaneous with data reduction, hard copies of the interview transcripts were open coded and related themes were colour coded (an example of open coding appears in Appendix H). Hereafter, related themes were grouped into emerging categories (see Appendix J for an example). Patterns of categories were then clustered into tables (see Appendix K for an example of axial coding). Finally, selective coding was done to facilitate integration and discussion of findings (Appendix L).

For the purpose of analysis and interpretation, core categories were grouped under three main spheres identified in accordance with the eco-systemic orientation that underpins this study. In order to gain insight into the participants' experiences of a shared traumatic event, these three main spheres comprised situational influences, interpersonal influences and intrinsic influences.

4.4.1   Data organisation

Data for the study consisted of the interview transcripts, participants' drawings, field notes and the notes made following informal interviews conducted with the key informants. All data was accounted for by sorting it according to date, venues and participants present. I started the process of data analysis at this point. As discussed in Chapter 3, this is however not a linear process, since the first phase of data analysis started during the collection of the data. Intensive, focused data analysis, however, only began after the collection of data had been completed and final research sessions had been terminated. Hardy and Bryman (2004:533) explain the purpose of data organisation as follows:

> Data management is the operations needed for a systematic, coherent process of data collection, storage and retrieval. An explicit data management regime enhances transparency of research procedures, which can vitiate concerns about the authenticity of the research.

4.4.2   Data reduction

During the initial stage of data analysis, each transcript was read several times after which the content of each interview was summarised separately. The purpose of data reduction is to make the quantity of data more manageable and to initiate the process of converting raw data into processed data (see Appendix I for an example of a graphic of the coded interviews). The references in brackets refer to the code given to the participant, the session from which the data was derived and the page reference in the transcribed interview. For example, (P5, S1/22:70-71) refers to the interview with participant 5 from the first research session on page 22, lines 70-71. A focus group interview is indicated with FG at the end, for instance (P5, S3/12:45 FG). The following interview with Joe is presented as an example of data reduction.

Figure 4.1: Presents Joe's drawing: "A happy picture, I know now, I can do it."

According to Joe, his picture depicts a happy boy. The meaning attached to this picture was, "it says happiness because I know I can get through bad stuff." Joe explained that talking about the deceased and his hurting feelings, being involved in the accident himself and "getting closer to family and friends" taught him to cope with what had happened. He smiled when he said, "I'm better at dealing with accidents. I know now, I can do it." When I asked Joe what the boy in the picture wanted to say to other people, he replied:

> Talk about how you feel because you can't keep it inside. When someone dies, you really know that other people can die too. You don't know who is going to die, and who not, or who is next (S1/23:76-78; 92-93).

4.5   PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

It was emphasised in the preceding chapters that the extremely sensitive nature of this investigation necessitated my involvement with the school community before the actual research sessions could take place. The aim was to ensure that I would be an informed researcher with an enlightened understanding of the internal discourses about the accident. I also believed that it enabled me to plan the content of the research sessions in a way that minimised the possibility of re-traumatising the participants. During this time, I came to know the grade seven learners; I observed their interaction and heard the conversations that

took place in the corridors and on the playground. When the research process started, I became the main instrument facilitating collection of the data. Due to the background information gleaned beforehand, it was easier to understand what participants' meant during times that they struggled to verbalise the thoughts or feelings depicted in their drawings. Subsequently, during the process of coding and data reduction, it was extremely difficult to keep the presentation of the findings separate from the interpretation thereof. As Merriam (2002) suggests, data collecting and analysis are interwoven processes, and I found it impossible to separate them.

My responsibility as qualitative researcher was to do justice to the participants' experiences of trauma and to present their views as accurately and honestly as possible. It is therefore crucial to read the findings presented below with a clear understanding that individual participants' perceptions, emotions and assumptions form the focal point and underlie the patterns that compose the spheres. It is impossible to present these spheres in isolation since they have a reciprocal and counteractive effect on each other. For instance, in the discussion of the feelings experienced by individual participants, feelings could be related to interpersonal issues as well as situational factors, such as the impact of witnessing the death of a close friend. Subsequently, considerable overlap between the categories was anticipated. In presentation of the findings, I sought to convey unity between recurring patterns, rather than presenting categories that exist independently of each other. The figure below illustrates the framework followed for organising the raw data into spheres that make sense within the eco-systemic framework assumed for this study (complementary tables appear in Appendix L). The themes that emerged from collective meaning making are discussed under the categories found to be most appropriate. The section that follows presents the findings in a detailed discussion.
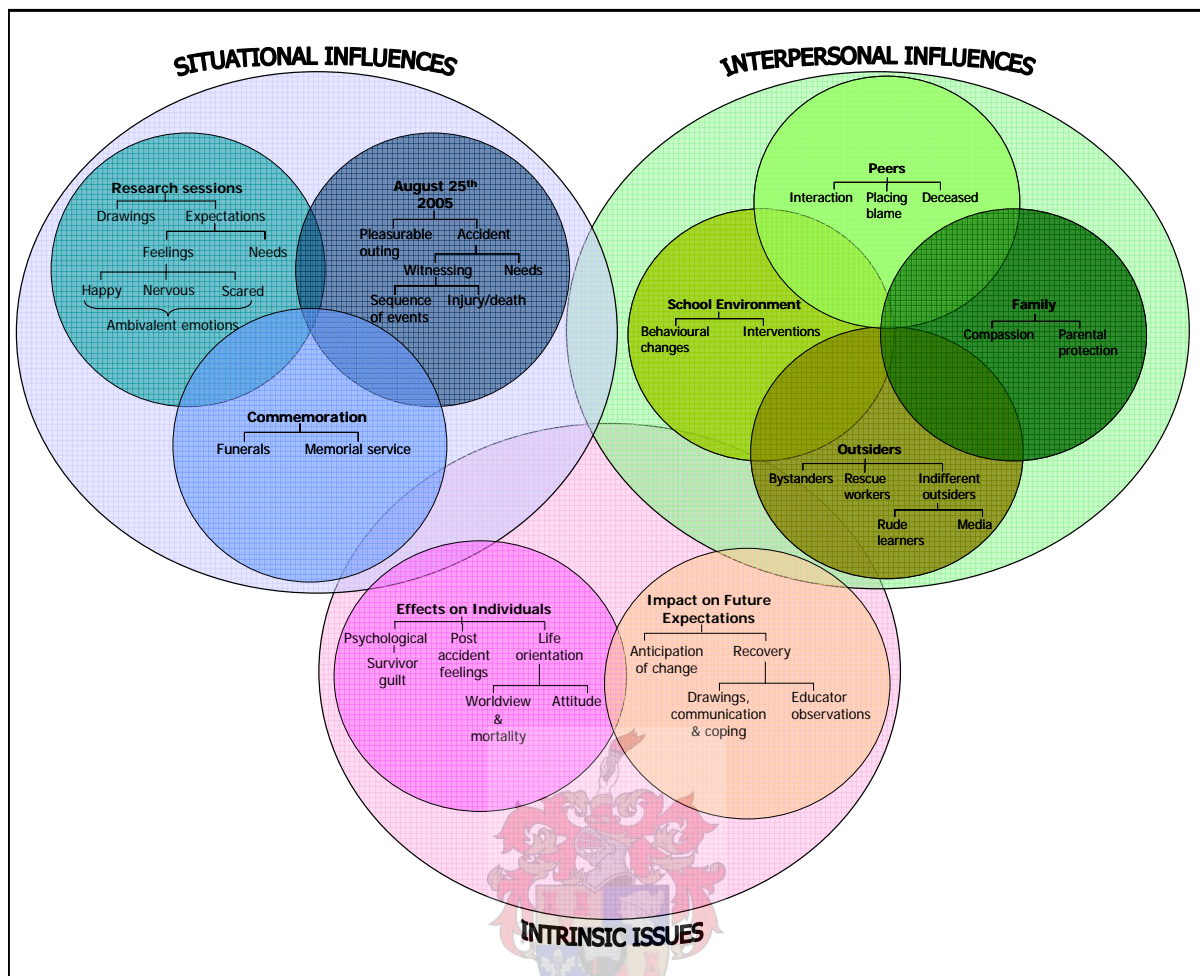
Figure 4.2: Presents an eco-systemic layout of the findings

4.6   SITUATIONAL INFLUENCES ON THE RESEARCH SESSIONS

4.6.1   Pre-drawing focus group session

Conducting research at a busy school is accompanied by challenges that could impact on the process. The first session in which four boys and two girls participated was held in a classroom off a busy corridor where a steady flow of learners chatted and doors slammed frequently. In an attempt to dull the noise and to create a relaxed atmosphere, I played baroque music in the background. The second research session started with a disruption because of a double booking of the allocated room, the staffroom, which housed several computers. When the participants and I arrived, three technicians were busy working on the computers. They kindly asked that we find an alternative location for the following thirty minutes. Since all the classrooms were occupied, we had to resort to a busy courtyard in the playground at the centre of the school.

To orientate the participants to the research sessions, a 20-minute pre-drawing focus group session was conducted with each group. Due to the sensitive nature of investigating an issue that participants experienced as life threatening, it was crucial to establish the group as a place of safety, mutual respect and trust before the research process could commence. During the first research session, participants were asked to share something about themselves and to mention one thing that they like and dislike. When prompted, Jerry volunteered to start. After introducing his name, instead of sharing personal information such as likes and dislikes, Jerry divulged information about which high school he would be attending the following year. The other participants followed Jerry's cue and no mention was made of personal likes or dislikes. Two participants, Dave and Jody, stressed that they were going to different high schools than their current classmates. Within this group, three participants were going to the same high school, one had enrolled at a high school in central Cape Town and two were following their older siblings to high schools in the adjacent areas.

The introductory activity was adapted slightly for the second research session. After choosing their favourite colour and writing their name and the one thing they like and dislike on a sticker, each participant was asked to introduce themselves verbally to the other group members. Table 4.2 shows how individual participants from the second research session introduced themselves.

Participant	Colour	Like	Dislike	Ref
Nina	Blue	Flowers	Rain	S2/1: 37-38 FG
Nora	Purple	Flowers	Dogs	S2/2: 39-40 FG
Keano	Green	Sun	Cats	S2/2: 41-42 FG
Rory	Blue	Cars	Rude people	S2/2: 45-47 FG
Hugo	Blue	Dogs	Cats	S2/2: 43-44 FG
Dean	Blue	Didn't say	Scary monsters in movies	S2/2: 48-49 FG
Mary	Red	Friendly people	Death	S2/2: 50-51 FG

Table 4.2: Introduces participants' likes and dislikes

At this early phase of the session, themes started to emerge that could relate to the bus accident. The discussions about high school in the first session revolved around an anticipation of changes associated with the near future, and fear and uncertainty about what to expect. They, for example, spoke about letting go of primary school and classmates, as well as the prospect of entrance into unfamiliar high schools. In the second session, three of

the participants initiated discussions that had linkages with the bus accident. For instance, Mary's statement that she did not like death and Dean's dislike of scary monsters were coded as a theme relating to nightmares or trauma-related memories. Rory's reference to rude people could stem from controversial comments about the bus accident that can be interpreted as tactless or harsh. I became aware of these statements by following media coverage of the accident.

4.6.2   Expectations of the sessions

The participants were asked to clarify the reasons why they chose to be part of the group, as well as their expectations or what they wished to gain from the sessions. They were also asked whether they thought it necessary to talk about their traumatic experience. Table 4.3 (below) depicts individual responses. Eight of the participants responded to the question, three participants reiterated one another's responses, while two preferred to remain silent. As illustrated in the table, a measure of hesitance was detected in the majority of the participants when they were asked to express their reasons for participating. It seemed difficult for them to put their thoughts into words, and I found that they were generally cautious to start the process as they initially refrained from stating their expectations clearly. Instead of sharing their expectations, it seemed easier for the participants to reflect their direct needs for the sessions.

Participant	Response 1	Follow up response	Ref
Jerry	"Some children were injured and died." "To draw something I can remember about the day of the accident."	No response	S1/2: 51 FG S1/4: 112-113 FG
Terry	"Yes, because I get sad feelings about it still." "To draw some things about what happened to us." "Not laughing about what another child says, or else they will feel bad and stop talking."	No response	S1/2: 48 S1/2: 60 S1/3: 93-94
Dave	"To talk about my emotions about the accident." "Not shouting out" "To have happy feelings at the end."	No response	S1/2: 58 S1/3: 100 S1/4: 114
Zoe	"I like to draw things. On the day of the accident some got to draw pictures, but not everyone did get the chance."	No response	S1/2: 68-70

Participant	Response 1	Follow up response	Ref
Joe		No response	
Suzy		No response	
Nina	"People mustn't laugh at each other when they speak about their experience." "I think it should be an important rule ... not laughing at each other."	"I didn't really think about it."	S2/3:95 S2/3: 98
Nora	"To have company in this time."	"I didn't really think about why I signed my name on the list."	S2/3:100
Keano	"Talking about it ... the accident."	No response	S2/3: 103, 105
Rory		"Still thinking."	S2/3: 108
Hugo		"Still thinking."	S2/3: 109
Dean		"Still thinking."	S2/3: 110
Mary	"A chance to express my feelings." "How we feel about something that happened in the past." "Luckily, I pray now." "It helps to be able to talk and not be afraid that people will be laughing about it."	No response	S2/3: 111-116

Table 4.3: Expectations of the session

During this phase of the introductory pre-drawing focus group session, three direct needs were highlighted. These are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

4.6.2.1   *The need for communicating and expressing feelings*

The responses of Terry and Jerry indicated that the need to address feelings of persistent sadness contributed towards the decision to volunteer their participation. Keano expressed the need to talk about "it". When asked to clarify the meaning of the word "it", he said, "the accident". Dave gave a more direct response, which was to "talk about my emotions about the accident." When prompted, some of the participants expanded on their initial responses. For example, Dave expressed the need to have "happy feelings in the end." Mary elaborated on her first comment of disliking death by saying that certain types of music were distressing because it reminded her of the four funerals. She emphasised that this type of reminder was unpleasant to her:

> The reason why I come to this group, I was with a friend and we were listening to gospel music, this song came up, it sounded just like Chevonne's funeral. I didn't like it; it reminded me of all the funerals. It made me think of Chevonne's funeral ... the song reminded me, I didn't like it (S2/4: 140-146).

4.6.2.2   *The need for togetherness free from ridicule*

An expectation was raised by six of the participants that group sessions would create channels that could satisfy participants' need to give expression to their feelings and to communicate within the context of a shared experience. Nora expressed the need for companionship that is synonymous with becoming part of a group. The expectation that this togetherness be complemented by a non-judgemental atmosphere was stressed. Early in the session, the issue of "not being laughed at" was raised by participants from both groups. For instance, Terry emphasised "not laughing about what another child says, or else they will feel bad and stop talking." Nina and Mary reflected that it would be helpful to talk about the incident without being afraid that "people will be laughing." The expectation that their heartfelt opinions would be taken seriously and not ridiculed seemed an essential pre-requisite for group discussions. This implied that participants may have experienced being undermined or silenced, and that they feared that they would again not be heard or granted the opportunity to express their opinions about the accident.

4.6.2.3   *The need for remembrance through a concrete, tangible image*

According to Zoe, only some learners who went on the outing were given the chance to draw pictures on the day of the accident. Three participants expressed the desire to capture memory in the form of a drawing. For instance, Terry emphasised the need to "draw some things about what happened to us" and Jerry wanted to "draw something I can remember about the day of the accident." From Zoe's statement, "I like to draw things," I deduced that she decided to volunteer her participation because she was one of the survivors who did not get a chance to draw on the day of the accident.

During this first introductory part of the session, I noticed signals of self-consciousness, such as nervous giggles, shuffling around and avoidance of eye-contact. Although this type of non-verbal behaviour is expected from adolescents, these responses could also be interpreted as indicative of individuals who are vulnerable or particularly sensitive in nature. In order to win the confidence of the participants, I set out to establish the group as a safe place within which individual views could be expressed without inhibition.

4.6.3   Introductory game

Research sessions were planned as serious events to show respect and to avoid undermining the participants' experiences. However, I was acutely aware of the heavy atmosphere throughout the first research session and sensed weariness in the group as a whole. Instead of

creating a relaxed atmosphere, the baroque music contributed to an atmosphere of sombreness, which possibly restricted the energetic spontaneity generally associated with early adolescence. I feared that the sessions had turned into an agonising experience since the participants seemed unable to relax, exchanged nervous glances and fidgeted throughout. Mrs Botha confirmed my suspicion that classical music, such as baroque, created a sombre atmosphere similar to the church music played at the funerals. She said, "it is morbid, demanding and depressing ... It doesn't lift you" (KI 2:7).

Needless to say, no baroque music was played in the second research session. A marked change in behaviour was noted in the participants: they were able to focus their attention without being distracted despite the noise and lack of privacy, with curious learners peering from adjacent classroom windows. Being vigilant about traumatising the participants, I built a game into the introductory session with the second group of participants. The second group of participants seemed more at ease than the first group. Spontaneous laughter during the game seemed to facilitate a comfortable atmosphere. It is possible that the element of fun and cheerfulness brought in with the introductory games complemented their unique personalities and allowed for a discharge of nervous energy. This activity is discussed in the following paragraph.

To expand on participant expectations and on the theme of consideration for each other's feelings, participants in the second research session were engaged in an activity called balloon badminton. Before I could introduce this activity, Nora demonstrated an attitude of alertness by glancing at the packet of balloons (in their deflated form) and commenting that she sees a smiling face on one of the balloons. Participants were asked to choose a balloon, each of which had a different facial expression, and to add their own feelings or facial expressions by writing or drawing on their balloon.

The table below shows that most participants had conflicting emotions about the group session. During this activity, participants echoed one another, which reflected a degree of uncertainty and feelings of ambivalence about how to respond to the process. This could be linked to the hesitancy detected at the commencement of this session. However, positive emotions along with the need to communicate about their experiences of the accident seemed to override their fears.

Participant	Feelings prior to group session						Ref.
Nina		Happy			Bit nervous		2/5:182
Nora	Very happy		Excited				2/5: 185
Keano			✓			Bit scared	2/5: 187
Rory		✓	✓				2/5: 188
Hugo			✓		✓		2/5: 184
Dean				Eager			2/5: 183
Mary			✓			✓	2/5: 186

Table 4.4: Illustrates feeling words used by participants

I was continuously aware of the vulnerable state of these participants and was supportive without leading the participants. I mostly reflected their expressed views. By repeating their exact phrases or uttering statements of confirmation, I made a conscious effort to show participants that their words were heard. Towards the end of the pre-drawing focus group session, a game called "catch my feelings" was played with the balloons. The purpose was to embody sensory awareness towards each other's feelings and opinions, as well as the right to freedom of speech free from ridicule. A metaphorical comparison was made between the balloons as something that is easily broken, like sensitive feelings, which can be hurt easily by disrespect. On the word "go!" participants threw their balloons into the air and everyone had to move quickly to prevent any balloons from touching the floor and popping. With this game, they were reminded of the courage it takes for someone to share feelings that are difficult to deal with. After the game, I referred to the statements made earlier by Nina and Mary, when they said that it was important for them not to be laughed at. The balloons symbolised a reminder for all group members to pay attention to the opinion of others in ways that are respectful, even if they do not agree with what the person is saying, hence "catching each other's feelings carefully." When I returned to the school for the next scheduled research session, I was told that the majority of the participants had "donated" their balloons to be hung in the headmaster's office. I noticed that the balloons remained in his office until the end of the year. I wondered whether this reflected their need for remembrance.

4.6.4 Individual interviews and drawings as meaning-making

A requisite for qualitative inquiry is to obtain rich, reliable data. From a qualitative interpretative paradigm, meaning making is based on how reality is interpreted. The existence of multiple realities is recognised since meaning is influenced by issues or contexts that individuals are exposed to. From an eco-systemic paradigm, contexts on which constructions of reality are based are inter-related and not isolated entities. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, due to the complexity of human experience, emerging themes that constitute reality permeate intrinsic and extrinsic spheres. Within the context of this study, the researcher as viewer can attribute multiple meanings to each participant's artworks. Visual data, however, cannot hide as easily as written data can and "is much more vulnerable to scrutiny, thus having wider repercussions for validity, interpretation, and analysis" (Daniels, 2006). The viewer's reality on which interpretations are based is likely to differ extensively from the unique meaning attached by the participant as creator of the drawings. According to Daniels (2006):

> The researcher's conclusions could also be positioned in her frame of reference, and if this is different from the research population, it could lead to wrong conclusions when the researcher falsely interprets something to be true.

The interpretations of the researcher as viewer and the participant as creator may not resonate with each other, which imply that there is a risk of conveying a false rather than a reliable interpretation. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, drawings were co-analysed by individual participants as co-creators of meaning and experts on their own realities.

4.6.4.1 *The image captured*

As explained in Chapter 3, participants were asked to draw one of two options. Firstly, they could draw what motivated their decision to volunteer their participation in the research sessions. The second option was to draw what they remember or what stands out most about the accident, and to convey their experience and feelings as honestly and clearly as possible. The following table shows the option that each participant chose, as well as the title given to each picture. In cases where the participant did not provide a title, I chose one that reflected the words used by the participant to describe the picture.

Parti-cipant	Gender	Title of picture	Option 1: Motivation	Option 2: Significant Memory
Jerry	M	Finality: The funerals, the coffins, and saying goodbye.		*
Terry	M	SADNESS: Please make the pain go away.		*
Dave	M	A good day that went into a bad day.		*
Zoe	F	Happy faces: Forget about the past, it is over, think about the future and life ahead.	*	
Joe	M	A happy picture: I know I can do it. Talk about your feelings because you can't keep it inside.	*	
Suzy	F	Happy faces mixed emotions	*	
Nina	F	Bus of Horror. Why didn't you help?		*
Nora	F	The day that my heart broke.		*
Keano	M	The bus is driving through the wall! Come over and help!		*
Rory	M	Injured but calm amidst chaos.		*
Hugo	M	My daddy wants to help, but they won't let him... I would be proud.		*
Dean	M	The sequence of events: 25 August 2005.		*
Mary	F	Speeding Kills! Please drive slow and arrive alive!		*

Table 4.5: Options chosen and titles given to pictures

The table above illustrates that the majority of the participants chose to capture their memory of the bus accident in their drawing. Only three participants drew the reason that motivated them to participate in the research sessions.

4.6.4.2 Memories related from pictures

Figure 4.3.1: Presents Terry's drawing: "Sadness, please make the pain go away."

Terry, Mary and Nora drew themselves in their pictures and related that their pictures were about sadness. During the discussion, Suzy and Dean recognised these feelings of sorrow and identified tearfulness in the drawings. For instance, Terry recognised that Mary's picture was about a very sad girl and that Nora depicted herself crying because her heart felt broken by the death of their three peers. According to Terry, his picture (above) is about himself, crying for his friend at the scene of the accident. Terry explained that the house in the background belonged to a lady who helped the survivors by taking them into her home and by giving them sugar water. He said that he pasted the word "sadness" on his picture to show how sad he felt when he was crying for his friend (P2, S1/10).

The participants recognised that Mary's picture is pleading for adherence to the speed limit. Dean and Mary interpreted each other's pictures as stating that the driver was speeding deliberately. Mary clarified that her drawing was of a small girl who has been involved in an accident and is pleading with all drivers to refrain from speeding. Although the girl is still young, she knows that speeding can kill anybody, innocent or guilty, young or old. Mary suggests that driving responsibly within the speed limit is a way of preventing accidents. She said:

> I draw uhm a picture about speeding. How people must drive slowly all the time if they want to arrive alive, and ... To tell them to stop driving fast or speeding, people must stop driving too fast because they can hurt people's feelings and make an accident and that somebody might die if they don't drive slow (S2/30:9-14).

Figure 4.3.2: Depicts happiness: Pictures of Suzy (left), Zoe (centre), Dave (right).

Along with Joe's picture (refer to figure 4.1) and in contrast to the pictures about sadness, the pictures above were related to themes of happiness. Dave's picture presents the bridge between ecstasy and tragedy. He described that he drew "a good day that went into a bad day." The accident and subsequent death of three friends turned what was meant to be a

pleasant experience into a dreadful one. Suzy said that it was "a picture of happy children, a boy, and a girl." When prompted, she explained that it was raining in her picture and that the children were getting wet. Suzy said that the children "are sad, but a little happy" but not happy about getting wet (P6, S1/24). Although Suzy related that her picture reflected happiness, contrasting emotions were detected by other participants during the discussion. Nora and Terry shared the perception that Suzy's picture depicted a change in feelings, from sad to smiling again, while Mary and Nora wondered whether the rainy weather was an omen of sad tidings. Mary saw that the picture also reflected relief that the lives of others were spared. Zoe's drawing reflected the belief that reminiscing about positive times in the past, being thankful and counting personal blessings in difficult times lead to positive emotions. According to Zoe, capturing the image of happy faces in her drawing will remind her to face the future with a positive attitude and to be thankful that her life was spared. In order to have hope, she believes in forgetting about the past by blocking out negative memories (P4, S1/18-19). Joe related that the boy in his picture was happy. The meaning attached to this picture was, "it says happiness because I know I can get through bad stuff." He elaborated that experiencing the accident had taught him that he has become "better at dealing with accidents" (P5, S1/21-22).

Rory explained that he depicted the moment the bus tipped against the embankment when his friend fell on top of him. Nina said that her picture showed the capsized bus containing injured passengers, as well as the face of Chevonne, who died in the accident. Nina remembered that she was very frightened while she was trapped in the bus because she witnessed her dying classmate's face turning blue. In the discussion about Nora's picture, this image was repeated by Mary, who remembered that the faces of the deceased had been covered with blue jackets. She recalled how upsetting it was for the survivors to see their injured peers lying on the bloodstained pavement. Terry, Dean and Mary noticed the names of the deceased in the flowers depicted in Nora's drawing. Meanings related to pictures that were not discussed in the preceding section will be integrated in the categories that follow.

4.7   SITUATIONAL INFLUENCES: THE DAY OF THE OUTING

Figure 4.4: Presents Dean's drawing: "The sequence of events: 25 August 2005."

4.7.1   Memories of the outing

For the participants to this study, 25 August 2005 was remembered as a day of immense tragedy, a day with a shadow hanging over it. It had been assumed that all recollections of this day would amount to heartache. However, various participants recounted pleasurable memories when Dean's drawing (above) was discussed. Dean had divided his page into 20 blocks with each block containing a different picture. His picture had distinctive individual images depicting the sequence of events on the day of the outing. Starting in the top left hand corner, he recalled how the passengers aboard his bus were playing music on their journey from the school to Table Mountain, how they were singing and laughing as they walked up the mountain together, and how they were very excited in the cable cars. A parent who accompanied the learners confirmed that "the excitement of all who went on the outing could hardly be contained," everyone was enjoying themselves and the day was characterised by a relaxed, festive spirit up until the accident happened.

When relating memories from his picture, Dean recalled details about nature that he had learned from the guide leading the party. For instance, that if one touches a blister plant it gives blisters that only go away after two weeks and that people should stay away from the "dassies" because they could bite you (P12, S2/27). Various participants reflected how in awe they had been at the beauty of the surroundings viewed from the top of the mountain. Suzy and Terry recalled the beauty of the mountain, the trees and the flowers, and Dean described that:

> In this picture the boy was sitting around and looking at the mountains ... at the trees and the mountains and he said 'WOW' because it was so beautiful. (S3/8:258-260 FG)

Mary remarked that she was walking up Table Mountain in the same group as Chevonne, one of the girls who died in the accident. When I asked Nora what the words on her picture said, she explained that the outing was originally planned for June, but that it had been postponed due to rainy, windy weather. On the day of the outing, the sun was shining and, while they were walking up the mountain, Nora said that she "never thought of bad things that would happen to us" (P8, S3/12 FG). The inconceivableness of the accident was confirmed by Terry, who said, "nobody knew" it would happen (P2, S3/5 FG). Nora reflected that, "maybe, it didn't have to happen" if they went on the day that they were supposed to go, despite the bad weather (P8, S2/14). Rory recalled that the last sight he remembered before the accident happened was the view of Table Mountain.

4.7.2 The accident

4.7.2.1 *Connotations of the term "accident"*

Although Nora wondered whether the accident would have happened if the outing went ahead as initially planned, she acknowledged that people do not have control over fateful events and said, "an accident is an accident" (P8, S2/15). The participants reflected an understanding of the bus accident as an event characterised by an unpredictable and dreadful nature. An event that was unexpected, unpreventable and unthinkable. The accident caught everybody off-guard because, as emphasised by Nina, "one cannot prepare for" it (P7, S2/10). Keano related from his picture that the accident was a forceful, unnatural event that felt unreal, like it happened in slow motion. Although accidents happen unexpectedly, Mary believed that accidents have a cause and that prevention is possible. She extended a warning that speeding causes accidents and urged drivers to "stop making accidents" by adhering to speed limits (P13, S2/30-31; S3/16 FG).

Throughout the research sessions, Suzy, who generally preferred to keep her opinion to herself, stated that she had nothing to say about the bus accident. She did however state that the images of the accident in the drawings by Nora and Dean related feelings of sadness and hurt. The emotionally overwhelming nature of the accident was accentuated by most of the participants. For instance, before I could ask, Nora pointed towards her picture and said, "this is me, that day when my heart broke" (P8, S2/12-13). For Hugo, "it was really, really sad, the accident" (P11, S2/26), and Terry said, "accidents hurt people's feelings" (P2, S3/3 FG). When Dean was asked to relate his feelings about the content of his drawing, there was a long silence while he searched for words. He replied that he "can't say anything ... I don't know what to say how I feel about the accident ... I can't say any words to say how." Although he did not know how to word his emotions concerning the accident, he pointed towards the fragmented drawings that make up his whole picture and said, "they speak of those feelings" (P12, S2/29). What started out as an extraordinary day had turned into disaster. The frightful memories and heartfelt sadness that went home with those affected were expressed by all the participants.

4.7.2.2 *Witnessing the bus accident*

The mood before the accident was in direct contrast with the moment that confirmed the reality of the event. Prior to the accident, the passengers in both busses hired for the trip were singing and dancing. They were completely oblivious of the prospect of tragedy. Mary explained that they were joking with a girl who had a premonition that the "bus was going to tip" (P13, S3/11 FG). Moments before they got to the scene of the accident and even when the second bus stopped, the link between reality and the premonition seemed so unthinkable that it was ridiculed. According to Mary, seeing people running away from the capsized bus and realising that it was their peers drove reality home. This delayed realisation was confirmed by Nora, who recalled that the people on her bus only realised what was happening when they saw one of their injured peers lying on the bloodstained roadside. This sight is described as a shattering experience that created crying, shock and extreme shifts from a festive mood to terror-stricken emotions in an instant. During the discussion, Mary said, "they didn't prepare the children for anything bad," which could be interpreted that the survivors were caught off-guard and felt ill equipped to deal with the emotional impact of the accident (P13, S3/10 FG). Dean, who was on the same bus as Mary and Nora, said that their bus was behind, but he reflected on the events as if he had been on the bus that crashed. He pointed to a section in his picture saying, "Here the driver said, 'No brakes!' The people were

screaming ahhh ... and the bus hit one of the rails." In the discussion, Mary confirmed that the brakes failed at the same point indicated by Dean in his picture (P12, S2/27; P13, S3/6 FG).

Keano, Rory and Nina were passengers on the bus that crashed. Keano recollected the chaos on impact when the bus came "driving through the wall" (P9, S2/17). For Nina and Keano, the suddenness of the event evoked immense terror and fear for their own survival. When I asked Keano what he remembered about that moment, he said, "I thought I was going to die that moment" (P9, S2/17). When relating her experience, it was clear that confrontation with the death of a classmate made Nina question her own mortality. Nina's tears bore witness that the intensity of the emotional impact on her as survivor stretched far beyond the parameters of the accident. She said, "I was scared. I did not know what to do. I already knew that she died ... I was scared because I thought I was going to die" (S2/9:25-27).

Rory, who was injured in the accident, recalled specific details from the moments immediately after the accident happened, for instance, the instinctive reaction people have to get out of harm's way. He told how his friend Jerry "ran around the corner" since he anticipated further tragedy; "he thought the bus was going to bomb because he saw fire" (P10, S2/20).

4.7.2.3   *Witnessing forceful injury or the death of peers*

Nina reflected that the image of the deceased was dramatically different from her memory of the girl alive (see picture below). Similar to Terry's account given above, other survivors were restrained from seeing the deceased. For instance, Rory was told to cover his face. This was probably done to prevent further trauma. Although she choked on her words, Nina was able to relate a clear description from her drawing of what seeing her deceased classmate was like for her,

> This is Chevonne, who died, the girl, who died. This is how she looked. It's not how she always looked, but uh ... like how she looked ... but this is how her face looked when she was lying in the bus (S2/9:10-14).

Figure 4.5: Presents Nina's picture: "Bus of Horror. Why didn't you help?"
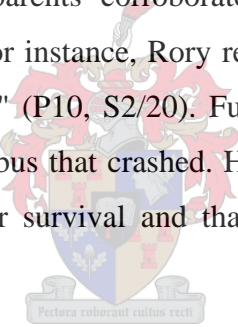
Keano recollected that one child was slung from the bus into the road – "she was out of the bus already," while Nina saw how her "friend flew out of the window" (P7, S2/9; P9, S2/17). Bearing witness to the force of the injury inflicted on friends caused collective terror and crying (P8, S2/13). Nina's description of the injured – "she is just lying here" and "no one is helping her" – reflects an acute sense of fragility and helplessness experienced by both the injured and the witnessing survivors (P7, S2/9, 11). According to Nora, the sight of an injured friend lying in the roadside was not merely distressing; it was heartbreaking. She explained that she and other passengers were restrained from getting off the second bus, despite feeling that the injured "really needed us" at that point of the accident (P8, S2/13). Dean confirmed that the witnessing passengers were empathetic, "they were sorry" for those in the bus that crashed (P12, S2/29). In this regard, Terry recalled that, although he wanted to assist his injured friend, he was too frightened to go closer to him. In broken sentences, Terry relayed what happened when he went looking for his friend:

> My friend was in the accident, he ... they said to me ... he had a ... somewhere here by his scalp ... I just felt ... so I went looking for him and saw him lie ... and I didn't want to go and look ... they said I must stay away from that part of the bus ... they said that he had died ... they said I had to go back to where all the other children was ... that time I knew, I'd never see my friend again (S1/10: 21-25; 11:59-61).

4.7.2.4   Immediate needs of survivors at the accident scene

Nina was in tears when she described the experiences of surviving passengers immediately after the accident as "they'll just be crying," indicating that they were inconsolable (P7, S2/11). Hugo confirmed feeling sad and traumatised before he was taken to the hospital. At this point, Terry had just been informed that one of his close friends had been killed. He related how physical affection and collective mourning, "feeling sad together," caused the anger of not being permitted to assist his injured friend earlier to subside (P2, S1/12). In contrast to Terry's experience, Joe reflected on the immense relief when he was re-united with his loved ones. He described how he was "just like happy that he found his friend again after losing him ... that his best friend is alive" (P5, S1/21, 22).

Key informants as well as parents of two of the participants related how the surviving witnesses "called for their mothers" during the first moments after the initial impact. Restoring feelings of safety is a basic human need, which was expressed by three of the participants. Key informants and parents corroborated that this need was instinctively associated with maternal comfort. For instance, Rory related from his picture that his friend Jerry "wanted to phone his mommy" (P10, S2/20). Furthermore, Keano recounted that his mother was also a passenger on the bus that crashed. He described how separation from his parent created fear for both of their survival and that he impulsively shouted to her for protection. He said:

> I thought my mommy was going to die because the only time I saw her was like when the bus was lying already and the bus was slided like that so I shouted 'mommy' and then she said 'here am I' and she kept like that miss, she held me tight. (S2/17:35-40)

In the preceding section, it was briefly mentioned that there was a delay in allowing passengers off the second bus. The discussion about Terry's picture evoked collective memories of searching for missing peers. Terry and Dean recounted that, once they were allowed to disembark, they were instructed to search for specific peers who were still unaccounted for. Keano confirmed that some of the witnesses from the other bus wanted to run to the capsized bus to help their injured peers. Nora stated that they were restrained from searching further when the missing learners were confirmed dead. She said, "Someone told us to look for Angelique that died. But we didn't know yet and then they stopped us from looking for her when we found out (P8, S3/10:330-332 FG).

In order to regain a sense of control, it became apparent that the participants needed to feel useful at the scene of the accident by making a meaningful attempt to help their injured peers. Being restrained from helping may have resulted in survivor guilt for Mary and Nina. With his voice cracking and tears rolling down his cheeks, Terry admitted, "I shouldn't have listened to them coz I felt cross the whole time. I still feel cross with myself that I didn't go back" (P2, S1/11,12). In this regard, Nora said, "Sometimes I used to feel guilty about what happened because they didn't want to let us out and maybe we should have helped and nobody would have gotten killed or hurt."

As Nina was recalling her memory of the accident, she reflected feelings of guilt that somehow she could have prevented the girl from dying:

> I, sometimes ... I feel guilty because maybe when I was like in the bus with her and another girl that was trapped with me, I thought maybe I could have helped her in a way that ... maybe she wouldn't have died.

4.7.2.5   Experiences of injury

Various anxiety-provoking experiences were related about injuries sustained during the accident. Nina recalled how she and another girl were crying for help when they were trapped together in the capsized bus. According to Nina, who sustained injuries to her hand, conversations take place at school regarding the experience of being injured. Nina elaborated that her friend who was slung from the bus said that she could not remember anything, except for crying, "Help me! Help me!" (P7, S2/11-12). A temporary loss of memory and a sense of disorientation were confirmed by Nora, who related the words of a fellow learner as follows:

> He actually told us that he was shocked first of all and wondering why he was lying there. He didn't know what happened and after he saw the bus and things he was crying (P8, S2/14:50-54).

Figure 4.6: Presents Rory's picture: "Injured but calm amidst chaos."

Rory was on crutches at the time of the interview. When he described his picture (above), he described how his leg had been badly hurt in the accident and that he had sustained head injuries. Although Rory had been injured, he remembered how he had been calm and aware of what was going on around him. He attempted to help others, despite his own injury. He emphasised that he was worried more about the injured children than about his own injuries. He recalled that, while he was in the ambulance and separated from the other survivors, he heard that "the three children died, but didn't' know who it was yet." Although he reported being "shocked and tired at that time," Rory was desperate to find out who had died. His words indicate that being isolated and uninformed was truly an agonising experience for him:

> I was worried about them. I wasn't worried that much about me. I just hoped ...
> I started thinking that it must be anybody. It was not somebody in the
> ambulance. It could have been me, but I was so tired.

Rory explained that he had been hospitalised and only saw in the newspaper that it was a very close friend of his that had been killed. Rory's words, as corroborated by Joe, highlight the critical importance of keeping injured survivors informed, even of bad news, in order to prevent increased anxiety. Joe confirmed that uncertainty about the identity of the deceased created further anxiety when he said, "You know someone died, but you don't know who it is ... who is alive and who has died and who could have been killed. You just get worried (P5, S1/21:29-32).

4.8 SITUATIONAL INFLUENCES: THE FUNERALS AND MEMORIAL SERVICE

4.8.1 Meanings attached to the funerals and memorial services

Figure 4.7: Presents Jerry's picture: "The funerals, the coffins, and saying goodbye."

According to Jerry, the funerals presented a time for collective mourning and an opportunity to bid the deceased farewell. He depicted one of the funerals in his drawing (above) and related that it was a "sad, sad day ... it was terrible" (P1, S1/7). Towards the end of the interview, I asked Jerry what the boy under the tree, which he referred to as himself, would like to say to the world. It took a few moments for him to reply. In words that were barely audible, he said, "Everybody who is here is hurting for the three children that died, and the driver. All the others were sad together" (P1, S1/7: 25; 8:69-70).

Jerry's words, "it was not just a dream, it did happen," indicate that the reality of the accident and subsequent loss of lives were signalled by the funerals. He emphasised that his picture indicated how "it really happened; everybody was there to say goodbye at the funeral." Jerry's conviction that collective mourning for the loss of friends and loved ones persisted beyond the funerals, was echoed at the memorial service a year after the accident, when it was said, "no words of comfort can compensate for loss and injury." Terry stated that "remembering the memory ... to have hope and to have a small thing of him, to think about him every day" made it easier to come to terms with loss. In this regard, Mary recalled the presence of spiritual leaders from various religious denominations who offered words to comfort the mourning. She related that the rabbi said, "the deceased have moved on to a better place."

During the research sessions, Mary noticed that Suzy's picture depicted happiness due to the belief that the deceased had "gone to a better place." This was echoed at the memorial service when it was said that commemoration of loss and celebration of the lives of the deceased were "healing in itself."

4.9   INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCES: OUTSIDERS

Several participants related from their drawings the presence of a multitude of people who were scurrying around. For instance, Keano said that there were "a lot of people" who arrived on the scene of the accident (P9, S2/17). This may be indicative that the participants perceived a situation marked by utter chaos. A clear distinction was made between the various groups of people present: Apart from the survivors, onlookers and helpers who responded to the needs of the injured and traumatised were also talked about.

4.9.1   Bystanders

The bystanders were acknowledged for their compassion and support towards the survivors at the accident scene. They offered words of empathy in an attempt to console the survivors. According to Nina, they said, "I'm sorry this happened to you" and "Are you hurt?" It was mentioned that, although the bystanders wanted to help, they were rendered helpless and remained passive, probably sharing the survivors' feelings disbelief and shock. Instead, they "call[ed] others to help." Nina referred to the onlookers as the people who "came to see what was happening" or the people "standing around." Keano confirmed the passivity of some onlookers when he mentioned the man who was "just standing still here." Furthermore, an element of curiosity was attributed to the bystanders. Nina reported that they wanted to "see the children who is coming out and they want too see who died and who is hurt." Questions such as "Did you see any of the children die?" were related.

4.9.2   The rescue workers

This group of people reportedly consisted of trained helpers, such as medical services, and also included a bystander who took the survivors to safety. Keano and Rory recognised the magnitude of the task bestowed on rescue workers and helpers, while Nina acknowledged their unselfish sacrifice when she said that, although they could not save everybody, they did all that were humanly possible. The rescue workers consisted of "helicopter and ambulance men and fire hydrant people" who "got into the bus to help the injured children out" and took them to safety. According to Keano, the ambulance picked up the passenger who was slung from the bus and "drove away with her." Rory emphasised that the ambulance men helped

him by telling him to "lie still." Dean related that, although rescue workers were on the scene quickly, the traumatised passengers were screaming until they arrived. Nina and Rory confirmed that, despite the presence of rescue workers, the personal fear of dying felt at the accident scene would not subside.

4.9.3 Volunteer helpers

Figure 4.8:   Presents Keano's picture: "Come over and help!"

Several participants mentioned "the lady," a resident who lived across the road from where the accident happened, as one of the first bystanders on the scene. Rory related that it was she who reported the accident and alerted rescue services. As indicated in Keano's picture (above), "the lady" allegedly hastened to help and took control by shouting for passive onlookers to "Come over and help! We must help the children!" Hugo mentioned another helper who recognised the seriousness of the situation and took action with urgent intent. During the discussion about Terry's picture, several participants acknowledged the helpers who assisted the survivors on the scene of the accident, such as Terry, who reflected that "the lady" provided for their basic needs by offering them shelter and sustenance. Various participants expressed their gratitude towards bystanders who demonstrated acts of selflessness. For instance, Dave and Joe were thankful that there were people who were "being there for us." This confirmed that acts of kindness did not go unnoticed in the midst of chaos.

4.9.4 Indifferent outsiders

The discussion during the third research session highlighted an awareness of and active following of media coverage of the accident. Mary reported that *The Voice*, a local newspaper, made upsetting and infuriating statements about the driver of the bus that crashed. Allegations accusing the driver of deliberate speeding were based on an interview that took place on the scene of the accident with a survivor who had not been a passenger on the bus that crashed. Reportedly, this interviewee pretended that he had been on the bus and gave a sensationalised account of the sequence of the accident, thereby giving false information to *The Voice* reporters. Such statements included that he "went on his knees" to beg the driver to slow down, but he continued to speed deliberately. It became clear that the participants felt strongly about the indifferent allegations published in *The Voice* newspaper. Throughout the research sessions, Mary frequently directed the conversation towards the issue of speeding and placing blame:

> I think *The Voice* was wrong what they were writing about André, but they said they'd do it again. They were blaming André. I think they never like care about what they wrote and they don't care about if André's wife and children was going to read it (S3/14 FG).

Mary emphasised the words of the driver's wife, Mrs Lemmetjies, at his memorial service. She said, "If ever he had to drive for a school, he took care of the children like it was his own children and he was a good driver. They never had any complaints about him." Mary, Dean, Nora and Terry demonstrated compassion for the families of the deceased. Nora said:

> It wasn't right. They suffered more than enough. Because that isn't really what happened in the accident, because they, André's family, also have feelings. It's not fair what they wrote. They don't need to hear that stuff. That is not good for them, it just makes things worse (S3/14 FG).

Subsequently, *The Voice* published offensive statements such as, "death was waiting for her." Most participants supported Mary in the belief that "*The Voice* don't care about people's feelings." Nora confirmed that these statements re-traumatised them and were deeply upsetting; they awakened sadness and resulted in the inability to sleep. She added, "everyone was crying again" and raw wounds were scratched open.

Conversations about the indifference of media reports evoked reminders of rude high school learners at memorial services. Reportedly, some high school learners acted immaturely by being disrespectful at moments where they were expected to be serious. Mary felt that these

learners demonstrated a disregard of the spiritual leaders while faith ceremonies were performed. She elaborated that the disrespectful peers forgot that siblings of deceased were sitting amongst them. The consequence of their indifference had reportedly intensified the negative impact of loss on the brother of one of the deceased. The realisation that respect does not necessarily come with maturity came to light. Nora believed that an attitude of indifference prevailed since these learners were not directly affected by tribulation, "because they didn't experience what we did, the way we did" (P8, S3/18 FG). This reflected an understanding that people are more concerned and compassionate when an issue touches them personally.

4.10 INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCES: PEER-RELATED ISSUES

4.10.1 Group processes and interaction

The discussion in the following section focuses on interaction that took place between group members during the research sessions. Although all the participants indicated that they wanted to attend the third and final research session, only five arrived. The third and final session consisted of a 45-minute focus group session. Since the five participants who had decided to attend the last session did not know each other well, the session was started with a game called "find somebody" (Appendix J). The purpose of the game was to find, as quickly as possible, someone who, for instance, had the same colour hair as you, whose birthday was in the same month as yours, or who lived in the same neighbourhood, in the group.

After packing all the drawings created during the preceding two sessions in a spiral on a table, I suggested that each person choose a picture they wanted us to discuss together. Since I noticed some sighs – as if to say, "not again!" – I asked the participants if they were sick and tired of talking about anything related to the bus accident. Although two of the participants nodded very insistently, the other three gave no response. I was not convinced that they had nothing more to say and tried to generate enthusiasm by reminding them that they were now part of a new group and had not seen all the drawings created by participants in the study. This idea seemed to catch their interest and, when I asked who wanted to choose a picture first, Mary volunteered. She picked up her own picture. She was given the option of explaining her picture or having the other group members say what they saw or understood prior to her explanation. She chose the second option. The other participants followed Mary's example and the process that followed was one in which participants could approach the

drawings as viewers, not creators. Their interpretations and the meanings they put to the drawings are discussed next.

Group processes confirmed that multiple meanings were derived from a single picture. For instance, feelings associated with one picture ranged from sad and hurt to immense relief, as well as disbelief at the reality of the event. This substantiated my understanding of the complexity of individual experience and the existence of multiple realities. As stated previously, marked differences in personality defined how individuals responded during the sessions. For instance, Nina and Nora demonstrated spontaneity when it was their turn to discuss their drawings. Even before a question could be asked, both girls volunteered to start the interview. In contrast to this, Zoe appeared to be blocking out reminders of the incident and avoided expressing her thoughts about her drawing. During the discussion, all participants except Suzy appeared eager to offer an interpretation of others' drawings.

4.10.2 Interpretation and placing blame

Based on my observations, and as confirmed by discussions facilitated through pictures, it was clear that this one picture (Figure 4.9 below) evoked a variety of unique interpretations related to the accident. For instance, in the discussion about Mary's picture, both Nora and Dean interpreted Mary's drawing as a warning against deliberate speeding. In contrast to Nora, Dean did not make a direct association between Mary's picture and the bus accident. Nora emphasised her belief that the bus accident could not be attributed to deliberate speeding on the driver's part. She said, "I think that people should drive slow, but actually it is not about that ... it wasn't because the driver was driving too fast that the accident happened."

Figure 4.9:   Presents Mary's picture: "Speeding kills! Please drive slow and arrive alive!"

Mary's response indicated that the accident raised renewed awareness of the "Arrive Alive" road safety campaign. Mary's focus on the issues of speeding and placing blame may be linked to strong convictions discussed in relation to the indifferent allegations published in *The Voice* newspaper. She clarified that the purpose of her picture was not to accuse the driver of speeding, but rather to express the desire for accident-free roads:

> No man, Nora! I didn't say the driver is the cause that it happened. I just say that people must drive slow if they want to arrive alive. We don't want anymore ... we don't want to hear anymore on the news that there was more accidents because of that.

She indicated faith in the concept of "Arrive Alive" by extending an urgent plea to all speeding drivers about the devastating impact of negligence when traffic regulations are disobeyed.

Three of the participants had trouble reading the text in specific pictures. For example, when Nora tried to make sense of Dean's picture, she said that she "can hardly see the words." Consequently, she suggested that another participant "can go first then I can understand" (P8, S3/5 FG). This indicates that Nora was careful to avoid misinterpretation of Dean's picture. Dean noted that Terry and himself related similar experiences from his picture (Figure 4.4). Mary, on the other hand, misread the word "Wow" in Dean's picture as "Move". Based on

this misinterpretation, she proceeded to say that Dean depicted the driver as speeding deliberately: "I can see what this shows ... This part shows that the driver has started speeding and the second driver is telling the first diver to move because he is driving too slow."

Although Dean rejected Mary's interpretation of his picture immediately, Mary seemed to ignore him and continued by stating that "here he is telling again the driver to move because he is driving too slow, and the accident happened, the bus crashed" (P13, S3/5 FG). Mary's misinterpretation created tension between the group members. Other participants were visibly angered by the assumption made by Mary. Although Suzy and Terry remained silent, their glances verified an active interest in the conversation. Nora, in particular, reflected the belief that unsubstantiated judgements were insensitive and disrespectful of Dean's feelings. It became evident that making hasty assumptions were rejected for their damaging effect on interpersonal relationships. Nora advised that clarification of meaning was crucial in order to avoid making indifferent statements that are hurtful:

> I'd like to say, maybe Mary should have asked Dean first. Maybe he didn't like it when she said that, maybe it hurt his feelings ... Maybe he will actually care, because it isn't going to help if all of us are going to him and saying, 'why did you show that in your picture?' and it's not something that he meant.

When asked to indicate how Mary's incorrect assumption affected his feelings, Dean said, "I can't explain how it makes me feel" (P12, S3/7 FG). Bearing in mind that the participants' were aware of allegations in *The Voice* that the driver had been speeding deliberately, it is likely that Dean experienced being misunderstood as insulting and that it evoked emotions he could not articulate. At this point, Mary was clearly upset when she defended her interpretation by saying, "I only said it because I saw the word 'Move' (P13, S3/7 FG).

Group members reached an understanding that "you really cannot say if you were not in my shoes at the time" and the misinterpretation was clarified. Furthermore, the participants felt strongly that you had to have been aboard the bus that crashed to really know how the accident happened. If you had not been on the first bus, you really could not pass judgement.

Although conflict between group members was resolved, the discussion sparked a conversation in which participants expressed their protest against controversial media statements made about the accident (discussed in the preceding section). Several participants echoed Mary's words, "they [*The Voice*] could even come to our school now and ask us, who are part of this group right now, 'what do you feel?'" (S3/18-19 FG). This verified a mutual

need amongst the participants for their version of the story about the accident to be heard and to be taken seriously.

4.10.3 Memories of the deceased

Yesterday we were running around like there was no tomorrow, not knowing our lives were going to end in such a tragic way. We laughed, played, and joked around; full of joy but little did we know it was the end of the road ... Peace to you, 'Our Angels' (From the memorial service, one year after the accident).

Figure 4.10:   Presents Nora's picture: "The day that my heart broke."

Statements made by various participants prefigure the quotation that introduces this section. Although their lives had been cut short prematurely, eternal status was bestowed on the deceased with their memories serving as an inspiration. During the research sessions, Dave confirmed this when he said, "the children that died, man ... they are heroes." In the discussion about Nora's picture (above), Terry and Mary noticed that Nora kept alive a deep adoration for the deceased in her heart. For Terry, comprehension of the finality of loss of friendship and subsequent changes evoked tears: "My friend is not here anymore. He won't laugh; he won't come and play with me and my other friends. He won't come home with me ... It makes me cry a lot."

Mary acknowledged that Terry's picture reflected individual and collective sadness for the loss of a friend's life. A similar message was articulated by Hugo when he explained that his

picture wanted to say, "that Chevonne, Brent and Angelique that we, like our class, really miss them ... I really miss them." Joe confirmed that the emotional pain due to the loss of a close friend is very hard to bear.

Mary said that she belonged to the same lift-club as Brent and that lift-club was a reminder that the deceased are sorely missed. Brent was reportedly a good friend of Terry and Rory, and lived in the same neighbourhood as Rory. Both boys pondered the possibility of preventing the tragic death of their friend. For instance, Rory said, "couldn't we have prevented it from happening or something like that?" Belief in the possibility that help from survivors could prevent death was also mentioned by Nora.

Chevonne, one of the girls who died, was a new learner at the school. Mary was saddened by the thought that opportunities to become acquainted with her had been lost forever; she said that she recurrently thought about Chevonne. Joe and Jerry made similar observations, indicating the intensity of the emotional impact death had on all the grade seven learners. Furthermore, the deceased were remembered as "soft-hearted, never a rude person, always kind" (P13, S3/18 FG). Rory stated, "I didn't think it will be any of them because they're not that naughty. They're quiet most of the time" (P10, S2/21). This may reflect the belief that those who are innocent and well behaved were undeserving of death as a punishment.

4.11   INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCES: FAMILY-RELATED ISSUES

4.11.1 Issues of parental assistance and protection

Earlier in this chapter, it was established that survivors expressed an instinctive need to restore feelings of safety. The need for parental protection, expressed in calling for their mothers, was one of the first responses observed by educators at the scene of the accident. It was also mentioned that the parents of some participants were concerned that their children directed anger at them for failing to check the road-worthiness of the bus. In this regard, only one participant expressed the belief that it was the parent's responsibility to ensure that public transport was safe before allowing their child to embark. He said:

> That, that their parents must first check the bus or any, any vehicle that they are going to get into and the driver, there must be a good driver. It must be a responsible driver and, and they must ride slow, slowly.

In contrast to this, Hugo felt strongly that the responsibility rested on individuals who use public transport to remind drivers frequently that their vehicles should be roadworthy. He said, "if you ride in the bus, please ask the driver to check the bus before." Further aspects of

parental involvement relate to parents who were at the scene of the accident. Firstly, several participants recalled that they witnessed injury to parents. For instance, Keano stated that his mother, who accompanied them on the outing, "was getting the glass out of her." Furthermore, Rory related that, despite his own injuries, he had been concerned about Mrs Fredericks, because "she could not feel her legs." Rory's concern was warranted because Mrs Fredericks now uses a wheelchair as a result of the accident. She confirmed that life-long injuries had resulted in major adjustments for herself and her family. She was commended for her courage at the memorial service on 25 August 2006.

The participants also related how parents offered help and attempted to take control of a chaotic situation. Instinctive parental protection as well as urgency to alert helpers was acknowledged. For example, Hugo related from his drawing (below) how his father offered to help at the scene of the accident: "This is my daddy here. He told me that he wanted to help also at the site, but that they didn't want him to ... Maybe he could get hurt also."

Figure 4.11:   Presents Hugo's picture: "My daddy wants to help."

Hugo elaborated that he knew that his father really wanted to help them because his father dropped everything and rushed to the scene of the accident, "he ran out of his car. He didn't lock the door." He reflected that he would have been proud of his father for helping (P11, S2/25). The urgency with which parents reacted was also pointed out by Keano:

> When the bus rode into the wall, there were people, but they were looking for a way to get into the bus, but my mommy like put out her head and called, come help here! And they came, like a lot. My mommy said I must keep on my jacket because she wanted me to get out last with her.

4.11.2 Compassion for the families of the deceased

For Joe, building relationships with friends and family of the deceased has enabled him to cope with adversity. Various participants expressed compassion for the sadness experienced by the families of the deceased. According to Mary, a premonition had forewarned Chevonne's mother that "Chevonne shouldn't go on the bus with the other passengers." A specific local newspaper had made unsympathetic remarks about the premonition Chevonne's mother had and Mary was deeply upset to witness the overwhelming effect of these allegations on her own mother. Mary confirmed that she shared the outrage experienced by her mother, saying, "she and I were so cross ... we were just both crying the next day." Nora agreed that these allegations had re-traumatised them and had resulted in sadness and sleeplessness. Furthermore, Mary and Nora anticipated that the parents of one of the deceased regretted moving their child to a new school. However, Nora acknowledged the unpredictable nature of the accident. She said that the probability of an accident claiming the lives of learners were possible at any other school.

Terry and Mary expressed identification with the sadness experienced by siblings of the deceased. Although Mary perceived the brother of one of the deceased as "soft-hearted," she saw that he was enraged by the indifference of high school learners at the memorial service. Statements made by Mary and Dean reflect the belief that this indifference had intensified the negative impact of loss on the siblings of the deceased. Nora responded that she felt an attitude of indifference prevails if a person is not directly affected by tribulation, "because they didn't experience what we did, the way we did."

4.12   INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCES: ISSUES RELATED TO THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

4.12.1 Behavioural changes

All three learners who passed away had been in Mrs Andrews's class. During the interview with the two grade seven educators, Mrs Andrews observed that, immediately after the accident, the learners in her class were quieter than usual. She recalled that, in the beginning stages, she would inquire about their feelings frequently. She felt that they were "trying to be strong for the others" when they replied with statements such as, "no miss, I am fine today, I'll do my work." Although they appeared to be coping, the educators were concerned about the learners' ability to communicate their feelings. Mrs Andrews said:

> They'd do their work. But then somehow they didn't just break down and cry. In the beginning stages without the therapy, they would put their heads down and cry; they wouldn't express themselves.

Hugo explained that the empty seats were a reminder to all learners of the loss of their classmates. Jerry observed that "everything is still the same at school, but that the children in the class are different, and the teachers." Jerry pointed out that, although the deceased learners had all been in the one grade seven class, all three classes were adversely affected by the death of their peers, "everybody is sad because of it". Joe acknowledged collective suffering when he said that all learners in their school had experienced emotional pain because of the accident. The statement "it changed our lives forever" was made at the memorial service on 25 August 2006. This illustrated the collective impact of the accident on the entire community affiliated with the school. Furthermore, Mrs Botha reflected that some learners reportedly still experience nightmares and reminders. She was concerned that these learners refrained from attending formal counselling sessions.

4.12.2 Educator observations of intervention

The key informants were asked to comment on differences in learner behaviour observed after they had attended a variety of trauma intervention sessions conducted by specific organisations. Sessions that used complex methods of trauma intervention, which were unfamiliar to the learners, were criticised. Amongst the reasons offered by learners for not wanting to attend formal counselling were that "they don't want to go and sit and talk about it again" because "it's the opening of the wound again." In this regard, Mrs Andrews stated that the learners "became confused ... they became confused and then they became emotional." According to her, some learners said, "Miss, I don't want to go again!" Mrs Andrews clarified this statement by elaborating:

> They became confused because they felt that everything is inside of them, and how's it gonna come out? "And if I do use the tapping method and it doesn't work for me, am I going to be stuck, am I going to be left the way I am?"

4.13 INTRINSIC ISSUES: EFFECTS OF THE ACCIDENT ON INDIVIDUALS

Earlier in this chapter, it was argued that the overwhelming emotions felt by the learners who witnessed the death of their peers remained with them long after the accident. For some participants, speaking about these memories was still too painful. For example, Nina reflected that "thinking back is like ... I still can't believe that it happened ... it is difficult to believe it." This indicates that feelings of disbelief persist and that comprehension of a devastating

experience is difficult. Rory's statement indicated similar thoughts: "I don't know why they had to die ... I don't know why children have to die." The realisation that the innocent, such as children, are not spared by accidents was repeated by Mary. The following section presents a discussion concerning the psychological effects the accident and subsequent death of peers had on the participants.

4.13.1 Psychological effects

4.13.1.1 Survivor guilt

All who were affected by the bus accident have endured emotional pain and are left with different degrees of permanent psychological scarring. Several participants expressed feelings of unresolved anger, the longing to change the outcome of the past and survivor guilt. For instance, Terry admitted that he was "not feeling okay." He explained that he was angry with himself for being unable to change the past: "I just still feel so cross with myself that I can't change how things happened on that day, but I know I can't change the bad things now, I wish I could."

This belief that a personal act of helping could have saved the lives of severely injured peers was reflected when Rory asked the following question: "Couldn't we have prevented it from happening or something like that? (P10, S2/22). Nina confessed that the words ""Help me! Help me! Why didn't you help?" were written on her picture to show that she sometimes experienced survivor guilt. She elaborated that feelings of guilt were triggered at random, for instance, when she heard conversations about the deceased learners at school.

Zoe's brief responses and strong intent to focus on the future may indicate a measure of avoidance and a longing to block out the negative experience. Furthermore, Nora seemed to struggle with coming to terms with the possibility that "if they would have let us go when it was windy and rainy, maybe it would not have happened." However, Dave and Jerry acknowledged that their tears were incapable of alleviating pain or reversing the outcome of tragedy. Jerry said, "Things can't change now, even if we wanted to change them."

During the second research session, a conversation took place in which the innocence of fellow survivors was explored. For instance, qualities of caring and acts of bravery and helpfulness by survivors at the scene of the accident were commended. Concerning feelings of guilt, Nina remarked that she found it helpful when adults confirmed the innocence of the survivors. She said, "it makes me feel better if you say that it was not my or other children's

fault at all." Nora expressed a similar view. Nina's class educator confirmed that Nina had become very open and spoke to her "about anything and everything."

4.13.2 Changes in life orientation

4.13.2.1 Worldview and mortality

Several participants reflected themes related to the emerging transition from a childlike to an adult worldview. Wisdom that surpasses childlike views indicated that Nora in particular had made a marked transition from childlike perceptions to a worldview that resembles a mature orientation. On the other hand, Keano's perspective indicated that childlike views were also prevalent. He believed that a terrible experience only happens to a person once in a lifetime:

> Like, I tell the children, like don't be scared ... Just get into the bus, that it will
> be safe ... I tell the children it won't happen again to anybody. So that's how it
> is for me, like it won't happen again to anybody.

The realisation that bad things happen closer to home than previously assumed underlies Dave's warning against ignorant attitudes and blindness to dangerous situations and suffering. I asked Dave what he thought other people should understand about his experience of the bus accident. He said that he wanted people to become more aware of what goes on in the world around them:

> They must open their eyes, man, and realise what's going on in the world now.
> Lots of stuff is happening, bad things happen right in front of your eyes, lots
> of stuff is happening right in front of your eyes, man.

When I asked Dave what this "stuff" was, he said, "Accidents and people hurting each other." According to Dave, if people would become more aware, "if their eyes are open they can do something when it happens" and "they can know the chances of what can happen in the world around them, that people can die, but they can help." This indicated the belief that awareness of danger equips people to be alert and to react in times of crisis, thereby increasing the chances of preventing death. The warning that accidents are a real possibility informed Rory's belief that "we all just have to be safe, that's all." Similarly, Hugo recommended alertness in attitude when he said that, "watch out, because maybe, accidents can happen."

Furthermore, a significant theme that emerged throughout the research sessions was that of the finality of death. For instance, Rory said, "You really don't know when it is your time. It could have been me. It could have been anybody." Nora elaborated by saying:

> One day you are there and the next you are gone. One moment I see you and the next I don't. You can never say that today we definitely will live. That I'm not gonna come back, might happen. Anything can happen ... It has happened.

As discussed in the following section, a change in attitude was brought about by the realisation of human mortality. This facilitated a renewed conviction that people should treasure their fellow human beings. In this regard, Mrs Andrews observed that since the accident the learners make a point of saying good-bye and are more open about displaying affection towards the educators. She related how Joe, in particular, would come to her at the end of the school day, especially on Fridays, give her a hug and say "goodbye, look after yourself." During the research sessions, Joe demonstrated this awareness of the mortality of others, such as friends and loved ones, in statements such as the following:

> When someone dies, you really know that other people can die too. You don't know if the person who is going to die. You don't know if the person who is next will be someone you know, like a best friend.

4.13.2.2 A change in attitude

> *"Words cannot change things or lighten the emotional burden on survivors, but whatever power you have to do good, do it."*

This powerful statement, made at the memorial service on 25 August 2006, was echoed by several participants. Participants recognised that a lesson could be learnt from tragic life events, such as the realisation that the conviction to make a difference in life rests in the hands of the living, and not with the dead. For instance, although Zoe knew that she could not control negative life events, she realised that she can control how she reacts during adversity. The reality of loss sparked renewed appreciation of and a positive attitude towards loved ones and friends. Ironically, concern was expressed just a few weeks prior to commencement of the research sessions about the angry attitude observed in Zoe and Dave by their families. It is possible that personal growth had taken place in the interim and had led to insights such as renewed appreciation of loved ones. Rory confirmed that coming face to face with death reminded him to uphold a respectful rather than a hateful attitude, since "you really don't know when it's your time." Similarly, the texts on Nora's drawing signify constructive meaning making, wisdom and maturity in attitude. She said, "I learnt a lot" and read the words on her picture: "I learned that I can't like hate people because the next moment I don't know if I will be dead or they will be dead and I won't hold a grudge and stuff like that."

Rory's words, "we don't know why three children had to die" were reiterated at the memorial service. However, solace was found in the realisation that their death brought people from different denominations together to share experiences and feelings about the tragedy. These life lessons appeared to motivate the personal decision to adopt a positive attitude to life and to think before behaving in a negative fashion. Nora, for instance, had made the commitment to strive towards being a genuine friend and a better person. She stated the following resolutions:

> I'm going to love everybody and make friends and ... Don't say something personal that's bad. Don't say anything bad. Get to know someone before you say something bad, get to know the person. Life is too short to hate and too long to love. You can love a person longer and that there is not enough time to hate any person.

4.13.3 Post-accident feelings

Long periods of silence and sporadic crying signalled that the emotions of some participants were still very raw or that they struggled to find the adequate words to describe these emotions. It seemed likely that Suzy found it difficult to express herself about abstract ideas and emotions. When Keano attempted to give words to his feelings about the accident, he said, "I don't even know such a word ... a really very bad feeling ... the worst. I don't want anyone to get this feeling ever again." This indicated a genuine desire to protect anyone else from such a dreadful experience.

Despite the inability to explain how and why a positive change in feelings had come about, most participants said that feelings of sadness and fearfulness had subsided. A resilient attitude was noticed in Joe when he expressed confidence in his ability to overcome adversity. While troubling emotions reportedly returned infrequently, Mary said that distancing from painful memories had taken place, and Terry confirmed that his anger and sadness were busy healing. An injured parent corroborated that experiencing a turbulent range of emotions, such as anger, depression and sadness at the "loss of life as I know it." Nora was able to explain the elements that brought about a change in her emotions:

> Talking about it ... I … we were talking about it the whole time so I had to think about it. It wasn't such a traumatic thing anymore, because everyday we talked about it. We were together talking and it helped a little bit every day because we talked about it every day.

Although the accident had turned "a good day into a bad day," Dave and Jerry confessed that they were feeling "happier again". Rather than denying sadness, painful feelings were owned and various participants acknowledged continuing sadness. Particularly Dave and Joe emphasised that being comfortable with one's own feelings counteracts fear and enables comprehension of tragedy. Dave said he had realised that dwelling on anger was counterproductive to healing and that crying was a necessary outlet for emotional release. He said, "you must cry ... cry on ..." He shared that what had helped him to know his feelings was that his mother lets him write down his feelings about the accident. When I asked him what he wrote down, he replied, "I wrote that it hurts a lot, it hurts a lot. I write that I was still heart sore ..." For Dave it was important to be able to identify one's feelings because "it can teach you to better understand when bad stuff happens." He said that people who know their feelings, "won't hide them" and "they won't be nasty. They'll be nicer to each other. It will help them in their relationships with other people."

Joe insisted that emotions that cause unease must be expressed in order to heal. He explained that the boy in his picture wanted to urge other people to "talk about how you feel because you can't keep it inside." Other participants confirmed that communication provided an outlet for overwhelming emotions. Terry emphasised that the conscious decision to occupy his mind elsewhere, such as focusing on his schoolwork, made him feel stronger and alleviated feelings of despair. For Jerry, Dave and Joe coming to terms with the loss of classmates meant spending time in the company of fellow survivors. A detailed discussion of survivors' perception of recovery is presented in the following section.

4.14 INTRINSIC ISSUES: THE IMPACT ON SURVIVORS' FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

4.14.1 Anticipation of future change

As indicted in the introduction to this chapter, the accident created anticipation about prospective life changes, such as the transition to high school and letting go of primary school. According to Zoe, dealing with adversity is essential to ignite a hopeful attitude towards the future. By capturing the image of happy faces in her drawing, she is reminded to face the future with a positive attitude. Although most participants emphasised dealing with adversity rather than blocking out negative memories, Zoe felt that forgetting was vital for recovery: "Forget about the past and everything that happened in the past, it is over. Think about the future and life ahead, and be happy."

As discussed previously, it seemed difficult for Zoe to find suitable words to express herself. Instead of blocking out negative memories, it is however possible that her statement implies the choice to focus on uplifting thoughts deliberately and not to dwell on sadness. During the discussion, Mary and Nora recognised an attitude of thankfulness in Zoe and Suzy's picture for the life still to live. A message at the memorial service also confirmed that counting one's blessings and gratitude to God are uplifting to the human spirit and shape how tragic experiences are processed.

4.14.2 Perceptions of recovery

At the memorial service, Mrs Fredericks, who had been paralysed by the accident, said, "When the night is at its darkest, the stars shine at their brightest." During this research study, celebrating life, sharing compassion and love with others who were adversely affected by the accident on a daily basis were regarded as conducive to recovery. For Joe, communication and unity during tribulation presented a gateway to recovery. He explained that talking about the deceased and his hurting feelings, being involved in the accident himself, and "getting closer to family and friends" taught him to cope with what had happened. He smiled when he said, "I'm better at dealing with accidents. I know now, I can do it" (P1, S1/21, 23). Dave confirmed that family support had aided release from painful emotions and memories. He said, "My mommy talks to me"; she "gave me lots of hugs after the accident" (P3, S1/15). Keano related that learners counsel and encourage each other at school to overcome fears, for instance of getting into a bus again (P9, S2/ 18). Nora elaborated that exchanging memories amongst peers was comforting and helpful in processing loss. Hugo reflected confidence in the idea that strength is found in unity when survivors support each other in enduring hardship, while Dave said, "You must be strong even if it is hard. If you try, I will be strong with you" (P3, S1/26). This indicated the belief that collective support has a greater capacity to generate personal strength than when one stands alone.

Mary, Terry and Rory had indicated that prayer helped them to cope during this time. At the memorial service on 25 August 2006, it was stated that faith undergoes an ultimate test in times of tribulation. However, as confirmed by the participants, prayer and standing united as school and community enabled "us to become stronger and better human beings." Mary, Nora and especially Terry emphasised that it was vital for the school to create opportunities for collective remembrance. Keeping the memory of the deceased alive daily and having a tangible object that symbolises his or her presence were regarded as helpful in dealing with loss. In this regard, Terry said, "Remembering the memory ... To have hope, to have a small

thing of him to think about him everyday." Nora and Terry emphasised their conviction that healing is facilitated in small steps, such as through "drawing with the music about the accident; thinking and talking."

4.14.3 Drawings, communication and coping

The majority of the participants acknowledged that drawing was enjoyable, or helped them to verbalise or release emotions that were difficult to deal with. Jerry and Dave confirmed that drawing helped them to face and talk about their traumatic experience. Mary similarly said that the opportunities to express feelings through her drawing during the group sessions had brought comfort and relief. Mrs Andrews confirmed that the participants seemed stronger and more mature, and that they could express themselves. She said, "After they've had your therapy they've become free, they wouldn't be so emotional about everything, they could sort of take a stronger stand, and they could express themselves." Mrs Botha elaborated: "Their feelings flowed through the art. It wasn't more of a verbal kind of thing, their feelings came out through their art ... They could really express what they felt like" (KI 2:3).

From a research perspective, the value of drawings in facilitating communication about trauma was best illustrated by reflecting on Dean's process of drawing. While he was drawing, I noticed that Dean's attention seemed so fixed on the activity that he seemed to block out everything happening around him. He was the last participant to finish his drawing. As I walked passed while Dean was drawing, he started explaining the scenes depicted in his incomplete picture spontaneously. When he got to the part that still needed to be drawn, he stopped. I asked him whether he wanted to carry on telling me what happens next in his picture, even though it was not finished, or whether he wanted to complete it first. He chose the latter option. When the whole picture was complete, Dean reflected on his drawing for a while. He then motioned for me to come closer and said, "Here is my picture, it is finished now. See miss, if it can help me to tell you about that day." Guided by the sequence captured in his pictures, Dean related the rest of the fragmented pictures one by one, thereby giving a detailed account of what he remembered about the day of the outing. This was significant to me, since it was evident that Dean needed the step-by-step structure in order to convert his unspoken memories into words.

4.14.4 Educator observations of recovery

In contrast to statements made in the preceding section, the educators related that the participants who had volunteered to attend the research sessions had expressed excitement

beforehand. The key informants stated that the participants returned to their classes with a positive, "sort of relieved" attitude. Mrs Andrews reported that "they came back stronger ... they came back happier." Furthermore, Mrs Andrews observed that the participants who were in her class, namely Dave, Nina, Joe, Keano, Hugo and Zoe, "in some way or other, they've just proved themselves, it's like they blossomed." Mrs Botha thought that the participants were able to work through "whatever their fears were ... in a way that they enjoyed what they were doing themselves" because "kids are kids ... they enjoy drawing and they enjoy game." In this regard, Mrs Andrews added:

> The fun part ... It sort of cuts the emotions; it cuts that sad emotion that they are feeling, 'Look, it happened to us, there is an outcome. It's not something I'm going to be stuck into forever, there is a light at the end of the tunnel, there is a way out of this, I'm going to get out of it'.

4.15   CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the findings generated from the data were presented. The processes of coding and identification of themes were employed whilst working through the transcripts of the interviews and focus group discussions, together with the field notes, in an effort to reduce the data. The processes of data collection and analysis were difficult to separate. The process of analysis therefore became intertwined with that of data collecting. The focus group sessions became opportunities to co-analyse the drawings created by the participants, as well as to discuss differences between individual interpretations of specific drawings. In this study, the role of drawings in facilitating understanding of adolescents' experiences of a shared traumatic event was researched. Discussions facilitated by the drawings brought to light that participants' recollection of the bus accident reflected an impact that reaches far beyond personal parameters. Conversations facilitated by their drawings stressed extrinsic factors, such as interpersonal and situational factors, as significant considerations in understanding the impact of shared trauma during adolescence.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

South African education finds itself in a transitional space with a focus on change and growth in order to improve the quality of service delivery within our unique multi-cultural context. Education is one national system which is challenged to find creative solutions to complex problems. In this study, I presented a detailed discussion of the apparent difficulty young people have in verbalising emotions that are difficult to deal with, such as reminders of a traumatic incident. In this regard, Driessnack (2005) argues, that clinicians need to continue to explore ways to integrate children's drawings in order to increase potential access to children's voices. Within the context of this study, it was argued that richness in cultural diversity as well as the perceived difficulty children encounter when asked to give a verbal account of traumatic experiences warrant a change in the ways of understanding the perceptions of children and adolescents who come from cultural backgrounds that differ from that of the researcher. This view is supported by Hardin and Peterson (1997), who argue that alternative methods to the traditional ones must be investigated, and was affirmed by the key informants in this study.

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into adolescents' experience of a shared traumatic event, namely the bus accident that claimed the lives of four people, three of whom were peers the participants knew personally. Drawing was used as a creative research tool to elicit understanding of what the participants' experiences of the bus accident had been and the impact it had on their functioning within the home and school communities. Within an eco-systemic theoretical perspective of educational psychology that was undertaken for this study, I presumed that intrinsic and extrinsic factors from different systems in a specific social context are influenced by one another in a dynamic and continuous process of balance, tension and interplay (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002). It was argued that, since the accident had an impact not only those directly involved, but also on the entire community associated with the school, research conducted from a qualitative stance would have to reflect

an understanding of factors such as family, school, peer and community associated influences.

Significant implications of the findings of this study are presented in the following section.

5.2   THE FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

The findings, based on conversations facilitated through the drawings created by the participants, indicated that a dynamic interplay between multiple influences affected their perception of the bus accident. Conceptualising the impact of the bus accident on this group of adolescents demanded an understanding of their individual attributes. These included intrinsic issues, such as personality and psychological sensitivity, as well as situational influences from which the trauma arose, or wherein the impact of shared trauma was externalised, such as the accident itself, the funerals and the research sessions. Furthermore, the type of support received from peers, family, the school environment and the affiliated community were indicated as significant influences on the adolescents' perceptions and ways of processing the traumatic incident. Finding that were made were relayed into themes and will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

5.2.1   Situational influence: Group communication and hesitance

The need to communicate about the traumatic experience was signified by the participants' voluntary attendance of the research sessions. However, most participants were unable to verbalise why they chose to attend, or what they expected from the research sessions. They were hesitant to start the process and a non-confrontational guide or mediator that could provide distance between their emotions and direct verbalisation thereof appeared to be an appropriate option. Their drawings became that guide. The majority of the participants reflected that drawing their experience of the accident was vital in relating their perception thereof. For instance, Dean stated, "Here's my picture, it's finished now. See miss, if it can help me to tell you about that day." This is in keeping with Lykes's (1997) findings that drawing can serve as a mediator of painful experiences.

The drawings allowed participants to express and do things that are sometimes impossible to describe in words. It provided an opportunity to release emotional energy, which was tied up in their fears and current concerns. Many of the participants acknowledged that sharing feelings and drawing together in a small group was helpful to processing their traumatic memories about the bus accident and the deaths. The reflective notes affirmed that in the smaller groups, drawing and games brought in an element of fun, creating a relaxed

atmosphere where the participants felt comfortable to express themselves. This experience of the participants was similar to what an adolescent client said about group sessions in Oaklander's research (1978). The value such sessions have is that they provides a safe space to talk about painful things. It also creates the opportunity for the participant to learn about him or herself, as it is a process of exploration. Finally, it is a space that is therapeutic because of its empathetic atmosphere. Those in the group are interested in you and what you feel, and you feel validated by such a group.

5.2.2   Intrinsic issues: Survivor guilt and resilience

Various participants reflected the belief that their acts of helping may have made the difference between life and death. For instance, unresolved painful emotions were reflected by Terry, who was restrained from assisting his friend who died in the accident. Helping the injured and being kept informed about who was injured or died were identified as ways which could restore a sense of control amidst chaos.

Several participants reflected an attitude of resilience. For example, Joe explained that experiencing the accident had created confidence in his own ability to confront and process troubling emotions. Alertness towards danger, motivation to nurture personal relationships and to maintain a positive attitude towards interpersonal conflict was emphasised. Janoff-Bulman (1998:167) confirms "people who survive a severe stressor may develop enhanced perceptions, a more positive view of their strengths, and a different perspective on future events." For all the participants of this study, growth was noted in their views on their position in the world and the impact they have on others, and vice versa.

5.2.3   Interpersonal influences: Stories as personal testimonies

An important finding was the participants' strong views on the offensive allegations published in *The Voice* newspaper and its indifference. For the participants, it exacerbated the painful effects of the accident. Outrage was expressed at these allegations since they were reportedly based on falsified information. In this regard, Oaklander (1978) also found that adolescents are very much affected by the realities of the world. According to her, many young people attempt to learn about dealing with the world. "They try to make their voices heard and make decisions for themselves" (1978:158). However, due to their age, most are ignored or not taken seriously. Similarly, I found that the participants' desire to be granted the opportunity to have their personal account of the accident heard was ignored by significant others, amongst them this local newspaper. The collaborative analysis of their drawings

empowered the participants to speak out against social practices that they found discriminatory, such as the indifferent newspaper articles that contained untrue allegations. The emancipatory role of drawings in research with vulnerable populations whose voices are commonly silenced, such as minors, is affirmed by Finley (2005:135), who states that:

> I want to encourage children to learn early to become lifelong activists who are equipped to wage war against oppression by virtue of their ability to name their oppressors, dispute oppressive practices that are harbour stereotyped views of children's rights to be heard.

5.3   RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE RESEARCH

Research such as this could be traumatic for its participants and could have repercussions for the mental health of such participants. Sensitivity is therefore required, more so because of the participants' minority status. The anticipation that the research sessions could elicit painful emotions was stated in the previous chapter. In order to contain unresolved emotions, participants were presented with the opportunity to attend follow-up drawing-based counselling sessions. Alternative opportunities for ongoing therapeutic intervention upon entrance to high school were also suggested. The value of such sessions could be researched in a follow-up longitudinal study.

According to Schratz and Steiner-Loffler (1998), creating pictures with a view to improving the audibility of young people's voices is an intervention in itself. Furthermore, Lykes *et al.* (2003) point to the psychological benefits of co-constructing these collective testimonies. The positive impact of collective remembrance on the local community and the enhancement of self-understanding and self-esteem in the post-trauma reconstruction phase are also emphasised. Consequently, in order to address participants' need to have their collective account of the accident heard, continued research from a participatory action research stance is recommended. The results of such a research project could be beneficial, not only for research purposes, but also as a collective testimony published in the popular press, such as *The Voice*.

Based on my engagement with the literature reviewed for this study, it is evident that the potential of creative research techniques remains largely under-explored. A literature study on drawing as a medium to unlock the silenced voices of marginalised populations would therefore contribute valuable information to this area of research.

5.4   LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The findings of this study are specific to the population under investigation. Contextual influences are unique to this group of participants and do not apply to the general South African population. In relation to this, the fact that there was no record of the participants' experiences of previous trauma limited the study. A more comprehensive understanding of each individual participant's experience of the bus accident would have been possible if relevant background information about previous experiences of trauma, such as familial stressors or a history of traumatic exposure, had been available. Consequently, the findings of this study are specific to a single trauma incident and do therefore not meet the criteria for trauma resulting from stressors other than that experienced during the accident.

Conducting research in a busy school during the last term of the year with grade seven learners who are preparing for entrance to high school is not ideal, especially regarding consistency in attendance. Furthermore, reflection on the research process revealed that, since I am a relatively inexperienced researcher, my own anxiety influenced the quality of the follow-up questions asked during individual and focus group interviews. Probes into vague answers could have elicited clearer, more specific responses from participants who found it difficult to verbalise their thoughts.

The ethical problems related to the use of drawings in educational research, such as the difficulty in ensuring anonymity when identifying information about a participant as depicted in the drawings, remain a concern, as Daniels (2006) also found in her research with visual-based methods. A possible solution concerning anonymity could be to present participants with the choice of whether they want their identity revealed or not. This in itself holds potential for empowering participants to share their voices. However, in research on vulnerable populations such as minors, ensuring confidentiality is regarded as a more critical concern.

5.5   CONCLUSION

This inquiry set out to explore adolescents' drawings as a research tool and a window on their traumatic experiences of a tragic bus accident that they all witnessed and in which four individuals had died. The study was conducted from a qualitative, interpretative paradigm and is underpinned by an eco-systemic theoretical framework. In order to comprehend the impact of shared trauma on the group of participants, individual and focus group interviews were conducted. For data triangulation purposes, parents and educators were consulted as key

informants in order to enhance the researcher's understanding of extrinsic factors that influenced the adolescents' perceptions of the bus accident.

The findings indicate that creative expression played a vital role in eliciting communication about emotions that would otherwise be difficult to verbalise. Themes related to three main spheres of influence, namely situational and interpersonal influences as well as intrinsic issues were indicative of how participants' perceptions were shaped. These influences provided a holistic, contextualised image of the participants as unique yet integral members of the community who shared their experiences. Situational influences included frightful memories of the accident scene, ambivalent emotions towards the research sessions and collective mourning during the funerals. Issues related to the support of peers, family and significant helpers, as well as laying blame, were derived from interpersonal influences. Personal influences, such as changes in life orientation and future expectations, were demonstrated in attitudes towards fellow human beings and perceptions about recovery from the traumatic incident. The study found that a traumatic incident such as the bus accident could lead to collective repercussions for the learners and the communities within which they function.

The measure of assistance provided by an eco-systemic perspective to educational psychology within the context of this research study was demonstrated. Furthermore, the value of using drawing as a tool to unlock memory and knowledge and help with meaning making was illustrated. This educational research served to inform and expand my understanding of a group of adolescents' shared experience of a bus accident as well as helped them talk about the impact of this traumatic event on their lives.

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Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Miss Liezl Malan
Metropole South
Private Bag X2
MITCHELL'S PLAIN
7785

Dear Miss L. Malan

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: MEDIATING UNDERSTANDING OF A SHARED TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE DRAWINGS OF ADOLESCENTS.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **4th September 2005 to 30th November 2005**.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December 2005).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the Principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the following school: **Dennegeur Primary**.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Education Research.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
    The Director: Education Research
    Western Cape Education Department
    Private Bag X9114
    CAPE TOWN
    8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 16th November 2006

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LETTER OF CONSENT

<u>FOR ATTENTION: THE PRINCIPAL</u>

With this letter I offer my condolences to all affected by the tragic bus accident, the learners and educators, as well as the families and community affiliated with the school. I hope that the following proposition holds potential for support during a difficult time.

I would hereby like to request your permission to conduct a research study at the school whereby all Grade Seven learners will be invited to volunteer their participation. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into adolescent's experiences of a shared traumatic event. The research sessions will be conducted in group context. Participants will be provided with the opportunity for drawing and painting individual experiences and perceptions of the accident, and for sharing feelings in a safe, non-discriminatory environment. As participation is voluntary, a participant may withdraw at any time. All information shared by the participants will be handled anonymously and in strict confidentiality. The research will be written up and pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the participants as well as to ensure confidentiality of sensitive data.

Parent/s and guardians of the prospective participants will be invited to attend an informative session prior to commencement of the research sessions. During this session, the purpose of the study will be discussed in detail and signed; informed consent will be sought from these parent/s or guardians. To further inform the study, I kindly request an interview with the grade seven educators regarding behavioural changes observed at school. Any information divulged by educators will also be kept confidential.

The study will inform my master's degree thesis in educational psychology through the University of Stellenbosch. For the duration of the study I will be supervised by a senior educational psychologist and by a specialist in educational research. I will also be working in close collaboration with the local district-based trauma support team.

If additional information is needed regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact the supervisor and co-supervisor of the research.

Kind regards,

Liezl Malan

Cell: 083 44 77768

Prof D Daniels (supervisor)

Tel: 021 8082324

Mrs L Collair (co-supervisor)

Tel: 021 8082313

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Parent/s or Guardian,

With this letter I offer my condolences to those affected by the tragic bus accident which took place at the end of August 2005. I hope that the following holds potential for support during this difficult time.

Following a trauma intervention session which took place at school on 21 September 2005, your child indicated that s/he wanted to be part of a group that meets once weekly to share perceptions and feelings about the bus accident. Before the learners could volunteer, they were informed that their participation would comprise a research study for my master's degree thesis. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into adolescent's experiences of a shared traumatic event. The research sessions will provide opportunity for drawing and painting individual experiences and perceptions of the accident, and for sharing feelings in a safe, non-discriminatory environment. As participation is voluntary, a participant may withdraw at any time. All information shared by the participants will be handled anonymously and in strict confidentiality. Prior to the start of the group sessions I may need to interview grade seven educators regarding behavioural changes observed at school. Any information divulged by educators will also be kept confidential. The research will be written up and the real names of participants will not be used in the thesis or in the sharing of the findings with outsiders. This is to protect participants' identities as well as to ensure confidentiality of sensitive data.

Throughout my involvement at the school, I will be supervised by a senior educational psychologist and by a specialist in educational research. I will also be working in close collaboration with the trauma support team from the district-based educational support team.

Your permission is hereby requested for your child's participation in the research sessions. If you support your child's decision to volunteer his/her participation, kindly sign the attached consent form and return it to school.

Kind regards,

Liezl Malan

PARENT CONSENT FORM

I, _____ (parent/guardian) of _____ who is in Grade 7 at Dennegeur Primary School hereby give permission for my child to take part in the research study described above. I hereby agree to it that relevant information given to the researcher may be shared with informed professional that are supervisors to this study. As parents/guardians, I/we also commit myself/ourselves to participating where necessary in the above-mentioned research i.e. attending an interview and possible follow-up sessions.

I/we also give permission for the following:

1. That information about my child or myself may be obtained from relevant person/sources (e.g. school, significant educator).
2. That audio-visual recording of each session may be utilised. I have been informed that all such recordings/observations will be handled anonymously; in strict confidentiality; and that they will be destroyed upon completion of the research study.
3. That information shared by my child and I may be used for research purposes in order to improve services for individuals who have experienced a traumatic incident in the future.

_____   _____

(Parent / Guardian)   **Witness**

Date: _____

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, _____, hereby volunteer to take part in the research study. I know that I will be part of a group where drawing and painting will be used to share feelings about the bus accident.

I know that the researcher keeps notes when we talk and draw, and records our sessions on video. I also know that all information, as well as my own and my family's identities are kept secret. I have also given my permission that her notes and our drawings may be discussed with her supervisors. Some experiences may be difficult to share with others and I know that I don't have to talk if I don't want to. I also understand that when I share my experience of the accident, the researcher and other group members will respect my opinion.

I have put my name on this paper to show that I agree to take part in the group sessions.

....
Participant's name   **Date**

....
Researchers name

SIGNATURES SYMBOLIC OF

GROUP UNITY AND COMMITMENT

LETTER OF GRATITUDE

Dear parent/s, guardians and participant,

I hereby express my gratitude for your voluntary participation to the research sessions regarding the bus accident of August 25, 2005 which took place during October and November 2005. During the research process, art was used to facilitate conversations about feelings and perceptions of the bus accident. Research reveals that creative expression provides potential for sharing feelings, and subsequently, healing from trauma. The value of this research, for me, lies in the contribution it could make towards a more comprehensive understanding of how adolescents create meaning from trauma; and towards how drawing can be used as a tool to contain trauma more constructively.

I am thankful for each participant's contribution, since it enriched my understanding of what was like for this group of adolescent to be involved the bus accident.

I wish you a peaceful and blessed festive season.
Kind regards,

Liezl Malan

LETTER OF GRATITUDE

Dear principal and staff,

I hereby express my gratitude for the opportunity to conduct research with the grade seven learners of 2005 following the bus accident on 25 August last year. During the research process, art was used to facilitate conversations regarding the group's feelings and perceptions about the accident. Research reveals that creative expression provides potential for sharing feelings, and subsequently, healing from trauma. The value of this research, for me, lies in the contribution it could make towards a more comprehensive understanding of how adolescents create meaning from trauma; and towards how drawing can be used as a tool to contain trauma more constructively.

I am thankful for each participant's contribution, since it enriched my understanding of what was like for this group of adolescent to be involved the bus accident.

I wish you a peaceful and blessed festive season.
Kind regards,

Liezl Malan

OPEN CODING

ACC: Accidents cause emotional pain (P2, S3/3: 90-91 FG)

FEEL: Owning feelings of sadness (P3, S1/26: 24)

FEEL: Emotional pain is unavoidable (P3, S1/26: 24)

FEEL: Longing sadness to subside (P2, S1/26: 9-10 FG)

FEEL: Sadness has subsided (P1, S1/7: 33); (P3, S1/26: 21 FG)

FEEL: Picture depicts sadness for friends that died (P2, S1/ 26: 5-7 FG; P2, S3/3: 88 FG; P8, S3/4: 118 FG)

PB: Plea for adherence to speed limits (P2, S3/3: 89-91 FG)

OUT: Acknowledges helpers who provision of shelter and sustenance (P2, S1/ 26: 5-7 FG)

MORT: The finality of death is irreversible (P1, S1/8: 67-68; P2, S1/26: 24-25)

PB: Not placing blame: not the driver's fault (P8, 3/3: 96-99)

PB: Support for "Arrive Alive" road safety campaign (P13; P2, 3/3: 90)

ACC: Accident caused permanent emotional scars (P3, S1/26: 24-25 FG)

FEEL: Release of feelings, (crying) vital for recovery (P3, S1/26: 24 FG)

REC: Accessing personal strength during tribulation is important (P3, S1/26: 28 FG)

REC: Collective strength in unity enables personal strengthening (P3, S1/26: 33)

REC: Focusing attention elsewhere facilitates processing of trauma (P2, S1/27: 38 FG)

REC: Processing trauma: conversations about accident (P1, S1/8: 36; P5, S1/27: 40 FG)

REC: Processing trauma through drawing (P1, S1/27: 41-42 FG; P4, S1/27: 43)

REC: Processing trauma through expression of feelings (P5, S1/27: 44)

INTER: Discontinue voluntary attendance (S1/27: 72 FG)

MORT: Picture depicts the funeral as a terrible day (P1, S1/7: 20; 25 FG)

MORT: Picture depicts coffins of the deceased (P1, S1/7: 13 FG)

FEEL: Individual mourning (P1, S1/7: 24 FG)

IMP: Collective impact equates collective sadness (P1, S1/7: 25 FG; P1, S1/8: 69-70; 9: 58)

PERS: Changed perspective of others (P1, S1/8: 43-44)

MORT: Class has undergone physical change: empty seats (P1, S1/8: 47-48)

FEEL: Longing to change the outcome of the past (P1, S1/8: 67-68)

MORT: Funeral signifies final farewell (P1, S1/8: 71-72)

MORT: Deceased was close friend (P2, S1/10:5; 18)

WIT: Witnessing injury: frightening (P2, S1/10: 23-25)

OPEN CODING

Individual interview with Mary, (P 13)

CODE

1 LM: Try to speak into the microphone okay. Can you
2   tell me about your picture?
3 M: I draw uhm a picture about speeding. How people
4   must drive slowly all the time if they want to
5   arrive alive, and... To tell them to stop driving fast
6   or speeding, people must stop driving to fast
7   because they can hurt people's feelings and make
8   an accident and that somebody might die if they
9   don't drive slow.
10 LM: If they don't drive slowly okay, you're saying
11   people might die if people drive too fast?
12 M: Yes.
13 LM: And this girl over here is it a girl, is it a lady?
14 M: It is a little girl.
15 LM: What is she saying? What, If she could say
16   something would she be saying?
17 M: Drive slow. Don't go too overboard with the car.
18   To drive slow and … arrive alive.
19 LM: She's saying arrive alive. Okay. And if she
20   wanted to say something to you what would she
21   be saying?
22 M: I think that uhm that, it happened to her already.
23   She's gone through that already and she's just
24   warning me and other people, but that's why she's
25   crying.
26 LM: She is just warning others and she's crying.
27 M: She has gone through that already and … she is
28   just warning.
29 LM: And she is just warning other people, okay. So it
30   happened to her already and she is crying here?
31 M: She is feeling sad about what happened.
32 LM: And if this girl, this girl looks back at the, the
33   accident that happened, what does she, what are
34   other feelings that goes through her mind and
35   through her heart?
36 M: Sadness.
37 LM: Sadness. Okay. Anything else? What caused the
38   sadness?
39 M: If your friends die.
40 LM: Okay. And this girl in your picture, uhm if she's
41   sitting here today, uhm are there any feelings
42   about the accident that have change for her?
43 M: Yes.
44 LM: What feelings?
45 M: She don't feel that fear and the … uh like you
46   forgot about what happened.

CODE

PB: PLACING BLAME:
- Plea: Stop speeding!
- Support: "Arrive Alive" road safety campaign
- Speeding may kill

ACC: ACCIDENT'S CAUSE EMOTIONAL PAIN
- Realisation: mortality
- Sadness
- Death of friends/loved ones

PERS: VULNERABILITY OF INNOCENT SURVIVORS

PB: DESIRE FOR ACCIDENT FREE ROADS

PERS: Personal experience is warning

ACC: Memories of sadness due to accident

FEEL: CHANGE IN FEELINGS

47	LM:	Okay. What helped, what helped her to forget?	- Distancing from pain
48	M:	By drawing it.	- Fear has subsided
49	LM:	Anything else that helped?	
50	M:	Expressing her feelings.	- Drawing is helpful for emotional expression
51	LM:	Okay. Right. So drawing and expressing feelings	
52		helped her to forget about the sad feelings?	
53	M:	Yes.	
54	LM:	Okay. Anything else you'd like to say to me?	
55	M:	Ja... that is all	
56	LM:	And what would this girl in the picture like to say	
57		to other people in the world today?	
58	M:	If people see a sign, that says you must ride a	
59		certain speed, like if they see a sign on the road	PB: PLEA FOR RESPONSIBLE DRIVING
60		that says, like they mustn't go over 60 or 80, they	
61		mustn't go over it, it is fine to ride less that the	- Adherence to speed limit: not negotiable
62		sign says, but they mustn't go over that.	
63	LM:	So the girl is saying that people mustn't go over	
64		the speed it says on the sign? They must obey the	
65		signs?	
66	M:	Yes... and that people must drive slowly if they	
67		want to arrive alive. We don't want anymore,	
68		uhm, we don't want to hear anymore on the news	
69		that there was more accidents because of that.	PB: DESIRE FOR ACCIDENT FREE NEWS
70	LM:	Okay, I hear you. Anything else that you'd like to	
71		say?	OUT: AWARENESS: MEDIA COVERAGE OF ACCIDENT
72	M:	That's all.	
73	LM:	Thank you very much for sharing about your	PB: PLACING BLAME?
74		picture and talking with me about your feelings	- Unstated belief that bus
75		about the accident.	accident was caused by
76	M:	Nods	speeding?

CODES CLUSTERED ACCORDING TO EMERGING THEMES

HELP: Wanting to help and feeling useful:

Some witnesses rush to capsized bus to help (P9, S2/17: 13). Some witnesses restrained from: disembarking (P8, S2/13: 2-24). Helplessness: No sense of control given to the survivors (P7, S2/9: 16-17; P13, S2/30: 19; 30). Witnesses anticipated being needed "really need us" (P2, S1/12: 90-91; P8, S2/13: 26-28). Restraint equated feeling useless: resulted in persistent anger and guilt (P2, S1/11:58-60; 12: 82-86; 90-91; P8, S2/13: 26-28). Belief that personal act of helping would have saved lives (P2, S1/11:60-61; P8, S2/13: 27-28).

INF: Being informed:

Uncertainty about identity of the deceased created further anxiety; Recurrent worried thoughts (P5, S1/21: 29-32; P10, S2/21: 60-61). It is necessary to be kept informed even if it's bad news; otherwise it inflicts further anxiety (P10, S2/21: 520). Being isolated and uninformed is truly agonising: quest for certainty "I started thinking, worrying... it must be anybody" (P10, S2/21: 60-61).

RE: Reactions:

Suddenness, out of control nature is emotionally overwhelming: immense terror; survivors are inconsolable (P7, S2/9: 25-27; S2/11: 95-97; 104; P8, S3/12: 431 FG

Disbelief P10, S2/21: 49). Anticipation of further danger immediately after impact; instinctive reaction to flee (P10, S2/20:16). Traumatised passengers: screaming until arrival of rescue workers (P12, S2/27: 60). Instant fear, chaos, and anxiety on impact (P9, S2/17: 38). Tragedy caused intense turmoil (P2, S3/3: 90-91; P8, S2/13: 17-18; P11, S2/24: 17, 30, 32; P11, S2/26: 91).

WIT: Witnessing injury and death:

Shattering experience: sight injured peers on bloodstained roadside (P8, S2/13: 16-18; P8, S3/12: 411 FG). Witnessing passengers were empathetic, "they were sorry" for the survivors aboard the bus that crashed (P12, S2/29: 75). Witnessing forceful injury inflicted on peers: Seeing child was slung from the bus into the road (S2/9: 16-17; P9, S2/17: 15). Encountering death is emotionally devastating to witness (P7, S 2/9: 10-14; P2, S1, 10: 21-25; S1, 11: 59-61). Sight of injured friend lying in road: extremely frightening (P2, S1/10: 23-25; P7). Image of deceased: Dramatically different to alive (P7, S 2/9: 10-14). Encountering death places own mortality in jeopardy: (P7, S2/9: 25-27). Intense confrontation with mortality of self and other human beings; (P10, S2/22: 112-113; S2/21: 61-62; 97-98). Fear of witnessing injured (P2, S1/10: 24). Picture revokes memories of searching for missing peers (P2, S3/9: 329; P12, S3/9: 320-321; 327 FG). Survivors restrained from searching further when missing were confirmed dead; witnessing further traumatic images (P2, S1/10:23-24; P10, S2/20: 33; P8, S3/10: 330-332 FG). Collective mourning (P2, S1/12: 86-88)

AXIAL CODING: SESSIONS ONE AND THREE

CATEGORY	CLUSTER OF CODES	PARTICIPANTS						PARTICIPANT REFERENCES					
		1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
EFFECTS OF ACCIDENT ON INDIVIDUALS (Long-term psychological scars)	Persistent difficulty in comprehending reality of an innocent's death		X						S1/11: 58-59				
	Survivor guilt		X						S3/3: 90-91 FG				
	Unresolved anger at self for not helping		X						S1/12: 94-95				
	Longing to change outcome of past	X	X		X			S1/8: 67-68	S1/12: 94-95		S1/19: 40, 47		
	Belief that personal act of helping could have saved lives		X						S1/12: 102-103				
	Sadness incapable of reversing tragedy	X		X				S1/8: 67-68		S1/26: 24-25			
	Helpful when adults confirm innocence of survivors		X						S1/13: 115				
CHANGES IN LIFE ORIENTATION (Worldview and mortality)	Emerging transition to mature worldview			X						S1/16: 49-66			
	Alertness against malevolence increases constructive reactions			X		X				S1/16: 53-55		S1/23: 77	
	Unpredictability of death and human vulnerability		X	X		X			S1/11: 65-66 S3/5: 167 FG	S1/16: 67		S1/22: 54-56	
CHANGES IN LIFE ORIENTATION (Positive change in attitude)	Renewed appreciation for life			X		X				S1/16: 71-73		S1/21:21-22; 22: 39	
	Personal decision to undertake positive, kind-hearted attitude			X	X					S1/16: 64-67	S1/19: 70-71		
	Resilient attitude: confidence in own coping skills					X						S1/21: 15; 22: 70	
CHANGES IN LIFE ORIENTATION (Post-accident feelings)	Unresolved painful emotions		X				X		S1/11: 49; 12: 112				S1/24-25
	Healing underway despite of fluctuating emotions	X	X	X				S1/7: 33	S1/10:32	S1/15: 25-26			
	Expressing feelings critical for coping			X		X				S1/15: 25-26		S1/23: 92-93	
	Confronting and owning painful emotions counteract fear			X		X				S1/15-16: 36-39		S1/17: 84-87	
	Focusing attention elsewhere facilitates strengthening		X						S1/27: 38; S1/11:51-52				
	Togetherness enables coping	X		X		X		S1/8: 36		S1/16: 40-41		S1/21: 11	

AXIAL CODING: SESSIONS TWO AND THREE

CATEGORY	CLUSTER OF CODES	PARTICIPANTS							PARTICIPANT REFERENCES						
		7	8	9	10	11	12	13	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
EFFECTS OF ACCIDENT ON INDIVIDUALS (Long-term psychological scars)	Persistent difficulty in comprehending reality of an innocent's death	X			X			X	S2/12: 136; 140			S2/22:101-102			S2/30: 26-28
	Survivor guilt	X	X					X	S2/9: 33-37	S2/13: 23-24					S3/10: 359-360 FG
	Unresolved anger at self: not helping	X	X						S2/9: 33	S2/15: 81					
	Longing to change outcome of past		X					X		S2/14: 73-75					S3/: 12: 414-421 FG
	Belief that personal act of helping could have saved lives	X	X		X				S2/9: 33-37	2/13: 27-28		S2/22: 89-90			
	Helpful when adults confirm innocence of survivors	X	X						S2/10: 71-73	S2/13: 34-39					
CHANGES IN LIFE ORIENTATION (Worldview and mortality)	Emerging transition to mature worldview		X							S2/15: 105-107					
	Childlike views: tragedy won't be repeated			X				X			S2/18: 54-58				S3/4: 123-125 FG
	Alertness against malevolence increases constructive reactions				X	X						S2/22:100	S2/26: 86-87		
	Unpredictability of death and human vulnerability	X	X	X	X			X	S2/9: 25-27	S2/14: 60-62; 15: 105	S2/17: 35-37	S2/21: 61-62; S2/22: 112-113			S2/30: 12-14
CHANGES IN LIFE ORIENTATION (Positive change in attitude)	Renewed appreciation for life		X				X			S2/14: 60-93, S3/11: 380-382 FG				S3/11: 378 FG	
	Personal decision to undertake positive, kind-hearted attitude		X		X					S2/15: 91-126		S2/22:110-113			
	Resilient attitude: confidence in own coping skills		X			X				2/15: 112			S2/26: 86-87		
CHANGES IN LIFE ORIENTATION (Post-accident feelings)	Unresolved painful emotions	X		X			X		S2/11: 97-104		S2/18: 60; 64; 66			S2/29: 84, 91	
	Healing underway despite of fluctuating emotions	X						X	S2/32: 13-14						S2/32: 26-30
	Expressing feelings critical for coping		X					X		S2/13-24: 36-41					S2/31: 49; 51-52.
	Togetherness enables coping		X	X						S2/13: 38	S2/3: 103				

SELECTIVE CODING

	SITUATIONAL INFLUENCES																
CATEGORY	CLUSTERS OF THEMES	PARTICIPANTS													KEY INFORMANTS		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	1	2	P/G
AUGUST 25th 2005	**Memories: Prior to accident**																
	Pleasurable: Festive, relaxed day		X	X			X	X	X		X		X	X			X
	Oblivion: Tragedy unthinkable		X	X					X		X			X			
	Meaning: Accident																
	Unpreventable: Dreadful and heartbreaking	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
	Lack of words: Caught unequipped		X			X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X			
	Survivor reactions: Sequence of event																
	Premonition of accident was ridiculed								X				X	X			X
	Delayed realisation: Witnessing verified reality		X				X	X	X	X			X	X			
	Restrained from disembarking		X						X				X	X			
	Extreme emotions in instant timeframe		X				X	X	X								X
	Inconsolable: Empathy for injured		X				X	X	X			X		X			
	Hyper-vigilant: Instinct to flee	X									X						
	Confronting mortality: Search for missing		X					X	X	X				X			
	Experiences of injured																
	Physical injuries: Trapped together							X			X						
	Helpless and disorientated: Loss of memory							X	X		X			X			
	Calm and helpful despite own pain										X						
	Hospitalised: Overall exhaustion										X						
	Immediate needs: Accident scene																
	Restoring safety through parental protection	X			X		X		X	X					X	X	X
	Peers console each other		X	X		X		X			X						
	Shelter and sustenance		X	X		X						X					X
	Feeling useful: Helping injured		X				X	X			X						
	Crucial to be kept informed		X			X			X	X	X						
	Survivor perceptions																
	Helplessness: Persistent anger and guilt		X			X		X	X		X		X				
	Possibility of saving lives through helping		X					X	X		X						
	Deceased' identity unconfirmed		X			X		X		X	X						
	Agonising: being uninformed/isolated		X			X					X						
	Not placing blame vs. issues of prevention		X						X		X		X	X			X
FUNERALS MEMORIAL	Final farewell: Collective sadness	X	X											X	X	X	X
	Spiritual leaders offer words of comfort	X	X				X		X					X			X

INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCES

OUTSIDERS	**Bystanders**															
	Multitudes		X				X		X	X	X					
	Passive, curios and empathetic						X		X	X						
	Alert rescue workers and volunteers		X				X		X	X						
	Rescue workers and volunteers															
	Respond with urgency		X				X	X	X	X	X					
	Urge bystanders to assist survivors						X		X	X						
	Take witnesses to place of safety		X				X	X		X	X	X				
	Human limits: Incapability to save all		X			X	X		X	X						X
	Magnitude, helpers' task: Acknowledged			X		X	X		X	X						X
	Indifferent Outsiders: The Voice															
	Awareness: media coverage of accident		X				X		X		X	X				X
	Offensive allegations: deliberate speeding						X				X	X				X
	Re-traumatising and enraging		X				X				X	X				X
	Indifferent High School Learners															
	Inappropriate, immature behaviour		X				X				X	X				
	Indifference: negative impact on siblings										X	X				
	Direct experience: only guarantee, respect		X				X				X	X				X
	Behaviour: Unable to verbalise feelings													X	X	X
	Changed perspective: Peers and educators	X	X			X		X		X						
	Collective impact: Collective sadness	X	X			X	X	X	X			X	X			X
	Peers communicate: Overcome fears		X	X		X	X	X	X				X		X	
	Remembrance in small group is healing		X				X	X				X	X	X		
	Mass counsel: Not conducive, expression													X	X	
PEER-RELATED ISSUES	**Multiplicity and Individual Complexity**															
	Intently focused on drawing		X				X	X	X		X	X	X		X	
	Spontaneous interpretation		X				X	X	X			X	X			
	Picture crucial for communication				X	X	X					X				
	Discontinue attendance	X		X		X			X							
	Personal growth		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Picture: Acknowledges shared sadness	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
	Placing blame: conflicting assumption		X				X				X	X				X
	Memories Of Deceased															
	Deeply saddened: Collective missing	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Comforting beliefs: Eternal life				X		X		X				X			X
	Innocent's death: incomprehensible		X				X		X			X				X

FAMILY table

Category	Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
FAMILY	**Parental protection**																
	Instinctively offer help								X		X				X		X
	Physical protection	X							X	X						X	
	Fear for survival of injured parent								X	X							X
	Immense relief: reunited with loved ones				X	X			X						X		
	Responsibility: checking trustworthiness								X				X				
	Fluctuating behaviour, blaming observed			X	X										X	X	X
	Compassion																
	Identification with families of deceased		X			X		X				X	X				
	Share in parent's outrage at media												X				X

INTRINSIC ISSUES

Category	Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
EFFECTS ON THE INDIVIDUAL	**Psychological**																
	Unresolved painful emotions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Confirming survivor innocence helps		X				X	X							X	X	
	Healing despite of fluctuating emotions		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X				X	X	X
CHANGES IN LIFE ORIENTATION	**Worldview and mortality**																
	Mature vs. childlike worldview		X	X	X	X			X	X	X						X
	Human mortality and vulnerability	X	X	X		X		X	X		X			X			X
	Positive change in attitude																
	Prioritise compassionate attitude			X	X	X			X		X				X		
	Resilience and confidence: Coping skills			X		X		X	X					X			
	Renewed appreciation: Life/living			X	X	X	X		X		X			X	X	X	X
SURVIVOR'S FUTURE EXPECTATIONS	**Anticipation of future change**																
	Transition to high school	X		X	X	X											
	Alertness against malevolence			X		X		X		X	X				X		
	Perceptions of recovery																
	Expressing feelings: critical for coping	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
	Confronting emotions counteract fear			X		X					X						
	Faith; collective remembrance		X		X		X		X		X				X		X
	Togetherness enables processing loss	X	X	X		X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
	Drawings, communication and coping																
	Enjoyable and enables self-expression	X	X		X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X		
	Provides structure: Verbalise unspoken	X	X		X				X		X	X		X	X		
	Relief: Light at end of tunnel			X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	

INTRODUCTORY GAME

Find Somebody....

1. Find someone who lives in the same street/neighbourhood as you

   ....

2. Find someone who plays the same sport as you ....

3. Find someone who has the same favourite song or who likes the same

   music as you ....

4. Find someone who wears the same size shoe as you ....

5. Find someone whose birthday is in the same month as yours ....

6. Find someone who has the same hairdresser as you ....

7. Find someone who has the same strange habit as you ....

   ....

8. Find someone who hates the same things as you ....

9. Find someone who has the same favourite movie ....

10. Find someone who has the same pet as you ....

11. Find someone whose house is the same colour as yours ....

12. Find someone who has gotten lost before. Ask him/her to tell you

    about it! ....

13. Find someone who has done something really interesting or unusual

    before ....